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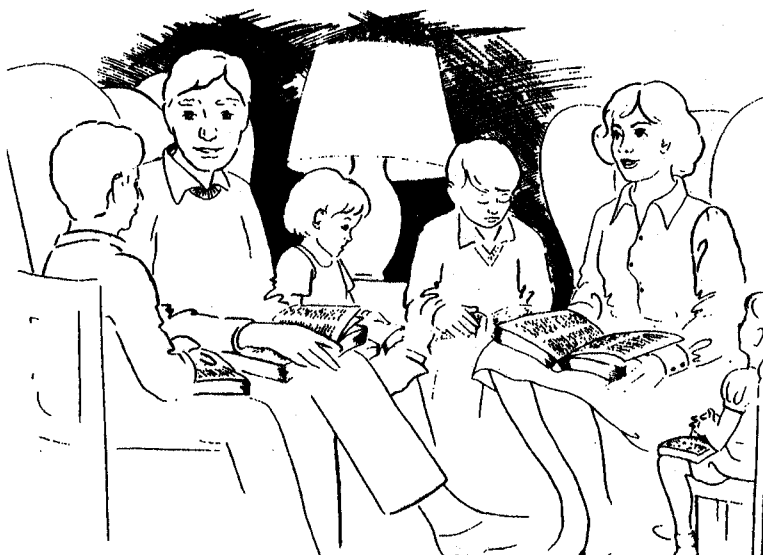
The Story of the Bible



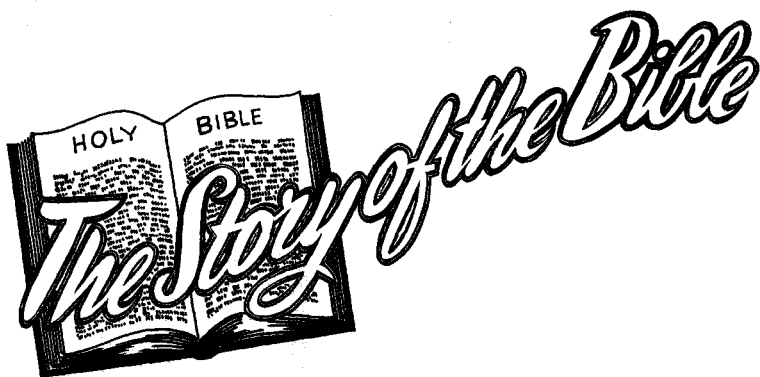
A detailed exposition of the Bible
discussed within the family circle

by H. P. Mansfield

Edited by Graeham E. Mansfield



The children of the Phillips family gather with their parents for a daily reading of the Bible — an important part of their lives. Then they discuss together the remarkable events recorded in the greatest Book in all the world.



The Dramatic Times and Acts of the Apostles

This eighth volume of our *Story of the Bible* introduces us to the dramatic events that occurred after the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, having fulfilled his ministry on earth to reveal the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the people and to achieve his conquest over sin, so leading the way to salvation for those who seek to join with him in faith and hope. Before he left his disciples, he told them that he would send "the Comforter," the gift of the Holy Spirit, to enable them to recall the circumstances of his work among them, and to provide a powerful witness to their proclamation of the Truth to those about them.

We now begin the history of the formation of ecclesias through the ministrations of the apostles. It is a thrilling and exciting story; one of continuous activity, of debate, of encouragement, and of spiritual warfare as the Word of

God was boldly proclaimed to both Jews and Gentiles in face of bitter opposition and increasing persecution.

The apostles were changed men from those who beforehand had struggled with their doubts and inabilities; who did not always understand the teachings of their Master. But their contact with Christ, and the confirmation of his resurrection from the dead, matured their understanding and attitude, so that they now reflected his teaching and characteristics.

For example, Peter, the impetuous disciple, was no longer the boastful, belligerent fisherman portrayed in the Gospels, but a forthright, fearless preacher of power who had learned to overcome his natural weaknesses and to bear patiently with those with whom he came in contact. And the change in Peter was typical of the change in them all.

This conviction was so obvious that people could clearly see a remarkable change in these so-called "unlearned and ignorant" Galileans (Acts 4:13). Because of this, men "marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus."

The difference stemmed from their better comprehension of the Old Testament Scriptures, of their understanding of the atoning sacrifice and resurrection of the Master, and of Yahweh's purpose in him and in mankind. Thus equipped, they were energised for the work before them. This work took them throughout the world. That, indeed, was their commission. They had been told: *"Go into all the world and preach the Gospel; he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"* (Mk.16:16). Further, they were instructed as to how they should reveal themselves to the public: *"Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"* (Acts 1:8).

The apostles carried out these instructions after the power of the Holy Spirit had come upon them at the time

of Pentecost. This power gave them the ability to remember his words (Jn. 14:26), and to express the divine Truth in a vigorous and courageous manner.

They commenced preaching at Jerusalem, but the growing crescendo of hate that they experienced there soon drove them from that city, and they progressively extended their preaching activities into all the world. Thus, Paul could later write: *"The Gospel was preached [Gr. heralded] to every creature under heaven"* (Col. 1:23).

It was heralded to all, though many did not stop to hear or heed it. But those who did so, formed themselves into ecclesias, and caused the Truth to shine forth in their individual centres.

The story of the apostolic labours for the Truth is largely dominated by two men: Peter and Paul, and in order to unfold it, it will be necessary for us to draw upon the epistles of the apostles as well as the record contained in the Acts. For example, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he declared: *"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice suffered I shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep..."* (2Cor. 11:24-25). Yet none of the incidents here listed are recorded in the Acts except for the occasion when Paul was beaten in Philippi (Acts 16:22), and the stoning he endured in Lystra (Acts 14:19). The other adventures are passed over in silence. In his humility, Paul had not mentioned them to Luke who wrote the Acts of the Apostles. The shipwreck mentioned in Acts 27 is therefore a later incident to the three mentioned by Paul in 2 Cor. 11:25. It is so easy to quickly read those words, and not realise the frightful experiences they record. But when we stop to try and imagine the terrible nature of each, we begin to realise the devotion of these men to the things they believed.

To obtain a complete record of incidents relating to the

early ecclesias and the apostle, incidents like these must be fitted in, and we will attempt to do so.

The record contained in the Acts of the Apostles is one of great activity and heroism. The apostles always took the initiative to preach the Gospel, and by their fearless proclamation provided a wonderful example for others to follow. We can revel in the record and gain encouragement to manifest in our day a similar faith and courage. The apostles were provocative in preaching, forthright in exhortation, vigorous in action, and compelling in example.

Their lives are a constant reminder of what we can attempt, for we, too, can be moved by their enthusiasm and example to follow Christ as they did.

In treating with the story before us, we propose to also provide outlines of the various epistles written by the apostles, give character sketches of the men and women who were associated in the work of preaching, and attempt to simply describe the involved story that is presented in the Scriptures.

We shall give analyses of the public addresses given by the apostles, and will express these in modern phraseology. Every care will be taken by comparing the original language to ensure accuracy as far as possible in the expressions used. To that end, various translations will be carefully compared.

It is a wonderful story that we have to relate, and we trust that the reader derives pleasure and profit from its consideration, as we have in preparing this record.

This eighth volume of *The Story Of The Bible* will complete our outline of God's work with His creation as recorded in the Scriptures, and show how everything was set in motion for the latter-day development of the divine purpose, leading to the promised Kingdom under the authority of the great king, Yahshua, the Son of God.

It will show how Peter, the courageous apostle, called by Christ to "feed his sheep" (John 21:15-17), fulfilled his

commission with great courage, and with thoughtful diligence. In doing so he used his own experiences of strength and weakness in the days of the Lord's ministry, in order to continue the labour of his Master in his absence. By his work, many of the Jews found the Truth, and followed the Lord Jesus. Peter's warm and concerned epistles that are recorded in the Inspired Word demonstrate the fatherly character of this great servant of the Master.

As a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus, rescued from the harness of Judaism, Paul continued to extend the influence of the Gospel from Asia to Europe, whilst, at the same time, he consolidated the ecclesias he had already established.

We will take heed to the biographical references that are found in his epistles, and will try and synchronise them with Luke's narrative as contained in the *Acts Of The Apostles*. Because of the character of his writing, we consider Luke's accounts, both in the Gospel and in the Acts as providing a good sequential outline of events. In the life of the apostle Paul an absorbing account of the labours of a totally dedicated man emerges. He is seen, not merely battling against the forces of darkness outside, but also countering the attacks of enemies within the Brotherhood. The former challenged the doctrines he taught; the latter tried to destroy the reputation he had built up. By false accusation, backbiting, invective, innuendo and open attack they sought to besmirch his character and undermine his influence in the ecclesias. It is a sad thing that many seem to reject the worthy works of faith, and instead seek to elevate their own reasonings and personal prestige.

Paul met the challenge in faith. He gathered around him helpers who could assist him in the additional work which he now encountered. He ruthlessly and relentlessly drove himself to fulfil the increasing demands made upon him, whilst showing every consideration for those with

him. In this, he permitted neither friend nor foe to turn him from his course. Resting heavily upon Yahweh for strength, daily engaging in earnest prayer, he met the difficulties that rose against him like a flood, as a challenge to his faith, and won through.

But though a fighter, he was also a man of deep emotions. He could lash out with stinging words of rebuke, as in the Epistle To The Galatians; courageously and publicly oppose a fellow-apostle *"because he was to be blamed,"* as he did Peter — or break down and weep tears of affection as he did for Timothy, or for the wayward but lovable brethren of Corinth.

It was this feeling for others that drew so many to help Paul. He demanded much of them, but gave unstintingly in return. In turn, they loyally co-operated with him, and whether in attack or defence, gave him their full support. Thus, despite all oppositions and frustrations, the work made steady progress. Yahweh was with the apostle, and ecclesias sprang up on all sides.

It was a most exciting time for the proclamation of the Truth. Ephesus and other places became centres from whence it branched out in all directions. The apostle's activities increased. No longer was it possible to personally visit each centre, and so he had to have recourse to writing epistles, or sending out emissaries.

In this volume we will continue to provide outlines of these epistles. We are confident that these will enable the general theme of the various letters to be better comprehended, and by so reading, our understanding of the character and determined spirit of the apostle himself might be better understood.

Where did Paul obtain the material resources to enable him to accomplish all his work? It may have been that he had some private resources, but if so, they were by no means sufficient for the work in hand. Was he paid by the ecclesias? The answer is, No. Paul did not command great wealth, but he maintained his

independence by living within his means, and by personal work as a tentmaker. He laboured "night and day" that he might not be chargeable unto the brethren, and in so doing provided not only for himself but also for his co-labourers (Acts 20:34).

His life is an exhortation. He wrote to the Corinthians: "*Follow me, as I also follow Christ.*" That sets a very high ideal to which we must aim. But it is not an impossible one. In his lifetime, Paul was able to gather about him men and women who were drawn by his example to also give themselves unstintingly to the work of Christ.

We have opportunity to repeat that today in our circumstances. Let us neither ignore nor neglect it. Christ is at the door. Soon he will return to take account of the stewardship of his servants of every age. Then his apostles will be brought from the dead to receive a reward more than equal to their labours, to share with all those "of like precious faith," the glory laid before them. It is the joy delivered us through the Inspired Word of Truth. May it be our happy lot to be associated with Peter, Paul, and their associates in the day of their glory — even as now, through reading the record of their lives and activities, we are admonished to share with them the agony of their labours.

Further details of these times will be found in our volume: *The Christadelphian Expositor: Acts*, which provides a verse by verse exposition of the book of the Acts of the Apostles, and will be found helpful in the worthwhile activity of Bible marking. —*Editor.*

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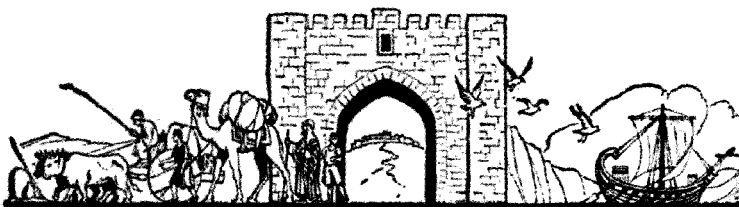
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Analysis

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Yahweh's Final Offer to Israel at Home and Abroad

Jesus died pleading for the forgiveness of those who gathered at his crucifixion, on the basis of Israel's ignorance of the real crime they committed, of rejecting Yahweh's Anointed (Luke 23:24; Acts 3:17). The apostles were sent forth from Jerusalem that by miracle and preaching, the Truth might be fully known (Acts 1:8; 8:4). Thus the appeal was made first to the Jews, and when they rejected it, it was opened to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 28:28).

Stephen's death brought the national rejection of this appeal. Though, like Christ (Luke 23:24), he pleaded that the Jews be forgiven; but unlike the Master, he did not urge their ignorance (Acts 7:60). He had clearly revealed to them the folly of their ways, and they had knowingly rejected his message. What Stephen proclaimed in the capital of the Jews, Paul later did to the Jews in Rome, the capital of the Gentiles. He plainly set before them the facts concerning the Jewish rejection of Christ, and called upon them to repent. Having thus proclaimed the Truth to Jews throughout the civilized world, Christ's prayer on behalf of the people resulted in this offer of mercy, and the need to preach first to the Jews and afterwards to the Gentiles was no longer necessary. In fact, at the conclusion of the work of Stephen, three and a half years after the sacrifice of the Lord, the fulfilment of the prophetic "week" of Daniel 9:27 concluded — a prophetic week that commenced with the introduction of John the Baptist, and concluded seven years later with the death of Stephen.

Significantly, the *Acts Of The Apostles* concludes with the statement that thereafter Paul preached to "all that came to him," both Gentiles and Jews, with "no man forbidding him," as previously was done. Today we do not preach "first to the Jews" and then to the Gentiles, for the need no longer applies.

THEME: WITNESS TO CHRIST

Theme Verse: Acts 1:8

The Book of the Acts has been a puzzle to many students. It seems to end on a most unsatisfactory note: with Paul imprisoned. It says nothing about the subsequent history of either Peter or Paul, though it records their activities almost exclusively. Its author was Luke, and he wrote for Theophilus, who may have been the Ethiopian Eunuch whose conversion is recorded in the eighth chapter.

But why did Luke end the book on such an unsatisfactory note?

We suggest that he did not intend to write a biography of Peter or Paul, but rather an exposition of how Yahweh, in mercy, made one final offer of grace to the Jewish nation before overwhelming it in AD70.

When Jesus hung from the stake, he pleaded with his Father to overlook the crime of the people on the grounds that they knew not what they did (Lk. 23:34). Consequently, the preaching of the apostles brought the enormity of the crime clearly home to the people. Time and again they were told that they had murdered their Messiah (Acts 2:23; 3:14-15; 7:52), though it was conceded that "through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (ch. 3:17).

The apostles were sent forth to witness to that fact, and they did so "first" to the Jews, and only then to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46). Accordingly, Paul made it his practice to seek out cities where there were synagogues, and to preach first in them to the Jewish community.

Why did he do this? Why was it a principle to offer the Gospel "first to the Jews" and only afterwards to the Gentiles? We do not follow that principle today in preaching; but why not, if it were then necessary?

Because, the Gospel having been officially rejected by the Jews both in the Land and in dispersion, the requirement is no longer necessary. This act of grace to the nation of Israel was in answer to the Lord's request upon the stake, and when it was completed (as it was by Paul in Rome), Luke brought his book to an end.

The *Acts of the Apostles*, therefore, primarily records how that Yahweh answered the plea of His Son by providing a final opportunity for the Jewish nation to accept Jesus as Messiah, and how, when this was rejected, it was preached to the Gentiles. Paul completed the appeal to the Jews by his defence in Jerusalem, and his approach to the leaders of the dispersion in Rome, on which note the book appropriately concludes. When the *Acts of the Apostles* is considered in that light, it will be found to be a complete and satisfactory treatise.

The stoning of Stephen by the Sanhedrin, after his masterly and irrefutable exposition, constituted the final national rejection of Yahweh's appeal. The people in the Land had officially spurned the offer of mercy, and the preaching of the Gospel was transferred to different centres — Samaria, and then to Gentile lands.

It is significant, that as he was dying, Stephen repeated the prayer that

Christ had uttered from the stake, with one notable exception: he did not say, "they know not what they do" — his exposition had clearly revealed to them the enormity of their crime. Their action was a blatant repudiation of God's goodness.

So much for the Jews in the Land. But then Paul conveyed the same message to those of the dispersion. Consider his first recorded speech, and how he presented to the Jews abroad, the same message of the ignorance and wickedness of their rulers in crucifying Christ, as had Peter to those of Jerusalem (Acts 13:27-28). Paul urged that the offer of repentance had now been sent to the Jews of the dispersion (v. 26). Why should this address be recorded, whereas others were not? Because it comprised Paul's policy speech to the synagogues everywhere.

Consistent with this thought, Paul's first action on arriving at Rome was to call together the elders of the Jewish community in that city, and place before them these facts. They rejected his message, and Paul warned: "*The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it*" (Acts 28:28). On that note, the book closes. No longer was it necessary that the Word of God should first be preached to Jews (Acts 13:46), for they had officially refused it. Thus today we proclaim it almost entirely to Gentiles.

It is significant that Paul had a desire to visit Jerusalem and Rome, the capitals of the Jewish and Gentile worlds. In both cities he laid before the Jews the facts of their rejection of Messiah, and the requirements of salvation, and on their rejection of them he turned to the Gentiles. The great witness to the Jewish people consequent upon the prayer of Christ in which he pleaded their ignorance had come to an end.

Theme Verse

Acts 1:8 epitomises the whole book: "*Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*" The book shows how that from Jerusalem, the Truth extended into Judea, up to Samaria, and was taken by Paul and others to the uttermost part of the earth. The book can thus be divided into the following four main headings, with numerous sub-headings:

[1] PREPARATIONS FOR PREACHING — Acts 1:1 to 2:4.

Christ's instruction and commission to the Apostles	... 1:1-8
The Angelic Message of Promise and Hope	... 1:9-11
Period of Prayer and waiting in Jerusalem	... 1:12-14
Appointment of Matthias to Apostleship	... 1:15-26
Pentecostal outpouring of Holy Spirit	... 2:1-4

[2] PREACHING IN JERUSALEM — Acts 2:5 to 7:60.

The first impression	... 2:5-13
The first message	... 2:14-47
The first miracle	... 3:1-11
The first opposition	... 3:12 to 4:4

The first defence	4:5-12
The first deliverance	4:13-22
The first relief	4:23-31
The first love and unity	4:32-37
The first discipline	5:1-11
The first apostolic authority	5:12-16
The first persecution	5:17-42
The first organisation	6:1-7
The first martyr	6:8 to 7:60

[3] PREACHING IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA — Acts 8:1-25.

The scattered Witnesses	8:1-4
Samaria receives the Word	8:5-25

[4] TO THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH — Acts 8:26 to 28:31.

Toward Africa — ch. 8:26-40.

Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch	8:26-40

Toward Asia — chs. 9:1 to 16:5.

Saul: The instrument found	9:1-31
Peter: Authority confirmed by miracle	9:32-43
Door opened to Gentiles	10:1-48
Preaching to Gentiles defended by Peter	11:1-18
The spread of the Gospel through persecution	11:19-30
Opposition of Authorities successfully defied	12:1-24
Paul: The instrument commissioned	12:25 to 13:4
Paul: The instrument used	13:5 to 14:28
The council at Jerusalem	15:1-35
The separation of Barnabas and Paul	15:36 to 16:5

Toward Europe — chs. 16:6 to 18:17.

The call to Macedonia	16:6-13
Lydia and the Jailor converted (Philippi)	16:14-40
Thessalonica, Berea, Athens	17:1-34
Corinth	18:1-17

In Asia — chs. 18:18 to 26:32.

Ephesus	18:18-21
Visiting Ecclesias	18:22-23
Ephesus	18:24 to 19:41
Three months in Greece	20:1-6
Troas	20:7-12
To Jerusalem	20:13 to 21:16
In Jerusalem	21:17 to 23:30
In Caesarea	23:31 to 26:35

In Europe — chs. 27:1 to 28:31.

By ship to Italy	27:1 to 28:15
In Rome	28:16-31

TWOFOLD DIVISION OF ACTS

The book of Acts can be divided into two main sections, the first of which records the preaching of the Gospel throughout Judea, and the second, the proclaiming of it throughout the world. A close examination will reveal a remarkable repetition of experiences.

Part One — Chapters 1 to 12.

Part Two — Chapters 13 to 28.

Jerusalem the centre		Antioch the centre
Peter the chief figure		Paul the chief figure
Taken out to Samaria		Taken out to Rome
Rejected by the Jews of the Land		Rejected by the Jews of the Dispersion
Peter imprisoned		Paul imprisoned
• Judgment on Herod.		• Judgment on the Jews.

PETER AND PAUL: A PARALLEL

See Heb. 2:4

Peter

Paul

First address	ch. 2	First address	ch. 13
Lame man healed	ch. 3	Lame man healed	ch. 14
Simon the Sorcerer	ch. 8	Elymas the Sorcerer	ch. 13
Influence of shadow	ch. 5	Influence of handkerchiefs	ch. 19
Laying on of hands	ch. 8	Laying on of hands	ch. 19
Peter worshipped	ch. 10	Paul worshipped	ch. 14
Tabitha raised	ch. 9	Eutychus raised	ch. 20
Peter imprisoned	ch. 12	Paul imprisoned	ch. 28

Thus the signs and wonders performed by Peter in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, were repeated by Paul when he took the Gospel to the uttermost part of the earth.

CHAPTER SUBJECTS

YAHWEH'S FINAL OFFER TO THE NATION OF ISRAEL

Theme verses: Acts 1:8; 13:46. Compare with Lk. 23:34.

[1] FINAL OFFER TO THE JEWS OF THE LAND

— Chs. 1-12.

- Ch. 1 — Apostles prepared and commissioned.
- Ch. 2 — Miracle; Witness; Response.
- Ch. 3 — Miracle (lame man healed); Witness; Opposition.
- Ch. 4 — Miracle (release from prison); Witness; Opposition.
- Ch. 5 — Discipline; Witness; Opposition.
- Chs. 6, 7 — Miracle; Witness; Opposition.
- Ch. 8 — Samaria; Ethiopian chancellor.
- Ch. 9 — Conversion of Paul.
- Ch. 10 — Cornelius baptised.
- Ch. 11 — Antioch; the new centre.

Ch. 12 — James executed; Peter delivered; Herod judged as head of nation.

[2] FINAL OFFER TO THE JEWS OF THE DISPERSION — Chs. 13-28.

Chs. 13, 14 — First missionary journey.

Ch. 15:1-35 — Jerusalem Conference.

Chs. 15:36 to 18:23 — Second missionary journey.

Ch. 18:24-28 — Powerful preaching of Apollos (Corinth).

Chs. 19:1 to 22:30 — Third journey and final rejection of Jews of Jerusalem.

Ch. 23 — Paul witnesses before the Sanhedrin.

Ch. 24 — Paul witnesses before Governor Felix.

Ch. 25 — Paul witnesses before Governor Festus.

Ch. 26 — Paul witnesses before King Agrippa.

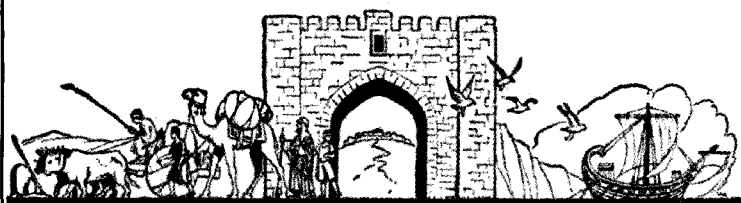
Ch. 27 — On the way to Rome; Witness on the ship.

Ch. 28 — In Rome and final rejection by Jews.

SUMMARY OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

This book is really “Book Two” of which the Gospel of Luke is “Book One.” It begins where the first book ends: at the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and then goes on to describe the various stages by which Christianity spread over the whole civilised world, and was formed into an organised community. In the first half of the book the writer deals with the growth of the infant ecclesia in Jerusalem under the care of Peter, James and John, and in the latter half confines his attention to the activities of “Saul of Tarsus” (afterwards called Paul), the great apostle to the Gentiles. By three wonderful journeys he established the Truth throughout the Roman Empire, which terminated in his arrest and subsequent imprisonment at Rome. The expression “we” often occurs in the narrative, especially in chapters 16, 20, 21, 27, 28, showing that the writer (Luke) was personally engaged in the incidents there described.

• Further details are contained in the volume: *The Christadelphian Expositor: Acts.*



The Preaching Campaign Commences

(Acts 1:1 to 7:60)



Chapter 1

THE PURPOSE OF “THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES”

*The “Acts of the Apostles” records the founding of the Ecclesia of Christ and its early development. As the Gospels record what Jesus **BEGAN** to do and to teach, the Acts records what he **CONTINUED** to do (Acts 1:1-2), as the ever-living leader in heaven, who was nonetheless present with his followers in spirit (Mat. 18:20). The Acts reveals faith in action; the work of Christ in his people.*

It is a book of warfare as exciting as the book of Joshua; but its warfare is in the realm of thought and belief, and the weapons were those of Truth pitted against the citadels of Error and Ignorance.

The author of the Acts was Luke, the “beloved physician” who often accompanied the apostle Paul on his journeys (Col. 4:14); and therein he continued the narrative commenced in his Gospel (cp. Acts 1:1-2 with Lk. 1:3). As Luke’s Gospel embraces the thirty-three years of the life of Jesus Christ (BC7–AD26; i.e., in common dating, AD33), so this book records the first thirty-three years of ecclesial development from the resurrection of the Lord, to the close of the first imprisonment of Paul (AD27–AD70). The numerous “we” sections (chs. 16:10-17; 20:5-21; etc.) indicate where Luke joined Paul as a fellow traveller.*

Luke’s style is vivid, and his description of the storm and wreck of the ship upon which Paul sailed is rated the most exciting and dramatic narrative of sea adventure in ancient literature (Acts chs. 27, 28).

LUKE completed his record of the *Acts of the Apostles* with Paul imprisoned in Rome. To many, this seems a most unsatisfactory note upon which to conclude the exciting record of adventure that unfolds in the pages of his book. Again we ask (see p. 20), why did not Luke complete the life history of the great Apostle to the Gentiles? Some have suggested that he intended to write a further book as a sequel to this one, in which he would complete the biography of his beloved friend Paul, for Luke was with him to the end (2Tim. 4:11).

*Some authorities, such as H. Lockyer, indicate that the “AD” era was not used till several hundred years after Christ. The calculations were made by a learned monk, Dionysius Exiguus, in the sixth century, who made an error of some years; so that to get the exact date from the birth of Christ we must add seven years to our usual dates. — *Ed.*

But if that was the intention, surely divine inspiration would have seen that it was done.

A careful consideration of the background to the Book of Acts, however, not only reveals that Luke completed all that he intended to write, but also that he concluded his work on the most appropriate note.

In his preface, he clearly states his intention. It was not to write a biography of Paul, but to record the completion of the Lord's labour in a certain particular. His Gospel account recorded "*all that Jesus began both to do and to teach*" (Acts 1:1); and the Acts records the work of the Lord through the apostles in taking the message of the Gospel from Jerusalem to the "*uttermost part of the earth*" — the Old Testament designation of Rome (see Deu. 28:49).

Why The Gospel Was First Preached To Jews

Further, the Acts of the Apostles not only records the work of Christ through the apostles, but does so with regard to a special mission which limited the scope of their preaching. An understanding of this provides the key to much that is recorded therein.

For example, why did Paul tell the Jews: "*It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles*" (Acts 13:46)? Why was it necessary for Paul to preach first to the Jews and only afterwards to the Gentiles?

We do not follow that procedure today, yet it is obvious, from Paul's words, that it was a principle with him to proclaim the Truth "*to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*" (Rom. 1:16).

Thus, when Paul arrived in Rome, he first called the Jews before him, and propounded to them the Truth (Acts 28:17-24). When they rejected the message, he applied Isaiah 6:9-10 to the situation: a prophecy that not only predicted the stubborn resistance of the Jews to the appeal of the living Word, but also proclaimed that it would constitute the last opportunity for the nation to accept it before their city and land would be wasted, and the people scattered into all nations (Isa. 6:11-12). This was fulfilled in the terrible invasion of the Land by the Romans in AD70.

Paul, in Rome, concluded his quotation from Isaiah 6, by stating: "*Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it*" (Acts 28:28).

After that official rejection of the message by the Jews, Paul no longer went first to them and then to the Gentiles. Instead, he proclaimed the Gospel to "*all [both Jews and Gentiles] who came to hear it*" (Acts 28:30-31).

A further question. Why did Paul so ardently desire to visit two

cities: Jerusalem and Rome, and the former before the latter (Rom. 15:23-29)? Obviously, because of the principle he followed: first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. In addition, those two cities comprised the two capitals of the religious world, of Judaism and of Paganism. In both cities, Paul desperately tried to bring home to the Jews the folly of their rejection of Christ, and the terrible sin they had committed in crucifying their Messiah.

Why did he scrupulously observe the principle of preaching first to the Jews and afterwards to the Gentiles?

For an answer to this, and as a key to the plan of the Acts of the Apostles, consider the Lord's request of his Father, given on the stake. He declared: *"Father forgive them; for they know not what they do!"* (Lk. 23:34). In his deep compassion and boundless love for his people, the Lord pleaded that the Father forgive them on the ground of their ignorance. Would the merciful Father in heaven refuse such a request from the lips of His beloved and dying son?

By no means.

The basis of the prayer was that in crucifying the Lord the Jews did not really comprehend the enormity of what they did.

And that is the theme of the preaching in Acts.

The work that the Lord Jesus performed through his apostles comprised the answer to the prayer, and constituted Heaven's last appeal to the nation before it was cast off and given over to the Roman invasion of AD70! Because of that prayer, Paul was instructed to preach first to the Jews, and only afterwards to the Gentiles; first in Jerusalem and afterward in Rome.

Once this work was completed, and the rejection of Christ by the Jews at home and abroad was shown to be final, the record in Acts was finished.

Notice how this is in accordance with the theme of preaching in such passages as the following: *"Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ"* (Acts 2:36).

"Brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (Acts 3:17).

"Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham... to you is the word of this salvation sent; For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him" (Acts 13:26-27).

In view of Jewish ignorance of the enormity of the sin they committed, and because of the prayer of Christ from the stake, the apostles were sent forth preaching, first to the Jews and afterwards to the Gentiles.

**The Jews At Home
And Abroad Reject
The Message**

Now look again (pages 23-24) closely at the Acts of the Apostles. Notice how that it is basically divided into two parts. Chapters 1 to 12 record events in Jerusalem or the land of Judea, and conclude with the imprisonment of Peter; chapters 13 to 28 relate how that the Gospel was taken into foreign parts, and conclude with the imprisonment of Paul.

In the first part, Peter emphasised to the Jews in the land that they had through ignorance crucified the Messiah (ch. 3:17); whilst in the second part Paul did the same to the Jews of the diaspora (the dispersion — Acts 13:27).

A dominant incident in the record of Acts is the stoning of Stephen, and, in the light of our suggestion as to the theme of the book, his dying prayer is most significant.

He had most effectively and systematically set the Truth before the Jews of Jerusalem, so that they could no longer plead ignorance of it (Acts 6:10). They brought him before the same Sanhedrin as the Lord had been earlier arraigned, and once again, the leaders among the Jews heard such a presentation of the Truth as they were unable to answer or resist. Filled with impotent anger, they took him out and stoned him. But, again, a prayer for mercy ascended into heaven, so similar to that uttered by the Lord on the stake, as to suggest that it was patterned on it.

But there was a notable omission in Stephen's prayer. Having set before the Jews a systemised presentation of Truth, he could not plead their ignorance. Therefore that section of Christ's prayer was omitted, and the faithful and merciful Stephen prayed: "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!*"

Jerusalem had officially rejected the divine offer of mercy, and now the Truth was taken from that city to Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1), and then abroad, until, finally, it was presented to the Jews of Rome, the capital of the diaspora (the dispersion of Jews from the Land to foreign areas) who likewise officially rejected it. Yahweh's final offer of mercy to the nation that was in answer to Christ's prayer, was thus nationally rejected at home and abroad by the people of Israel. Time had run out for Israel, and the period when the Gospel had to be first preached to the Jews and only afterwards to the Gentiles, came to an end.

Paul had warned that "*blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*" (Rom. 11:25). That remains their state today, so that we do not follow the apostolic procedure of first preaching to the Jews and then to the Gentiles.

The door of mercy has been fully opened to the latter.

Chapter 2

PREPARATIONS FOR PREACHING

(Acts 1:1 to 2:4)

The work of preaching should never be undertaken lightly; it needs care and attention in its preparation. Men must be seized with the reality of its need, and must be enthused with the glory of its teaching and the privilege of preaching before they can hope to impress others with the need to embrace it, or beget in them a warm enthusiasm for the message. The Lord knew that, and set about educating his apostles accordingly. They had the difficult task of going forth into a hostile world, proclaiming a gospel of salvation based upon the amazing claim that a man who was regarded as an executed criminal, was in fact the Messiah, who was afterwards raised from the dead. First the apostles' own doubts had to be swept aside; their understanding of the prophetic Scriptures had to be confirmed; and, finally, added power had to be given to their preaching by the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. Thus equipped they were qualified to preach the astounding message to others in spite of the hostility and threatened violence that they had been warned they would experience. The tremendous task set them, was to produce even "greater works" than those accomplished by the Lord himself (Jn. 14:12); and this was only possible with his assistance and in his name (v. 13).

FOR forty days, from his resurrection to his ascension, the Lord met periodically with the apostles, to instruct them in the teaching and purpose of Yahweh. As a result, their understanding of the Scriptures (the Old Testament as we know it) was greatly increased, and they were completely confirmed in their conviction of the risen Christ.

Many questions presented themselves to their minds as they pondered these matters. Many of these the Lord answered as he endeavored to guide them in all truth. But more than even this was required before they would be fully equipped for the difficult work of preaching that they were to undertake. They required the power of the Holy Spirit to "bring all things to their remembrance" (Jn. 14:26), and to provide an



infallible witness to its truth, with “*signs, wonders and various miracles*” (Heb. 2:4). By this means it would be made obvious to all that God was with them in their preaching.

They were in Jerusalem at this time, having returned there from Galilee. The Lord instructed them to remain in the city, until the power of the Holy Spirit should be given them: “Do not depart from Jerusalem,” he commanded them, “but remain there and wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit of which you have heard of me.”

The Apostles Abide in Jerusalem

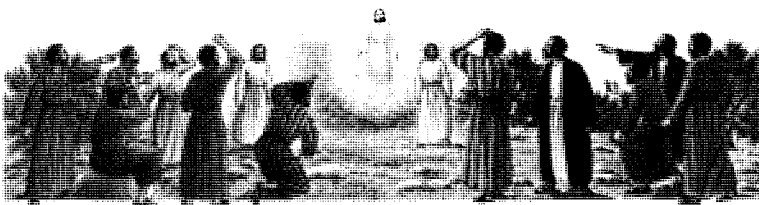
They recalled these words, as they stood together on the summit of the Mount of Olives and saw him disappear from before their sight. They remembered them as they listened to the voice of the angel which spoke to them as they stood gazing heavenwards: “*Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven!*”

There was work for them to do, and they had to prepare for it. Firstly, they had to obey the command that the Lord had left with them, and wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, they descended from the Mount of Olives, and returned to Jerusalem there to abide until it was bestowed.

Meanwhile, they regularly met together in the upper room of a house in which they took residence for the time being (Acts 1:13). It was probably the same house in which they had celebrated “the Lord’s Passover,” on the night of his betrayal. Most likely, this was the house of Mark’s mother, for she was an earnest follower of the Lord, and her home, located in Jerusalem, became the centre of the activities of the Truth in that city (Acts 12:12-17).

The eleven apostles assembled there with other visitors from Galilee. There were the women who had followed Jesus to the capital, Mary his mother, and his half-brothers who now were completely converted by the fact of his resurrection.

This little company of devout disciples spent the time in meditation and prayer, waiting for the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, at which time, the public witness would commence. Only a few days remained until Pentecost, and, as required by the



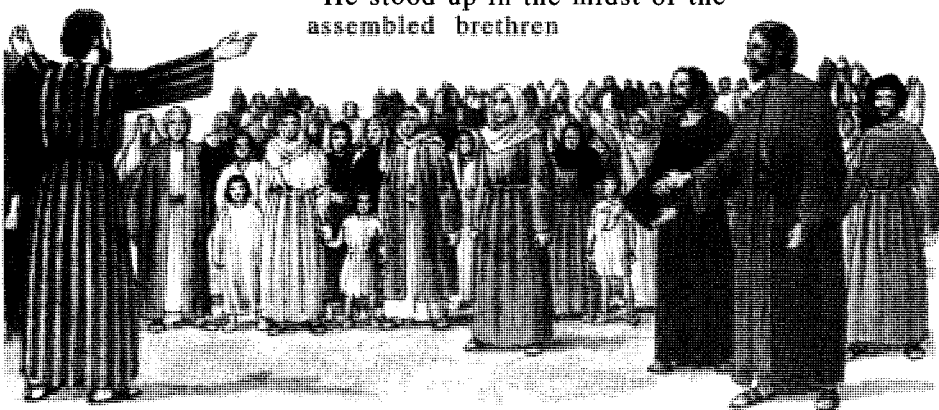
Law, and now made even more meaningful in view of the promise of the Lord, those days were eagerly counted until that most significant festival would come.

Completing The Number Of Apostles

But the number of the apostles was incomplete. The traitorous action and suicide of Judas Iscariot had caused that. The Jerusalem Ecclesia was called together to consider the matter. At that time, it numbered one hundred and twenty members, and Peter assumed the lead.

The believers saw in him a man completely changed from the Peter they knew previously. His character had tremendously matured over the past two months, through the influence of the risen Christ upon the experiences of his life. Already, since the Lord's ascension into heaven, he had begun to assume the role and responsibilities of the bold, fearless, thoughtful leader he ultimately proved to be.

He stood up in the midst of the
assembled brethren



and addressed them: "Brethren," he said, "*The Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit foretold through the lips of David concerning Judas, who became guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was counted with us, and received his allotted share in this ministry; for in the book of Psalms it is written, 'Let his dwelling be desolate and may no one live in it,' and 'Let another take his office.'* So then, of the men who accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out with us, beginning from the baptism of John and on to the day when he was taken up from us, one of these must be our fellow witness of his resurrection."

Peter thus clearly defined the qualifications demanded of the divinely-appointed apostles: they had to be able to witness to the resurrection of the Lord by their own personal eye-evidence of the fact. None but such could be apostles in the true sense of the word,

though the term is used for brethren sent out on ecclesial business, as in Philippians 2:25, where the word "messenger" is from the Greek *apostolos*.

Two brethren were nominated for the position as having the necessary qualifications. One was well-known among them for the work of preaching he had already done. His name was called Joseph (*Increaser*), but because of his activity, he was given the surname of Barsabas Justus which means: *Son of summoning, or calling, to justification*. The other was Matthias (*The Gift of Yahweh*) of whom nothing is recorded but the name.

These two men were put forward as answering to the necessary qualifications, and prayer was directed to heaven, that the appointment be ratified by God and Christ.

And now, a most important principle was taught the ecclesia. The very description given to the two men, the fact that Joseph's name is mentioned first, and given in such detail (Acts 1:23), suggests that he was the more prominent and favoured among the apostles; yet the appointment fell to the other. God thus made His choice through the ecclesial election, reading the heart.

The solemn prayer was publicly pronounced: "*Thou, Lord, Knower of all hearts, make clear which one of these two Thou hast selected to take the position of this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place*.*"

With that prayer ringing in their ears, and deeply conscious of the tremendous responsibility to choose according to divine principles, they gave forth their lots, appointments, or votes. The majority decided in favour of Matthias; and, accordingly, he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

The Method Of Selection

It is sometimes suggested that Peter was wrong in urging that the number of the apostles be then completed, and that it was Christ's intention to do so when he appointed Paul.

But such reasoning is not valid. Most likely this matter had been discussed with the Lord before he ascended into heaven, and this procedure had then been decided upon to impress the disciples with their individual responsibility, and the power of prayer. Further, Peter based his action upon the teaching of the Psalm which instructed that Judas' office should be occupied by another. Finally, the appointment was endorsed by Heaven, for Matthias received the full power of the Holy Spirit in common with the other apostles (Acts 2:3), and was numbered with them in subsequent transactions (ch. 6:2).

** Prophecy required a traitor who would betray the Lord to deliver him into the hands of his enemies. Judas selected that place of a traitor as his own.*

How was this appointment decided? Was it by lot as in Old Testament times, or by vote? In ancient times, the lot was decided with the aid of the breastplate of the high priest, but that was not available to the apostles. The appointment was by vote of the majority. The record says (Acts 1:26): "*they gave forth their lots,*" in consequence of which, "*the lot fell upon Matthias.*" The expression "their lots" refers to the disciples. The meaning of the word (*klerous*) is *lots*, for appointments. Though the phrase has been rendered, "they cast lots for them," the Greek is in accordance with the Authorised Version.

The Holy Spirit Bestowed

And now, with excitement, the apostles waited the coming of Pentecost. Under the Law of Moses, they were taught to "count the days" (Lev. 23:15) from the day after the first sabbath following the Passover, fifty days to Pentecost; and with what feeling they would do so on this occasion, in view of their expectations.

All that was expressed in type under the Law in relation to this most significant day, was about to be fulfilled.

When it arrived, the apostles gathered together in the house with "one accord." It was early in the morning (Acts 2:15), and they knew that before the day was out, the Holy Spirit would be given them.

Suddenly, as they were met together, they were startled by a sound as of a hurricane, caused by the tremendous breathing forth of divine power. It filled the house in which they were sitting. Then as in awe they waited for the next indication, they saw the appearance of fire which divided into twelve tongues, "and it sat upon each of them," separating each one for the work of preaching.

Thus they heard the sound, saw the fire, and felt the influence of the divine presence.



Yahweh is a “consuming fire.” The proclamation of words of inspiration by a prophet was likened to the divine fire burning within him (Psa. 39:3; Jer. 20:9). In the case of the apostles, the people were soon to feel the “heat” of such burning.

Meanwhile, the effect of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles was instantaneous. Their minds were supernaturally enlivened in the things of God. They found that they could speak readily and with fluency, as had been promised them (Mat. 10:19-20; Mk. 16:17). Their memory was increased, so that they quickly recalled Yahweh’s revelation in the Scriptures, or incidents and teachings from the life of the Master (Jn. 14:26).

In addition, they found that they could speak foreign languages without having learned them. The days of earnest prayer to which they had given themselves leading to Pentecost (Acts 1:14), found their fruit in the remarkable experiences they now felt. It was as though they themselves were subjected to the miracle they once saw the Lord perform upon a deaf and dumb man, whose “ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, so that he spake plain” (Mk. 7:35).

They did likewise in the upper room in Jerusalem. They sensed the influence of the Holy Spirit surging through their bodies, and felt fully equipped for the work of preaching. The time had come for them to go forth and publicly witness to the risen Christ.

THE SUICIDE OF JUDAS

Reference is made to this sad incident in the midst of Peter’s speech (Acts 1:18-19), but apparently it did not form part of his discourse. Thus, in the Revised Version, and other translations, these two verses are in parenthesis, forming an explanatory note to what Peter was saying.

It is thought by some that the record in Acts contradicts that in Matthew, for Acts represents Judas as purchasing a field “with the reward of iniquity” (ch. 1:18), whereas Matthew records that he took the betrayal money, and flung it at the feet of the priests (Mat. 27:3-10).

This would appear as a discrepancy if “the reward of iniquity” is interpreted to mean the thirty pieces of silver; but that should not be done. Judas bought the field with the money he had thieved from others, not the betrayal price. John records that “he was a thief” before he betrayed Jesus (Jn.12:6). The death of Judas brought the field he had purchased into the market again, and it then was purchased by the priests as a cemetery for Gentiles (Mat. 27:7-8).

The incident of Judas’ suicidal death is outlined in *The Story Of The Bible*, vol. 7, pp. 365-370.



PENTECOST IN TYPE AND ANTITYPE

The word "Pentecost" signifies fifty, and the Feast was so called because it was held fifty days after the sabbath following the Passover (Lev. 23:16). Special services were conducted on that day which were all appropriate to the significant events that took place when the Holy Spirit was bestowed upon the apostles, and the Truth was proclaimed for the first time in the name of Christ Jesus.

The Feast was also called *The Feast Of Weeks*, and was celebrated under the Law to commemorate the events that took place from the time (the week) Israel passed through the Red Sea until the terms of the Covenant were proclaimed from Mount Horeb. It thus represented:

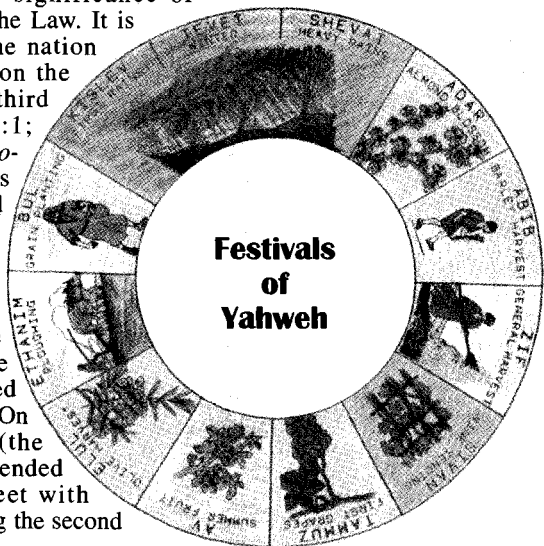
- A period of progression to a new revelation for Israel;
- The need of entering into a covenant relationship with Yahweh.

Under the Law, the Israelites were required to individually “count the days,” from the first day after the sabbath when the Passover was held, until the fiftieth day therefrom.

What significant days they were! What lessons they teach as one meditates upon them! There was first the rejoicing as Israel stood triumphant on the other side of the Red Sea; there was the murmuring at Marah, the comfort of Elim, the complaining at the wilderness of Sin, the giving of manna, the provision of water, the victory over Amalek, and onwards to the proclamation of the Covenant at Horeb.

What significant days were those from Passover to Pentecost for the apostles! First the rejoicing at the resurrection of Christ and the victory it proclaimed over sin and death; then the illumination of the mind in the things of Yahweh; finally the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, and the proclamation of the terms of the New Covenant in the name of Christ Jesus.

Consider the significance of Pentecost under the Law. It is computed that the nation arrived at Sinai on the first day of the third month (Exo. 19:1; see *Expositor: Exodus*). This was what we would call a Monday, and the forty-fourth day after Sabbath when the initial sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest was waved (Lev. 23:10, 15). On the next day (the 45th), Moses ascended the mount to meet with Yahweh, this being the second



day of the month (Exo. 19:3); the following day (the 46th) he returned to receive the people's reply (Exo. 19:7). On the fourth day of the month (47th) he made the second ascent (Exo. 19:8), at which time he was commanded to institute a three days' preparation, after which, on the third day later (50th), the revelation was given (Exo. 19:11) which proclaimed the basis of the covenant that Yahweh made with the people (Exo. 20:1-17; Deu. 4:13-14).

Now, on Pentecost immediately following the resurrection of the Lord, the terms of the New Covenant were proclaimed to the people in the name of Christ Jesus.

The "counting of the days" leading to Pentecost was an individual requirement, and designed to impress all true Israelites with their personal responsibility to Yahweh. One Jewish commentator has stated: "We count the days that pass since the preceding festival, just as one who expects his most intimate friend on a certain day, counts the days and even the hours. This is the reason why we count the days between the anniversary of our departure from Egypt, and the anniversary of the Law-giving. The latter was the aim and object of the exodus from Egypt."

Thus, the deliverance from bondage was not an end in itself; it was the prelude to Sinai (Exo. 3:12). Liberty without Law is Licence, and is not good for flesh.

Apostolic Preaching Typed By The Law

There were special ordinances of service and of sacrifice to be observed on the day of Pentecost which foreshadowed the proclamation of the Truth by the apostles.

For example, on the first day of the week following the sabbath after Passover, "a sheaf of the firstfruits" of the harvest was waved before Yahweh (Lev. 23:10-11). This beginning of the "firstfruits of the harvest" pointed forward to the Lord Jesus, who rose to life and renewed activity before Yahweh, on the first day of the week following the Passover.

Fifty days later, a further offering was made. This time it comprised "two wave loaves" "baked with leaven" as the "firstfruits unto Yahweh" (Lev. 23:17). As the single sheaf represented the Lord Jesus, the two wave loaves represented the Christ community. They are shown "with leaven" because they are conscious of sin; and they are represented as two, because they are drawn from the two great families of the human race: Jews and Gentiles.

In addition, a number of animals were also offered. They were, in order:

- 7 Lambs — Representing the fulness of the covenant.
- 1 Bullock — Labour to be devoted to Yahweh.
- 2 Rams — All strength to be given to Him. The two rams represented Jew and Gentile, so that the sacrifices showed in sequence that the ratified covenant (7 lambs) which enables a man to devote his labour to

Yahweh (the bullock), will be open to the two great families of the human race who shall give their strength or their chief ones (the rams) to Him.

- 1 Goat — The sin offering, needful because all have sinned.
- 2 Lambs — For a peace offering, showing that both Jew and Gentile can be brought into fellowship with Yahweh.

Israel also was instructed that no servile work (slave labour) should be done on that day, for it was a day that commemorated deliverance from such labour. Finally, that it should be a statute for ever in their dwellings (Lev. 23:21) — pointing to the hope of permanent rest in the Land of Promise.

The antitype of all this was manifested on that day of Pentecost when the apostles proclaimed the Truth. They set before the people the fulness of the covenant of Yahweh (7 Lambs); they called upon them to labour in His service (Bullock); they exhorted the people to give their strength unto Him (Rams); they directed attention to the true sin offering (Goat); and they laid down the principles of divine fellowship (Lambs for peace offering).

All this is expressed in Peter's address given on the day of Pentecost, even though, for the moment, even the apostles did not fully comprehend that the New Covenant was open to both Jews and Gentiles on terms of complete equality. This was soon to be made apparent to them.

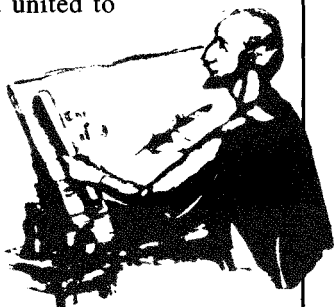
Meanwhile, in the celebration of the Festival of Pentecost, there were set forth the very principles of preaching which the apostles took upon their lips once the Holy Spirit had been given them.

THE UNITY OF THE EARLY ECCLESIA

This was stressed by the use of the phrase: "with one accord" (Acts 4:24). The Greek word is *homothumadon* — from *homos*, same; and *thumos*, mind; thus, "with united mind." The united mind of the brethren forged a united ecclesia. They were found united in prayer (ch. 1:14), worship (ch. 2:1, 46), thanksgiving (ch. 4:24), witnessing (ch. 5:12), and purpose (ch. 15:25).

The word is also used of the world in its united opposition to the ecclesia. The world united to stone Stephen (ch. 7:57), in seeking the support of the persecuting Herod (ch. 12:20), in attempting to silence Paul (ch. 18:12).

As both parties were united, the one against the other, a clash became inevitable, particularly as the hatred of the world hardened, and persecution became more acute.





Great number of pilgrims move toward Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. In the photograph families arrange themselves into processional order on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, the road upon which the Master travelled "six days before the passover (Jn. 12:1), and the day before his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Chapter 3

PREACHING IN JERUSALEM

(Acts 2:5 to 7:60)

The Lord Jesus had instructed the apostles to begin witnessing unto him in Jerusalem, afterwards in all Judea, then in Samaria, and finally unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). Immediately after the preparation was complete, the preaching commenced. Jerusalem became the scene of this amazing beginning. The account records a series of "firsts." There was the first impression (Acts 2:5-13), the first message (vv. 14-47), the first response (ch. 3:1-11), the first opposition (chs. 3:12 to 4:4), the first defence (vv. 5-12), the first deliverance (vv. 13-22), the first thanksgiving (vv. 23-31), the first love and unity (vv. 32-37), the first discipline (ch. 5:1-11), and so forth. At first the message was heard with curiosity, but this soon gave way to anger, then bitter opposition, leading to the death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Nevertheless, tremendous success attended the efforts of the apostles, and thousands were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THOUSANDS of people had crowded into Jerusalem, from all parts of the world, to celebrate Pentecost. They were "devout" in their religious convictions, for they held their beliefs firmly (Gr. *eulabes*), and were not easily swayed.

The First Impressions (Acts 2:5-13) The size and religious character of the crowds provided an admirable opportunity of presenting the Gospel message in the name of the crucified but risen Christ. Accordingly, the apostles went forth, mixed with the people with the purpose of placing these truths before them. Though they proclaimed one message,* it was expressed in different languages. The people swarmed together to listen, and were amazed to hear the strange doctrine proclaimed in each of the languages of the countries from whence they had come. As they hearkened to the miracle, they commented one to the other: "Behold, those men are ignorant Galileans! How is it, then, that we each hear them in our native speech in which we were born? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers of Mesopotamia, of Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus,

* This is suggested by the Greek form of the words, as they are rendered in the margin of the A.V. The Greek word φωνή, "phone" in the singular (v. 6, "noised abroad") suggests that the people heard the apostles proclaim the same message, although in different languages.

and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs — we hear them expounding in our own languages the wonderful works of God!"

It is obvious that this was not a babbling in some unknown tongue or jargon, but in the native languages used by the worshippers from foreign parts, as they could all understand what was being said. It was not the strange unintelligible babble that is often heard in modern Pentecostal gatherings.

The people were amazed and at a loss to explain the miracle.

"What does it mean?" some asked.

Others tried to ridicule it, unwilling to heed its message.

"They have had too much new wine," they sneered.

The First Message (Acts 2:14-36)

The people now were gathered together in one huge crowd, providing the opportunity for the apostles to outline the gospel message to the public. Peter seized it, instantly assuming the leadership over the other apostles.

Standing up, and raising his voice so that all could hear, he delivered the first recorded address in which the Gospel was publicly proclaimed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. His companions must have wondered at the skill and tact by which he presented the glorious truths he set before the people. It was so unlike the impetuous Peter of previous days; he had matured beyond all measure.

"Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem," he commenced. "You should all understand this, so take note of what I say. These men are not drunk as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning; but this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'It will be in the last days, says God, that I shall pour out My Spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy and your youths will see visions; your elders shall dream dreams, and on My bondservants and My bondmaids I shall in those days pour out My Spirit and they will prophesy...'"

Thus the first proclamation of the Gospel was based upon fulfilling Bible prophecy. The manifestation of the Spirit through the apostles was a current "sign of the times," and was exploited by Peter to that end. It is obvious from the record in Joel, that there were to be two outpourings of Spirit: one in the apostles' days and the other at the second advent of the Lord. Thus Joel declared: "Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in Yahweh your God: for He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month" (Joel 2:23).

The expression, “the former rain moderately,” can be rendered “a teacher of righteousness” (see margin), and is thus a prophecy of the coming of the Lord Jesus. Joel declared that this Teacher “would cause to come down for you the rain,” which is figurative of the Holy Spirit. In fulfilment thereof, the Lord Jesus promised to send the Comforter, or Holy Spirit, to the apostles (John 14:26).

But Joel taught that there were to be two outpourings of Spirit, one more abundant than the other, but both manifested in the first month; or month of Abib. That is the month when normally the spring rains fall, and the Passover is celebrated, and therefore speaks of deliverance.

The fact that both rains are represented as falling in the same month (though separated by time) shows that literal rain is not referred to, and that this section of the prophecy should be linked with that which speaks of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Yet with this promise of hope, there is also an ominous note in Joel’s prophecy, and Peter warned his listeners: “And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of Yahweh come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Yahweh shall be saved” (Acts 2:19-21).

These words from Joel speak of national judgment upon Israel. The “heaven” or government, and “earth” or nation, would become as the sacrifice on the altar of Ariel, the fire-hearth of Jerusalem. Blood speaks of slaying; fire points to the means of burnt offering; and vapour of smoke relates to all that is left after the



consumption. In the terrible judgments about to be poured out upon the government and people of Judah, Peter warned that Yahweh would be vindicated, and only those who called upon His name would be saved therefrom.

There is obviously a double application to the prophecy of Joel: first, to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70, prior to which the first outpouring of the Spirit took place; and second, to the future when all nations shall be gathered there to war (Joel 3), prior to which there will be a more abundant outpouring of Spirit, in the bestowal of divine nature upon the approved. Those who accepted the teaching of Peter then would be saved from the destruction that would involve the nation in AD70; and will find their hopes fulfilled in the resurrection to immortality prior to the future Day of Yahweh, when He will be vindicated again at Jerusalem, then in the sight of all nations.

These words of Peter completed the first part of his address. It was specifically addressed to the local inhabitants (“men of Judea, and all that dwell at Jerusalem” — v. 14), refuting the mocking claim that the

apostles were drunk, and warning the people of the imminent judgment to be poured out upon the city and land, calling upon them to accept the way of salvation.

**Second Portion:
The Wonderful
Works Of God
(vv. 22-36)**

Peter probably paused at this point to allow his words to sink into the minds of the people. But there was no comment from the crowd. They were familiar with the prophecy of Joel, and could appreciate the note of

urgent warning in the apostle's exposition. He now addressed all, including those visitors from afar: "*Ye men of Israel, hear these words,*" he commenced. "*Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know: him, being delivered*

Peter's First Address:

**CURRENT EVENTS IN THE
LIGHT OF BIBLE PROPHECY**

This could well form the title of Peter's Pentecostal address recorded in Acts 2:14-36. The following provides a summary of the headings under which he spoke:

- Current events fulfilled in Bible prophecy — vv. 14-18.
- Bible prophecy indicated an impending and devastating crisis — vv. 19-20.
- There is opportunity for personal salvation — v. 21.
- Jesus, as the manifestation of God in Israel, died a sacrificial death — vv. 22-23.
- He rose from the dead revealing the way of life — vv. 24, 28.
- This fulfilled Bible prophecy — vv. 25-28.
- Prophecy requires that he who rose from the dead will reign on David's throne — vv. 29-32.
- Prophecy required that he ascend into heaven until the time of his return — vv. 33-35.
- Salvation is only possible through Jesus Christ — v. 36.
- It requires a change of mind, and baptism into the name of Jesus Christ — v. 38.
- There is an urgent need for individual initiative to grasp the way of salvation — v. 40.

Peter taught by implication: • the mortality of man (vv. 27, 31, 34); • the hope of life through resurrection (vv. 28, 32, 34); • that Jesus did not pre-exist (v. 30); • that he was subordinate to the Father (vv. 32, 33, 34, 36); • that he is to return to reign (vv. 30, 35, 36).

The "plan" of Peter's address would make an excellent public address today. We are also living in times of impending crisis, when there exists an urgent need for folk to "save themselves from this untoward generation."

by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it..."

Many of the visitors from afar, both priests and elders, would have just celebrated Passover in Jerusalem, and therefore would be familiar with the events connected with the crucifixion of the Lord nearly two months earlier. They would recall the amazing incidents that had troubled the leaders of the nation: the unusual period of darkness, the terrible earthquake, the awful tearing asunder of the temple veil. Then there was the report that the tomb of Jesus had been found empty three days after he had been placed therein, and the scandal of the priests bribing the soldiers to say that his disciples had stolen the body away!

These things had been public knowledge (Mat. 28:15), and though much of what had then happened had begun to fade from the memory of the people, Peter's address would have revived it once again.

They considered his words.

He presented to their attention Jesus of despised Nazareth (Jn. 1:46), whom, he declared, God approved, or "pointed out" (as the Greek word *αποδεικνυμι*, *apodeiknumi*, in Acts 2:22 signifies) by the miracles and wonders that He performed through him.

They may have remembered some of the miracles. In any case, there was food for thought in the teaching of the apostle. Teaching, we might add, that is as far divided from that of modern Christendom as it could possibly be! There was no reference to the Trinity. Instead, he presented Jesus of a despised city, a man whom God elevated.

And notice his explanation of the atonement. Though the Jewish people, in the wickedness of their hearts, willingly crucified the Lord, Peter taught that it had been also by divine foreknowledge and purpose. In other words, God used the circumstances of a hard-hearted nation to bring to pass His purpose to redeem a people worth saving.

Jesus was completely sinless, and because of that, he had been brought again from the dead, for "it was not possible" that death could permanently hold enslaved such a righteous man.

Why not?

Because Yahweh is just, and therefore could not permit any such injustice (see Rom. 3:25).

Having laid all this as a foundation, Peter proceeded to give it scriptural backing. He continued: "*For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the LORD always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh shall rest in hope: because Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine*



"His sepulchre is with us unto this day." The so-called Tomb of David in Jerusalem. The graves seen in the foreground of this photograph belong to Greek, Latin, and Armenian cemeteries.

Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; Thou shalt make me full of joy with Thy countenance..."

Peter was quoting from Psalm 16:8-11.

Did the Psalm relate to David?

No, declared Peter, that would be impossible: *"David is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day!"*

That was true; it could not be successfully refuted. Peter's hearers could visit the sepulchre if they desired and see the concrete proof that those words did not relate to David.

Peter enforced his proof by a further reference to Psalm 132:11. He declared that David: *"...being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in the grave, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses."*

There was no disputing the logic of Peter's reasoning, based on the references he advanced. Did that mean that the reports that circulated throughout Jerusalem nearly two months earlier, of Jesus being raised from the dead, were true?

The apostles boldly stood up as witnesses of the fact, and supported the prophetic scriptures to prove it!

Peter now advanced a further scripture for their consideration. He declared: *"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has shed forth this, which you now see and hear."*

The minds of his listeners would revert to Isaiah 52:13: *"Behold, My servant... shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high."* Certainly Scripture did speak of the Messiah being exalted; certainly it was a miracle that each could hear in his native tongue the discourses that had been earlier proclaimed by all the apostles. Thus, by appeal to Scripture, evidence, and logic, Peter drove his points home. Though he had claimed that Jesus who had been crucified as a criminal was actually the risen Messiah, the crowds before him remained listening in silence.

Then, with superb judgment, Peter advanced the very scripture with which the Lord himself had refuted the Jewish leaders: Psalm 110 (see Mat. 22:41-46): *"For David is not ascended into the heavens; but he said himself: 'Yahweh said unto my Lord [Adon], Sit thou on My right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool'."*

This was well recognised as a Messianic Psalm. But never, in the countless times that the Jews had read it, had it been used with such stunning force. It obviously taught that Messiah had to ascend into heaven; that he would have enemies who had to be crushed; and that he would return again to the earth to rule thereon. Certainly the facts

fitted the case of this Jesus of Nazareth, who, according to his disciples, had risen from the grave and ascended into heaven!

And whilst the Jews pondered on the reasoning of Peter, they heard him by a skilful selection of Scripture reasoned with devastating logic: *"Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ!"*

Christ's resurrection confirmed his authority and status (Rom. 1:3-4). He had been "christed" at birth, baptism and resurrection. He had been "anointed" as prophet, priest and king. He had been "made" Lord and Christ, and certainly not the second person of a Trinity as Christendom today teaches. Indeed, Jesus Christ had to develop and perfect his character; he did not exist previously as the teaching of the Trinity asserts.

The evidence could not be challenged; the logic could not be faulted. The Jews listening to Peter were forced to succumb to the power of Truth.

The First Response (vv. 37-40)

The people listening to Peter were conscience stricken. They were pierced to the very heart, to the innermost part of their being where the eye cannot penetrate (Heb. 4:12). They felt the power of his words, and appreciated the enormity of the action of their leaders in crucifying the Messiah.

"Men, brethren," they enquired, *"what shall we do?"*

It was the first response to the preaching of the Word in the name of Christ Jesus.

There was but one thing for them to do; and Peter joyfully expressed it: *"Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; for the promise is to you and to your children and to all those far away, as many as the LORD our God may call."*

The word rendered "repent" does not necessarily mean to be sorry, for the people were already conscience-stricken (v. 37); in fact, their sorrow was genuine, and found expression in action. The word Peter used is a translation of *metanoeo*, and is compounded of two words: *meta*, "after," and *noeo* from *nous*, "the mind." It thus signifies to change one's mind and purpose. Peter called upon them to change their minds concerning Jesus, and, accepting him as their Messiah, to act upon it by being baptised for the remission of their past sins.

In addition, he told them, they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and themselves manifest the miracle that they had witnessed the apostles perform that day.

Whilst it is needful that all believers in every age be moved by the power of the Holy Spirit-Word (Jn. 6:63; Eph. 6:17; 1Jn. 5:7) so that

in that sense, they might “walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16), Paul specifically taught that the time would come when the gifts of the Spirit would no longer be available to believers as they were then (1Cor. 13:8), and so he emphasised the need of developing faith, hope and love (v. 13).



Preaching in public 1904

Paul’s comment is obvious when the method of imparting the gifts of the Holy Spirit is considered, for they were given only by the laying on of the hands of the apostles (Acts 8:18; 19:6; 1Tim. 4:14; 2Tim. 1:6). In the absence of a divinely-appointed apostle (for there were apostles not divinely-appointed — see where the word “messenger” is the same as “apostle” in the Greek: Phil. 2:25), these “gifts” could not be imparted. Thus with the death of the last of the apostles, the divinely appointed medium of bestowal of the Holy Spirit was no longer available, and the gifts ceased, as predicted by Paul.

In his address, Peter limited the bestowal of such gifts to three parties: “you,” “your children,” and “all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call” (Acts 2:39).

“You” and “your children,” comprise those Jews listening and their immediate descendants; by “all that are afar off” are meant both Jews and Gentiles scattered abroad to the “uttermost part [*i.e., to Rome; Deu. 28:49*] of the earth.” The apostles had been appointed to convey the message to such (Acts 1:8), though the means whereby this would be done were not then revealed.

At that stage, even Peter did not fully grasp the implications of the words he was using. His comment was based upon the prophecy of Joel 2:32, “Whosoever shall call on the name of Yahweh shall be delivered.” The word “whosoever” in that prophecy shows that the call would not be limited to Israelites, but would extend to Gentiles. Without fully appreciating the implications involved (see Acts 10:28), Peter told his Jewish audience, that the gifts of the Spirit would be made available to Gentiles as well as to the Jews of the diaspora who embraced the Truth; but he also stated that such gifts were limited to that generation: to parents and children.

Meanwhile, he solemnly urged and exhorted the people to accept the Truth, particularly in view of the impending crisis that would soon come upon Judah and Jerusalem, as indicated by the prophet Joel.

"Save yourselves from this perverse generation," he appealed to them.

The First Results
(vv. 41-43)

With this appeal ringing in their ears, the people responded readily. Those who had really been touched with his message sought the baptism offered. No less than three thousand people pressed forward for that purpose, and arrangements were made for their immersion.*

These were given further instructions by the apostles, so that they were firm in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship. And, having been baptised, they attended the meetings of communion where they celebrated the eating of bread and drinking of wine, and engaged in prayer through the mediatorship of the Lord Jesus.

Knowledge of these remarkable doings swept through the city of Jerusalem. People heard of the "wonders and signs" that were done by the apostles, and a general feeling of awe was felt by all.

The First Enthusiasm
(vv. 44-47)

The members of the newly formed ecclesia discovered a glorious unity one with the other that they had never experienced before. They became completely united in objective. Many had come from distant parts, and normally would be returning home after the completion of the festival. But, in view of the revelation that had been given them of the purpose of Yahweh, this was not now felt desirable. It was important, even vital, that they should have their faith consolidated by further instruction before returning to foreign parts, where they would not have the guidance of the apostles to assist them.

Normally, a Jew, when attending the feasts at Jerusalem, would be accommodated by one of his fellow-worshippers of that city; but, of course, those who embraced Christianity, were no longer welcome by such under those circumstances.

Yet new converts experienced a willing hospitality on the part of local fellow-believers. The latter joyfully took them into their homes and invited them to share the necessities of life in common with them. Naturally, this taxed available resources, but with initial enthusiasm brethren willingly sold their surplus possessions and divided the proceeds among those who had need. The heavy strain of caring for visitors by the local brethren was thus relieved, as a communal effort was made of it. This, however, was but a temporary arrangement, and not a permanent requirement of the Truth, and apparently was

* Though the record in Acts declares that "the same day there were added about three thousand souls" (v. 41), it does not necessarily follow that they were all baptised on the same day, but rather, that the fruit of Peter's preaching on that one day resulted in three thousand being added to the ecclesia.

incidental to Jerusalem (see 1Cor. 16:1).

The brethren saw in the Christ a fulfilment of all the ordinances of the Law; they recognised in him one who "magnified the Law and made it honourable" (Isa. 42:21), and therefore, they now visited the temple and participated in its services with proper understanding. They looked beyond the shadows of the Law to the reality of Christ, and with deeper understanding they were able to discern the spiritual principles that the ritual of the Law was intended to convey.

But whilst they attended at the temple for the externals of worship, they realised that the real tabernacle, or dwelling place of Yahweh, was in the hearts of individuals, and that true worship must look beyond the formalism of temple service. So from the temple they returned to where their own gatherings were held,* and there they engaged upon a communal feast that preceded the communion of bread and wine. They were filled with a great joy in their new-found knowledge, and met together with a singleness of purpose to serve Christ.

With hearts charged with love for Yahweh because of the glorious revelation made to them, and the wonderful privileges granted them, they raised their voices in praise to God, entering into the service of study, prayer and singing with the greatest enthusiasm.

Moreover, they retained the favour of people generally. As yet, the full impact of the demands of the Truth was not felt. They did not, at that stage, understand the full requirements of separation and repudiation of evil. This came later. For the moment, the apostles merely pointed out that Christ fulfilled the requirements of the Law, and in order to attain unto the benefits of faith, it was necessary to be baptised into his name. As far as morals were concerned, the Truth had affected them for the better, and this was appreciated by their acquaintances. Later, those very acquaintances would bitterly oppose them, being urged on to do so by their leaders. However, for the time being, the scandal of the stake was not felt, and the bitterness of opposition that they later experienced was yet not apparent. They felt only the benefits of Christ without the pain; though this was soon made evident.

Meanwhile, there was a daily increase in the ecclesia, so that enthusiasm was maintained at a peak.

* Instead of "from house to house" (Acts 2:46) we should read "at home" as in the margin, R.V., Diaglott, etc. The same word, *oikon*, is used also of the tabernacle (Mat. 12:4), and the temple (Lk. 11:51), and here doubtless relates to the dwelling where they held their ecclesial gatherings (see also Acts 5:42). First they partook of what was termed a "love-feast" where all ate together in imitation of the supper eaten by the Lord before communion (Lk. 22:17). Later this practice fell into abuse (1Cor. 11:20-22), and Paul urged that it be discontinued. Communion was taken after supper. Their attendance at the temple shadowed the reality in Christ which they celebrated by the partaking of the bread and wine.

Chapter 4

THE FIRST OUTSTANDING MIRACLE (Acts 3:1-11)

This section of the Acts describes the first recorded miracle, though other “wonders and signs” had been performed by the apostles in the sight of the people (Acts 2:43). The miracle, itself, was of such an outstanding nature as to instantly bring the apostles before the direct notice of the leaders, who could see that these men of faith must soon challenge their authority. This they could not bear, so that Peter’s act of compassion precipitated the first opposition the ecclesia received from the authorities (v. 12 to ch. 4:4). This was followed by the first defence (vv. 5-12), and the first deliverance (vv. 13-22).

IT was the custom of the apostles to visit the temple at appropriate times according to the Jewish feasts established for the people. They now viewed the worship in a new light, recognising that the Lord Jesus was the antitype of all the formalism that they witnessed. They realised that the Law could not justify one unto life eternal, but only condemn inasmuch as mankind are burdened with human nature. In Christ, the temple service revealed a greater spiritual significance than they had previously recognised.

One afternoon, about 3 p.m., Peter and John went together into the temple to pray. It was the time of the burning of incense, and appropriate for that purpose. A great bond of affection existed between the two men, and they enjoyed sharing their spiritual experiences. Before they had been called by Christ, they were in business partnership together (Lk. 5:10), and as disciples of the Lord, they had often associated with him in special duties he called them to perform.



At The Beautiful Gate Of The Temple

The two apostles approached the temple gate called “Beautiful” which gives access to the court beyond. The gate was given this name because of the beauty of its appearance and decorations. It was some fifty cubits high and forty wide, and decorated with silver and gold, as well as with Corinthian brass.

But there was a pathos as well as a beauty about this gate. It was

the place where beggars used to stand, to receive any alms from worshippers more fortunate than they, as they passed through the gate.

Among their number, there was a man over forty years of age (ch. 4:22), well-known to temple visitors, who was lame from birth, and who was daily carried by his friends to the temple, and laid down at this gate in order that he might seek charity from those passing through. He observed Peter and John as they were about to enter the temple, and immediately asked for alms.

As he did so Peter felt the power of the Holy Spirit surging through him, and realised that this was divine guidance to effect a miracle on the man before him. Together with John he turned to the lame man, and concentrated his full gaze upon him.

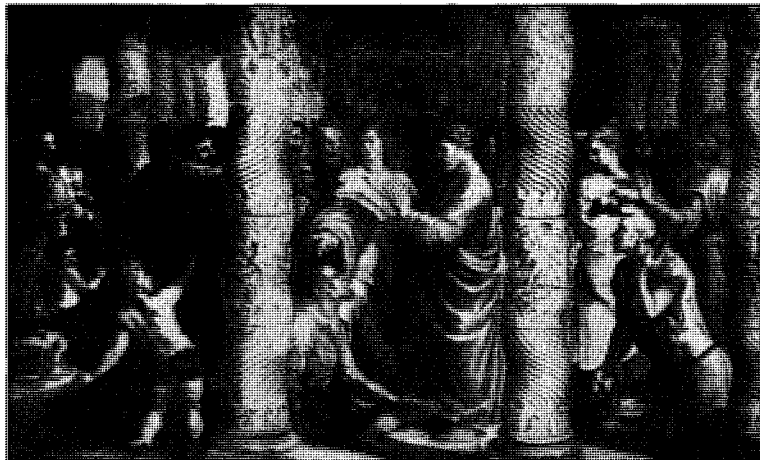
"Look on us," he commanded.

The lame man did so, joyfully. He thought that he was about to be given money. Little did he realise the great boon that he was to receive that day through the mercy of the Father. With simple, direct and powerful words Peter addressed him: *"Silver and gold have I none;"* he declared, *"but such as I have give I you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk!"*

The man listened to him in amazement. What did he mean, "rise up and walk"? How could he possibly do so? Did this man not know that he was lame, and could not walk? Was this stranger mocking him?

But no! Peter stretched forth his right hand, and lifted him up. Instantly the man felt power surging through him. His feet and his ankle bones received strength, and to his amazement, he felt able to walk.

A strange man before him had performed a miracle of healing!



No longer would he have to sit at the gate of the temple, seeking alms of people, humbled before the haughty Pharisees who entered the building for worship. Now his own feet could convey him into the temple where he so often longed to go.

A great joy seized him. He leaped to his feet, and began to walk, immediately making his way into the building, walking, testing the strength of his ankles, and loudly praising God for His goodness.



People saw him, and realising that it was the man who had sat at the gate of the temple for so long begging for money, they were filled with awe and amazement. For a moment they doubted the sight of their eyes, and so followed him as he made his way into the house of God.

Meanwhile, the lame man recognised that Peter and John were the mediums of God's grace to him, and, in gratitude, he embraced them as they made their way into what was called Solomon's porch. This caused a curious crowd of people to gather around. They recognised the lame beggar, and were mystified at what they saw.

Like all miracles, of course, this one had a meaning. The lame man had been caused to "leap like a hart" by the power of God, and this is set forth in the prophetic Scriptures as one of the great signs of Messiah (Isa. 35:6). He had been in that condition for forty years (Acts 4:22), which is the number of probation. In fact, he could represent the nation of Israel, unable to walk in God's way through inherent weakness in the wilderness of probation, and thus in dire need of help. Sadly many in Israel could not perceive their own spiritual lameness, but this man had been rescued from his weakness and strengthened by the power of the apostle.

There was no disputing that the apostles had manifested divine power, and the lame man, as well as the onlookers, realised it.

Chapter 5

THE FIRST OPPOSITION

(Acts 3:12 to 4:4)

This miracle of healing provided an opportunity for again preaching the Truth, and resulted in a further remarkable increase to the Jerusalem Ecclesia. However, this continued success incited the first opposition from the authorities, who were not prepared to allow this new-found community to develop their influence. The section before us can be divided into Peter's address (vv. 12-26) and the opposition by the authorities (ch. 4:1-4).

HE people gathered around the two apostles, tremendously impressed by the miracle of healing they had seen, and with the man who had been lame standing with them. This presented a splendid opportunity to preach the Word, and Peter lost no time in seizing it.

Peter's Address
(Acts 3:12-26)

"Men of Israel, why are you surprised at this?" he began. "And why are you staring at us, as if we had made him walk through our own power or piety? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified His servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and disowned before Pilate, when he had decided to let him go..."

Again the words are significant in view of current beliefs. Obviously, Peter did not subscribe to the erroneous British-Israel theory, for he addressed his Jewish audience as "men of Israel." Nor did he teach the Trinitarian concept of God, for he described the Creator as "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," and the Lord Jesus as His servant.*

In a forthright manner, Peter revealed the enormity of the action of the Jews in crucifying Jesus. They had delivered him up to Pilate, a Gentile, one with whom true Jews would consider hardly worthy of association, and had insisted that he execute Jesus when he, Pilate, was determined to let him go!

* This phrase in the A.V. is rendered: "hath glorified his Son Jesus," but the word "son" in the Greek is υἱός, pais, and signifies a child in descent, or a servant as to condition. Obviously the latter is meant, and so most other translations render it as "His servant Jesus." As the term "servant" is applied to the Lord in heaven, it clearly shows that Peter did not believe in the Trinitarian concept of Christ, but to the man who had come into the world to perform the work of God for the salvation of His people, of whom the lame man was an example.

Even worse, they had condemned one of irreproachable character in favour of a confirmed criminal: *"You denied the Holy and Righteous One and requested that a murderer be granted you. You killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. Yet it is by faith in his name that this man, whom you see and recognise, has been strengthened, and it is through faith in him that the miracle has been performed!"*

Perhaps Peter paused at that point. If he did, there was no answer from the crowd. The people could not refute the power of the miracle that had been performed, nor the indictment of their leaders in the way described.

Whatever the crime of which Jesus may have been accused, there was no justification for the priests delivering him up to a Gentile! If condemnation were justified, the Law was sufficient for it.

So there was no answer to the forthright denunciation of Peter in

Peter's Second Address

CHRIST'S DEATH AND YOUR SALVATION

This important subject was the basis for Peter's address in the court of the temple following the healing of the man born lame (Acts 3). Note its progressive structure, under the following headings:

- The miracle was evidence of Divine Power — v. 12.
- The same power brought Jesus from the dead — v. 13.
- The Jews had murdered the Holy One, the Saviour promised them, but God had raised him from the dead — vv. 14-15.
- The power of his name is shown in the miracle — v. 16.
- The Jews were moved by ignorance in killing Jesus, but God's purpose was nevertheless fulfilled — vv. 17-18.
- They should seek Christ to obtain strength in the forgiveness of sins — v. 19.
- Christ is coming again to restore the kingdom — vv. 20-21.
- He is the prophet predicted by Moses — v. 22.
- He will come with judgment on individuals — v. 23.
- He will fulfil the promises made to Abraham — vv. 24-25.
- Opportunity was given the Jews first, to accept him — v. 26.

Peter taught by implication: • the unity of God (v. 13); • the subordinate status of the Lord Jesus to the Father (vv. 13, 15); • the character of Christ — Holy, Righteous, Author of life (vv. 14-15); • the need of the atonement (v. 18); • the privileged status of Israel (vv. 25-26); • Jews and Israelites were one (v. 25); • the second coming of Christ (vv. 19-20); • the restoration of the kingdom (v. 21); • the coming judgment (v. 23); • the universal extent of Christ's future reign (v. 25).

This could well form the basis of any current address today.

the court of the temple, in the hearing of people, priests and Pharisees.

What a difference this was to the Peter who, two months earlier, had sullenly denied in the court of the high priest's palace that he was a follower of Jesus!

Seeking to win the people to Christ, he continued: *"Now I know, brethren, that you behaved ignorantly just as your leaders did; but God has thus fulfilled what He made known beforehand through the lips of all the prophets, that His Christ was to suffer. Repent and turn about, so that your sins may be wiped away and that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. For He will send Jesus Christ, whom the heaven must receive until the time of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began..."*

Thus Peter warned them that times of refreshment could only come for them by the blotting out of sin, and that required action on their part: a change of mind, and a retracing of their steps (repentance and conversion). This should be done because the very Christ whom they had crucified was to come again.

He warned them of the terrible responsibility that rested upon them if they refused to hearken to the message of Christ: *"Indeed Moses said, 'Yahweh Elohim will raise up from among you a prophet like unto me. Listen to everything he will tell you; for every soul that will not listen to that prophet will be utterly destroyed from among the people.' Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, have likewise foretold of these days. You are the heirs of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, 'And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.' Unto you first God, having raised up His servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities..."*

The opportunity was before them to accept the life-giving message. They could not refute the evidence of their eyes. They could see the man born lame standing with the apostles, a witness to the power manifested, and which the onlookers could not help but acknowledge was divine.

The responsibility rested upon the people. How would they act?

Opposition Of The Authorities

By now a great crowd of people surrounded the two apostles in the court of the temple, all intent upon the words of Peter. It displeased the authorities. They realised that they would have to stop the activities of the new sect, otherwise they would have greater problems on their hands than when they put Jesus to death nearly two months previously.

It grieved them to see that the murder of Jesus had failed to bring

the results anticipated and to have destroyed any influence his disciples might try to assert. Jerusalem had been rife with rumours (Mat. 28:15), and though they had died down over the past few months, the teaching of the new sect would cause them to break out again in a more virulent form. The earthquake at Passover, the resurrection of the saints, the unusual eclipse of the sun, the rent veil in the temple, the empty tomb, the preaching of the resurrection, exercised the minds of the leaders, and troubled them.

And particularly the last.

The high priesthood at the time was in the hands of the Sadducees, with Caiaphas occupying the chief position, and they rejected the doctrine of the resurrection, so that the preaching of Peter was particularly offensive to them.

With the captain of the temple, the priests and Sadducees burst in upon the apostles and arrested them. As it was already evening, they put them in custody until the next day.

So the multitude dispersed, but the preaching had left its mark. Many made their way to the other apostles, and sought further instruction, in consequence of which, the ecclesia in Jerusalem grew to the number of five thousand people.

Peter's Third Address

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST: ITS CERTAINTY AND SIGNIFICANCE (Acts 4:8-12)

This address to the Sanhedrin could well be given the above heading, with the following main points:

- To arrest a person for doing good is unjust — v. 9.
- The miracle was performed in the name of Christ, showing that he lives, therefore his resurrection is a fact — v. 10.
- The risen Christ fulfils the requirements of Bible prophecy — v. 11.
- Those who oppose Christ will perish if they do not accept that truth — v. 12.



Chapter 6

THE FIRST DEFENCE

(Acts 4:5-37)

The official opposition to the apostolic witness gradually hardened. At first the leaders mocked at the apostles (Acts 2:13), then they ordered them not to preach (ch. 4:18), following this they imprisoned them (ch. 5:18), then they were beaten (ch. 5:40), stoned (ch. 7:59), and scattered by bitter persecution (ch. 8:1; 26:10-11). This did not deter the apostles, however. Resolutely they faced their enemies, and their preaching became more determined. As the opposition grew, a battle was fought in which carnal weapons were matched by those of faith and trust, and were defeated.

NEXT day, the council of the Sanhedrin met to consider the problem presented by the preaching of the apostles. It was an august company that gathered together when considered from the standpoint of the flesh, and one well calculated to overawe the humble Galileans.

The Sanhedrin Meets There was **Annas** who still retained the title of high priest, even though he had been deposed in favour of his son-in-law, Caiaphas. There was the unscrupulous **Caiaphas** who, with cold-blooded indifference, had conspired to kill Jesus as the apostles had declared in their addresses. There was **John**, thought to be Rabbi Johanan ben Zaccai, then renowned for his wisdom, and who, later, predicted the destruction of the temple from his interpretation of Zechariah 11:1. There was **Alexander**, probably Alexander Lysimachus, one of the richest Jews of the time, who gave great gifts to the temple, and was in high regard with Agrippa. There were the kindred of the high priest, called elsewhere the chief priests. Finally, there were the rulers, elders and scribes of the Council.

Before this celebrated assembly, the two humble fishermen and healed lame man were brought, and formally asked: "*Through what power or by what name have you done this?*" It was a splendid opportunity to set before the leaders of the nation the power inherent in the Lord Jesus, and Peter grasped the opportunity to do so.

Peter's Defence
(ch. 4:5-12)

Peter felt the power of the Holy Spirit moving him. He saw clearly the issues, and words came freely to him. There was no hesitation,

no fear as he faced those men who would have had no compunction about delivering him up to death; indeed, whom he had witnessed giving Jesus over to death.

Clearly and powerfully his voice rang out: "*Rulers and elders of the people,*" he commenced. "*If today we are being called to account for a good deed to a cripple, by what means he has been cured, then you and all the people of Israel should know that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, through him this man stands before you in sound health. He is 'the stone despised by you the builders, which became the head of the corner.' And there is salvation through no one else; for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*"

It was a bold, fearless declaration of truth, and the Sanhedrin was silenced and taken aback by it. Every word of it was a challenge. The prisoner had become the judge, accusing them of killing their Messiah. Even the name pronounced by the apostle did that: **Jesus Christ of Nazareth**. The name Jesus proclaimed his mission; the title Christ revealed the way in which it was fulfilled; and his identification with Nazareth indicated his humble origin. It was this title that Pilate had put upon the stake on Golgotha that held the crucified Christ (Jn. 19:19).

The Sanhedrin looked nonplussed at the three men standing before them. They marvelled at the boldness of the apostles, and when they perceived that they were Galileans (perhaps by their accent) and that they were unlettered men who had never studied under a rabbi, they were astonished, and recalled that they had been taught by Jesus (Acts 4:13).

They hated them for the boldness of their words, and the fearless manner in which they had accused them of killing Jesus, but with the evidence of such a miracle standing before them, and recalling the other inexplicable happenings in connection with the one they had crucified two months earlier, they could say nothing against them.

They realised, only too well, that to do so would force them to open up the case of Jesus once again, and they knew that there were others, such as Joseph and Nicodemus (now doubtless meeting with the apostles), who would have challenged them most effectively.

The First Deliverance Having arrested the apostles, the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:13-22) had a problem on its hands: what should it do with them? To consider the problem in private, they ordered that the three men be taken from out of the council-chamber whilst they conferred among themselves.

Then they considered what should be done. They were forced to concede that a miracle had been performed; they recognised that this

demonstrated supernatural power, though they doubtless tried to explain it away. But with complete and utter disregard of the consequences, they refused to investigate the truth of the matter.

They openly admitted all this: *"What shall we do to these men?"* they asked. *"For that a notable sign has occurred through them is obvious to all the people of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it."*

Their problem was discussed, and then blind bigotry triumphed. They declared among themselves: *"So that this will not spread further among the people, let us strongly warn them to speak no more to any person about this name!"*

The apostles and healed lame man were brought back into the council chamber, and the decision made known to them.

"We order you not to refer to, or to teach in the name of Jesus," they were commanded.

This threat might have had some effect upon Peter two months earlier, but now he was a changed, courageous man. In amazement, the august company of the Sanhedrin heard words of dignified defiance: *"Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God is for you to judge; as for us, we cannot refrain from telling what we have seen and heard!"*

They considered themselves as the supreme authority amongst the people; a committee to be listened to and obeyed. So many councils of men take to themselves such dominant influence and command, and in so doing deflect from the divine authority of Heaven.

This statement by the apostle Peter amounted to a declaration of war against the powers that be. The council threatened them as to what it would do if they were found defying the order, but the threat had little force, because outside, the people were praising God for what had happened, and the Sanhedrin feared to incite them. Thus it was counselled to release the apostles.

There was no disputing the miracle: the man upon whom it had been performed was known to have been crippled for over forty years. Now he was healed, and that, remarkably. It was a testimony to the power of God vested in His apostles.

The First Thanksgiving (Acts 4:23-31)

After their release, the apostles and the healed man made their way to their companions, to report to them everything that had been done. The remarkable miracle, the bold defence of Peter, the impotence of the Sanhedrin, and the release of those arrested, filled the brethren with joy, and the realisation that Yahweh overshadowed their lives. They unitedly raised their voices in adoration to Him, thanking Him for His protection.

"Sovereign Lord, Who hast made heaven, earth and sea, and all that in them is; Who by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said,

Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against Yahweh and against His Christ.

"For they have actually gathered in this city against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, all doing what Thy hand and Thy purpose determined before should take place.

"And now, Yahweh, notice their threats and endow thy bond-servants, that with all fearlessness they may speak Thy Word as Thou reachest out Thy hand to heal and to work signs and wonders through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus."

Even as the fervent prayer was being spoken (v. 31; Diaglott), and as each felt the power of the words uttered, they received tangible evidence of the presence of God with the meeting. The place where they were gathered together was shaken by an earthquake; and each was moved by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that they had a desire to go forth and preach the Word with that boldness that they had requested in their prayer.

Thus they experienced a fulfilment of the words of Isaiah 65:24, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

The apostles used a most significant title for God in this prayer: The Greek δεσποτης, *Despotes*, rendered "Lord" in Acts 4:24. It signifies Owner, Ruler, Master, Lord, King, or Sovereign, one possessing absolute power over his subjects. It is used elsewhere for God (Lk. 2:29; Jude 4; Rev. 6:10); for Christ (2Pet. 2:1); for masters (1Tim. 6:1-2; 2Tim. 2:21; Tit. 2:9; 1Pet. 2:18).

Its use in this prayer is significant, testifying that Yahweh is in absolute control, and all are subject unto Him. In the deliverance of

PSALM 2 AS USED IN THE N.T.

In quoting Psalm 2 in their prayer, the brethren applied it to the first advent of the Lord, though its final and complete application is to the second advent, as the context indubitably shows. The combined opposition of Jew and Gentile at the crucifixion of the Lord foreshadowed that resistance to his rule that may be expected at his second advent.

The Psalm is frequently quoted in the New Testament, to emphasise the following truths:

- The provision of a Son — Acts 13:33.
- The greatness of his status — Heb. 1:5.
- The glory of his priesthood — Heb. 5:5.
- His relationship to the Father — Mat. 3:17; Mk. 9:7.
- The tragedy of opposition to him — Acts 4:27.

Peter and John there was an example of this regal sovereignty such as is expressed in Psa. 47:2; 95:3; 98:6.

The title is expressive of Yahweh's unlimited power over all creation, and therefore is found in correct context in this prayer.

The early believers recognised the reality of His power and control, and felt immeasurably strengthened and comforted by it.

The First Love And Unity (Acts 4:32-37) This early opposition that the ecclesia experienced, only served to make more apparent the unity that they enjoyed one with the other. They drew more closely together in the bonds of fellowship and love, as they experienced the growing hostility of those about them. They were "of one heart and of one soul," manifesting the greatest affection and unity, figuratively thinking and breathing as one.

Meanwhile, the apostles continued to fearlessly proclaim the Word of God, particularly emphasising the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. All members of the ecclesia felt the power of their preaching, and rejoiced in the divine favour shown toward them in that they had been called to such a position of privilege.

With the blessing of Yahweh, the fearlessness of the preaching brought results. It had already attracted the attention of the world without (ch. 1:10-13; 4:13); it was something for which the brethren had prayed (v. 29); it was typical of Paul's approach once he commenced these labours (ch. 9:27); it was a commendable feature of the attitude of Apollos (ch. 18:26); and it was the manner of Gospel proclamation that Paul advocated should be manifested by the Gentile ecclesias once they were established (Eph. 3:12; Phil. 1:20; 1Tim. 3:13).

The love and unity, characteristic of the ecclesia, were manifested both in word and deed. With the heavy influx of converts, the available resources of the brethren were taxed to the utmost, for many were from distant parts. The problem was relieved by more brethren voluntarily selling their superfluous possessions*, and pooling the proceeds to assist accommodating those from afar, or those in need.

The money was placed at the feet of the apostles, who made distribution according as each had need.

An outstanding example of great generosity was shown by one

* Note the plural: "houses or lands" (Acts 4:34). Those who possessed such, disposed of surplus property, whilst retaining that needful for their personal use (Acts 12:12). The Greek gives Acts 4:34 in the continuous present tense, so that the Diaglott renders: "they were constantly selling and bringing the value." Brethren continued to do this as the need remained. This was a temporary arrangement, made necessary by the unusual circumstances of a rapidly growing ecclesia of strangers to the city, and the boycott the Jews would then have exercised against any who joined the new sect, particularly as the official attitude toward it hardened.

disciple, a Levite, whose name was Joseph (Increaser). He was also called Barnabas, or the *Son of Consolation*, or *Prophecy*. He was a visitor to Jerusalem, being a native of Cyprus. Normally, he would be exempt from the local responsibility, but instead, he threw in his lot with the ecclesia. He had land, but he sold it, and gave the proceeds to the apostles for them to do as they saw need.

Unfortunately, this act of liberality, was followed by one of gross deception from another party, that cast a shadow over the early ecclesia, and revealed that God was not to be trifled with.

A Dictionary Of Personalities In The New Testament

INTRODUCTION

In setting forth the life of the Lord in volumes 6 and 7, we provided brief biographical notes of the various characters associated with him and we have done the same with regard to those referred to in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. The canvas is much more crowded than is the case with the Gospels, and therefore we must limit our comments regarding those referred to therein. But many a powerful lesson is revealed by considering the lives of humble men and women who appear in the narrative for a brief moment, and then disappear from the scene; to one day be revived from the dust to stand before the Lord. We trust that these brief notes will help to introduce many of these lesser characters to the reader. We will not include any to whom reference is made in the Gospels as they have already been considered in the previous volumes of *The Story Of The Bible*.

ACHAICUS: THE ENQUIRER

His name means, *Belonging To Achaia*, so that he was evidently a native of the province of which Corinth was a prominent city. He was one of a deputation of three brethren (1Cor. 16:17) from Corinth who visited Paul in Ephesus bearing a communication, possibly arising out of a previous letter which Paul had sent to the ecclesia, the contents of which had evidently been misunderstood (1Cor. 5:9-11). They brought specific questions which Paul proceeded to answer (1Cor. 7:1). Queries (whether contained in the letter from Corinth, or obtained by questioning his visitors — see 1Cor. 15:35) dealt with the subjects of the Spirit gifts, ecclesial order, and doctrinal problems. In consequence of this, what is known as the *First Epistle to the Corinthians* was written. Thus the enquiries of Achaicus and his companions have greatly enriched every ecclesia since.

AENEAS: THE PALSIED

This brother dwelt at Lydda, now called Lod (the international air terminal in Israel), and bore the Greek name of Aeneas which signifies *Praise*. For eight long, weary years, he had lain on a bed of pain, afflicted with the severe malady of palsy. But Peter healed him, and the notable miracle caused many in Lydda to turn to the Lord (Acts 9:33-34).

Chapter 7

THE FIRST APOSTOLIC DISCIPLINE (Acts 5:1-11)

The early chapters of Acts record the wonderful enthusiasm of the newly formed ecclesia in Jerusalem as it witnessed the power of apostolic testimony in word and miracle. In Chapter 5, however, the first discordant note is heard. It is introduced by the interjection, "But..." (v. 1), which appears like a startling wake-up call rousing from a state of sweet fellowship and continuous triumph of the Truth. The challenges from without had been expected, and were met in faith and courage; but those from within were more deadly: they threatened the foundations of unity, love and mutual trust upon which the ecclesia was built. The utmost disapproval had to be shown toward such. Thus the first discipline was exercised as the punishment for the first hypocrisy. Under cover of a righteous act, Ananias and Sapphira practised a lie — and that against the Holy Spirit! To have permitted this to go unpunished would have been tragic for the ecclesia, for it would suggest that sin could succeed. The discipline was terrible, but salutary, and constituted a warning to all believers, revealing that God is not mocked; that He can read the hearts. The rapidly increasing ecclesia was thus shown that the things of God must not be treated lightly.

AMONG the members of the newly formed ecclesia in Jerusalem were a married couple named Ananias and Sapphira. Their names are honoured ones, for Ananias signifies *Yahweh Hath Been Gracious*, and Sapphira is derived from *Sapphire*, a lovely blue gem that speaks of divine righteousness.

Unfortunately this couple did not honour the names they bore, nor the wonderful truth that they had espoused.

The Terrible Sin And Punishment Of Ananias And Sapphira

They took note of the manner in which many of the disciples were freely donating their surplus material possessions into a common fund for the relief of others, and they coveted for themselves some of the praise that these liberal-minded brethren received.

At the same time, they did not want to give away too much! They, therefore, schemed to deceive the apostles who were receiving such gifts. They sold a property that they possessed, and retaining a portion of it, Ananias took the balance to the apostles, pretending that it

represented the whole proceeds of the sale.

There was no compulsion exercised upon them to either sell the property or to give up all the proceeds, therefore the pretence was solely prompted by their desire to gain the praise of men.

They were prepared to lie to God in word and action to gain that!

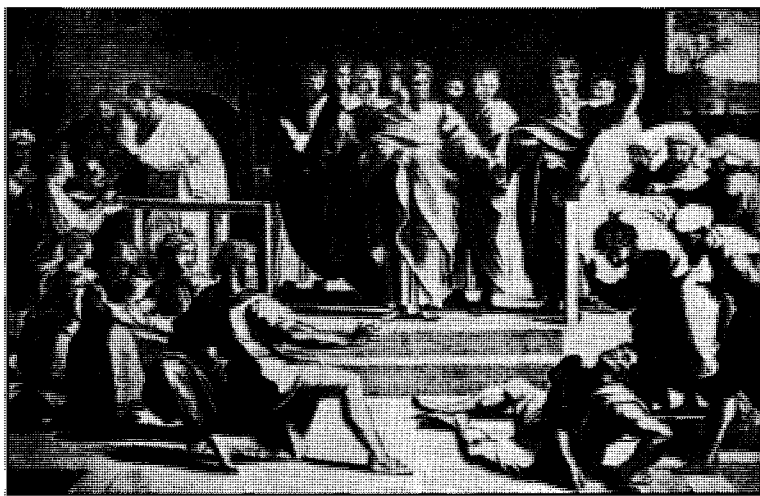
They should have known better; at least they should have recognised that the apostles represented Christ, that they possessed the Spirit of God, and one cannot lie to God with impunity.

The apostles were gathered together in a house in Jerusalem, and there Ananias brought his gift. Peter occupied the pre-eminent position among them, and as Ananias stood before him, he gave him his earnest attention.

Peter was appalled by what he saw. By the power of the Spirit, he could read the heart of Ananias as Elisha had done that of Gehazi (2Kgs. 5:25). And like Elisha with regard to Gehazi, Peter knew that Ananias was practising deceit. Gehazi was punished with leprosy: a living death; Ananias received death itself.

Peter spoke to him: *"Ananias, why has Satan* filled your heart to deceive the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whilst it remained, was it not your own to do with as you liked? And after it was sold, was it not in your power to give what you would? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied unto men, but unto God!"*

Ananias listened to this rebuke with fear. What amazing power



** The "satan" referred to by Peter was the covetous and deceitful desire manifested by the guilty couple. This is shown by Peter's subsequent words: "You have conceived this thing in your heart" (v. 4); "You have agreed together" (v. 9). See James 1:14-15.*

these apostles had that they could read the thoughts of men! He now realised that all this scheming was in vain. Instead of praise, he would not only lose the money he had donated, but would be discredited before all his brethren. Words failed him, as he felt the disapproving eyes of all those assembled there fixed upon him. Then, to their consternation, he silently fell down dead.

A hush of fear came over the assembled gathering. Each one felt the disgrace of Ananias' action personally; and, not the least, Peter himself. Had he not himself, earlier in his life, denied the Lord, and yet received mercy? How terrible that he should be the channel of such dire punishment to Ananias!

Yet the circumstances were quite different. Peter had denied his Lord when he had been taken off his guard, and brought under extreme pressure; Ananias and Sapphira had premeditated their sin. Mercy was extended to Peter because God's justice demands that He take into account all such circumstances; but no excuse was justifiable for Ananias, the full measure of his infamy was obvious to all. At the command of Peter,* some of the young brethren present, covered Ananias with a shroud, carried him out and buried him.

Meanwhile, Sapphira awaited the return of her husband at home. Three hours passed, and he had not returned. She began to wonder what had happened to him. Finally, she also made her way to the house in Jerusalem, and likewise stood before Peter. She enquired as to the whereabouts of her husband.

Sadly and solemnly Peter addressed her, ignoring her question for the moment. "Tell me," he asked, "Did you sell the land for so much?"



** We suggest this because, under normal circumstances, Sapphira would have first been informed of the tragedy.*

"Yes, that was all we sold it for," she replied.

It was a premeditated, blatant lie, proclaimed in the name of God as an act of charity, and designed to deceive the apostles!

Sternly Peter now addressed her: *"How could you possibly agree together to put to the test the Spirit of the Lord?"* he began. *"Hearken, there are the footsteps of the men who have buried your husband! They are at the door, and they will carry you out as well."*

Like her husband before her, the fear-stricken woman fell down in a faint and died. Thus, as the young brethren returned from burying Ananias, they found Sapphira also dead; and carrying her out, they buried her beside her husband.

It was a just end to an act of gross deception. It shows how that even a good work can become evil when the motive dictating it is wrong. The deadly sins of Ananias and Sapphira were those of pride and hypocrisy. They craved the good opinion of their fellows, and pretended to have given all when, in fact, they had but given little. The dire punishment meted out to them constituted a warning to the whole ecclesia to avoid such actions.

The selling of houses and lands was not a compulsory act, but a voluntary sacrifice. The property belonged to the individuals; they might claim it, they might part with it, they might keep a portion of the proceeds of the sale: all that was wanted from them was the truth of their sacrifice, the reality of the offering. Ananias and Sapphira claimed that they were doing more for God than they did, and for this they died.

But we must not regard Ananias as a liar two thousand years ago; Ananias is the liar of today, and is present in every ecclesia. He represents those who say they have done all they can do, when they know that their statement is a lie. No man has done all he can do. Are we then all guilty before God in that respect? Not if we are honest with God. Not if we freely recognise the limitations of our service, of our sacrifices. But if we claim before men that we are doing more than we are, merely to gain their self-respect, let us beware lest the fate of Ananias and Sapphira ultimately become our fate when we meet the Lord at the Judgment Seat.

Sapphira was "buried by her husband" (Acts 5:10). They were laid side by side in a common grave. What a strange example of unity! One in marriage, one in their Jewish religion, one in their conversion to the faith of Christ, one in their hypocrisy, one in their death, one in their common grave, one in the undying record of guilt in the Book which is read by those in every nation under heaven, and one in the day of judgment yet to dawn.

As brethren and sisters pondered the circumstances of this couple they were sombered with awe. They might well have considered the Scripture that states: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Let us not neglect it.

Chapter 8

THE FIRST PERSECUTION

(Acts 5:12-42)

Despite the setback occasioned by the deception and tragic death of Ananias and Sapphira, the ecclesia in Jerusalem rapidly increased in numbers. Many miracles were performed by the apostles to the amazement of all. Gradually, Peter found himself forced to the forefront of apostolic activities, and accepted as the leader of the ecclesia. Reports were circulated of special miracles performed by him, and this drew even greater attention to his work. It was obvious to most people that the apostles possessed remarkable powers. Meanwhile, the Jewish authorities became deeply concerned at the keen interest generated by the new teaching. They realised that they had to do something to hold it in check, otherwise they would lose all their influence. Accordingly, they launched what we have called the "first persecution."

 **THE** authority of the apostles, and the cause of the Truth, had both been advanced by the stern discipline meted out to Ananias and Sapphira. Believers realised that they had to be honest with God, and outsiders who heard of it, recognised that divine power was with the apostles.

This was made even more obvious by the many signs and miracles they performed by the power of the Holy Spirit to the amazement of all who witnessed them. Thoughtful Jews realised that God was with them in their teaching and deeds.

Peter's Eminence Among The Apostles

In those days it became customary for the brethren of Christ to assemble at Solomon's porch in the court of the temple. This was not only a place where people generally gathered, but the spot where Peter had effected the remarkable cure on the man who could not walk (Acts 3:11), and therefore an admirable centre for the proclamation of the Truth. Here further miracles were performed to the amazement of the people who regarded the apostles with awe and reverence.

The Jewish leaders, however, looked disapprovingly upon these proceedings.

This attitude divided the people. Most feared to offend their leaders; others, who had a full conviction, openly confessed Christ by baptism. They were the "believers" (v. 14) as distinct from "the rest" (v. 13), who were mere observers.

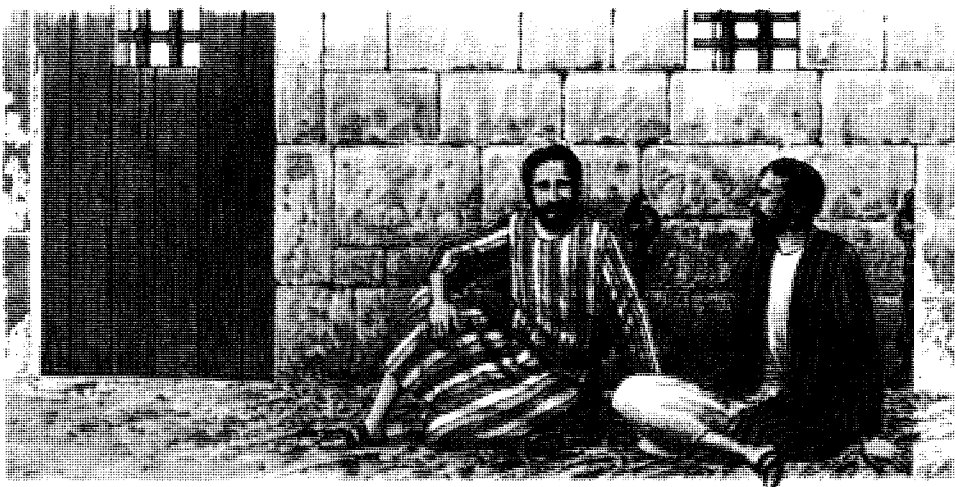
In many cases, therefore, the fear of man acted as a barrier against people laying hold of the greatest privilege and most glorious inheritance that Yahweh has set before His creatures: communion with Him and the hope of life eternal. Some desired God's benefits without offering back any service. They saw how that the apostles, and particularly Peter, performed miracles in the name of the Lord Jesus, and mistakenly imagining the power to do this came from the men before them, brought their sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that even the shadow of Peter passing by might move over them. This does not mean that they were cured by this means, but merely indicates the superstitious regard that people were paying Peter at that time.

On the other hand, the miracles that were performed, were to many the tangible evidence of divine power, and they embraced Christ. Thus the ecclesia rapidly grew, to the annoyance of the Jewish leaders.

The Apostles Defy The Jewish Leaders

The high priest was particularly incensed. He viewed the success of the apostles' preaching with jealous anger. As a Sadducee he repudiated the doctrine of the resurrection which was such a prominent feature of Peter's preaching. Calling the Sanhedrin together, he drew attention to the increasing influence of the ecclesia, and it was agreed that action should be taken against the apostles.

They were immediately arrested, and as it was nearing nightfall, they were flung into the common prison to await their trial on the morrow. But an angel of Yahweh was sent by night to release them.



He opened the prison doors, and brought the apostles forth without the wardens being aware of it, conducting them through the doors with the keepers standing at attention outside! Quietly the angel closed the gates, and instructed the apostles: *"Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."*

It was about daybreak (RV), but they immediately made their way to the temple for that purpose.

And there, later, to his amazement, the high priest found them preaching. He could not understand it. Instantly calling the Sanhedrin together, he reported the matter, and it was decided to first investigate what had taken place. The guard was dispatched for that purpose, and returned with an amazing story.

"We found the prison safely locked up, with the sentries posted at the doors, but on opening the doors we found no one inside!" they reported.

The Sanhedrin listened to the report in disbelief. It was absolutely impossible! If the prisoners had been properly locked up, they must still be in prison! But how could their presence in the temple court be explained? They were at a loss for an answer, except it be that they were a different group of men.

As they discussed the matter between themselves, a messenger made his way into the council room to report that the apostles were publicly preaching in the temple court: *"The very men you put in prison are here in the temple and teaching the people,"* he declared.

Something had to be done, and that immediately. The officer of the guard was sent to fetch them, but instructed to do so without using violence for fear of the people who might pelt them with stones. Arresting the apostles, he led them into the council of the Sanhedrin, and the high priest addressed them: *"We strictly forbade you to teach about this Name, did we not?"* he commenced. *"And here you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine! You want to make us responsible for this man's death."*

They carefully avoided the use of the name "Jesus," or any expressions which would imply that he rose from the dead. To them, he was dead; and they wanted him to remain that way.

Peter was again face to face with the very group that he had feared when the Lord was under trial; but there was no fear in Peter now. He was a changed man. Boldly and defiantly he challenged the Sanhedrin: *"We ought to obey God rather than men,"* he declared. *"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a stake. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to them that obey Him."*

It was a bold, short, but comprehensive statement of apostolic

belief. It propounded five incontrovertible facts:

- [1] God should be obeyed before men (v. 29).
- [2] The apostles had not abandoned the hope of the fathers (v. 30).
- [3] God resurrected Jesus because he was to become the Author of life, and Saviour from sins (v. 31).
- [4] The apostles were divinely provided witnesses of these things (v. 32).
- [5] The miracles they performed through God's power testified to that truth (v. 32).

Peter's short address cut his listeners to the heart, and angered them exceedingly. Gathering together, they reasoned what should be done. Some were for slaying them, but better counsels prevailed.

Gamaliel Intercedes One of the greatest rabbis of the day, was a man named Gamaliel. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, but unlike the high priest, who was a Sadducee, and therefore did not believe in the resurrection, Gamaliel was a Pharisee. As such, he was an ardent believer in the Scriptures, and of the doctrine of the resurrection. Moreover, his reputation was such that he commanded the respect of all.

He now stood up to speak, and all, with one accord, set themselves to listen. But first he ordered that the apostles be taken out of the council, after which he addressed the Sanhedrin: "*You men of Israel,*" he commenced, "*take care what you do with these men. In days gone by, Theudas started up, claiming to be a person of importance, and a number of men, about four hundred of them, rallied to him, but he was slain, and all his followers were dispersed and wiped out. After him, Judas the Galilean started up, at the time of the census, and got people to desert to him; but he perished too, and all his followers were scattered. So I advise you today to leave these men to themselves. Let them alone. If this project or enterprise springs from men, it will collapse; whereas, if it really springs from God, you will be unable to put them down. You may even find yourselves fighting God!*"

It was a wise counsel, and the Sanhedrin decided to adopt it. Recalling the apostles, they beat them with rods for disturbing the peace, and commanding them that they must not speak in the name of Jesus, they let them go.

The apostles returned to the ecclesia, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41). Thus they considered it an honour to be dishonoured for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 6:14; Phil. 3:10). Peter had learned the significance of the Lord's statement that his disciples must be prepared to "take up the cross" and follow their Lord (Mat. 16:24).

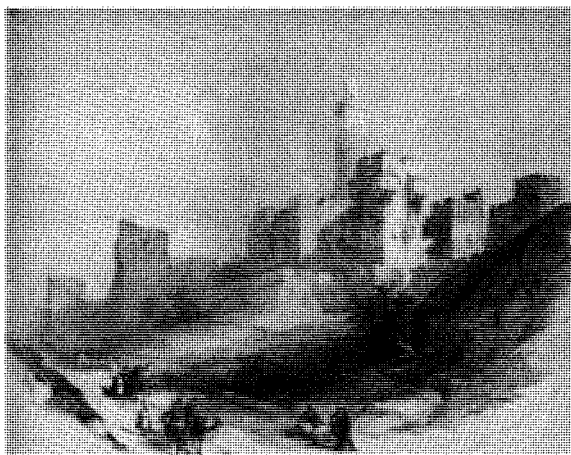
They Continue To Preach

As Peter had bluntly declared, the apostles had no intention of heeding the Sanhedrin's prohibition to preach. Indeed, they did it all the more boldly. Selecting the most public place, the temple, they daily assembled for that very purpose.

Moreover, they engaged in Gospel proclamation activities, calling upon the people and proclaiming the Gospel message, or else instructing them more fully in these beliefs.

Thus the first persecution was answered by renewed zeal in the public testimony of the Word. Others were encouraged by this faithful and fearless attitude, and so the ecclesia grew and developed.

*Jerusalem, the
Centre of the
Truth's Witness*



Peter's Fourth Address

GOD CALLS MEN TO OBEDIENCE

1. God should be obeyed before men (v. 29).
2. The apostles had not abandoned the hope of the fathers (v. 30).
3. God resurrected Jesus as the Author of Life and the Saviour from sin and death (v. 31).
4. The apostles are the divinely-provided witnesses of these things, and the miracles performed through God's power are also witnesses to that Truth (v. 32).

The Accused becomes the Accuser as Peter's address implies that:

• The Jews had left God out of account (v. 29). • They were murderers (v. 30). • They opposed the divine will of salvation and the way of life (v. 31). • They rejected the evidence of God's power and authority (v. 32).

Chapter 9

THE FIRST ORGANISATION

(Acts 6:1-7)

The rapid increase in the membership of the Jerusalem Ecclesia brought increasing problems. This led to dissatisfaction and murmuring which was overcome by proper organisation.

THE increasing number of converts caused problems that resulted in murmuring and dissatisfaction. To counter this, the original simplicity of ecclesial arrangements had to be supplemented by a more complex organisation, providing a pattern for ecclesias throughout the ages.

A measure of antagonism had developed between two groups of Jewish converts. They were styled the Grecians and the Hebrews. The former comprised Hellenistic Jews, who spoke Greek and followed Grecian customs. They were mainly foreign Jews who visited Jerusalem, and hearing the Gospel preached, accepted it.

The Hebrews, on the other hand, were those who clung tenaciously to the Hebrew and Aramaic languages, and refused to be influenced by the widespread usage of Greek. Originally, Paul was a "Hebrew of the Hebrews," one who fanatically used Hebrew, and closely followed the traditions of the Jewish elders (Phil. 3:5).

Murmuring Among The Believers

These two groups, clearly discernible in Jewish communities, were found also in the ecclesias. The influence of the Gospel, of course, should have destroyed any division of thought or rivalry, but flesh being what it is, these things, unfortunately, remained. And this finally erupted in a complaint which the Grecians advanced against the Hebrews.

Among the converts at that time were a number of widows, who were given certain official duties, and received financial support from the common ecclesial fund for so doing (see Acts 9:41; 1Tim. 5:3, 9-11, 16). The Grecians raised a real or imagined complaint, alleging that in the appointment of these widows, preference had been given to those of the Hebrew groupings.

This caused an undercurrent of murmuring and secret debate which threatened to undermine the excellent work that was being accomplished. The apostles were compelled to leave the preaching and teaching of the Word in order to consider the complaints. Some suggested that they should take over this duty of organisation and make the appointments themselves, but they pointed out that if they

were to give themselves constantly to such labours, the more important duty of feeding the ecclesia spiritually would be neglected. They decided to set up an ecclesial organisation to look after the problem so as to eliminate all such murmuring (and this should always be the purpose of any such organisation), and to that end, they called a general business meeting of the ecclesia to consider the problem.

Arranging Brethren Appointed

The ecclesia having been called together, the apostles (probably through Peter) addressed the gathering: *"It is not fit that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables,"* he declared. *"Therefore, brethren, you look out from among yourselves seven men of good report, full of spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word."*

The ecclesia could see the wisdom of this proposition. It recognised the need of the apostles to give themselves to ministering the Word and to Prayer. The former demanded study and meditation and the giving of time to teach and expound it. The latter also made demands upon available time. The prayers of the apostles took in all the manifold needs of the Body, and these had to be first sought out. They communed long and earnestly with the Father (Acts 10:9-10), and it would not be wise to curtail or neglect this in any way.

The request of the apostles, therefore, was valid and reasonable. However, it required that the ecclesia as a whole appoint others to positions of ecclesial ministrations. The choice was not to be by popular vote, but a vote based upon a careful assessment of the merits of each one whose name was advanced. They had to be of good reputation, men of spirit (or energetic; the word "Holy" is not in the original texts), and noted for their wisdom. After they had been selected by majority vote, they would be brought before the apostles that they might approve the choice.

The ecclesial elections were held, and the results were excellent. Not only had seven outstanding brethren been appointed, but all of them apparently Hellenists, for all had Greek names. In short, the spirit of the Gospel had so dominated that election, that even the Hebrews had voted for their Greek brethren.

By that means, all the previous antagonism was broken down.

The seven men chosen were Stephen (*A Crown*), Philip (*Warrior*), Prochorus (*Leader of Singers*), Nicanor (*Conqueror*), Timon (*Honourable*), Parmenas (*Faithful*), and Nicolas (*Conqueror of the People*), a proselyte of Antioch.

These brethren were brought before the apostles, who prayed that Yahweh might bless the appointment. They then laid their hands on them, and so publicly endorsed their office (see Num. 27:23; Deu. 34:9; Acts 13:3).

The Work Increased This organisation freed the ecclesia for the work of witnessing. The Gospel continued to be preached with outstanding success. The number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem, and even a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Some idea of the extent of the work can be gauged from the statistics kept at the time. On the day of Pentecost, three thousand had been added to the original one hundred and twenty (Acts 2:41). A little while later, another five thousand converts had been made (Acts 4:4). The display of miracles had resulted in "multitudes both of men and women" accepting the faith (Acts 5:14). Further, a great company of priests were added to the ecclesia.

By then, the ecclesia would have had a membership of at least some twelve thousand people.

A Dictionary Of Personalities In The New Testament.

AGABUS: THE PROPHET

His name means *A Locust*. He was a member of the ecclesia in Jerusalem, and was noted for his prophecies. He predicted a widespread famine throughout the world which came to pass in the days of Claudius, and caused brethren from near and afar to send relief to the ecclesias in Judea which were particularly affected. Later, he predicted the imprisonment of Paul (Acts 21:10-11), and dramatised his bonds, by binding his hands and feet with Paul's girdle. He seems, therefore, to have been a prophet of doom, and perhaps, well named.

APPHIA: THE BELOVED

This believer, belonging to Colosse, is styled "beloved" and "our sister" by Paul (Philemon 1:2; RV mg.), and her name is said to signify *That which is Fruitful*, and she doubtless lived out the significance of it by being a fruitful branch of the Vine (Jn. 14:1). She was possibly the wife of Philemon to whom the epistle was directed and in which her name appears, and who so willingly opened his home to the work of the ecclesia. She is mentioned in connection with his domestic affairs. The expressions of love that Paul uses in this epistle to the household of Philemon shows that it was most fruitful in the work of the Lord, suggesting that Apphia co-operated with her husband in that regard.

ALEXANDER: THE ANONYMOUS

His name means *The Defender of Men*, and there are perhaps six men of this name mentioned in the New Testament. These include the convert of that name in Ephesus (Acts 19:33), and the apostate of 1Timothy 1:20, who may have been the one to publicly indict Paul as recorded in 2Timothy 4:14. See *Story Of The Bible*, page 310.

Chapter 10

THE FIRST MARTYR

(Acts 6:8 to 7:60)

Of the seven men appointed to supervise ecclesial activities and to dispense the funds, Stephen (whose name means "Crown" or "Wreath of Victory" — see Rev. 2:10) became the most prominent. He was a powerful preacher and a skilful debater (Acts 6:10), and his former associates found that they could not match his arguments in support of the Truth. They tried to ruin his reputation by asserting that he was a blasphemer, and on this charge he was brought before the Sanhedrin. Unable to resist the power of his logic, and with growing irritation at the opposition they were receiving from Christ's followers, the Jewish council ordered his execution, and he was illegally and brutally stoned to death.

STEPHEN was an outstanding man of faith and courage. He was also a man of understanding and vigour, with the disposition and ability to work in the cause of the Truth. And this he exercised to the full.

It is said of him that he was: "*Full of grace and power, so that he did great wonders and miracles among the people*" (Acts 6:8; RV).

Stephen's Vigorous Testimony

He was a Hellenist, and his vigorous witness on behalf of the Lord Jesus aroused the resentment of Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem.

There was a synagogue in Jerusalem that was frequented by foreign Jews, which, perhaps, Stephen used to visit. Now when he did so, however, it was to preach the Gospel, and this aroused resentment in his one-time associates (Acts 6:9). They disputed with Stephen, but they were unable to withstand the wisdom and Spirit by which he spoke.

The Holy Spirit sharpened his understanding of Scripture (Lk. 21:15), and enabled him to easily refute the arguments of his adversaries. They hated him for this and bitterly sought means to silence him, even hiring evil men to falsely accuse him of blasphemy.

"*We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God,*" they falsely claimed.

Stephen Is Arrested And Charged

There was nothing more calculated to rouse the anger and passion of the mob than the charge that these unscrupulous men laid against Stephen. They could not sustain their claim directly, but did so

by insinuation and innuendo, spreading their evil, lying reports, stirring the feelings of the people, and inciting them against Stephen.

And though the charge was false, it was the very thing that the leaders wanted to hear, in order to move against him. They ordered the guard to arrest Stephen and bring him before the Sanhedrin.

Once more the Jewish council met to consider the hated sect. It had ordered the execution of its leader, but his resurrection had defeated their action; it had imprisoned the apostles, only to find them miraculously released; now it commenced to move against its followers, determined to crush the growing ecclesia.

The charge laid against Stephen was one of blasphemy. False witnesses had been procured who stated it on the following grounds: *"This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the Law! We have heard him say that Jesus the Nazarene will destroy this place, and change the rites handed down to us by Moses!"*

There was no doubt a semblance of truth in the charge. If Stephen had spoken as the Lord had done (Jn. 4:21; Mk. 13:2), or as the apostles wrote (Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 8:13; Gal. 3:19), his words could easily be misrepresented by unscrupulous false witnesses.

The Sanhedrin, therefore, was in no doubts about being able to press the charge successfully. Moreover, the penalty was death by stoning, and Stephen could expect no mercy from the members of the Council. The charge was laid, and all eyes turned on Stephen, awaiting his reply. His audience was transfixed by what it saw, for it saw his countenance shining as with a divine radiance, as the face of an angel.

This should have impressed his accusers, causing them to carefully consider his words. And, indeed, for a time, they were compelled to hearken, though blind prejudice prevented them from doing so objectively.

Stephen was a doomed man before he commenced his speech.

Stephen's Defence The council was taken aback by Stephen's glowing countenance, so that after the charge had been laid, there ensued a silence.

It was broken by the voice of the high priest:

"Are these things so?" he demanded.

Stephen's reply was a masterly defence based upon the holy oracles. His speech should be read upon the background of the charges urged against him. He was accused of blasphemy because he taught that the present order was but temporary, and that true worship was possible apart from the Land, the Law and the Temple. He answered the charges by showing:

[1] The divine revelation reveals that Yahweh was never exclusively

interested in the land, nation, law and temple (ch. 6:2-50), and therefore it was possible to consider worship independent of those institutions; and that men must look beyond the mere externals of a formalised religion if they would worship God as He desires.

[2] In rejecting and crucifying Christ, the Jewish leaders had repeated the error of their fathers, and thus were themselves guilty of blasphemy in rejecting Yahweh and His Son (vv. 51-53).

In the course of his address, Stephen showed that the Jews placed too much dependence on outward symbols. They had not used the Tabernacle, the Law, the Temple, nor its institutions in the true manner intended by Yahweh for their institution. Yahweh did not limit His worship to one place or form. The Patriarchs worshipped Him without Tabernacle or Temple, both in the Land and in Egypt. That being so, was it not possible for Him to require it again, and should they not carefully examine the teaching advanced by the followers of Jesus supported as it was by miracle? Israel worshipped Yahweh in a moveable tabernacle in the wilderness and in the land — was that wrong? David, the man after God's heart, was not permitted to build the temple, but was not his worship valid? When Solomon did build the temple, was he not told that it was but the shadow of the reality and not the true place of rest?

There could be no successful refuting of these arguments, and they showed that neither temple nor the Mosaic covenant were absolutely necessary for proper and acceptable worship.

His defence was thus a rebuttal and a counter-charge.

It commenced on a note of conciliation: "*Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken: The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran...*"

Stephen acknowledged his association with Israel, he paid respect to the honoured status of the elders, he gently pressed the fact that the call to Abraham had come when he was in Ur of the Chaldees, and thus the patriarch was not dependent upon the Holy Place of Jerusalem or the temple, to worship God...

But the address that commenced on such a note, did not finish like that. It concluded with a forthright indictment of the wickedness of the nation as Stephen perceived they would not hearken to the Word: "*You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears; you do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before the coming of the Just One; of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it!*" (vv. 51-53).

This sudden outburst was no doubt induced by the growing impatience manifested by the members of the Council as Stephen listed the crimes of the nation, and claimed that the present attitude of

its leaders was typical of its history (v. 37). The sudden change manifested in his speech at verse 51 was probably called forth by noisy interjections on the part of his listeners, as they tried to interrupt him and incite him to anger.

The Defence Summarised

Stephen's defence can be divided into five main sections in which he traced the history of the nation from the days of the fathers:

[1] A rebuttal of the claim that the Jews as a nation, and the land as locality were the sole scenes of God's labours (Acts 6:13). Stephen showed:

- a. Abram was called when in Mesopotamia (v. 2);
- b. Even when in the land he received no inheritance (v. 5);
- c. Abraham's seed served God in Egypt (vv. 6-7);
- d. The Patriarchs rejected Joseph who served God and was honoured by Gentiles in Egypt, for "God was with him" (vv. 9-10);
- e. Jacob and his whole family had to leave the land to be divinely succoured in Egypt (vv. 11-16);
- f. God did not desert them in Egypt (v. 34);
- g. The Law was given and the form of worship established during 40 years' wilderness wandering (v. 36).

Therefore, it could not be rightly claimed that Stephen had spoken blasphemous words against God or the Temple (the holy place) in teaching that Yahweh can be worshipped apart from the Temple, or outside the Land, for this is confirmed by history and revelation.

[2] Stephen denied that in either word or practice he had taught or acted inconsistently with the teaching or the actions of Moses (Acts 6:11).

- a. In birth (v. 20), upbringing (v. 21), education (v. 22), marriage and begetting of his sons (v. 29), as well as his call by Yahweh to deliver Israel (v. 30), Moses had close associations with heathen lands and people, but very little with his own. For example, he never entered the Land itself, never saw "this holy place."
- b. Moses was misunderstood by his brethren (v. 25), forced to flee (v. 29), and even after delivering the nation, was rejected (v. 39).
- c. Moses taught that he typed the Messiah whom it was imperative to heed (v. 37).

As Moses typed the coming Messiah, it could be expected that he would be rejected by the nation, and that he would set forth divine principles in a new law and revelation.

[3] Stephen rebutted that the rites of the Law were always necessary for righteous living (Acts 6:13-14).

- a. The Law came late in the history of acceptable worship, after

- circumcision (v. 8), and the deliverance from bondage (v. 38).
- b. It was given to a nation absorbed in idolatrous practices (v. 41), that had rejected Moses (v. 40).

Therefore it is possible to manifest true, acceptable worship apart from the Mosaic system.

[4] Stephen rebutted the principle that the temple was absolutely essential for acceptable worship (Acts 6:14).

- a. God communicated with Abram at Ur (v. 2).
- b. Moses stood on holy ground at Sinai (v. 33).
- c. The nation worshipped at a moveable tabernacle in the wilderness and in the land (vv. 44-45).
- d. David was not permitted to build a temple (vv. 45-46).
- e. Yahweh proclaimed that He does not dwell in temples made with hands (v. 49).

Thus the tabernacle worship was changed to the temple worship, and the limitations of the latter were clearly stated, suggesting the possibility of further change.

[5] Stephen indicted his accusers in a manner they could not refute.

- a. Moses indicted the nation as being stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart (v. 51).
- b. Their history is a record of persecution of righteous men (v. 52).
- c. They could not justly claim anything against Jesus, who, for all their illegal prosecution, remained "the Just One" (v. 52).
- d. They were guilty of false witness and murder (v. 52).
- e. They were indicted by the very Law to which they appealed in their prosecution of Stephen (v. 53).

As such, Stephen's accusers should be placed on trial and condemned!

APPARENT CONTRADICTIONS IN STEPHEN'S DEFENCE

It is frequently claimed that Stephen's address abounds with contradictions of the Old Testament record, and therefore he, or it, is unreliable.

On the contrary, Stephen's address shows that he had a clear grasp of the history of the nation and of the Old Testament Scriptures.

How Many Went To Egypt?

Stephen declared that the descendants of Jacob numbered seventy-five persons at the time that the patriarch descended into Egypt. However, Genesis 46 records only seventy relations of Jacob.

Was Stephen wrong?

No, he does not quote any passage of Scripture, but merely makes a statement based on Scripture.

As a Hellenist, Stephen would be familiar with the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament, and this contains an addition at Genesis 46:20, reading: *"There were born to Manasseh which the Syrian concubine bore to him, even Machir; and Machir begat Gilead. And the sons of Ephraim, the brother of Manasseh, were Sutalaam and Taam; and the sons of Sutalaam, Edom."*

These additional names make up to seventy-five, and the insertion is probably derived from Num. 26:28-31; 1Chr. 7:14-20.

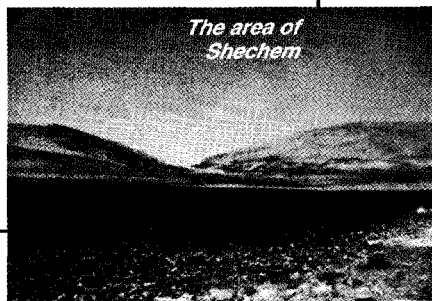
Stephen's claim that seventy-five persons went down into Egypt can also be reconciled with the Hebrew text. This states that the descendants of Jacob numbered seventy persons (Gen. 46:8-27). The list, however, includes Er and Onan who died before Jacob went into Egypt; Joseph, who was already there, and Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born there. Exclude these and it leaves a total of sixty-five. As Judah's wife, Shuah, was dead (Gen. 38:12), the wives of the ten remaining sons could bring the total to seventy-five persons as stated by Stephen. Both explanations are in accordance with the facts, so that his figure was correct.

The Sepulchre In Shechem

Stephen's speech claims that Jacob and his son were buried in Shechem, in a piece of ground that was earlier purchased by Abraham.

This is said to be inaccurate on the grounds that there are no indications that the sons of Jacob were buried at Shechem, nor that Abraham made any purchase there.

But the fact that an incident is not recorded does not mean it did not take place, and Stephen's grasp of history was such that it is unlikely that he made a mistake. The record does state that Jacob purchased a piece of ground at Shechem (Gen. 33:18-19), the right to which he had later to defend by the sword (Gen. 48:21-22). However, Abraham could also have purchased this earlier when he visited Shechem, and Jacob could later claim this, first, by a further payment, and then by defending it with the sword. However, the Diaglott has a footnote at Acts 7 which substitutes Jacob for Abraham: "The best critics are of the opinion that 'Abraham,' as found in the text, is spurious, and has been inserted by some officious transcriber."



As to the sons of Jacob being buried at Shechem, a tradition extant long after the time of Stephen, claimed that the tombs of the twelve patriarchs could be seen at Nablus (Shechem). Moreover, it can be implied from Genesis 48:22, "I have given to thee [Joseph], one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow."

Joseph received the chief portion which suggests that provision was made also for his brethren; thus agreeing with Stephen's statement.

Damascus Or Babylon?

To draw attention to the iniquity of Israel, Stephen (see vv. 42-43) quoted from Amos 5:25-27. However, he makes reference to Israel being dispersed beyond Babylon rather than beyond Damascus as Amos has it.

Was he wrong in so doing?

No, for he was both quoting and interpreting the passage. The ten tribes were taken "beyond Babylon" which is "beyond Damascus," according to the original prophecy. Thus Stephen drew attention to the way in which it was fulfilled.

The Effect of Stephen's Speech

Stephen's defence could not be successfully challenged; it argued his case with irrefutable logic. It was more than a defence; it was an accusation. It indicted the Jewish leaders in such a way that they could not bear it.

It was not the first time such things had been heard. When the people heard Peter's speech they were pricked in their hearts, and asked: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" When they heard Stephen deliver substantially the same message they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

Of course, the circumstances were different. The success of Peter's preaching aroused jealousy in the hearts of the leaders, so that as Stephen spoke, the flesh took control of them. His oration was interrupted with interjections and taunts, as with livid, hate-distorted faces, they screamed out their rage, pouring invective on him, and gnashing their teeth in anger.

When violent and unscrupulous men cannot beat their opponents by argument, they attempt to beat out their brains by violence.

Only one thing now would satisfy the hate-crazed members of the Sanhedrin: the violent death of the noble follower of Jesus before them.

But Stephen, at that moment, knew little of the storm of hate which swirled around him. The Holy Spirit was on him, and lifted

him out of the environment of insane spite and bitterness that dominated his accusers, and set him in the very presence of the Lord.

Gazing into heaven, he saw a vision of the glory of God, with Jesus standing at His right hand.

The pose of the Lord Jesus was significant. In other references, he is described as sitting, his work accomplished (Heb. 10:12); but in this vision, he was standing, as though stirred into activity to extend help to his faithful servant on earth below.

The Death of Stephen To the indignation of the seething council members, Stephen described the vision he saw: "*Behold,*" he declared, "*I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God!*"

"I see the Son of man," he declared. Faith gave him such a vision as was beyond the ability of his judges to see. He saw Jesus as "Son of man," his title as judge (Jn. 5:27); he saw him at the right hand of God, the place of authority (Psa. 110:1; Dan. 7:13); he saw him standing to avenge his servants on earth. The Master did so in the judgment of AD70 which brought the guilty nation to ruin.

But now the hatred of his accusers broke all bounds of restraint. To them, his words were blasphemous in the extreme, and he was deserving of death. Crying out with a loud voice to drown his words, they stopped their ears, and rushing upon him with one accord, pushed and dragged him violently through the streets of the city, and out beyond its bounds, where they stoned him.

They legalised the murder, being very careful to maintain the ritual forms of the Law (Num. 15:35; Lk. 4:29). Thus the false witnesses hired against him were required to cast the first stones (Deu. 17:7), and in order to do so, they laid down their outer clothing at a young man's feet whose name was Saul.

The stones thudded against the body of Stephen, bruising and battering it, the very hatred of his enemies giving extra velocity to their throwing. But though they might destroy his body, they could not destroy the record of faithful service he had rendered to his Lord, and which he now offered on the Christ altar. Stephen prayed:

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

The stones kept thudding against his body, so that he reeled to his knees. Each one represented a measure of the venom of hate of his enemies, and yet, in spite of the terrible injustice of their action, the painful, agonising death he was suffering, Stephen kept his spiritual sight on the heavenly vision, seeing, as it were, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, before merciful oblivion claimed him at last, he made one final petition, stimulated by the vision of the Lord. Crying with a loud voice, he pleaded: "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!*"

It was a repetition of the Lord's prayer upon the stake (Lk. 23:34)

with this exception: it did not include the words: "they know not what they do." Stephen had clearly revealed to them the full measure of their iniquity, yet their bitter hatred blinded them to reality, and drove them to this most despicable, unjust and brutal murder.

Stephen's probation was brief. Only a short time before he had been appointed to his office, and now he lay bruised, mangled, killed. Yet his life was a long one, for it ultimately lived again in the young man at whose feet the witnesses laid their clothes. Little did Saul of Tarsus realise, on that dark and terrible day, that he himself would carry forward the message for which Stephen died. The hate that swirled around Saul that day would remain with him for a time until God dealt with him in such a way as to drive it from him; then it would be replaced by wondrous love. How strange is life, and the influences we spread around us in our progress through it. Let us exercise care, for our example can lead others to life or death in the Kingdom of glory that Stephen will inherit.

The death of Stephen was Jerusalem's final repudiation of the Gospel message. This last public witness closed the Apostolic labours as far as the capital was concerned. After the martyrdom of Stephen, the work was to broaden out to incorporate other parts, including Samaria and the northern districts.

Meanwhile, Stephen "fell asleep" in Christ (1Thes. 4:15-16). For him the resurrection will be a glorious awakening, for again he will gaze in love upon the countenance of that One whom, in vision, he then saw gazing down from heaven, then to receive from him the commendation that will announce his inheritance in the Age to come.

But perhaps even more wondrous than that will be the fact that Stephen will again look upon the face of the young man who, on that tragic day, stood guard over the garments of the false witnesses who flung their stones at the dying man. Stephen will then know that he did not die in vain, and that through the efforts of his, then inveterate foe, the Truth was preached far and near, bringing thousands into the fold, and establishing a work that has been maintained throughout the ages.





AGRIPPA: THE KING

He had the same name as his father, Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1). When his father died in AD44 (Acts 12:23), he left his son, then 17 years of age, and three daughters: Bernice (Acts 25:23), Mariamne, and Drusilla. Claudius, the Roman Emperor (in whose home Agrippa was brought up — Josephus, *Ant.* 19.9.2), considered it dangerous to put so young a man in authority over so large a kingdom as that of his father in Judea, so he made it a Roman Province, and sent Cuspius Fadus to be procurator of Judea and the whole of the kingdom (Josephus, *Ant.* 19.9.2. *Wars* 2.11.6). In the year 48, Agrippa's uncle, Herod, King of Chalcis, died, and Agrippa was appointed to the position. At the same time, he was made superintendent of the temple at Jerusalem, and manager of its Treasury with power to remove the high priest, which power he freely exercised (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.8.11; 20.9.1-4). In the year 53, he was removed from the position of Governor of Chalcis, and given greater power: the tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanius over the north and north-west of Judea, but excluding Petrea, Judea, Samaria and Galilee (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.7.1). He made Caesarea Philippi his headquarters. He was not popular with the Jews, who suspected him of being prejudiced in favour of the Romans. Prior to the Roman war, he tried to persuade the Jews to come to terms, but with the war itself, he threw in his lot with the Romans. He finally retired to Rome, where he died in the year 100 at the age of 73.

It was before Agrippa and his sister that Paul gave his defence as recorded in Acts 26. Apparently Agrippa was shaken in his convictions by Paul's words, and seriously impressed by what he heard. "With but little persuasion you would fain make me a Christian," he remarked to the apostle (R.V.). Agrippa had the opportunity, but failed to grasp it. He sought for glory and prestige then, and failed to walk the path that would give them to him forever.

ANDRONICUS: FELLOW-PRISONER

His name signifies *Conquering Men*. He was a member of the ecclesia in Rome when Paul wrote to that ecclesia from Corinth, and is styled his "fellow-prisoner." The circumstances, however, are not revealed. It was one of those many adventures in the life of the apostle that is not recorded. Evidently Andronicus had been with the apostle prior to the latter's Roman imprisonment, and had afterwards transferred to the ecclesia in Rome.

APELLES: THE APPROVED

This typically Jewish name belonged to a disciple in Rome. It

signifies *Separate*, and to it Paul attached the title of “approved in Christ” (Rom. 16:10). The word “approved” is from the Greek *dokimazo*, a term usually used for testing metals, and thus signifies to be proved under trial. In some way not revealed, Apelles’ fidelity to Christ had been tried and had stood the test to warrant Paul’s use of this term.

ARISTOBULUS: THE ANONYMOUS

Paul does not mention this man directly, but only his “household” (Rom. 16:10), and because the preposition “of” is from the Greek *ek* or “out of,” it is considered that Aristobulus himself was not converted, but that some of his household were. His name means *The Best Counsellor*; but if it was a fact that he was not converted, it is obvious that he was a man of some status, and that his counsel was of the flesh.

ARTEMAS: THE MESSENGER

The only reference to this brother is in Titus 3:12. His name is associated with *Artemas*, the god of hunting, which some suggest means *Safe; Sound*. He was Paul’s companion at Nicopolis, and was sent to hunt for Titus and deliver a message to him.

ASYNCRITUS: THE UNIQUE

Asyncritus means *Unique*, and all that we know of him is that he was a brother in Rome to whom Paul sent greetings (Rom. 16:14).

BAR-JESUS: THE MAGICIAN

His name means *Son of Jesus*, but his actions dishonoured the Lord’s name. He was a Jew who had departed from the teaching of Moses, and had embraced magic, so that he set himself up as a magician and prophet. He was honoured by Sergius Paulus who provided him with accommodation in his home. But Sergius Paulus also became interested in the Truth, and invited Paul to preach. This brought the apostle into conflict with Bar-Jesus, who, setting forth his false principles, was strongly rebuked by Paul. He was struck blind for a season for interfering with the work of the apostle (Acts 13:6-12). Bar-Jesus thus experienced a similar humiliation to that which Paul himself had suffered on the road to Damascus. In Paul’s case, however, it had opened his eyes to the Truth; whether it did so for Bar-Jesus is not revealed. It is rather significant that following this incident, made notable by the acceptance of the Truth on the part of the Roman Sergius Paulus, the apostle seemed to have preferred to use the name Paul instead of Saul.

The Truth Preached Abroad

(Acts 8:1 to 8:40)



Chapter 1

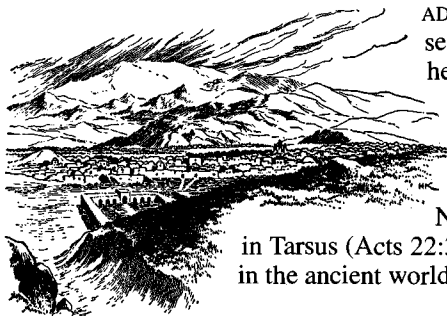
THE EARLY LIFE OF SAUL

The martyrdom of Stephen introduces us to one of the greatest men who ever lived: the apostle Paul. In whatever circumstances we find him, he reveals earnestness and dedication. He does so, even before his conversion to Christ. Then he was devoted to Judaism, and his complete absorption in that system of religion blinded him to all else. He listened to Stephen, and must have been impressed with all that he heard, but doubtless, like so many others, there was one stubborn fact he could not overcome: Jesus had been crucified; and God's law cursed any Jew that "hung upon a tree." Would the promised Messiah be cursed of God? A thousand times no, every Judaiser would argue. Therefore, whilst he may have been impressed with Stephen's defence, there was nothing in it that overcame Paul's prejudice; Stephen was mistaken. Later, of course, he learned that it was he who made the mistake, and then he tried to do all in his power to redeem himself in the sight of God and Christ. Repeatedly he referred to the sad incident of the murder of Stephen in the most touching manner. See Acts 22:20, 26:10; 1Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; 1Tim. 1:13.

IT is impossible to state with perfect accuracy the date of either the birth or death of the apostle Paul, though both may be inferred within narrow limits. He is first mentioned, on the occasion of Stephen's martyrdom, at which time he is called "a young man." The Greek word *neaniau* could apply to one who was thirty years of age, and as he was almost immediately afterwards sent on an important mission, it may be concluded that he was then thirty, the age when the ministry of priests commenced (Num. 4).

The martyrdom of Stephen probably took place early in AD36, and as the Lord was 33 in the actual year AD26 (commonly understood as AD 30; see page 26), when he ascended into heaven, Saul would have been about six years younger than the Lord Jesus.

Jesus was brought up in the obscure and isolated village of Nazareth, but Saul had his upbringing in Tarsus (Acts 22:3), a Roman city of great importance in the ancient world.



Tarsus was a sophisticated, busy, university city, standing in a fertile plain at the foot of a snow-tipped chain of Taurus mountains that overshadowed it, and with the bright, swift stream of the river Cyndus flowing through the town. It was a centre of commercial enterprise and political power, for the ancient coins of the city represent her as situated amid bales of various merchandise.

Paul was a freeborn Roman citizen, but dwelling in the university city of Tarsus, he also was familiar with Greek learning. Thus he combined all the attributes needed for universal travel and preaching of the Gospel. By birth he was a Roman, by education a Greek, and by religion a Jew. From the very beginning, in birth, teaching, and worship, he was prepared for the work that God had in store for him. Later, Paul came to realise this, and gave expression to it in his letter to the Galatians (Gal. 1:15).

As one writer has stated: "Many apparently opposite qualities went to make up the special fitness of Paul for his great life-work. He combined in his own unique experience, a personal connection of the closest kind with the three principal social spheres of his age. He was called out of the very heart of Judaism. He knew Jewish legalism from beginning to end. He was called out of the very heart of Greek culture, for he spent his developing years from infancy in one of the great centres of Hellenistic life, and was familiar with all that was great and noble in Greek literature. He had, moreover, enjoyed from birth all the various privileges of Roman citizenship. He was thus a Hebrew to the backbone; he was Greek in the fullest sense by education; and he was a Roman citizen freeborn."

Education

His early education was obtained in Tarsus.

It seems to have included something of Greek culture, as well as Judaism, as he could later make reference to some Grecian poets (Acts 17:28). As a young boy, he would be required to learn by heart long passages of the Scriptures, and to study and expound such books as Leviticus. This memorising of Scripture stood him in good stead, later enabling him to quote freely in support of his teaching.

It was also incumbent upon every Jewish boy to learn a trade. Tarsus was noted for the weaving of goats' hair, which was used for making ropes, garments and tents. Young Saul learned the trade of a tent-maker, and here, again, is seen the providence of Yahweh. The knowledge of this trade not only enabled him to "pay his way" when he later took on the work of



preaching, but was a mechanical sort of work, which could be plied in such a way as to leave the mind entirely free for meditation and concentration on the Scriptures. We can well imagine Paul working at the tent-making, as his thoughts soared on higher matters, or as he held converse with his companions.

As he commenced his teens, he would be known as a *Son of the Commandment*, and would be brought under the responsibility and domination of the Law. About that time, he was sent from home to Jerusalem, to be trained at the feet of the notable teacher, Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Perhaps he lived with his sister during this time, for we learn later that he had a married sister in Jerusalem, whose son, on one occasion, saved Paul's life (Acts 23:16).

Paul speaks of his early education in the Epistle to the Philippians: "*Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews*" (Phil. 3:5).

A Jew was one who could trace his descent from Jacob and conformed to the religion of his fathers; but he was not a Hebrew also unless he spoke the Hebrew tongue and retained Hebrew customs (see Trench's *New Testament Synonyms*). Though Paul was born in Tarsus, he was brought up under the renowned Jewish teacher Gamaliel in the Hebrew metropolis, and spoke the Hebrew language fluently (Acts 21:40; 22:2). Mostly, in quoting from the Scriptures, he used the Hebrew text which he often translated for himself.*

Saul, doubtless, would follow the normal pattern of education in a Jewish home:

"At the age of five he would begin to study the Bible with his parents at home; and even earlier than this he would doubtless have learnt the *Shama* and the *Hallel* (Psalms 113-118) in whole or in part. At six he would go to his 'vineyard,' as the later Rabbis called their schools. At ten he would begin to study those earlier and simpler developments of the oral law, which were afterwards collected in the Mishna. At thirteen he would, by a sort of 'confirmation,' become a 'Son of the Commandment.' At



* Some suggest that the apostle quoted from the Septuagint Greek version, but we think this highly unlikely. He would have upheld and used the accepted Hebrew text rather than a Greek version of it, but any variation to the English translation, could well be the apostle's interpretation of the Hebrew for his readers. — Ed.

fifteen he would be trained in yet more minute and burdensome 'helachoth,' analogous to those which ultimately filled the vast mass of the Gemara." (F.W.F.).

Thus, from a tender age, his attention was directed toward the Scriptures, so that he could recite them from memory; whilst, at the same time, he would be carefully tutored in the principles of Judaism.

The young Saul was instructed in the teaching of the Pharisees, to which he applied himself with strict attention. He became a "Pharisee of the Pharisees," very rigid in the observance of the minute details of the Law and Judaism.

Probably, it was as a *Son of the Commandment*, in his early teens, that he was sent to Jerusalem to complete his education under the guidance of Gamaliel.

Thus, in those early years two unique teenagers were being prepared for the work before them: one in Jerusalem, and the other in Nazareth. For Saul and Jesus, though then unknown to each other, would ultimately meet on a road near Damascus and their lives become linked together.

How long Saul remained in Jerusalem is not revealed, but it may have been for several years. And doubtless, even after his return to Tarsus, he periodically visited the Jewish capital for the Passover, and other feasts, for he would have been very diligent about the Jewish ritual, and involved himself in the practices of Judaism.

It seems inconceivable that such an enquiring, alert personality as the developing Saul could have remained in ignorance of the teaching of the Lord when his ministry was so publicly revealed in Jerusalem. It was the subject of discussion among the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin (Jn. 11:47), so that it seems inevitable that it would have come to the notice of young Saul. Moreover, the presence of the Lord at Passover time, the remarkable miracles he performed in Jerusalem, and his public witness on such occasions, would not have gone unnoticed by the young Pharisee.

Indeed Saul may have been deeply impressed by the miracles, teaching and bearing of the Lord, but as with so many others, the crucifixion of Jesus stood as an insurmountable barrier to the acceptance of him as Messiah. Saul knew the Law, and realised that it cursed one who hung upon a tree. Great prophet though Jesus may have been, it was impossible, to Saul's concept of revelation, for the Christ to be cursed by God. This stubborn fact of doctrine blinded the eyes of Saul from the truth concerning Jesus, and caused him to become so antagonistic to the community of believers.

Saul The Pharisee The young Saul showed extreme promise in his education, and it was confidently expected by those who observed him, that he had a great future before

him as a Rabbi. From the very beginning, he lived according to the strictest rules of the sect (Acts 26:4-5). Later, he wrote to the brethren in Galatia: "I profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. 1:14). He was "blameless" in his scrupulous observance of all the requirements of the Law (Phil. 3:6), following a family tradition in so doing (2Tim. 1:3).

A severe training as a strict Pharisee does not seem the most promising preparation for the future Apostle to the Gentiles; but, in fact, it proved to be so. If Saul had been less of a Jew, Paul the apostle would have been less bold and independent. If Yahweh had selected a Gentile for the work of evangelising Gentiles, he would not have been able to counter the great controversy of the age: Justification by Faith or by the Works of Judaism. Once the light of Truth had come to Saul, he could detect the emptiness of the Judaistic ceremonies as well as the crushing yoke of the condemnation of the Law, for his previous education assisted him to do so. Once he saw the Truth there was no fear that such a man would ever look back, or that he would be tempted to set up again what the grace of God had overthrown (Gal. 2:18).

Was Saul A Member Of The Sanhedrin? In Acts 26:10, Paul declared that before conversion, he gave his vote against certain of the believers, so procuring their condemnation. On the basis of this, it has been suggested that Saul was a newly appointed member of the Sanhedrin, and gave his vote in that Council. But that by no means follows. If he had been a member, the fact would surely have been disclosed in his controversies with the Judaisers, or in such biographical notes as Philipians 3:5-6.

It was generally acknowledged, that before a person could be elected to the Sanhedrin, he must marry; and Paul is specific that he was unmarried (1Cor. 9:5). This would normally disqualify him for a position on the Council as would also his youth.

Moreover, Saul's commission to attack the ecclesia did not come from the Sanhedrin, but from the chief priests (Acts 26:10). He was possibly a member of a committee appointed for the suppression of the new teaching, and in that capacity gave his vote against those imprisoned.

That evidently was his position as he supervised the execution of Stephen, and took charge of the outer garments of the principal witnesses as they commenced to stone the believer. In spite of the wonderful address and prayer of that outstanding man, Saul fully approved his death.

Chapter 2

SAMARIA RECEIVES THE WORD

The Lord had told the apostles that they would become his witnesses first in Jerusalem, and then in all Judea and Samaria. However, they manifested a reluctance to extend the Truth beyond Jerusalem, until persecution drove them to it. This caused believers to leave the city, and they carried with them the seeds of the Truth to plant them in other centres. As yet, the apostles did not realise that Gentiles were to be invited to participate in the grace of Yahweh on equal terms with Jews, and this had to be gradually revealed to them. The Truth was first preached to the Jews, then to the Samaritans as a mixed racial entity between Jews and Gentiles, then to a Gentile proselyte (the Ethiopian), afterwards to a sympathetic Gentile (Cornelius), and finally to a hostile world (Acts 13). Thus the apostles were gradually eased into preaching the Truth to Gentiles.

 **HE** death of Stephen was viewed as a triumph for the Jewish leaders, who now commenced a full scale persecution designed to completely crush the newborn ecclesia. Saul became the spearhead of the attack.

No sooner had the burial of Stephen taken place with great lamentation, than the depressed brethren found themselves under fire of attack. "Saul made havoc of the ecclesia, entering into every house, and haling [violently seizing — Diag.] men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3).

Paul made mention of this on a later occasion. He wrote: "Beyond measure, I persecuted the ecclesia of God, and wasted it" (Gal. 1:13).

The word *elumaineto*, rendered "made havoc" and the word *eporthoun* rendered "wasted" in the references above, signify to destroy, ravage, lay waste, and in the Septuagint is used of the action of a wild boar uprooting a vineyard (Psa. 80:13). That is what Saul did. After the manner of a furious hog, he forced his way into the homes of the brethren, invading their sanctity, and violently seizing men and women, committed them to prison (Acts 8:3). When they were brought to trial, he testified against them, and procured their execution (Acts 22:4; 26:9-10) if they did not retract (Acts 26:11).

**The Scattered
Ecclesia**

Nor did he confine his activities to Jerusalem (Acts 26:11). He dedicated himself to crushing the hated teaching, and with

fanatical madness pursued his mission, even unto foreign cities.

It was with bitter remorse that Paul later made reference to his persecution of the ecclesia (Gal. 1:13, 23; Phil. 3:6; 1Cor. 15:9; 1Tim. 1:13). He describes himself as “a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious,” “not meet to be called an apostle because I persecuted the ecclesia” (Acts 22:19-20).

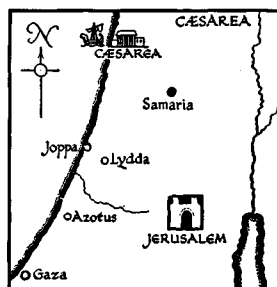
Meanwhile, fear swept the ecclesia as this policy of persecution got under way. A knock on the door of a house could cause panic. It might be the temple police, and could result in the dividing up of the family, and imprisonment for many of them. So brethren began to leave Jerusalem for the surrounding cities of Judea, taking the knowledge of the Truth with them.

Philip In Samaria

Among those who left Jerusalem at this time was a disciple called Philip. He was a companion of Stephen, being among the seven appointed for the special duties outlined in Acts 6.

But his main delight was to proclaim Christ to unbelievers, and for that reason he was called “the evangelist” (Acts 21:8).

He moved north to the area of Samaria, and preached Christ unto the people. The Lord, himself, had preached to the people of Samaria, and had done so very successfully (John 4:39-42). Thus Philip was moved by the Holy Spirit to complete the work that had been commenced by the Master.



Under normal circumstances, he might have expected some resistance to this action, for the Jews had little contact with Samaritans, but the apostles doubtless recalled the time Jesus had spent in this very area, and the manner in which the people had responded to his instruction.

Philip found the same reception. People flocked to hear him, and gave heed to the things he spoke, particularly in view of the miracles of healing that he freely performed.

Thus the people experienced a double joy: their sick were healed, and they received the Gospel message.

Simon The Sorcerer

Among those converted by Philip was a most unusual character by the name of Simon. He pretended to have magical powers, and used to delude the people with the incantations, spells and charms that he professed. He claimed great ability, and gave himself a title: *The Power Of God That Is Great* (ch. 8:10). Moreover, he exercised great influence on the people, so that he amassed a great following. He amazed the people

with his sorcery, and delighted in the power that it brought him.

But when the people believed Philip preaching the things of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, and forthwith followed Philip rather than Simon.

The latter found that he no longer commanded a following, and was himself in turn amazed at the miracles he saw performed by Philip. He, too, accepted the Truth and was baptised.

Having leisure time at his disposal, he continued with Philip, being intrigued with the miracles he performed. In fact, he now experienced in himself, the same feelings as he had induced in his dupes before; though he recognised that the miracles Philip performed were genuine.

Peter And John Sent To Samaria

Meanwhile, information concerning the success of Philip's preaching had reached Jerusalem. The apostles decided to send two of their number to supervise the work in Samaria, and Peter and John were dispatched for that purpose.

They saw in the valuable work of Philip the fruits of the seed sown by Jesus. Calling the ecclesia together, the apostles prayed the Father that He might bestow the Holy Spirit on these new converts; then, laying their hands upon the disciples, they received the Holy Spirit. This action of the apostles was most significant, for it illustrated that "only by the laying on of the apostles' hands was the Holy Spirit given," as Simon observed (Acts 8:18).

It is significant to notice that although Peter had an appointed position, and though he was under the guidance of the Holy Spirit himself so that he could perform miracles, it required the laying on of the hands of an apostle before this power could be transmitted to a believer (see Acts 6:6; 19:6; 1Tim. 4:14; 2Tim. 1:6).

As Simon saw Peter and John doing this, he realised that this was the "great power of God" indeed. He desired that power himself, in order that he might continue to amaze and dominate the people. It would give him the prominence in the ecclesia that he desired. But how to obtain it? Perhaps money might buy it. He decided to try. Approaching the two apostles, and offering them money, he asked: *"Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit."*

It was a foolish request, made in complete ignorance of the exalted position of God, and it testified that whilst Simon believed, he did not properly understand, nor had been truly converted.

Simon offered them something they did not have, for earlier, Peter had declared to the man at the gate of the temple: "Silver and gold have I none" (Acts 3:6). Moreover, he offered them something that the world worships, for with it men can obtain almost everything they

want. Yet money is extremely limited. One might buy, or try to buy, influence, status, and authority by the use of money. But can one buy truth, or wisdom, or sound judgment? Are the most precious gifts of God purchasable with money? Why, the poorest man can be the wealthiest when eternal riches are brought into consideration. Did not Paul claim that in his poverty he made many rich (2Cor. 8:9)? Did he not write concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, that, "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2Cor. 8:9)? Does not the book of Proverbs teach that "there is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches" (Pro. 13:7).

Judas had been dazzled with the thought of money, and it had brought him to a suicide's grave, and perhaps Peter's stern reply was called forth because he remembered the sad end of a companion whom he once loved, and with whom he had spent many hours travelling through the land. In any case, Simon's offer and request revealed that whilst he may have believed the apostolic testimony, he did not properly understand it, nor had been truly converted.

Sternly Peter rebuked him: *"Your money perish with you because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money,"* he declared. *"You have neither part nor inheritance in this matter: for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Change your understanding and ways with regard to this your wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."*

The rebuke was harsh but warranted. The words of the apostle warned that Simon was without hope unless he changed his ways. In fact, Peter bluntly told him that he was lacking in understanding. The word translated "matter" is from the Greek *logos* and signifies "word" or "teaching." Simon was told that he had neither part nor inheritance in the word of salvation whilst he believed and acted as he did. This teaching, indeed, had turned him from the Truth, and, if unchecked, could corrupt others also. That is implied by the expressions Peter used: "the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity." They are expressions taken from the words of Moses, and which he used to describe teaching that can turn one from Yahweh (Deu. 29:18; Heb. 12:15).

Simon was abashed by the rebuke. He now feared the consequences of his thoughtless action, and sought the intercession of the apostles: *"Pray to the Lord for me, that none of these things which you have spoken come upon me!"* he pleaded.

Simon felt his own unworthiness to approach God in prayer, and sought the help of others in the spirit of 1Jn. 5:16; Jas. 5:16; Gen. 20:16-17. He was a very confused man, and had to learn a new set of

values in life. Those things which once meant so much to him — prestige, power and payment — had to be given new meanings and new values, and sought for in a different direction. Whether he learned the lesson or not we are not told. The general opinion is that he did not, and that he kept on in his folly, but there is nothing of substance to endorse that that was the case.

Simon's sin created a new word for the English Dictionary — *Simony*. It signifies the effort to secure a spiritual office by gifts. Simon's action was based upon the assumption that gifts of money constitute an adequate substitution for individual effort in the things of God, and implies that men can buy their way into the Kingdom by such means. What he needed to buy was that which Christ offers for sale: "Buy of me gold tried in the fire [faith], that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment [righteousness], that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve [spiritual discernment], that thou mayest see" (Rev. 3:18). Those things, however, we can "buy without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1). We buy them with time, energy, love, devotion and discretion.

That was the lesson Simon had to learn, and we hope that he did so.

Further Effort In Samaria

Back in Jerusalem, the apostles reported on the success of their mission (Acts 8:25), and as this indicated that it was Yahweh's will that the Truth should be preached in Samaria, plans were set in motion for further efforts.

Accordingly, others of their number were sent into the district to preach the Gospel in many of its cities, and so ecclesias were established in both Judea and in Samaria.

*Modern Samaria, showing
the mounts Ebal and Gerizim,
an area in which the Gospel
message found ready
acceptance in the days of the
apostles.*



Chapter 3

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

(Acts 8:26 to 28:31)

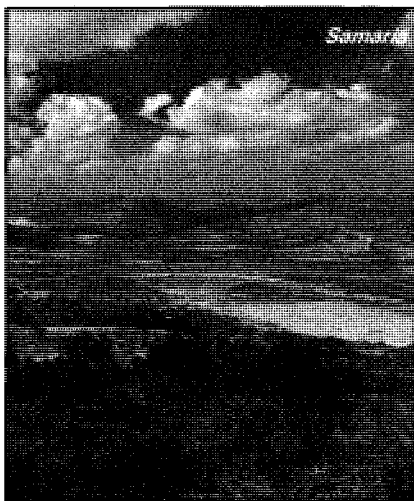
Having witnessed to Christ's resurrection in Jerusalem, then in Judea and Samaria, the third phase of apostolic testimony now opened up, in which the Gospel message was conveyed to "the uttermost part of the earth." This was the commission given by the Lord to the apostles (Acts 1:8). The work commenced with the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch, and terminated with Paul's presence and proclamation of the Truth in the capital of the Roman Empire.

THE development of ecclesias in Samaria now being under the supervision of the apostles, Philip was directed to preach to the Ethiopian Eunuch whom he found travelling from Jerusalem. This opened a door of utterance for the Truth in Africa, thus broadening its activities, and providing a further step toward the unfettered preaching of the Word to Gentiles.

It is very illuminating to consider how carefully and gently Christ thus led the apostles from one stage to another, breaking down their prejudices, teaching them by experience to go forth into the Gentile world without any doubts.

First the work was extended into Africa through the conversion of a Proselyte of Righteousness (as a full proselyte was called by the Jews); then to a sympathetic Gentile (Cornelius) who was most likely a Proselyte of the Gate (one who acknowledged the God of Israel but did not submit to circumcision), and finally, through Paul, to the hostile, heathen world without.

By these means, and in these early chapters of Acts, representatives of the three great families of the human race were brought into true covenant relationship with Yahweh: the families of Shem (the Jews), Ham (the Ethiopian; Acts 8), and Japheth (Europeans; Acts 10).



Chapter 4

THE ETHIOPIAN CONVERTED

(Acts 8:26-40)

The conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch introduced the Truth to Africa, and thus provided the first move by which the knowledge of the Truth was extended to the "uttermost part of the world." Philip was the instrument used on this occasion, and thus the means by which Christ was introduced to a heathen country. Christ evidently used him instead of one of the apostles because, Philip being a Hellenistic Jew, would be more untrammelled by the exclusiveness that was a feature of other Jews, and such as was manifested by Peter when he was sent to Cornelius.

PHILIP'S work in Samaria having been completed, he received a divine message directing him to further duties. The evangelist was told: "Arise, and go toward the south unto the Jerusalem-Gaza highway which is desert."

This desert was to bring forth fruit to the glory of Yahweh, although for the moment, Philip did not know what to expect. He was merely directed toward a certain place, and he immediately did so in faith, without question. When God guides to a work, this is how we should proceed. Philip did not question the instructions, but manifesting a warmth in the work given him to do, he willingly, and without hesitation, obeyed the directions.

The Preacher Sent It required a journey of about 60 miles (96 kilometres), and thus would take several days. Arriving at the Jerusalem-Gaza highway which continues for about twenty-five miles (40 kms), he waited to see what would happen.

Soon he saw a chariot approaching. The man seated therein was evidently some dignitary, for his very dress suggested he was a person of great authority, whilst his dark countenance showed him to be an Ethiopian. Later, Philip learned that he was a eunuch* under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, and was in charge of all her treasure.

This aristocratic Ethiopian was evidently a proselyte to the Jewish faith, for he had been to Jerusalem to worship and was on his way back home again. The road from Jerusalem to Gaza would bring him

* The term "eunuch" should not necessarily be interpreted literally, but was often used as a title for persons in high authority who, because of their office, were sometimes compelled to act like eunuchs, avoiding the association of women (see Gen. 37:36; 39:1; Mat. 19:12).

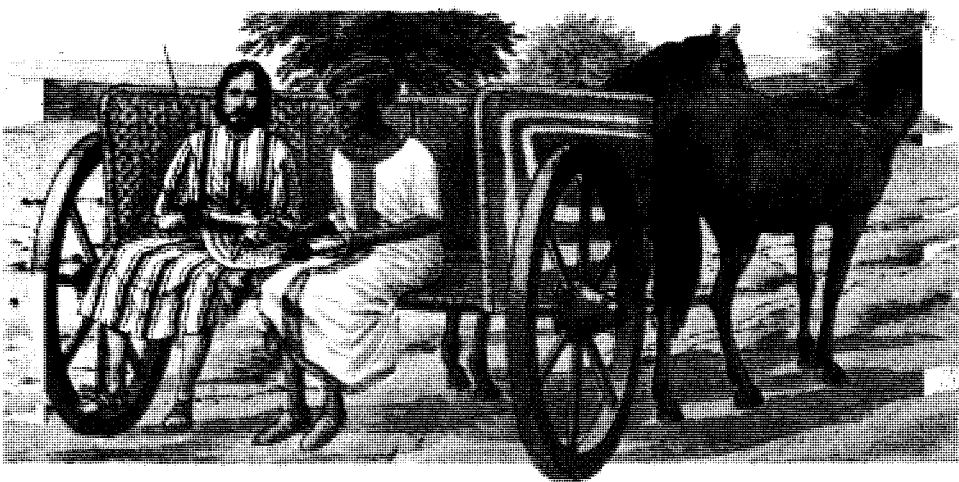
to the southern highway which ran directly to Egypt, from whence he could proceed to Ethiopia.

He was a devout, thoughtful man, with an enquiring mind. He was not one to waste his time, and therefore, as he quietly travelled along in his chariot, he occupied the time by reading from the scroll of Isaiah the prophet, which, in the custom of those days, he read aloud. He was obviously a searcher for Truth and sincere in worship. This is shown by the fact that he had travelled such a long distance to worship God, and the occupation of his mind in reading the sacred oracles. He wished to improve himself in these matters. God took heed of his humility, sincerity and earnestness, and provided him with a warm, enthusiastic and understanding teacher.

Who was this Ethiopian? We are not told. Was he Theophilus (Acts 1:1), for whom the Acts of the Apostles and Luke's Gospel were written? We do not know; but the fact that he is not named could imply that he was. If so, when he read this chapter, he learned the background to his amazing conversion.

The Instruction Given The Ethiopian was intent upon his reading, and did not see Philip standing by the side of the road. But as the chariot neared the evangelist, Philip heard the voice of God through the Spirit: *"Go near, and join yourself to this chariot."*

With typical warmhearted enthusiasm, he did so. The chariot was not travelling very fast, and Philip soon caught up with it. And now he could hear the Ethiopian reading aloud, completely absorbed in what



he was doing, a puzzled frown on his face. Philip interrupted him by enquiring: "*Do you understand what you are reading?*"

What significant words! How they should be heeded in every case! We open the Bible and read, but what do we read: words or ideas and principles? How important to ponder the words of Scripture in order to come to understanding. The Bible can be a book of words, or a book of revelation. It has no value in itself as a book of print, but only as its message is comprehended.

The Ethiopian then revealed further attributes of his character. He was not only an enquirer, and perplexed, but he was also humble and teachable. He did not mind acknowledging his limitations of knowledge. He was anxious to learn, and as humility is the hand-maiden to wisdom, he answered: "*How can I, except some man should guide me?*"

He then invited Philip to come up into the chariot and discuss the Scriptures with him. What an opportunity! And how eagerly Philip grasped it. Instantly springing up into the vehicle, he glanced at the scroll of Isaiah in the hands of the Ethiopian, and read the words: "*He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearers, so opened he not his mouth; in his humiliation his judgment was taken away; and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.*"

Enquiringly, the Ethiopian looked at Philip: "*I ask you, of whom does the prophet speak? Of himself, or of some other man?*"

No better opening for the teaching of the Truth could be given. Philip expounded the basic principles of the atonement. Commencing at Isaiah 53, he continued through the Scriptures, revealing the things concerning the Lord Jesus. At that time, of course, none of the New Testament had been written, so that the only Scriptures to which Philip could appeal were those of the Old Testament. He revealed to the Ethiopian how that these had actually predicted the death and resurrection of Jesus which had come to pass a few years previously, and he showed that one must identify himself with the Lord in order to gain the benefits of his sacrifice. That, naturally, introduced the subject of baptism and personal responsibility.

The Ethiopian sat enthralled throughout the exposition. It seemed to him as though a veil had been torn from his eyes. He now understood the Scriptures, and recognised his own personal responsibility thereto.

Meanwhile the chariot proceeded along the road to Gaza. At one spot, the road continued through uncultivated land, and past pools of water. The Ethiopian's gaze became centered on these as the chariot moved along. He knew what was required of him, and there were the means to provide it. He turned earnestly to Philip, and pointed it out to him: "*See, water! What hinders me to be baptised?*"

There was but one answer to this; and Philip replied: *"If you believe with all your heart, you can be."*

Fervently came the Ethiopian's endorsement of the fulfilment of such passages as Isaiah 53 by the Lord Jesus.

"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God!"

This declaration epitomised all that he knew with regard to the Kingdom of God as expressed in the hope of Israel, and the atonement as revealed in the offering of the Lord Jesus, based on such wonderful prophecies as that of Isaiah 53 that he now knew and understood. To this comprehensive acknowledgement of the Truth, the Ethiopian joyfully subscribed.

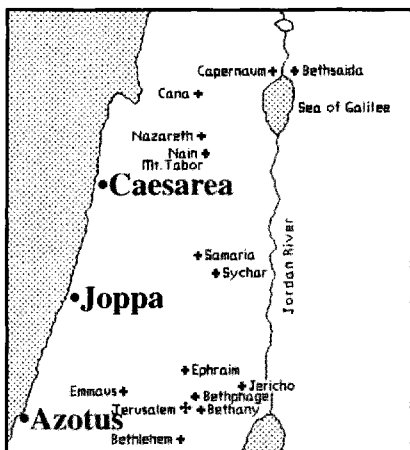
So the chariot was halted, and the two men — the Jew and the Ethiopian — became united as one, as both went down into the water, and Philip baptised the Ethiopian. The differences in status and colour were washed away by the waters of baptism, and they ascended therefrom as members of the great family of Yahweh.

The Men Depart

And now in gratitude, the Ethiopian would have rewarded Philip, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, the evangelist was snatched from his presence, and conveyed swiftly and pleasantly to Azotus (Ashdod), some twenty-five miles (40 kms) north of Gaza. The Ethiopian never saw him again, though he will one day in the future. Ascending into his chariot, he went on his way rejoicing. His doubts had been dissolved, his knowledge of salvation perfected, and in his peace of mind he discovered a joy such as he had never considered possible.

Meanwhile, the warm, enthusiastic Philip moved north from Ashdod to Caesarea, preaching in the cities as he did so, looking forward to the companionship of his family who dwelt in the latter city, some 60 miles (96 kms) to the north.

The Ethiopian manifested excellent qualities. He was an enquirer, teachable, honest, humble, obedient, faithful, joyful. He had prepared his mind by reading the Word, and sealed his study by obedience to what it required. He thus is an object lesson to us all.



*The
Conversion
of Paul the
Apostle
to the
Gentiles*

(Acts 9:1 to 9:31)

Chapter 1

SAUL: THE INSTRUMENT FOUND THE BLINDING LIGHT ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS (Acts 9)

The time had arrived for the Gospel message to be sent forth into the Gentile world. For that purpose, an instrument was needed who would have sufficient ability and determination to perform the divine will. The instrument was found in Saul the Pharisee. In his conversion there is revealed Christianity's greatest triumph (1Tim. 1:12-15). He was a Jew, a Roman, a scholar, an aristocrat. "Shrewder than Judas, more knowledgeable than Matthew, more ardent than Peter, he was a very volcano of a man. There lay within Saul a capacity to do anything that mortals ever did. Once his fingers took hold of a thing, it required Almighty Power to prize them open." And God treated him as was necessary. In this there is a tremendous lesson. Notice how differently God dealt with the Ethiopian and the Pharisee, and yet how exactly the methods used were suited to the men involved (Acts 8 and 9). The Ethiopian was quietly reading in his chariot, filled with religious wonder at the mysterious Word which challenged his attention (Acts 8:31). He was a man ready for, and receptive to, the Truth, and he immediately responded to the moving appeal of the words spoken to him. The Pharisee was a man of dynamic energy which had been aroused into a fury of action by his hatred of Christianity. He breathed the very atmosphere of threatening and slaughter, and expended it in blast after blast of hottest fury. Such a man was impervious to reason, and therefore Yahweh dealt with him as his circumstances required. In one swift blow he was flung to the ground, humbled into the very dust, shaken out of the fleshly pride that previously dominated him. His natural sight was blinded by the heavenly vision, but his spiritual vision was opened to receive the divine revelation. As far as the Gentile world is concerned, the conversion of Paul is the second greatest event in history, only superseded in importance by the influence of the death and resurrection of the Lord. When we read Acts 9, therefore, we read of a turning point in world history; for whether it is considered in relation to the proclamation of the Truth or the development of the Apostasy that arose from a perversion of Paul's preaching, the world was never the same again after the baptism of Saul whose name was changed to Paul.

THE young Pharisee, Saul, breathed in the atmosphere of hate against the followers of Christ, that had been generated by Jewish opposition. His fellow Pharisees, together with their Sadducee associates in the Sanhedrin and priesthood, could talk of little else than the need to ruthlessly crush the hated sect.*

The early success that attended the great persecution against the ecclesia in Jerusalem, only served to fan the fires of that hatred. The advice of Gamaliel, at whose feet Saul had learned the Law, was forgotten or ignored, and with grim determination the Jewish leaders set about to completely destroy the ecclesia.

Saul The Inquisitor Saul was foremost in the persecution. He was seized with an insane fury against the followers of Christ (Acts 26:11), and moved against them with dynamic energy and ruthless savagery. The brethren learned that they could expect no mercy from Saul, for at his instigation, both men and women were dragged into prison and given over to death, though their only crime was their determination to worship Yahweh according to a conscience governed by the Word which they believed and loved (Acts 22:4).

Saul's violent persecution caused the Jerusalem Ecclesia to disintegrate, scattering its members into all parts as they sought a refuge from the storm (Acts 8:3).

But even the shelter of foreign lands did not save them. Wherever the government was favourable to the high priest in Jerusalem, Saul received permission to act against adherents of the new sect, and in his mad fury he persecuted them even to foreign cities (Acts 26:11).

He was determined to utterly exterminate Christianity, and he became notorious for his fanaticism. But he miscalculated the power of the Movement. Whereas prosperity is often fatal to true Christianity, it thrives on persecution. *"They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word."* Saul found his work multiplied. Instead of being localised in Jerusalem, the new sect began to take on the character of a world-wide movement. In Jerusalem, the leaders urged him on to greater efforts of persecution and violence.

Thus his hatred and fury were recharged as he breathed in the



*Saul was a
Pharisee, the son
of a Pharisee*

* There is no comparable word in the Greek for the word "out" in Acts 9:1, which reads that Saul "breathed out threatenings and slaughter." This constituted the very atmosphere in which he lived, so that figuratively he breathed in the air of hate.

atmosphere of threatenings and slaughter that dominated the so-called City of Peace.

Authority From The High Priest

Having heard that Damascus, the capital of Syria, was one of the places where the fugitives had taken refuge, and there were carrying on their propaganda among the numerous Jews of that city, Saul went to the high priest, who then exercised spiritual jurisdiction over Jews everywhere. Of him Saul secured letters of authority and commission (Acts 26:12), empowering him to seize, bind and bring to Jerusalem all of the new way of thinking whom he might find there.

Since a recent change in rulership had taken place in Damascus, where Aretas was now king (2Cor. 11:32) and was sympathetic to Jewish interests; the local government also permitted such action to be taken. He was father-in-law to Herod Antipas, who divorced the daughter of Aretas, instead taking the wife of his brother Philip (Mat. 14:3). This insult resulted in war. Herod was defeated by Aretas, and appealed to the Emperor Tiberius who sent Vitellius to punish Aretas. Whilst Vitellius was on the march, however, news was received of the death of Tiberius (AD37). Caligula, the next emperor, was opposed to Herod, and probably assigned Damascus to Aretas, whilst Vitellius was ordered to withdraw.

As Herod was hated of the Jews of Jerusalem, there was naturally a sympathy shown by them toward Aretas, and this was reciprocated. It must have seemed to Saul that the way had been opened for what he believed to be a work of God. The year was approximately AD37, and Theophilus had been appointed as high priest. This very important date, therefore, determines the period of Saul's conversion, and provides a key to the chronology of the Acts.

The Cavalcade Sets Out

With a guard of soldiers, Saul set out from Jerusalem for Damascus, a journey of about one hundred and sixty miles (258 kms). With the slow means of travel then used, and stops on the way, this would probably have occupied a period of about six days.

It was a tiring journey, but Saul considered the mission an important one. A considerable Jewish population existed in the city (Josephus records that as many as 10,000 were slain in a massacre in Nero's time), and therefore there were as many as forty synagogues.

The little cavalcade, on its inquisitorial mission of terror and merciless persecution, advanced steadily toward the north,



probably taking the Roman route that led through Capernaum, moving up the Golan heights toward the highlands overlooking Damascus.

The Blinding Light And Startling Voice

It was about noon (Acts 22:6), when the eastern sun beat down upon them scorching, and most oppressive. But the city of Damascus was near at hand, and encouraged by the sight, the cavalcade moved steadily on, instead of stopping and taking a rest.

But suddenly, without warning, it was brought to a halt by a very strange phenomenon which filled them all with awe and fear!

They saw a light in the heavens, greater than the light of the sun. It moved swiftly toward them, finally encompassing them with flashes of light,* so dazzling in brightness as to eclipse the midday sun itself (Acts 26:13).

Full of fear, unable to blot out the terrible glare with their hands, they fell to the ground, trying to hide their faces from the piercing shafts of light that struck at them (Acts 26:14).

And then they heard the Voice!

Only Saul understood the words, though the others all heard the sound. To his amazement, Saul, in his prostrate position, heard the Voice from out of the centre of light, speaking to him in Hebrew, appealing to him: "*Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?*"

Saul listened to the appeal in amazement, afraid to lift his eyes to the terrible glare. From his recumbent position, forcibly paying homage to the one he hated, he asked, trembling: "*Who are you, Lord?*"

Again the Voice spoke: "*I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you persecute. It is hard for you to kick against the pricks!*"

The reference, of course, is to the goads, a long pole sharpened at



* The words "shined round about him" (Acts 9:3) are a translation of the Greek *periestrapsen*, signifying "to flash around." See Diaglott.

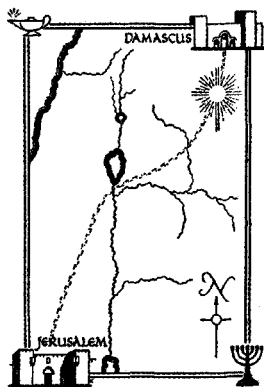
the end, by which drovers used to urge along unwilling oxen. A particularly stubborn beast might kick at the goad, only to harm its legs as well as its body, and, in any case, being forced along a course that it wanted to avoid.

The answer caused great consternation to Saul. "Jesus of Nazareth"!* Surely the Voice is wrong! Jesus had been put to death! What then of the Voice? Can dead men speak? Of course not! Then, had he made a terrible mistake? Was Stephen right after all? What of the advice of his teacher, Gamaliel, who had warned against persecuting the new sect, lest he be found in opposition to God? Had his own Pharisaic stubbornness blinded him to the truth of the matter? There was no disputing the Voice! It came from a living being! Jesus must have been brought from the dead! The followers of the hated sect were right and he was wrong! There was no doubt about that! But was it possible for the Messiah to die as a criminal on a stake, and be subject to the curse of the Law (Deu. 21:23)?

On this matter, Saul needed further instruction, but one fact now was apparent to him: Jesus lived, and he was wrong! He must submit to the one whose Voice he had heard. But what of those he had put to death? What of the congregations he had scattered? It did not bear thinking about, and had to be put to one side for the moment.

Saul lifted his eyes to the light, and though blinded by its brilliance to all other objects, he very clearly saw the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor. 9:1; 15:8). Perhaps he saw the scars on his hands that he will again show to his people (Zech. 13:6); most likely he had seen him in the temple prior to his crucifixion. In any case, he recognised the Lord, and this swept aside any lingering doubts that he must have had. Jesus lived! There was no doubt about that, and he must submit. Courageously, characteristically, Saul replied: "What shall I do, Lord?"

The Lord Jesus replied: "*Get up and continue your journey to Damascus; there you will be told of all the tasks that you must do. For I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister [the Greek word *huperetes* signifies an under-rower, one who accepts directions from another without necessarily knowing the course taken], and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of*

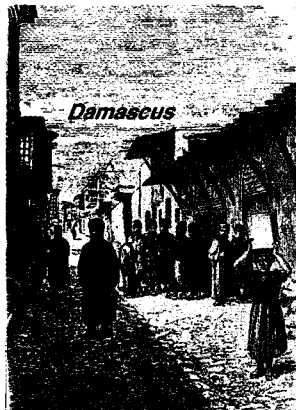


* These actual words formed part of the inscription on the stake at Golgotha (Jn. 19:19). If Saul the Pharisee was present on that Passover when Jesus was crucified, as we believe, then he would have observed the title on the stake, and would now be immediately confronted with the evidence of a risen Christ.
— Ed.

those things in which I will appear unto you. Delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send you, to open their eyes [significant for the blinded Saul], and turning them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (see Acts 26:16-18).

Meanwhile, the men with Paul had remained transfixed and speechless. They had heard the sound of the voice, but could not discern the significance of the words spoken. Unlike Saul, they did not see the Lord.

Exceedingly troubled, Saul lifted himself from the ground, but could see nothing. The brightness had completely blinded him. Figuratively, it represented his spiritual condition, and he realised it. He needed help and guidance, so taking him by the hand, his attendants led him into Damascus.



Three Days Of Darkness

Damascus was a large and well designed city. Its main artery was a street called Straight, which was then a wide and splendid boulevard one hundred feet wide (30 mtrs), with colonnades separating the two footways on the side of the central road, and adorned with a triumphal arch. In a house, there in that street lived a Jew called Judas, with whom Saul had arranged to stay. Judas had made preparations for his visitor, and doubtless felt honoured at entertaining such a well-known official and religionist. He knew of the energy and dedication of this Pharisee of the Pharisees, and perhaps was a little overawed at the occasion.

What a surprise for Judas, when the guard led to the door of his home a humble, blinded man who refused to eat any food placed before him, or enter into any conversation concerning his mission in the city. Judas clearly saw that this mighty Pharisee had been humbled by some outstanding experience on the road to Damascus.

The blinded Saul remained in the house for three days, refusing both food and drink.

How did he use that time?

He knew the Old Testament Scriptures intimately. His education in Judaism had required that he learn large sections of them by heart, so that he could quote from memory. Moreover, his astute mind would take in all that he knew of the teaching of the apostles, the defence of Stephen, undoubtedly some of the teaching of the Lord that he may have heard in the temple or elsewhere before the crucifixion. He would recall such passages as Genesis 3:15; Genesis 22; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53. The fact that Jesus now lived provided the

key to scriptures he had not understood before. The scales fell from his spiritual vision, as he gathered all the evidence before his mind, and recast his understanding of the Word.

How blind he had been! How destitute of a true understanding! What a criminal he had revealed himself to have been in murdering people who believed the Truth!

The blinded Saul, encased in the blackness of his own mind, was a pathetic figure in the home of Judas, as he lamented his past actions, and saw the full extent of his criminality. He realised that for all his high pretensions as a Pharisee he was nothing but a "blasphemer, a persecutor, a violent man," blundering in the blind ignorance of his unbelief (1Tim. 1:13).

How blind he had been, even though, in his egotism, he had imagined that he was blameless (Phil. 3:6)!

He realised now that he had been completely devoid of spiritual life; he could only liken his previous state to a spiritual miscarriage.*

What could he now do to retrieve the situation, but to pray earnestly unto Yahweh that He might forgive him for all the evil he had done, and that in some humble way he might be able to make restitution for his great sin of ignorance and wrongful commission.

And in the abounding mercy of his loving heavenly Father, he received answer to his prayer. His sightless eyes received the vision of a man named Ananias entering the house of Judas, and placing his hands upon him that he might receive his sight. He recognised this as a message from heaven, and full of gratitude he poured out his thanks unto God (Acts 9:11-12).



* In 1Corinthians 15:8, Paul describes himself as then being "one born out of due time." This is usually interpreted as signifying as being born before the proper time, but as Paul came after the other apostles this obviously was not his meaning. The Greek word "ekromat" signifies an abortion, a miscarriage, that is a dead foetus. That was Paul's opinion of his spiritual condition prior to his conversion: a dead foetus absolutely void of life, a vile thing fit only to be buried out of sight and forgotten. The greatest miracle, he declared (see vv. 8-10), was that God should grant spiritual life to such an one as that!

Chapter 2

ANANIAS IS SENT ON A MISSION OF MERCY (Acts 9:10-19)

AMONG the most prominent of the disciples of the Lord in Damascus, was a man by the name of Ananias. His name means *Yahweh has been Gracious* or *has Protected*, and he truly sheltered in the gracious protection of God. He not only followed the Lord Jesus, but also continued to carefully observe the principles of the Law of Moses, so that he was held in good report among all the Jews who dwelt there (Acts 22:12).

He kept the Law, of course, in the light of the revelation that had come from the realisation that the Lord Jesus was the antitype of all its types, shadows and sacrifices, and therefore free of the formalised Judaism of the times, which robbed it of its true meaning.

Ananias had evidently assumed the oversight of the local ecclesia, and therefore kept careful note of all developments that might affect it. He knew of the outbreak of persecution in Jerusalem, and of the violent attacks of Saul the persecutor against the ecclesia in that city. He had been advised of Saul's intention to visit Damascus and initiate a local persecution, and with the other disciples of that city, he was in trepidation as to the outcome.

Doubtless the prayers of the local ecclesia had ascended to Heaven, beseeching the help of Yahweh in view of these developments, as had those of Saul the previous persecutor! Both sought the intervention of God, and both prayers were answered.

Saul Is Baptised

In a divine visitation, the Lord appeared unto Ananias, and spoke to him: "*Ananias!*" he called. "*Here am I, Lord,*" came the answer.

The Lord instructed him: "*Arise, and go into the street called Straight and inquire at the home of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for he is there praying, and he has seen a man named Ananias entering, and laying hands on him, so that he may see.*"

Ananias was staggered at the mission. Go and seek Saul of Tarsus! Saul, the notorious persecutor, concerning whom they had been praying that they might escape his clutches! Saul who had imprisoned some of his brethren, and murdered others!

There must be some mistake.

"Lord," protested Ananias, "*I have heard from many about this man, how much he has hurt your saints in Jerusalem, and here he has authority from the chief priests to put into chains every one who calls upon your name.*"

The reassuring voice of the Lord came to Ananias again: "*Go!*"

For he is my chosen instrument to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel. For I will show him how much he will have to suffer on behalf of my name."

With these amazing instructions ringing in his ears, the devout and faithful Ananias made his thoughtful way to the broad boulevard called Straight, and to the house of Judas, where he enquired for Saul. It must have been with much trepidation that Ananias did so, and yet his obedience to his Master overcame all such anxieties.

He was shown into a room, and saw before him the great persecutor of the ecclesias. He was seated, completely absorbed, impervious to all about him, and showing clear evidence of having suffered a terrible shock.

He looked a pathetic picture, thoroughly humbled, with "bodily presence weak and... contemptible." There was no sight in his eyes; he did not see Ananias enter, although he would have been aware of his presence. It was clear that this man had been blinded by some unique experience.

In spite of his earlier foreboding, Ananias was moved with compassion for the one before him, especially as he recalled the words of the Lord Jesus. Spontaneously approaching him, and placing his hands upon him that he might receive his sight, he called upon Saul to be baptised: "*Brother Saul,*" he said, "*the Lord sent me, even Jesus who appeared to you on the road you travelled, in order that you may recover sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit.*"

Instantly, as if scales fell from the eyes of Saul, his sight was restored, and he looked into the countenance of this stranger, now his friend and brother, a man who, a few days earlier, Saul the persecutor would have roughly bound, and led to prison and to death.

Again Ananias spoke to him: "*The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will, to see the Just One and to hear a message from his own lips; for you will be his witness unto everyone concerning what you have seen and heard. Now then, why hesitate? Rise; be baptised, and calling on his name, be cleansed of your sins*" (Acts 22:14-16).

Although Saul was weak through the shock he had received, and the lack of nourishment for over three days when he had eaten nothing, he immediately arose, and was first baptised. Then, after eating some food, he regained his strength.

Thus illuminated in the Truth, baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus in obedience to his instruction, and now possessing the Holy Spirit, Saul was eager to channel his zeal and talents into the work of the Truth, to make restitution for all the harm he had done previously.

Chapter 3

THE FIRST PREACHING OF SAUL (Acts 9:20-22)

Those Jews of Damascus who had bitterly opposed the ecclesia had awaited the coming of Saul that they might assist him to crush the hated sect. There was a need, therefore, for Saul to explain why he was not prepared to proceed with the planned persecution. This took him to the very synagogues where he had intended to initiate it, but now it was to preach Jesus unto the Jews.

SHORTLY afterwards, Saul left the house of Judas, and abode with the disciples in Damascus. He remained with them several days, doubtless studying the Scriptures with them in the light of the revelation made to him. His familiarity with the Word now stood him in good stead, for it enabled him to instantly grasp those scriptures that related to the Lord, and to see how complete his death and resurrection fulfilled the requirements set forth therein.

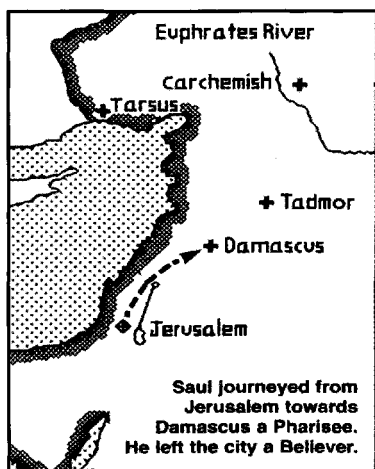
It was soon apparent to the disciples that Saul the persecutor, would be an outstanding expositor, and concrete evidence of this was soon made manifest to the Jews as well.

Preaching Christ in the Synagogues (Acts 9:20-22)

At the appropriate time, Saul made his way to the synagogues where he had intended previously to bring pressure on those Jews who accepted the new teaching. There was a need for him to now explain why this antagonism had been cancelled. To their astonishment, the Jews heard this previously hard and embittered Pharisee expound unto them that Jesus is the Son of God! He supported this by appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures, with such power that none were capable of resisting his words.

The Jews were astounded at the change: "*Is not this he that made havoc of those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and came here to take them as shackled prisoners to the chief priests?*" they remarked.

Some raised objections, but he easily answered them. And as



Saul felt the power of the Word in debate, he gained greater confidence in his new beliefs, and confronted the Jews at Damascus, proving that Jesus is the Christ.

He Visits Arabia For Further Instruction (Gal. 1:16-17)

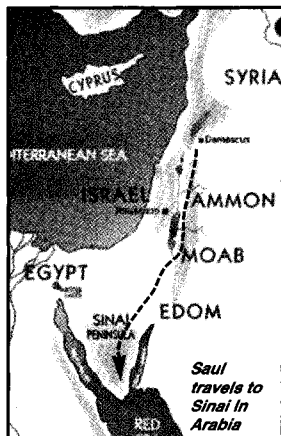
Saul was moved by an irresistible urge to preach; in addition, he had been told that he must bear the message of Salvation to all men, both Jew and Gentile. His brush with the Jews in the synagogues of Damascus had revealed to him how powerfully the Word endorsed the messiahship of Jesus, but to preach those things to Gentiles and to broaden the Hope to include those who formerly were excluded unless they became proselytes, was a complete departure from previous practice.

Saul needed further instruction before he would be equipped for that work.

He felt the need for protracted isolation, that he might think the whole matter out, and by communion with Yahweh find guidance in the Word to fortify him in his labours.

For that purpose, he left Damascus, and travelled far to the south to Arabia (Gal. 1:17). It is not specifically stated as to what part of Arabia he went, but Sinai is associated with Arabia in the same epistle (Gal. 4:25), and he most likely travelled to that mount.

And what more significant spot could he have selected to find the help he needed at that time? This is a place that Yahweh has seemingly reserved for purposes of specific revelation. It is an



isolated mountainous region of harsh, red granite, surrounded by arid desert. Mount Sinai itself rises some 7,500 feet (2,300 mtrs) on a plateau. It is surrounded by deep valleys and a large plain, out of which it stands like a huge, rough altar. There Moses received his wonderful revelation from Yahweh of the burning bush that spoke of the eternal destiny of Israel; there the children of Israel were taken that they might be brought into covenant relationship with God and be instructed in the Law and its precepts; there Elijah fled in the time of national apostasy to receive the grand revelation which sent him back to Israel with renewed vigour to speak concerning the purpose of God.

Now, it would seem, the man who had been selected above all others to carry the message of salvation to Gentiles, was drawn by inexorable need to make his way to this sacred spot to commune with the Father and Son.

How long he was there, and what instruction he received, is not revealed. Three years after his conversion, Saul again visited Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18), so he could have been in the vicinity of Sinai for some time. Between the two visits he travelled down to Arabia and back again to Damascus, bypassing Jerusalem. He returned even more strongly fortified in his understanding of the divine purpose. He now saw a wonderful vista of Truth opened out before him that previously had not been so clearly revealed. It was: "The revelation of the secret [i.e., that Gentiles should share the Gospel with the Jews] which was kept hidden in previous ages, but had now been made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, about to be made known to all nations for the obedience of the faith" (Rom. 16:26). Further, as Saul later explained: "The dispensation of the grace of God which Christ by revelation made known unto me, even the secret, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:2-6).

These statements, made later by the apostle, clearly show that he was given a revelation (quite apart from that referred to in 2Cor. 12:1-3, which was given later) which greatly enlightened him in the requirements of God as far as preaching to the Gentiles was concerned. It made a tremendous impression upon Saul, so that he became even more entrenched in the convictions that the blinding light on the way to Damascus had revealed to him.

Saul Returns to Damascus (Gal. 1:17) Saul returned to Damascus, a journey of over 300 miles (480 kms) from Mt. Sinai, probably journeying along the Kings' Highway, east of the river Jordan. He would thus by-pass Jerusalem

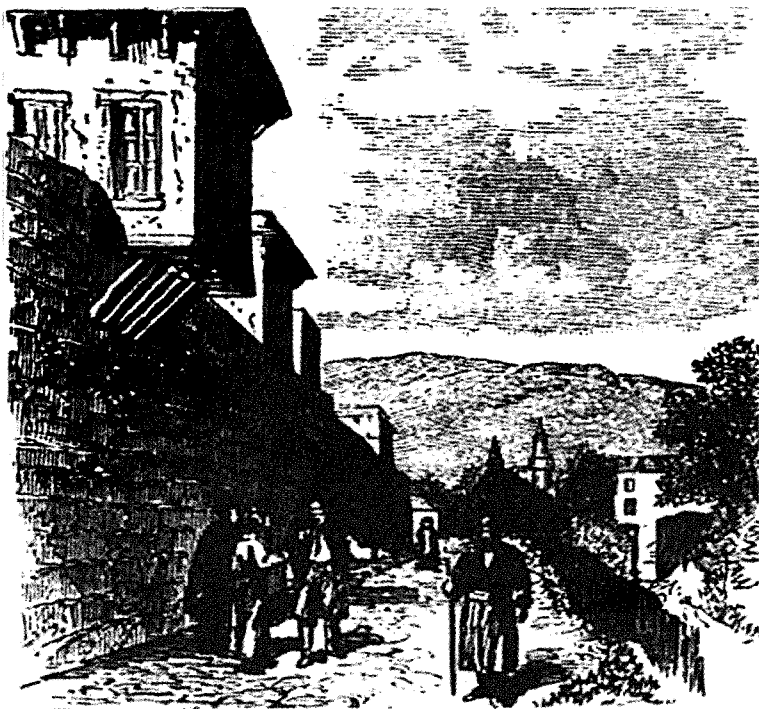
and Judea, doubtless desiring to do so at this time that he might thoughtfully ponder the revelations given him, and even more strongly confirm to himself his understanding of Scripture.

The darkness of his mind was now illuminated by the blinding light of Truth that clearly revealed the fulness of the divine purpose.

Back in Damascus, he again met with the brethren with whom he earlier associated, and they received further evidence of the vast change that had overtaken this one-time fervent persecutor of the ecclesia. He now was able to discourse freely and warmly of the truth in Christ Jesus, and by his superb understanding of the Old Testament Scripture, fortify the brethren in Damascus in those things they believed.

The Jews Plot to Kill Saul (Acts 9:23-25; 2Cor. 11:32-33)

Once again Saul visited the synagogues of Damascus. But now there was added force given to his preaching because of the revelations he had received. The Jews were not able to successfully refute his arguments, and when defeated by the force of Scripture and urged to accept Jesus as Messiah as the only way of hope, they became more and more irritated, and hardened against him.



On his part, Saul became the more emboldened as he felt the power of Scripture, and urged the Truth concerning Jesus Christ with greater vehemence. He was full of confidence in his beliefs, and felt a desire to move others to obey God through them.

But he was not yet ready for the work before him, and in the purpose of God, had to be further humbled.

The Jews became more and more impatient with him, as his complete change of attitude and teaching frustrated them. Perhaps urged on by those of Jerusalem to whom Saul would have communicated his change of heart, they took counsel to kill him. Saul learned of their plots, and decided that the time had come for him to leave Damascus, and to report to the apostles at Jerusalem. After all, he was well-known to them because of his prominence at the trial of Stephen and the subsequent vigour by which he had conducted the persecution of the ecclesia.

Finally, the opposition of the Jews of Damascus became so violent, that Saul found the need to hide from their anger. Perhaps it was in Damascus that he was scourged by the Jews in their synagogues, as reported in 2Corinthians 11:24. Be that as it may, the persecutor had become the persecuted. Pressure had been brought to bear upon the governor of the city under Aretas the king who was favourable to the Jews of Jerusalem, to arrest Saul, so that now he went in danger of his life.

The Jews were determined that he should not escape them. They heard of his plans to leave Damascus for Jerusalem, and arranged that the gates of the city should be watched day and night. Soldiers were posted there for that purpose (2Cor. 11:32). It was a most humiliating experience for Saul. He who had been honoured by Jews everywhere, who had prided himself upon being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a "Pharisee of the Pharisees," and a man before whom others deferred (Gal. 1:14), now had to hide like a hunted criminal. He could neither go among the people of Damascus freely, nor openly walk through the gates of the city in order to leave it. He personally experienced the feelings of those disciples whom he had previously hunted and persecuted.

Some form of escape was necessary, and one ultimately was suggested. Some of the houses in Damascus were built close to the wall, and in some cases right on it, with windows let into the wall itself. The disciples in Damascus had access to one such house, and saw in this an excellent opportunity to effect an escape.

One night it was accomplished. Saul was lowered down the side of the wall in a large basket, and in the darkness, ignominiously made his escape. It was an experience he never forgot; he had never been so humiliated before (2Cor. 11:32-33).



A much-restored part of the old wall of "Paul's Tower" in Damascus, with the traditional window from which the apostle was let down at night in a basket by his followers to save him from the fury of the orthodox Jews.

Chapter 4

SAUL JOINS THE JERUSALEM ECCLESIA (Acts 9:26-29; Gal. 1:18-19)

Three years had elapsed since Saul left Jerusalem to initiate the persecution at Damascus. He left full of fiery zeal to attack those whom he believed to be enemies of the faith; he returned a completely changed man; thoroughly humbled by his experiences, and anxious to assist the ecclesia he once attacked. But the ecclesia had not forgotten the bitterness of his inquisition, and for a time refused to accept his conversion as genuine.

SAUL'S main desire to visit Jerusalem at this time was to get better acquainted with Peter who was the most eminent of the apostles, and to explain the details of his astounding conversion to the brethren of that city. He was confident that they would accept him eagerly, and he felt convinced that he would be able to reveal to his erstwhile associates how wrong they had been to persecute the followers of Jesus.

Perhaps he thought that if he could bring home to the leaders of the Jews in Jerusalem the folly of their opposition to the teaching of Jesus, he would save the nation that he loved so much (Rom. 9:1-2).

But, first he had to make his peace with the ecclesia he had so brutally opposed.

He made his way to Jerusalem and presented himself to the brethren of that city. But they refused to accept him. They were afraid of him, and refused to accept his conversion as genuine. Saul, who previously had been so proud and so haughty, so incased in the ignorance of his own false understanding, again experienced humiliation, as he had to seek out one who would be prepared to introduce him to the ecclesia.

Saul and Barnabas He found him in the disciple called Barnabas, whose faith and affection had earlier come under the notice of the brethren. Saul told Barnabas of the vision on the way to Damascus, and how, in consequence, he now realised that Jesus lives as the Christ of God. He also outlined to him some of his experiences in the synagogues of Damascus, where he had attempted to preach Jesus unto the Jews.

Barnabas realised that Saul spoke the truth, and that, through the intervention of God, one of the most amazing conversions of all time had taken place. Eagerly embracing Saul, he introduced him to the

leaders* of the ecclesia, and explained to them how that he had seen the Lord Jesus on his way to Damascus and had spoken to him, outlining the adventures that he had experienced when he had boldly proclaimed the name of Jesus in the synagogues.

The right hand of fellowship was accordingly given to Saul by the ecclesia in Jerusalem, and he associated freely with its members during the time that he stayed in the city.

Saul in Jerusalem Saul did not remain long in Jerusalem. His main concern was to make personal acquaintance with Peter, and he stayed with him for fifteen days. During that time he boldly and publicly proclaimed to the Jews in Jerusalem the name of the Lord Jesus.

This led to much debating, particularly with the Hellenists in Jerusalem, called “the Grecians” (Acts 9:29) because of their endorsement of Grecian ways. Stephen was one once (Acts 6:1), and perhaps Saul sought to especially proclaim the Truth to them in a spirit of deep compunction at the part he had played in that disciple’s cruel death.

But they hated Saul because of the power of his witness, and, like the Jews of Damascus, they determined that he must die as a traitor to the cause. They went about to slay him, so that he stood daily in jeopardy of his life.

The fierceness of the opposition did not deter Saul, however. He could not erase from his mind the memory of that terrible day when in fury he consented to the death of the righteous, courageous and forthright Stephen, and attempted to make restitution by pleading with Stephen’s one-time companions in Jerusalem, believing that his amazing conversion would itself be sufficient to cause them to heed the message he now proclaimed.

But it was all in vain: the more he preached the greater became their opposition, and the more outspoken their determination that he must die.

The Vision in the Temple (Acts 22:17-21) There was no disputing the facts of Saul’s conversion. That one, so prominent and so bitter in opposition to the followers of Jesus, should so drastically change indicated strong and powerful reasons for so doing. Saul had been certain that the very evidence of his life would cause his friends to hearken to him, but it was not so. The more he preached, the more bitter became the opposition.

Meanwhile, like the other converted Jews, Saul saw no reason to

** Though Luke records that Barnabas brought Saul to the apostles (Acts 9:27), he actually only saw Peter and James (Gal. 1:18-19), so that Peter represented all the others who must have been absent at the time.*

abandon the temple. It was still the temple of Yahweh, and the worship there conducted was that laid down by His law. Saul, with the other believers, participated therein (see Acts 21:20), understanding, for the first time, its true significance. He saw behind its formalism, perceived the substance in Christ indicated by the shadow of types and sacrifices, and discovered a new meaning in worship whilst rejecting the evils of Judaism. He thus frequented the temple, and regularly engaged in prayer there.

On one occasion, a few weeks after he had arrived in Jerusalem, he was in the temple, completely absorbed in prayer, when, being in a trance, he again saw the Lord Jesus, and once more received a message from him. *"Make haste, and get quickly out of Jerusalem,"* he was told, *"because they will not receive your testimony concerning me!"*

This did not make sense to Saul. Why should they not receive his testimony? Did not his very conversion indicate the truth of his witness? Who had been his equal in persecuting the ecclesia? Surely the change wrought in such a man should demonstrate that it had not been caused by any whim of the moment!

Saul forgot that previously he had been unmoved by similar changes witnessed in the other apostles (see Acts 4:13-14).

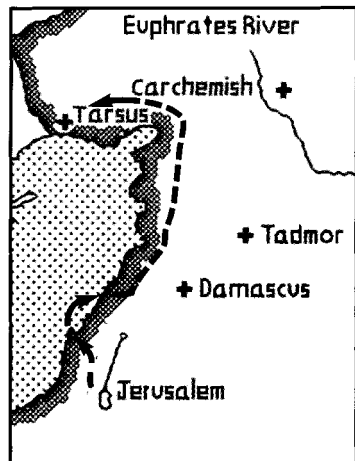
"Lord," he replied to Jesus, *"they know well enough that I went from synagogue to synagogue, arresting and beating those who believed in you, and, when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I myself was standing by and approving, and I watched over the clothes of those who killed him!"*

It seemed logical and reasonable that the Jews should now listen



to such a man who had been so active in their service. But human nature is both illogical and unreasonable. Inexorably the Lord replied to Saul: "*Go, for I shall send you far away to the Gentiles!*"

The command was peremptory: it had to be obeyed immediately. The tide of hate was rising so rapidly against Saul that delay could prove fatal. The brethren urged him to follow the advice of Jesus immediately and to leave both Jerusalem and Judea for Gentile lands. They brought him to Caesarea, where he took ship for Tarsus. But apparently he landed in Syria (possibly at Tyre or Sidon), and moving through the regions of Syria and Cilicia, made his way back to his home town of Tarsus.



Why he took this particular route is unknown. It could have been that the ship upon which he embarked at Caesarea was wrecked as it sailed up the coast, for in writing to the Corinthians, he mentions that he "three times suffered shipwreck" and on one occasion, he was in the water, floating on a plank for twenty-four hours (2Cor. 11:25). None of these occasions are mentioned in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and one of them could have taken place on this occasion.

Due to this hurried escape from Jerusalem, he remained unknown to the ecclesias of Christ throughout Judea. Nevertheless, the rumor went from one to another, and was repeated a hundred times: "Our former persecutor is now preaching the faith he once destroyed!" (Gal. 1:23).

Thanksgiving was offered in the ecclesias throughout the country, praising God for the relief that had come from the bitter persecution that they had previously experienced from the hand of this man.

Meanwhile, Saul made his way to his home town of Tarsus, there to preach the precious truths that had been revealed to him.



The Work of the Apostle Peter

(Acts 9:32 to 12:24)

Chapter 1

MIRACLES CONFIRM PETER'S AUTHORITY (Acts 9:32-43)

The conversion of Paul took place approximately AD37, so that it was about the year 40 when he visited Jerusalem and moved on to Tarsus. In the same year of his conversion (AD37). Tiberius, the Emperor of Rome, died, and Gaius, known also as Caligula, ascended the throne. Though he was a close friend of Herod Agrippa, he opposed the Jews, and proclaimed his intention of erecting a statue in the Holy of Holies. He ordered Petronius, Legate of Syria, to carry this out with force. This peril diverted the attention of the Jews from the believers, and provided a measure of rest to the previously persecuted ecclesia. Many Jews travelled to Phoenicia to demonstrate before Petronius and to appeal to him not to carry out the terrible action. He, in turn, appealed to Rome, but in vain. In fact, his own execution was ordered. But, in the meantime, on January in the year 41, Caligula was assassinated and Claudius reigned instead. These incidents diverted the attention of the Jews, which provided a measure of relief to the ecclesia, and permitted the Truth to make further advances.

Twas about the year AD40 that Paul left for Tarsus, and around about the same time, Caligula issued his edict for placing a statue in the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem.

With their main antagonist now converted, and with the attention of the Jews diverted to the threat of Rome, the ecclesias throughout Judea experienced a measure of relief.

The brethren discerned a divine Providence in these events, particularly in the conversion of Saul, and were greatly uplifted. With renewed energy they boldly proclaimed the Gospel, with the result that many more throughout Judea accepted the way of salvation (Acts 9:31).

Peter At Lydda

About eleven miles (18 kms) south-east of Joppa, there stood the town of Lydda. It is now known as Lod (cp. 1Chr. 8:12), and is the terminal for international flights into modern Israel.

In AD41 an ecclesia existed at Lydda, and Peter, who was on a preaching tour going from ecclesia to ecclesia to confirm the brethren, visited it, intending to stay there for a short time. He had just recently given hospitality to Saul for fifteen days (Gal. 1:18), and thus would have had a wonderful story of that most remarkable conversion to tell

the disciples as he sojourned among them.

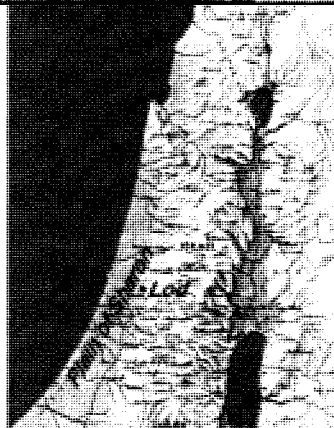
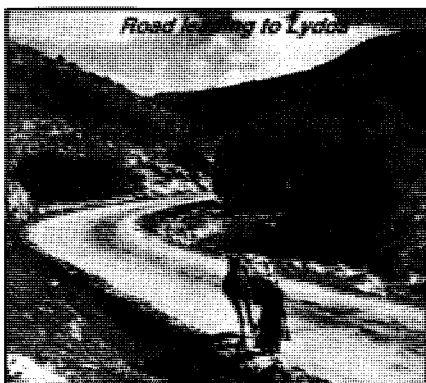
At Lydda there was a man afflicted with the palsy, who had been in that condition for eight years. Palsy is a form of paralysis. It is a disease of the brain which affects the spinal cord or particular nerves, and is usually induced by extreme intemperance.

This man's name was Aeneas, which means *Praise*, but he had very little to praise, being so grievously afflicted. Peter was brought before him, and looking down upon the paralysed man on his bed, felt the surge of Holy Spirit power within him, indicating that the man before him was a candidate for a cure. Instantly he addressed him: "*Aeneas,*" he declared, "*Jesus the Christ cures you! Get up and make your bed!*"

What an amazing statement to make to this poor man, But instantly the paralysed man rose to his feet, completely cured. The miracle revealed that the power of Christ is adequate to cure any forms of paralysis induced by intemperance. Aeneas found in the Gospel an influence that not only cured his malady, but also changed him spiritually.

The cured man realised that this great miracle should be told to others, and he desired to be the medium by which it should be done. As he was well known throughout the surrounding districts as a paralytic, all that he needed to do to testify to the power of Christ and the Gospel, was to show himself to the people. This he did, not only in Lydda, but also throughout the Plain of Sharon ("Saron" in Acts 9:35). Wherever he went, people remarked upon the amazing cure, and this gave Aeneas opportunity to explain the means.

The result was an increase of membership in the ecclesias throughout that area.



Dorcas Raised From The Dead

In the ecclesia in Joppa, there was an outstanding sister by the name of Tabitha, or,

(Acts 9:36-42)

in Greek, Dorcas. The name means *Gazelle*, an animal of great beauty, speed and shyness.

Tabitha was all that. She had a character that gave her beauty; she was swift to help others; and she was shy of self-praise. She was known for the good deeds that she did, and for her readiness to help others in need.

Great was the sorrow of the ecclesia, therefore, when Tabitha fell ill, and after a brief sickness, died.

The body of the beloved disciple was placed in an upper chamber away from the rest of the house, and two brethren were despatched to Lydda to call Peter to Joppa.

Without delay Peter obeyed the summons, and presented himself at the house in Joppa. He was conducted to the upper room, and stood, gazing down at Dorcas. With him were a number of widows, whom Dorcas had assisted. They spoke to Peter of the good deeds of this wonderful sister, and showed him some of the garments she had made for them.

The circumstances were somewhat similar to those when the Lord had brought again the daughter of Jairus from the dead. Perhaps a similar miracle could be performed now. Peter recalled how that Jesus had cleared the room before he effected the cure. He decided to do likewise. He ordered that all should leave the room, and leave him with the dead body of Dorcas. He then kneeled down and earnestly besought the Lord to grant him the power to raise this sister from the dead.

Once again he felt in himself the surging power of the Spirit.

Turning to the dead body laid out on the bed, he said: "*Tabitha,* arise!*"

Colour came back into the ashen face, the body began to pulsate with life, the eyes of Tabitha opened, and as she saw Peter, she sat up. Peter gave her his hand, and assisted her to rise. Then he called the brethren and the widows together, and presented her alive.

It was a wonderful vindication of the power of God and the resurrection. What joy in that house! What thanks rose to Yahweh as brethren and sisters gathered around Tabitha whom they loved so dearly.

The physical resurrection of Dorcas resulted in many spiritual resurrections taking place; for as the miracle of her restored life became known, many in Joppa turned to Christ. The ecclesia was greatly increased, and Peter found it necessary to remain in the town for some time.

**Peter In Joppa
(Acts 9:43)**

The Lord had instructed the apostles that when they entered a town with the objective

* "*Tabitha*" is a Syriac word, and "*Dorcas*," the Greek word, both signifying "*Gazelle*."

of preaching therein, they should enquire as to who was worthy, and there abide until they left; they were not to go from house to house (Mat. 10:11). These were wise instructions, for it meant that the preaching of the Gospel would be associated with worthy people, and the enquirers would know where to seek the apostles if they were desirous of speaking with them on the Scriptures.

In the ecclesia in Joppa, Simon was considered worthy. Perhaps he was one of the two men sent to fetch Peter from Lydda. In any case, Peter made the choice to stay with him, only to learn that he was a tanner.

A few years previously, Peter never would have stayed with a man of that trade. The art of tanning, though quite necessary, is a very smelly task, and one that was regarded as unclean by many Jews; for the tanner had often to treat the hides of animals considered unclean under the Law; and, in any case, the skins of dead animals. Because of this, the Jews required tanners to live outside the city proper, and they often made choice of being near water necessary for their trade.

So Peter made his way to the home of Simon, little realising what was ahead of him. Unbeknown to the great apostle, God was guiding his movements in a most dramatic way. Through Dorcas, Peter had been drawn from Lydda to Joppa, and there domiciled in the home of Simon the tanner.

This was all to prepare him for the conversion of Cornelius, the Gentile.

"A tanner by the sea side." The tanneries in Jaffa are situated on the seashore at the southern end of the town, and there they were in the days of "one Simon" who housed the apostle Peter. Tanners were not allowed to pursue their messy craft within the cities. In olden times they probably manufactured leather goods as well as providing the material. Primitive methods of converting raw hides into leather were much the same as those employed by the tanner pictured here on Jaffa beach. He is "unhairing" a skin after it has been soaked and treated with lime. Having stretched it on the beam he is working it with a specially-shaped knife, which partly scrapes and partly shaves off the hair. Tannage is subsequently carried out in acid bark liquors.



Chapter 2

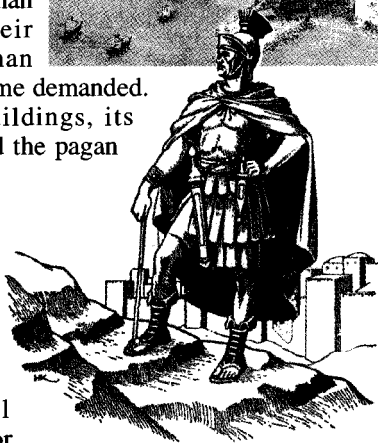
THE CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS (Acts 10)

There are features of the greatest significance in this incident. Firstly, the fact of the Truth being preached to the Gentiles by Peter, gradually overcoming his preconceptions concerning their position. Secondly, there is an amazing similarity between Cornelius, and the Centurion whose servant Christ healed (see "The Story of the Bible" vol. 5, pages 368-369), so that this incident appears as a sequel to that amazing cure. Thirdly, the careful guidance of God, is leading the apostles to a broader concept in the preaching of the Word. Notice how gently this was done, and how they were drawn from point to point. Firstly, the Gospel had been proclaimed to the Jews (Acts 2); then to the racially mixed Samaritans (Acts 8:5-25); then to a Gentile proselyte (Acts 8:26-40); now to a Roman soldier, at last establishing the principle expressed by Peter, that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34-35). To effect this, Peter had to break down any lingering prejudices of Judaism. Christ had given a lead in that direction by his interpretation of the Law, which swept aside the formalism of Judaism, but the full significance had not been brought home to the apostles, so that they could not yet see that the Gospel was to be preached to Gentiles on terms of equality with Jews. Yet certain prejudices had been broken down already, so that Peter had no qualms at dwelling with Simon the tanner. This was a stepping stone to his final break with Judaism. The fact that Cornelius was instructed to send for one who dwelt in the home of a tanner would indicate to him that the apostle had broken with the extremes of Judaistic exclusiveness, at least. Thus, unknown to the principals concerned, Providence had guided the steps taken so as to bring about an incident that would change the whole character of world history.

ABOUT thirty miles (48 kms) north of Joppa, there exists today the ruins of the ancient city of Caesarea. In the period of its glory, it was a proud and populous metropolis, named after the Roman Caesars. There the Romans had their headquarters in Judea, where the Roman Governor dwelt with all the pomp that Rome demanded. Caesarea was noted for its elegant buildings, its palaces, its open-air theatre and arena, and the pagan rites that were held there.

By AD40, however, an ecclesia had been established in Caesarea, one of its prominent members being Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8).

Among the Roman soldiers in the garrison of Caesarea, was Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian band: a section of the Legions that was given special honour as being associated with the emperor.



Cornelius signifies *The Beam Of The Sun*, and certainly he manifested greater intellectual light than his fellow-officers. He had already been impressed with the religion of the Jewish people, and realised the sanity of its worship of the one God. In fact, he was greatly interested in the Old Testament Scriptures, and found pleasure in discussing them with the Jewish leaders with whom he came in contact.

He was not a "Proselyte of Righteousness," for that would have required that he leave the Roman army; a Proselyte of Righteousness was one who submitted to circumcision, and embraced the Jewish religion in its entirety. Evidently Cornelius was a "Proselyte of the Gate," one who might approach the temple, but was not permitted to participate in its complete worship. Such an one did not submit to circumcision, nor fully subscribe to the formalism of Judaism.

Cornelius was a "devout man," which means that he was a man of deep reverence. In his case it was expressed in a practical manner: Cornelius was noted for the alms that he gave to the Jewish people, so that he was held in high esteem by all the nation of the Jews (Acts 10:4, 22). If he is identified with the Centurion of Luke 7 (as seems probable) he was noted for his love of Israel, to the extent of building a synagogue (Lk. 7:5).

Here, indeed, was a most worthy Gentile.

"Send For Peter" Cornelius had incorporated some of the Jewish customs in his worship. Jews were used to assembling at the temple each morning and afternoon (at about 3 pm, the ninth hour) for the purpose of prayer, and Cornelius had embraced the habit of praying at the same times.

On one occasion, in the afternoon, he was giving himself earnestly to prayer when suddenly he saw clearly in a vision, the appearance of an angel. The angel approached the kneeling soldier, and addressed him: "*Cornelius!*"

The soldier who would have faced a hundred enemies without fear, stared at the angel in terror; his divine visitor looking steadily at him. "*What is it?*" he asked.

The angel replied: "*Your prayers and your alms have risen before God as a memorial. You must now send some men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is surnamed Peter; he is staying with Simon a tanner, whose house stands by the sea. He shall tell you words whereby you and all your house shall be saved.*"

That was all; the angel withdrew and was just as suddenly gone.

But it was enough for Cornelius. Ever since he had heard Jesus he had been troubled in mind, desiring a greater understanding of the things of God. Judaism did not satisfy, and so he had doubtless made it a matter of prayer (Jas. 1:3). Now he had the opportunity of

learning more about the purpose of God, and what he should do.

He called two of his servants, and in addition, a “devout soldier of them that waited on him continually” (Acts 10:7).

Who was that soldier who received such an honourable mention? Most likely the servant of the centurion whom Christ had healed (Lk. 7:2). No better messenger could be sent; for Peter would have recognised him. Having instructed them as to what they should do and say, Cornelius sent them on their way.

Why did the angel instruct Cornelius to send for Peter, when there were other believers near at hand?

Because it was necessary for somebody of outstanding authority to perform this important mission. If anybody of lesser standing had baptised Cornelius, the validity of the action would probably have been questioned.

Peter's Vision: Rise and Eat (vv. 9-16)

On the morrow, about noon, the messengers from Caesarea neared the town of Joppa. Meanwhile, a drama was taking place upon the flat roof of the home of Simon, the Tanner.

Peter had ascended to this place for communion and prayer. It was noon, a time when the hands of the clock point toward heaven, and the sun is immediately overhead, and appropriately Peter centered his thoughts in that direction also.

Suddenly, unaccountably, he became very hungry. This was most

WORTHY SEQUEL TO A NOTABLE ACT OF FAITH

Was Cornelius the centurion of Luke 7? It seems probable that he was. It is recorded in both accounts that the centurion was a lover of Israel and noted for his almsgiving (Acts 10:22; Lk. 7:5). Jesus declared of him, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (Lk. 7:9), and of Cornelius it is testified that he was “devout and prayed always” (Acts 10:2), and that his prayers and alms came up as a memorial before God. Moreover, Peter testified of Cornelius that he had heard the Lord preach (Acts 10:37), so that it is obvious that he had met Jesus, and that Peter recognised him. Like Cornelius, the centurion of Luke 7 was described as pious, faithful, humble and generous. He did not presume upon his position, but recognising the subordinate status of Gentiles sought aid of Jewish elders to intercede for him (Lk. 7:3). With spiritual discernment, he recognised in Jesus one greater than flesh, and felt that his house was unworthy to receive such a visitor. Christ's act of mercy in healing his servant evidently resulted in a more complete worship of the God of Israel by the centurion, so that he induced his whole house to follow his example (Acts 10:2). This prepared the way for the ultimate complete conversion of himself and his household (Acts 10:44); a worthy sequel to a notable act of faith.

unusual for that time of the day. Usually the Jews have their main meal at night, so that Peter would not normally feel the pangs of hunger at mid-day. It was obviously supernaturally imposed, but it fitted in very well with his thoughts and feelings at that time, for with the great success attending his efforts, Peter had a hunger to preach the Word.

He gave himself unto prayer, in an ecstasy of feeling, and falling into a trance, became impervious to his normal surroundings. Suddenly it seemed to him as though the heavens opened, and he saw a huge white linen sheet let down by the four corners. As it was lowered, he saw that it was filled with all kinds of animals, creeping things and birds. Then he heard a voice: "*Rise, Peter, sacrifice and eat!*"

The word translated "kill" in the A.V. is elsewhere rendered "sacrifice" (see Acts 14:13, 18; 1Cor. 10:20, etc.). Peter was invited as a priest to preside over the sacrifice of such offerings, and to assuage his hunger by taking his portion as a priest would in the temple.

But Peter was appalled at such a suggestion.

The beasts, birds and creeping things that he saw were "unclean" according to the Law of Moses. It was against all his training from childhood, all his beliefs, to eat such food as that.

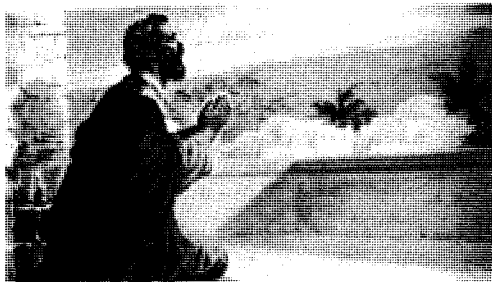
"No! No! My Lord," Peter replied to the Voice; "*I have never eaten anything common or unclean!*"

But the Voice replied: "*What God has cleansed, you must not count as common!*"

What did it mean? Peter did not know. As he was considering the matter, the invitation came to him again, but again the apostle refused. A third time the request was made, but Peter refused to obey because his mind was fixed on the principles of the Law. The sheet was then withdrawn into heaven.

Peter pondered the vision, but could make nothing of it. True, the fact that the appeal was made to him three times was significant, for in a spiritual sense, three is the number of completeness.* There was something complete and final about the vision, therefore; but Peter could not comprehend what it was he was supposed to understand. He

* The number three has great significance in the experiences of Peter. Earlier he saw the three figures of the Transfiguration and urged the building of three tabernacles (Mat. 17:4); he denied his Master three times (Lk. 22:61-62); he was questioned as to his loyalty three times (Jn. 21:17), and in Acts 10:19 three men were sent to him from Cornelius. The number three is also used in connection with the joy of life out of darkness as seen in the trial of Abraham which resulted in the joyous promises (Gen. 22:4); the illness of Hezekiah, which brought salvation from the Assyrians, and laid the basis for a seed of the royal house of David (2Kgs. 20:5); the rescue of Jonah from the belly of the fish that brought redemption to Nineveh (Jonah 1:17); the raising of the Author of Life from the darkness of the grave (Mat. 12:40). — Ed.



was perplexed at what it signified.

Meanwhile, the three messengers from Cornelius had arrived at the house and were enquiring of Simon as to whether a man named Peter

lodged with him. At the same time, Peter was told by the Spirit: *"There are three men looking for you! Come, get up and go down, and have no hesitation about accompanying them, for it is I who have sent them."*

Accordingly, Peter descended and presented himself before them.

"I am the man you are looking for," he declared. *"What is your reason for coming?"*

The messengers looked at him in surprise; how did he know they were seeking him? However, they replied: *"Centurion Cornelius, a good man who reverences God and enjoys a high reputation among the whole Jewish nation, was instructed by a holy angel to send for you to his house and to listen to what you have to say."*

The messengers were invited into the home of Simon, and provided with accommodation for the night.

At the House of Cornelius

The request of Cornelius the centurion gave Peter some concern. Should he obey it? The angelic Voice he had heard had told him to do so. Moreover, he doubtless recalled the time when the Lord Jesus had obeyed the request of a centurion, and had performed a notable miracle on his servant. If that centurion were Cornelius, the servant who that night lodged in the home of Simon was the one who had been healed. Why did Cornelius want to see him? the apostle possibly wondered. Was it to attempt a further miracle?

As yet Peter did not realise the significance of the sheet let down by its four corners. He did not understand that the white, linen sheet which stood for righteousness, was to be offered to Gentiles (typified by the unclean beasts, birds and creeping things) throughout the four corners of the earth. Nevertheless, he made preparations for his journey that night, arranging for six brethren from the local ecclesia (Acts 10:23; 11:12) to accompany him on his strange mission.

They travelled up along the Plain of Sharon all that day, and on the following day arrived at Caesarea, the Roman capital of Judea. The very environment of the place was foreign, like the contents of the sheet that Peter had seen in vision. They saw on all sides the symbols of Roman power and oppression: the soldiers' barracks, the haughty Roman matrons in the streets, the hard, callous legionaries, the elegant buildings, the viaduct conveying fresh water from afar, the palace of the Governor.

It was all indicative of Gentile power and efficiency, and reflected on the state of subservience to which Jewry had sunk. That which was once the Kingdom of God, had now become subject to the Kingdom of men.

Yet there was a drama in Peter's entrance into this Roman domain with his six companions from the Joppa ecclesia; for he, too, was a commander, a soldier of the faith (2Tim. 2:3), and in entering Caesarea, he virtually was invading the province of Rome! Faith would conquer in the heart of a man seeking the honour of the Almighty.

The messengers conducted him to the entrance of an elegant building, the local residence of Cornelius. As the humble Galilean fisherman entered, the Roman centurion came forward to greet him, falling down at his feet to pay him reverence. Peter, however, was no pope; he did not desire such adoration from any. Moreover, he was filled with doubts himself, and felt completely unworthy of any honour paid him. So he raised Cornelius, bidding him to stand upright.

"Stand up," he said kindly, "I am only a man myself!"

Side by side the Roman centurion and the Jewish fisherman walked into the house, conversing as they did so. The companions of Peter must have considered this action with amazement, for normally no Jew would accompany a Roman in that way, but would take care to remain completely separate. On the other hand, normally no Roman centurion would humble himself to one of a subject nation as Cornelius did to Peter.

Inside the spacious guest chamber, Peter saw a large company gathered together, for Cornelius had invited his relations and his near friends to meet him. Remembering the cure that Jesus had effected on the servant of the centurion, such a company would be anxious to see and hear the apostle.

The strange experiences of the last two days, the time Peter had, in which to think over the vision carefully, the reception he received from Cornelius, now caused the apostle to realise the significance of what he had seen and heard on the flat roof-top of Simon's house. So he addressed Cornelius and the assembled gathering: *"You know that it is illegal for a Jew to join or accost anyone belonging to another nation," he began, "but God has shown me that I must not call any man common or unclean, and so I have come without any demur when I was sent for. Now I want to know why you sent for me?"*



Cornelius gave reply: *"Three days ago, at this very hour I was praying in my house at three o'clock in the afternoon, when a man stood before me in shining dress, saying, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, your alms are remembered by God. You must send to Joppa and summon Simon who is surnamed Peter; he is staying in the house of Simon a tanner beside the sea.' So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Well now, here we are all present before God to listen to what the Lord has commanded you to say."*

Peter's Speech

What a wonderful invitation! What a significant moment in world history! The Truth was about to be preached for the first time to Gentiles in the name of Christ Jesus; the turning point had come which would result in the world being turned upside-down by the preaching of the apostles (Acts 17:6). It was the initial attack on the citadel of Paganism which will result ultimately in all nations being made subject to Christ in the Age to come.

Peter now perceived the full import of the vision on the roof-top, and the tremendous significance of his mission. In fact, the scales had fallen from his spiritual vision as they had from the eyes of Saul. He perceived the vast difference between Judaism and the Law of Moses, so much so, that in his address to the company in Cornelius' house, he quoted from the Law itself to justify his action!

He commenced his speech by quoting from Deuteronomy 10:17. He declared: *"I see quite plainly that God is no respecter of persons: but that he who reverences Him and practises righteousness, is accepted with Him. You know the teaching that He sent to the sons of*

Peter's Fifth Address

GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS

1. Those who work righteousness among Jews and Gentiles are equally acceptable with God (vv. 34-35).

2. Jesus who is Lord and Christ was sent to Israel preaching a Gospel of peace (v. 36), thus destroying previous enmity (Eph. 2:15-17).

3. The facts of Christ's preaching were shown to Cornelius but are summed up in the declaration that Jesus was God manifest in flesh for the deliverance of humanity from sin and death (v. 38). Thus responsibility rested upon Cornelius.

4. The apostles were specially selected witnesses of the Lord's death and corporeal resurrection (vv. 39-41).

5. There is need to accept their evidence, and submit to the requirements because knowledge implies a responsibility to resurrectional judgment (v. 42).

6. Christ's mission is foretold in the prophets, and reveals the necessity of baptism in his name for the remission of sins (v. 43).

Israel when He preached peace by Jesus Christ (who is Lord of all); you know how it spread over the whole of Judea, starting from Galilee after the baptism preached by John — how God consecrated Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went about doing good and curing all who were harassed by the devil; for God was with him. As to what he did in Judea and Jerusalem, we can testify to that. They slew him and hanged him on a stake, but God raised him on the third day, and allowed him to be seen, not by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had previously selected, by us who ate and drank with him after his resurrection from the dead, when he enjoined us to preach to the people, testifying that this was he whom God has appointed to be judge of the living and of the dead. All the prophets testify to it, that everyone who believes in him is to receive remission of sins through his name.”

This is a brief epitome of Peter’s speech, contained in the Acts, but it must not be thought that it was all that Cornelius knew of the Truth. Cornelius was familiar with the teaching of Jesus. “That word you know,” Peter had said. Had not Jesus healed the servant of the centurion? Had he not declared: “I have not seen such great faith, no not in all Israel?” Cornelius had hearkened to the words of the Lord Jesus and believed; he had intimate knowledge of how he went about doing good by the miraculous power that Yahweh had bestowed upon him. No doubt he had been told that this man, whose divine power he acknowledged, had been crucified in Jerusalem; but now he heard the thrilling news that he had also been raised from the dead. As his own servant had been healed when on the point of death, he could not doubt the miracle of the resurrection.

Cornelius was joyfully prepared to accept the message of salvation, even though it imposed certain sacrifices to him. For example, he was a soldier, and it was obvious that such a profession was inconsistent with the call of the Gospel. Peter had quietly pressed that point. He had declared that whilst God is no respecter of persons, those who would be accepted of Him must “work righteousness,” by demonstrating their belief by action. And to what was Cornelius called? To bloodshed and violence? By no means. “The doctrine preaching peace,” declared Peter (v. 36). This placed an obligation on this soldier to change his profession and do likewise. It would have been most inconsistent for Cornelius to accept a doctrine of peace, to follow a Saviour who had submitted to a cruel death, and still retain his position in the Roman army. As Peter later wrote: “Christ has given us an example that we should walk in his steps...” (1Pet. 2:21).

Baptism of Cornelius Cornelius, however, was prepared to accept all the conditions attached to the call of the Gospel. But now a problem faced those Jewish believers with Peter:

Should a Gentile be baptised as were Jewish believers, or was it first necessary for them to be circumcised and go through a form of proselytisation?

This question was instantly resolved. Early in the discourse of Peter, there had been seen a visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit coming upon the company of Gentiles listening to the exposition.

It instantly resolved all doubts. Peter recalled the words of the Master: "John indeed baptised with water; but you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 11:16). In the case of Cornelius and his company, the normal order was reversed, in that usually the Holy Spirit was given through the imposition of the hands of the apostles (Acts 8:18); but on this occasion it was given direct from the Lord in order to guide Peter and his company, as well as the ecclesia generally, into the knowledge that the Gospel was now open to Gentiles on terms of equality with Jews. It was a cause of great astonishment to the six who accompanied Peter, that Gentiles should receive the Holy Spirit as well as the Jewish believers, but it certainly swept aside any scruples as to whether these Gentiles should be baptised. Rejoicing at the goodness of God, Peter asked: "*Can anyone refuse water that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?*"

He paused for a moment, but none of the six objected. He then commanded the Gentiles to be baptised. Joyfully they submitted, to rise from the water new creatures in Christ Jesus. They were no longer Gentiles, but the true "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). All the barriers that once existed between the apostles and Cornelius as Jew and Gentile were destroyed (Eph. 2:15-17). Earnestly the centurion pleaded with the Galilean fisherman to remain in Caesarea a few days longer in order that he might receive further instruction at his hand. A door of entrance had been opened to the world at large.

PARALLELISM IN THE BAPTISMS OF SAUL AND CORNELIUS

• The hearts of Ananias and Saul are first prepared.	• The hearts of Peter and Cornelius are first prepared.
• The drama in the house of Judas in the street called Straight.	• The drama in the house of Simon the Tanner by the sea.
• Ananias is hesitant and questions the wisdom of the mission.	• Peter is hesitant and questions the wisdom of the mission.
• Ananias doubts whether the Truth should be preached to a persecuting Jew.	• Peter doubts whether the Truth should be preached to a Gentile.
• Saul unhesitatingly obeys the call to baptism.	• Cornelius unhesitatingly obeys the call to baptism.

Chapter 3

CONTROVERSY IN THE ECCLESIA

(Acts 11:1-18)

The preaching of the Gospel to Gentiles should have been a matter of rejoicing to the ecclesia as evidencing the great mercy of Yahweh. Instead it became the cause of bickering and contention, creating a wound that refused to be healed. Argument led to the development of the Judaistic heresy which plagued Paul wherever he took the Gospel, and which ultimately gave rise to the Apostasy. The seeds of this were apparent even before Peter preached the gospel to Cornelius, and was the cause of him taking witnesses with him when he was invited to Caesarea. They are described as being "of the circumcision," Jews who were zealous of the Law. Perhaps before Peter left with the messengers of Cornelius, there had been some discussion as to whether such action should be taken, and the witnesses selected were among those who had voiced their opposition to such a reversal of tradition. In the face of God's obvious endorsement of Cornelius, when the Holy Spirit was seen to come upon him and his associates (v. 24), these witnesses were silenced, and Cornelius was baptised. In Jerusalem, however, the action of Peter created a party now known as "they of the circumcision" which was determined to maintain the traditional attitude of Judaism. Peter had anticipated this, and therefore prevailed upon the six witnesses who had gone with him to Caesarea to also return with him to Jerusalem.

 HE news quickly reached Jerusalem that Peter had preached the Truth to Cornelius the centurion, and that he and his company were baptised. This caused serious misgivings on the part of some, and led to controversy within the Ecclesia. Soon there arose a party called "they of the circumcision" (Acts 11:2) which agitated for the retention of Jewish exclusiveness. They claimed that no Gentile should be baptised until he was circumcised.

Peter Defends His Action in Baptising Cornelius

Peter anticipated that opposition would be expressed to the work in Caesarea. After all, he himself would have taken the same stand prior to receiving the vision in Joppa, and witnessing the Holy Spirit bestowed upon the Gentiles. Therefore, he prevailed upon the six brethren who had travelled with him from Joppa to Caesarea to continue with him to Jerusalem, that they might testify as to what happened.

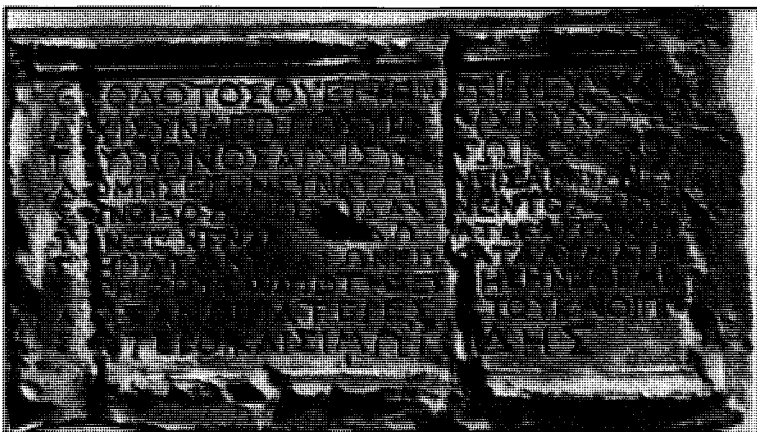
No sooner had Peter met with the ecclesia in Jerusalem than the charge was bluntly levelled at him: *"You visited and ate with the uncircumcised,"* they accused.

Despite the esteem in which Peter was held in the ecclesia, the atmosphere was electric. But Peter carefully rehearsed the matter before them, explaining in detail and in order what had happened, appealing to the six witnesses who were with him to corroborate what he said, supporting it with the words of the Lord Jesus, who declared that the time would come when he would baptise with the Holy Spirit. He concluded his speech by saying: *"At the beginning of my message the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as on us at the beginning: so I was mindful of the Lord's message, how he said, 'John did indeed baptise with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.' Now since God granted them the same gift that He gave us after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?"*

This reasoning was unanswerable. Peter transferred responsibility for the action from himself to God, so that if "they of the circumcision" wished to contend with anybody, it must be with Him.

This completely silenced the opposition. They quieted down and glorified God, saying: *"Then God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."*

Unfortunately, it was not long afterwards, that circumstances caused the controversy to flare up once more. This was due to the successful preaching of Paul, and on that occasion, even Peter was affected by the teaching of the Judaisers (Gal. 2:11-12).



"Then there arose certain of the synagogue which is called the synagogue of the Libertines" (Acts 6:9). Illustrated is an inscription from the tomb of rabbi Gamaliel at Beth She'arim.

Chapter 4

PERSECUTION SPREADS THE GOSPEL (Acts 11:19-30)

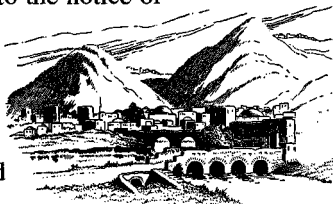
The bitter persecution that had been initiated by Saul helped, rather than hindered, the spread of the Gospel. Many believers fled Jerusalem to escape arrest, and carried the doctrine of Christ with them. It was particularly successful in Antioch, and soon a large ecclesia was established in that city to become a centre for the proclamation of the Truth in many parts.

THE persecution initiated by Saul affected the ecclesia in Jerusalem like a large stone thrown into a pond. The great splash in the centre forms ripples that extend out to the very extremities. That was the case as the disciples of the Lord fled from the persecution to distant parts. Some travelled north to Phoenicia, others to the island of Cyprus, and some to far-away Antioch, the capital of Syria on the river Orontes about 300 miles (480 kms) north of Jerusalem. Wherever they went, these disciples visited the synagogues and proclaimed the doctrine of salvation to the Jews only.

However, some of them who were from Cyprus and Cyrene, being Hellenist Jews, were more liberal in their outlook.

The Antioch Ecclesia Is Formed When they arrived in the city of Antioch, they did not observe this exclusiveness and introduced the Gospel to the notice of Gentiles.

Antioch was a busy metropolis with a population of about 500,000 people. The preaching of these Hellenist Jews to the Grecians of that city was marked by outstanding success, for many believed and turned unto the Lord.



Barnabas Sent to Supervise the Work (vv. 22-24)

A report of these doings reached the ecclesia in Jerusalem. Perhaps this was through the Judaisers in the meeting, intended as a warning, for they would have viewed these proceedings with doubt, as providing further evidence of liberalism on the part of certain in the ecclesia, urging that some restrictive measures should be taken.

Accordingly, it was proposed to send somebody to travel through those parts where ecclesias had sprung up, that the work might be

properly supervised, and, if necessary, further assistance be supplied from Jerusalem. Choice fell upon Barnabas, who was a native of Cyprus (Acts 4:36), and he was instructed to visit ecclesias in foreign parts as far north as Antioch.

Barnabas was an admirable choice for the work. He was a warm-hearted brother of fearless courage. He had shown his liberality toward the poor in Jerusalem (Acts 4:37), and his fearlessness in introducing Saul to the ecclesia (Acts 9:27). Now he took with him a message of great encouragement, demonstrating by his own zeal and dedication what was expected of the new converts.

In most of the centres, the Truth had been proclaimed to Jews only, and in those parts Barnabas encountered no problem. But in Antioch it was different. There the Truth had been preached to Gentiles as well, and many had accepted it. Barnabas, fresh from the discussions in Jerusalem, where he had heard Peter defending his action in baptising Cornelius, realised that the purpose of Yahweh required that the word of salvation should be preached to the Gentiles, and therefore rejoiced when he saw the grace of God in Antioch manifested in the number that had accepted it.

He gave the ecclesial exhortation, calling upon the brethren to “cleave unto the Lord” with “purpose of heart” (Acts 11:23). He warned them that they could not just drift into the Kingdom of God. They needed a policy, and should set themselves the objective of obtaining the Kingdom (see Deu. 32:36-37; Phil. 3:13; 1Tim. 4:15). By such means they would be strengthened to “cleave unto the Lord.” The word for “cleave” in the Greek is *prosmenein* and signifies “to abide with.” If they lived with a purpose, with an objective in view, they would more likely continue to abide with the Lord, and not drift back into the world from whence they came.

The example of Barnabas gave point to his exhortation. He was good in character, strong in faith, and vigorous in the Word. Full of the Holy Spirit, he gave himself to the preaching of the Truth, and as a result “much people were added unto the Lord.”

Barnabas Seeks the Help of Saul **(Acts 11:25-26)**

Barnabas could see that Antioch provided a most fruitful centre for the preaching of the Word, and sought for some assistance in its proclamation. He recalled the vigour of Saul, and remembered that he had left Jerusalem for Tarsus. Tarsus was not far from Antioch, and Barnabas decided to move on to that city to seek Saul and recruit him for the work at Antioch.

So once again the two disciples met. On the previous occasion Barnabas had introduced Saul to the ecclesia; now he invited him to co-operate in the work at Antioch. On his part, Saul was ready, for he had been waiting for such an opportunity. He left Tarsus in company

with Barnabas and came to Antioch where, with characteristic zeal, he threw himself into the work. There the two friends remained an entire year, assembling with the ecclesia and teaching the people.

Soon a large ecclesia was established there. It became known throughout Antioch as the ecclesia of the Christ. The disciples were called "Christians," or followers of Christ (i.e., Christ's Ones), first in Antioch. It was natural for Gentiles to call the disciples Christians, because they proclaimed that Jesus is the Christ; but as the Jews rejected this doctrine as blasphemy, they would not associate the disciples of the Lord with their Messiah.

Famine Predicted: Among the gifts of the Spirit was that of **Help Sent by Saul and Barnabas (vv. 27-30)** prophesying. This related both to the forth-telling of the things of God as well as foretelling future events. The main work of such prophets, however, was to instruct unto edification and comfort (1Cor. 14:3); but when moved so to do, they also predicted things to come.

Some disciples, possessing the Spirit-gift of prophecy, made their way from Jerusalem to Antioch, primarily to instruct the members of the newly formed ecclesia in the deeper things of God. One of these prophets, whose name was Agabus, stood up in the meeting and predicted by the Holy Spirit that there would be a great famine throughout the world. It was obvious that if this happened, the believers of Judea would be more greatly affected than those of other parts, for unbelieving Jews would take the opportunity of oppressing them by denying them food.

This was an opportunity for the Gentile believers to show their love and consideration for their Jewish brethren. They determined to take up a collection to support their brethren in Judea, and they called upon Barnabas and Saul to convey it to Jerusalem.

The famine came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. His reign is noted for several famines. Josephus (*Ant. Jews*, 3:15:3; 20:2:5; 20:5:2) indicates that the one commencing in AD44 was particularly severe as far as Judea was concerned. His statement is confirmed by Eusebius. Thus the prophecy of Agabus was fulfilled shortly after his visit to Antioch. His name means *Locust*, an insect that is noted in Israel for famine and trouble. The Acts of the Apostles records two prophecies by Agabus, and both of them predicted trouble (see Acts 21:10)!

Thus once again Saul found himself back in the city of Jerusalem; this time on an errand of mercy calculated to bind the Gentile and Jewish ecclesias more closely together.



Chapter 5

RENEWED PERSECUTION BY HEROD

It was about the year 44, and King Herod Agrippa 1, was at the height of his power. His oratory in Rome had assisted Claudius to obtain the throne, and the emperor was grateful for the assistance of his friend. Claudius loaded Herod with honours, so that when he returned home it was on the flood tide of his success, and with Judea, Samaria, Abilene and Lebanon added to his jurisdiction. He was anxious to foster the sense of Jewish nationalism, to satisfy the Sadducees, to be supported by the Pharisees, and to be popular with the multitude. The complete suppression of Christianity was the quickest and cheapest way to win general approval and popularity. Hence the Herodian persecution commenced.

HEROD Agrippa 1 was a man of ruthless ambition who combined external devotion to Judaism with moral laxity. He was completely unscrupulous, and would allow nothing to stand in the way of his personal success. He desired popularity with the multitude, and saw the oppression of the followers of Jesus would secure it. Moreover, it would satisfy his own adherence to Judaism.

He therefore set about oppressing certain prominent members of the ecclesia.

Martyrdom of James the Apostle (Acts 12:1-2)

First he laid hands on James the apostle, the brother of John. Very little is known of James, for the only references to him in the Acts of the Apostles are in chapters 1:13 and 12:2. However, the fact that Herod moved against him indicates that he was very prominent in the work of the Truth at that time.

James was arrested and executed "by the sword," which means that he was publicly beheaded. The death of this noble man plunged the ecclesia into mourning and fear again, but gave great satisfaction to the leaders of the Jews. Herod had gained his point. He had pleased the people he wanted to win to his cause, he had demonstrated his regard for Judaism, and he had struck a blow at the ecclesia. He claimed that he was a scrupulous observer of the Law, but God saw into his wicked heart. The righteous judgment of the God of Israel made angry by such hypocrisy, slumbered for a time, and then blazed forth against the king.

Peter Is Imprisoned (vv. 3-5)

Having won the approval of the Jews by the murder of James, Herod Agrippa sought to

add to his popularity by arresting Peter. He intended to execute him also, but as it was on the eve of Passover, and the king was meticulous in his observance of the formalism of the Law, he had him flung into prison to await the conclusion of the feast.

Herod Agrippa saw nothing inconsistent in such action. He did not see how incongruous it was for him to strictly observe a religious ceremony, whilst, at the same time, harboring murder in his heart. The priests were even worse than the king, however, for they supported him in his action whilst hypocritically leading the people in worship.

Peter languished in prison during the week's celebration of the feast of unleavened bread. Four bands of four soldiers were ordered to keep watch over him, taking in turns the four watches of the night. The intention of Herod was to bring him out after the completion of the feast for public execution.

The mourning ecclesia met to consider the matter. The brethren had but one recourse: to throw themselves on the mercy of Yahweh and beseech His help. This they did during the whole of that week. It was a most appropriate time for such a request. Passover celebrated Israel's deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh, and now the true "Israel of God" sought a similar deliverance. The ecclesia met daily to pour out fervent prayer unto God.

Peter Escapes From Prison

At last the feast came to an end. Herod determined that on the morrow he would bring forth Peter and arrange for his execution. The apostle knew this, and yet, that night, with a calmness of faith that contrasted with all the fevered activity about him, he peacefully slept between the two soldiers to whom he was bound with chains.

What a contrast Peter presents under those conditions to the restless way in which he had acted in the court of Caiaphas when his Lord had been taken captive! On that occasion, in panic, he harshly repudiated the accusation that he was a follower of Jesus, and swore with an oath that he did not know the man*! But much had happened to Peter since then. He had learned the lesson of faith and had gained spiritual maturity.

Peter, calmly sleeping between the soldiers, presented a picture of faith resisting fleshly power. Every precaution had been taken against the possibility of escape, as it had formerly with regard to the Lord Jesus, when his grave was secured by the guard (Mat. 27:62-66). Not

** Perhaps being concerned at any implication with Jesus, and unwilling to be identified with him in the trial, or being called as a witness to verify the claims made against the Lord. Judas had doubtless conveyed to the prosecutors that the statement made by Peter previously (Mat. 16:16) would incriminate the accused; and that statement became the grounds of their judgment against the Lord Jesus (ch. 26:63). — Ed.*

only was Peter bound with a double chain attached to two members of the quaternion of soldiers placed over him, but two others were on watch at the first and second ward, and the great, iron entrance gate was securely fastened. The drama was heightened by the attitude of the other parties: the king, confident in his diplomatic ability and schemes; the slumbering city, unaware of the drama being worked out in the prison; the praying, anxious ecclesia, not knowing what would happen to the great apostle...

Peter slept. But as he did so, an angel stood by him, and suddenly the prison was illuminated with light. Peter was shaken into wakefulness, and as the startled eyes of the apostle looked into the face of the angel, he heard him commanding: *"Arise up quickly!"*

Peter did so, to find the chains fall off his hands.

"Bind on your belt and sandals," ordered the angel.

Peter did so. Everything was done calmly, quietly, without fuss, though it seemed completely unreal to Peter.

"Now put on your cloak, and follow me," instructed the angel.



Peter did so as though in a dream.

They passed the first guard and the second; they reached the iron gate which led into the city, and to the amazement of the apostle it automatically opened and they were able to walk through without disturbing the guards who stood as though in a trance. In the street of the city, they walked along one block, when suddenly the angel departed, leaving Peter on his own. He looked around him in astonishment. It was real! He had been delivered from prison and death. As Peter came to himself, he said: *"Now I know for certain, that the Lord sent his angel, and rescued me from the hand of Herod, and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."*

Until then he had thought it was all a dream.

The Astonished Ecclesia

Having got his bearings, Peter hastened to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, for her home was a centre where the ecclesia used to gather. Though it was late at night, a large company of brethren and sisters were met together to pray on Peter's behalf. There was special urgency about their prayers that night, for they knew that

on the morrow the apostle would be executed.

Meanwhile, Peter knocked at the door of the gate which had been carefully closed, perhaps because of fear of the Jews. A young sister by name of Rhoda came to hearken. She recognised Peter's voice and, overwhelmed with joy, rushed back to tell the others, though in her excitement she neglected to let Peter in.

"Peter is at the front gate!" she exclaimed.

"You are mad!" they replied.

But she insisted that it was the voice of Peter that she had heard.

*"Nonsense, it is his messenger,"** suggested the assembled company, realising that she must have heard somebody.

They had assembled for the specific purpose of praying for the release of Peter, but when it had been effected they refused to believe it! How like us all! Let us realise, when we turn to God in prayer, that He can do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20), and we must place implicit faith in both His ability to act, and His wisdom to refrain from granting our requests as necessary (see Heb. 11:6). James was executed, but Peter was delivered: the former experience revealed the extent to which a man must be prepared to give himself to Yahweh; the latter experience showed that He overlooks all such matters.

Meanwhile, Peter continued to knock, wondering why they refused him entrance. At last others hastened to the door, and when they opened it, they saw to their astonishment that Rhoda was right, and Peter had escaped prison and was now at their gate.

Excitedly they began to speak, asking him questions; but he motioned them to be silent, and explained how that the Lord had arranged for his escape.

"Go and let James and the brethren know of this," he told them.

It was not wise, nor safe, for Peter to remain at large with the ecclesia, and therefore, having given these instructions, he followed the advice of the Lord, and departed to hide himself in another place (Mat. 10:23).

Consternation Among the Authorities Meanwhile, there was consternation in the prison. Early in the morning, at the break of day, the soldiers discovered that the prisoner had escaped. How had he done so? They knew the penalty demanded of a guard who allowed a prisoner to escape, and they therefore feared for their own fate.

They did not fear in vain. Flesh cannot lay its hands on Yahweh's saints with impunity. The guards received the summons from Herod to bring forth the prisoner. They had to confess that he had escaped. A

* The word "angel" can signify "messenger" (i.e., whether divine or mortal), and is so rendered in Mat. 11:10; Mk. 1:2; Lk. 7:24, 9:52; Jas. 2:25.

search was instituted, but in vain. No one could explain how it had happened, and it seemed to the authorities as though it had been arranged by the jailors themselves. Accordingly they were tortured and put to death.

Judgment on Herod Agrippa

Shortly after this, Herod Agrippa visited Caesarea. He was at the height of his political power and prestige, and dealt with his enemies with a high hand. He was particularly incensed with the districts of Tyre and Sidon at the time, for they were resisting his authority, and he threatened to punish them by war. This affected the whole of Phoenicia. There was reciprocal trade between the two countries, the timber of Lebanon being exchanged for the wheat of Judea. War would cut off the food supplies of the northern territory, so that it was to its advantage to make peace with Herod.

The emissaries of that country did so through one Blastus, the king's chamberlain. Winning him over to their cause, they pleaded for peace with Herod. This was granted at a special games ceremony held in Caesarea in honour of Claudius the Emperor. On the second day of the games, Herod Agrippa, clothed in a beautiful garment of silver which reflected the light of the sun, presented himself before the people. Taking his seat upon the raised judgment throne, he made a public oration to them. The servile mob, anxious to flatter the king, gave instant applause: "*It is the voice of a god, and not of a man!*" they shouted.

This claimed that he was equal to the Emperor who was considered as a god and worshipped. Herod loved the adulation and revelled in it. But his elevated seat of honour became his *Bema* or Judgment Seat of disgrace. He was smitten by an angel, and suffered a terrible and painful disease. Josephus records that five days later he was dead, at the age of 54 years.

So Yahweh dealt with this persecutor of His people. The ecclesia recognised his death as divine judgment, and was encouraged by the fact that God overshadows the lives of all. The experiences of James, Peter and of Herod Agrippa emphasised the fact of divine Providence, so that with renewed resolve and faith, the brethren gave themselves to the work of the Truth, and the Word of God grew and multiplied (Acts 12:24).

The First Journey of the Apostle Paul

(Acts 12:25 to 15:41)

Chapter 1

SAUL: THE INSTRUMENT COMMISSIONED (Acts 12:25 to 13:4)

Having been thoroughly prepared for the work, the time arrived, in the purpose of Yahweh, for Saul to be specifically chosen and commissioned with the task of preaching the Truth to Gentiles. It is important to recognise the thoroughness of this preparation. Saul was not sent out before he was ready, and some eight years elapsed between his conversion and his commission. During that time his knowledge of the Word grew, equipping him to become an efficient preacher for Christ. As the apostle now looked back over his life, he was able to perceive throughout, a divine Providence guiding his development to this end from early childhood. His strict Jewish upbringing, his freeborn status as a Roman citizen, his education in Greek learning, and above all else, the special tuition and wonderful revelations that he had received from God through the Lord Jesus, and which provided him with an understanding of the divine purpose second to none (2Cor. 12:1-4), all helped to equip him to become an ambassador of Christ to both Jew and Gentile. Thus he wrote to the Galatians: "God separated me from birth, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen" (Gal. 1:15-16). That time had now arrived.

HAVING completed their errand of mercy in Jerusalem (see p. 138), Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch, taking John Mark with them. Mark was cousin to Barnabas (Col. 4:10, see R.V.), and his keen enthusiasm for the Truth gave promise of excellent help in its proclamation.

Mary, the mother of Mark, was sister to Barnabas (Col. 4:10, where the word *aneposios*, denotes "cousin," as in the R.V. and Concordant versions), so that it is most likely that Barnabas and Saul would have stayed with her during their time in Jerusalem. If so, they would have had personal experience of the drama that took place, when the brethren met in that home to pray for Peter (Acts 12:12), and were surprised at his amazing release. They, therefore, would be able to provide the ecclesia in Antioch with first-hand evidence of the extent of the persecution conducted by Herod.

The Return To Antioch

Back in Antioch they doubtless reported these circumstances to the ecclesia, and this led to a remarkable meeting being convened

in which Barnabas and Saul were appointed to a special preaching mission.

The Truth was flourishing in Antioch. It was proclaimed with power, so that the ecclesia steadily grew. This stemmed from good leadership, careful instruction and aftercare given to the new converts.

The ecclesia was noted for the quality of the prophets and teachers who ministered to it.

Foremost among them was Barnabas. Because of his age, experience and knowledge, he took the lead in Antioch. But there was also Simeon who was surnamed Niger, or *Black*, as the name means, possibly because he was a Jew who originated from Africa; Lucius of Cyrene who was thus associated with an influential group of Jews from that country who had a special synagogue erected for their worship in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9); Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and therefore occupied a position of affluence and influence; and, listed last of all, Saul.

The Commission These met together for a very solemn purpose which, though not specifically mentioned, is certainly implied. The persecution in Jerusalem presented a crisis to the Truth. It was obvious that if this continued, and the apostles were scattered (and Peter already had fled the city), the initiative in preaching would have to be taken over by another ecclesia. The brethren therefore desired guidance as to what should be done under the circumstances. This is suggested in view of the subsequent instruction of the Holy Spirit which must have been in accordance with the spirit and purpose of the gathering.

They had given themselves to earnest prayer and worship, when suddenly it was interrupted by the Holy Spirit making known the divine will. They were instructed: *"Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."*

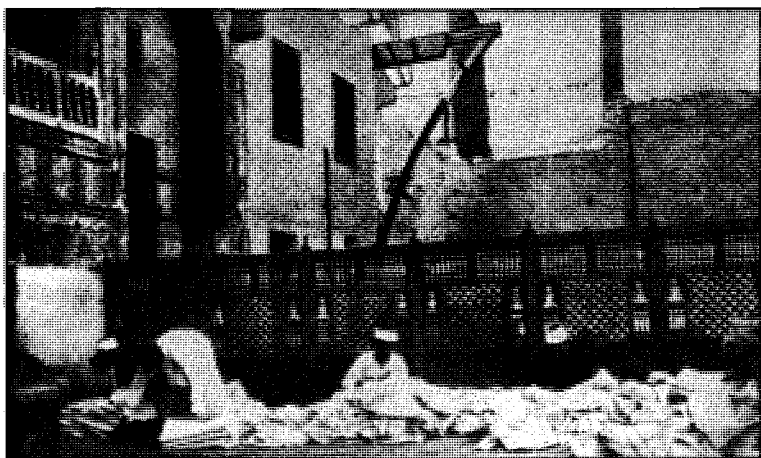
This was the call for which Saul had been waiting. His appointment to the work had been announced before: both to the apostle himself and to Ananias in Damascus (Acts 9:15), as well as on the occasion in the temple in Jerusalem when Christ had appeared to him, urging him to flee the city (Acts 22:17-21). Now the time had come to specifically send him forth.

To go forth and preach the Gospel openly to Gentiles was a departure from the practice hitherto followed, and it needed the authority of the Holy Spirit to still any opposition or criticism. True, the prophets had predicted that the Truth would be proclaimed to Gentiles, as Paul later taught the ecclesia in Rome (see Rom. 9:22-33), but until this direction came, Yahweh's intention had not been fully known. But now the once-hidden secret was revealed, as Paul explained later: "Now to Him that is of power to establish you

according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery [Gr. "secret"] which was kept secret since the [Jewish] world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:25-26).

Again: "By revelation God made known unto me the mystery [secret]... which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:2-6).

This revelation had been given to Paul either at the time of this gathering of prophets and teachers at Antioch to enquire of Yahweh concerning their future labours, or on an earlier occasion. In any case, it had been revealed, and Saul was ready to carry forth the message of salvation to the Gentiles.



Tentmakers. Paul's association with Priscila and Aquila — soon to become his devoted friends and "helpers in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 16:3) — began in Corinth because they followed the same trade as himself; "for by their occupation they were tentmakers." They do not appear to have led a settled life, but to have moved about making tents wherever there was a sufficient demand for them. Their work of sewing together strips of coarse canvas — which they wove of goat's hair — was much the same as that of these modern Transjordanian tent-makers plying their craft in a yard in Jerash.

Chapter 2

PAUL: THE INSTRUMENT USED

Commissioned by God to proclaim the Gospel unto Gentiles (see Gal. 1:1; 1Tim. 1:1; Tit. 1:3), Barnabas and Saul chose John Mark to assist them, and planned what is usually described as the First Missionary Journey. They agreed to first visit Cyprus, the birthplace of Barnabas, and then take the Gospel through the area of Asia. This would bring them into a region of considerable danger, where it was common for robbers to lurk ready to pounce on any unwary travellers. It was on this journey that Saul received the name of Paul, which he from then on preferred; and that a weakness in Mark's character was revealed, which he afterwards corrected.

HAVING received the blessing of the ecclesia in Antioch upon the work before them, Barnabas and Saul left the busy city for the seaport of Seleucia, on the shore of the Mediterranean, some sixteen miles (25 kms) distant. Barnabas, being older and more experienced in the Truth than Saul, naturally took the lead at this time, and Mark, his cousin, went with them as their assistant.

At Seleucia

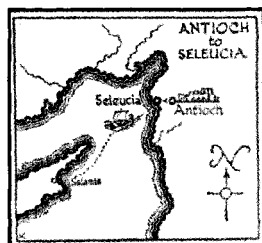
It was about the year 46, and the journey before them was to involve a period of about two years. Saul was about thirty-nine years of age when they left Antioch.

They planned first to visit the island of Cyprus. It was natural, for two reasons, that Barnabas should have a desire to preach the Truth there: firstly, it was his native land (Acts 4:36), and secondly, reports had been received that there would be a receptive ear for the Gospel on the part of some (Acts 11:19-20).

At Seleucia, therefore, they took ship to the island of Cyprus.

To Cyprus (Acts 13:5-12)

The ship conveyed the three missionaries to the south-west coast of the island of Cyprus, and into the Bay of Salamis. As it anchored in the bay, they saw before them a flourishing commercial city, situated on a rich, well-watered plain, encircled by hills.



The scene must have stirred the emotions of Barnabas. He was so keenly interested in preaching the Gospel there that later, after he separated from Paul, he returned to the island to continue the work begun (Acts 15:39). To him it was like a home-coming.

In The Synagogues In Salamis

Salamis had a considerable Jewish population, so that the missionaries found more than one synagogue established there (Acts 13:5). As their commission was to preach first to the Jews and afterwards to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:16) they presented themselves to the Jewish communities in these synagogues, and preached the Gospel message in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Apparently their preaching was accepted passively. At all events, Luke does not record any opposition. Nor does he state whether great success attended those efforts. Perhaps his lack of comment



indicates apathy on the part of the hearers. Opposition is not always a bad thing in the preaching of the Word. It indicates that those to whom it is proclaimed are interested enough to oppose it. To feel deeply about what one believes, is a first essential to accepting the Truth. Paul would recognise that; for he who had been so bitter in his persecution of the Christians, was now most ardent in his preaching.

Elymas Rebuked: Sergius Paulus Converted

From Salamis, they made their way over the island to Paphos, the capital of Cyprus, a distance of over ninety miles (145 kms). As they did so, they preached in all the places where synagogues were to be found. Again, this fact is recorded by Luke the narrator, and no details are supplied.

However, if the campaign of the missionaries had been devoid of excitement in Salamis and the other places visited en route to Paphos, it was not the case in the capital. There they came face to face with a notorious Jew by the name of Bar-Jesus. He had renounced Judaism in favour of Persian magic, and had become noted for his supposedly profound knowledge.

Bar-Jesus had ingratiated himself into the good favour of the Roman proconsul, Sergius Paulus, so that he exercised considerable influence upon him. So much so that Bar-Jesus was now domiciled in the home of the deputy, and was held in the greatest esteem by him.

Sergius Paulus was a highly intelligent man who desired truth above all else; and believed he had discovered it in the *theories* of Elymas.

Elymas means *Sorcerer* or *Magician*. He was skilled in the knowledge of the heavenly bodies, and by observation of their movements, attempted to prognosticate future events. He thus represented the scientific trend of the day, and had rejected the Scriptures in favour of it.

His theories, therefore, were completely opposed to the teaching of the Gospel.

Meanwhile, Barnabas and Saul had followed the custom that they adopted elsewhere, and had attended the synagogue in Paphos to proclaim the Gospel. The forthright message they presented, the enthusiastic earnestness by which it was proclaimed, no doubt became the subject of widespread comment, so that it came to the notice of the proconsul. The same feelings which had induced him to invite the Jewish sorcerer to domicile in his residence to set forth his teaching, also moved him to send for the new teachers that he might hear what they had to say, and perhaps, test it against the theories of Elymas.

Barnabas and Saul accepted the invitation, and immediately encountered the hostile antagonism of Elymas: for now he found himself opposed by men who were more than his match in the Old Testament Scriptures, and were able to detect the weakness of his reasoning.

As he listened to Barnabas and Saul and discerned the interest



manifested by Sergius Paulus, Elymas feared that he might lose his influence with the proconsul. He was not prepared to do that without a struggle. He therefore interrupted the two preachers, engaging them in open controversy, and sparing neither argument nor insult to ridicule the new teaching. So blatant and blasphemous was his attack, that it aroused the fiery indignation of Saul. Turning from the proconsul, and fixing a steady gaze upon the apostate Jew, Saul addressed him with words of justifiable rebuke: *"You son of calumny [devil], you enemy of all good, will you never stop perverting the right paths of the Lord?"*

The bold attack silenced the sorcerer. He was taken aback by the forthright rebuke of the apostle, and showed his discomfiture on his face. As for Saul, he could feel the power of the Holy Spirit upon him, and continued: *"Now, behold, the Lord's hand is upon you, and you shall be blind, unable for a time to see the sun!"*

The eyes of the audience in the proconsul's palace turned on Elymas, and saw in the horror manifested in his face, and in his confused and sudden actions, the terrible effects of Saul's indictment. A mist swam before the eyes of the sorcerer, which gradually intensified until total darkness overcame him. He could not see, and groping with outstretched hand, he sought for someone to lead him.

The miracle made a deep impression upon all present, and none the less upon Saul himself. Doubtless he recalled his own experience when, on the way to Damascus, he, likewise, was encased in darkness, and had to seek somebody to lead him by the hand. The three days' darkness that was inflicted upon him, had given him opportunity to seek the light of Truth; and the same privilege was now afforded Elymas. The physical darkness that took possession of this apostate Jew was indicative of his spiritual state; and with his eyes now closed to the natural bodies of heaven which previously formed the basis of his science and teaching, he was provided opportunity to meditate upon the teaching of the Creator which he had abandoned.

Whether it made any such impression upon Elymas, we do not know; but the proconsul was deeply moved by all that he had heard and seen. He was astonished at the power of the apostle's teaching, and believed.

Saul Called Paul

In recording the incident of the conversion of the proconsul of Paphos, Luke, for the first time, gives the apostle the name by which he is more commonly known: Paul (Acts 13:9). It is significant that this is in association with his namesake Sergius Paulus, and in conflict with the arrogant Elymas (*The Wise*) who represented the scientific teaching of the age. Let us consider the circumstances.

Paulus, the Roman, was a man of understanding, and of

significant humility to call for Barnabas and Saul with a desire to hear them.

Elymas, who unfairly withstood them, was smitten with blindness for a season, so that he had to be led about by the hand. He had claimed to be wise, but Paulus (which means *Little*) had more true wisdom than he.

There is not only an amazing similarity between the punishment of Elymas and Saul's own experience at his conversion, but Sergius Paulus' conversion followed the pattern of that of the apostle (and both were freeborn Romans) in their acceptance of the Truth. It could be, that this incident made such an impression upon Saul, that from henceforth he preferred to be known as Paul.

Saul signifies *Asked for or Demanded*, and this, Sergius Paulus had done; but Paul means *Little*, and it became the name adopted by the apostle who considered himself to be "the least of the apostles" and not worthy to be called one because he had persecuted the ecclesia (1Cor. 15:9).

Moreover, the attack of Elymas had brought Paul to the forefront of the little company. From now on he took the lead, and Barnabas followed. It was not a case of self-assertion, but the natural development of a man who was selected by Yahweh as a leader. The lovable, self-effacing Barnabas readily adapted himself to the change, so that now, the little team of preachers became known as "Paul and his company" (Acts 13:13).

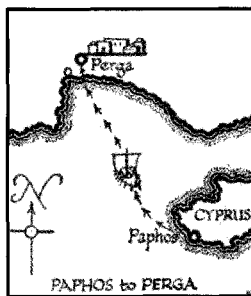
There is a further apparent play upon names in the narrative of this incident. Elymas was also known as Bar-Jesus, which signifies *Son of Salvation*, but Paul, when he addressed him, called him the *Son of the Devil* (Acts 13:10). This is similar to the language used by the Lord Jesus when addressing disbelieving Jews. They claimed to be true descendants of Abraham and looked upon God as their Father (Jn. 8:41), but the Lord told them that their works and words showed the fallacy of such a claim, and declared: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the Truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it" (Jn. 8:44).

Those words truly describe Elymas and justified Paul's description of him as a Son of the Devil, or the Flesh, the great calumniator of mankind.

From Paphos to Perga — John Mark Returns

The little company of pioneers weighed anchor from Paphos for Perga in Pamphylia. Perga was the capital of the province. It was about seven and a half miles (12 kms) inland on the river Cestrus, which is navigable, and along which their ship would have sailed.

Pamphylia signifies *Every Tribal* indicating its then heterogeneous population, for it was inhabited by a mixed race from all parts. The large, familiar Jewish communities of Cyprus were not in evidence here. The travellers found themselves in a strange place, and among a harsh, heathen people. Moreover, their path was barred by the mighty chain of Taurus mountains beyond which were semi-barbarous people of strange, foreign languages, and a region frequented by brigands and robbers who successfully defied the unsettled government, and preyed on travellers such as themselves. Being conscientious objectors, having no defence but that of faith itself, the adventure before them was one calculated to challenge the boldest, and was too much for Mark. He decided to return to Jerusalem.



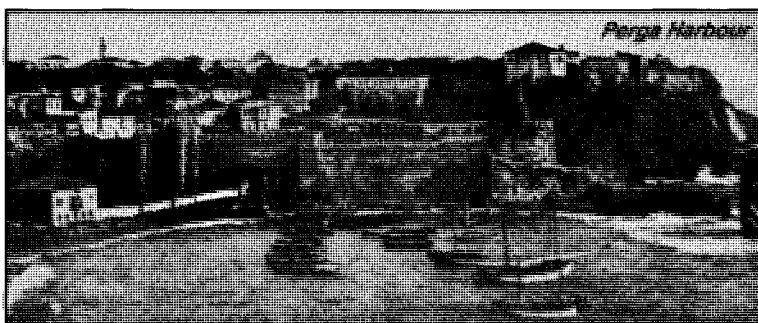
Why Did Mark Return?

What caused Mark to leave Paul and Barnabas and return to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13)? We are not specifically told, but it was sufficient to later cause friction between Paul and Barnabas when the former did not feel that the association of John Mark was justified in view of the difficult work before them (Acts 15:37-39). In fact, Paul felt the matter so deeply as to prefer to sever his partnership with Barnabas rather than take Mark on the next journey.

Several reasons could have contributed to Mark's defection.

It could have been that the three brethren had already experienced severe persecution in Cyprus, and in view of the possibility of even worse to come from the barbarous country they were about to enter, Mark lost his courage. In support of this theory, Paul lists sufferings that he endured that have not been recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles* (2Cor. 11:23-28), and some of these may have occurred in Cyprus.

Alternatively, it may have been that Mark resented the manner in which Paul was becoming the dominant influence, and found his dedicated, driving urge to work less pleasant than the ways of the



more relaxed, gentler Barnabas, his cousin. Paul was one who not only relentlessly drove himself, but, at that stage, tended to become impatient with others who gave lesser service. Later, toward the end of his life, Paul wrote to Timothy: "You have fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, fidelity, long-suffering, afflictions, which came upon me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me" (2Tim. 3:10-11).

Those words describe the very journey upon which he was about to embark, and from which Mark would turn back. Mark could see in the attitude of Paul what was expected of him. Paul was desperately ill at the time, and some change of plan for recuperation was necessary. They could either ascend into the wild mountainous region that lay before them with its difficulties and dangers, or else turn back. Paul refused to capitulate despite his physical weakness; Mark, however, turned back.

Perhaps he was home-sick. Mark was young; the novelty of preaching had worn off. He did not find working with Paul easy. He was a city-dweller from Jerusalem, and unused to such rigors. As his thoughts turned back home, he remembered the persecution, and his mother, and perhaps desired to be with her to help her at such a time.

Any, or all, of these considerations may have influenced Mark. In any case, he returned, leaving Paul and Barnabas to fend for themselves.

It is a testimony to the strength of Mark's character, that though Paul refused to overlook this defection at the time, the young disciple lived and acted so as to justify Barnabas' faith in him, and to later receive the commendation of Paul (see Col. 4:10).

SERGIUS PAULUS AND THE ACCURACY OF LUKE'S RECORD

"The accuracy of Luke in calling him a proconsul used to be strongly called in question on the grounds that the province was not so governed. But evidence has been uncovered to show that Cyprus was an Imperial province until BC22 when it became a Senatorial province, which meant that it was no longer governed by an Imperial Legate, but by a proconsul... A Greek inscription at Soloi bears the title: 'In the Proconsulship of Paulus'."— From *Luke The Historian*.

"Sergius Paulus... is twice named by Pliny in the list of authors placed at the commencement of his work... It is not a little remarkable that the two books, lib.2 and lib.18, in which Sergius Paulus is quoted, are just those which contain accounts of the heavenly bodies, and prognostications from the sun, moon, etc. which doubtless formed the staple of Elymas' science... Pliny (Nat. His.) spoke of a school of magic art in Cyprus taught by Jews..." — A. C. Hervey, *The Acts Of The Apostles*.

Chapter 3

PREACHING THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT ASIA MINOR

Mark, having withdrawn from the company of Paul and Barnabas, the work of preaching in Asia continued. It was an exciting time as the areas of Pisidia and Galatia hear the Word of Truth expounded powerfully. The first recorded address of the apostle Paul reveals the challenges that were raised against the Jewish teachings, and sets before the people the provision of our divinely-prepared Saviour. The record states that "Paul and Barnabas waxed bold" (Acts 13:46). They were not daunted by the opposition. They had Truth and incontestable facts, as well as the anointing of the Holy Spirit to support their claims. So progressed the Gospel to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews.

PAUL did not stay sufficiently long in Perga to preach the Gospel, though he did so on his return to that city (Acts 13:14; 14:25). Evidently something prevented him doing so, and caused him to seek the higher regions beyond, toward the Pisidian Antioch, which was then within the province of Galatia.

In his *Epistle to the Galatians*, Paul explains that it was ill-health that caused him to do this. Some have suggested that the fever-infested plain of Pamphylia could have brought on an attack of intermittent malaria, which could have the effect of drastically altering his bodily appearance, and cause him to seek relief in the healthier, higher regions. The effect of such an attack has been described as follows: "In some constitutions, malaria fever tends to recur in very distressing and prostrating paroxysms, whenever one's energies are taxed for a great effort. Such an attack is for the time absolutely incapacitating: the sufferer can only rest and feel himself a shaking and helpless weakling, when he ought to be at work. He feels a contempt and loathing for self, and believes that others feel equal contempt and loathing" (W. M. Ramsay).

Ill-health Causes Paul To Visit Galatia A lesser man would have turned back from the difficulties of a journey into Pisidia, but not Paul. His ruthless driving energy fed by a tremendous faith, spurred him on. He determined to carry out the commission given him in spite of his illness, and now essayed the dangerous and difficult journey through the lonely brigand-infested region of Pisidia. Perhaps this partly was the cause of Mark's action,

who felt himself unequal to maintaining such an effort as that, and returned home.

Later, in revealing the circumstances that caused him to preach throughout Galatia, Paul wrote: "You know how that through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh you despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus... I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me" (Gal. 4:14-15).

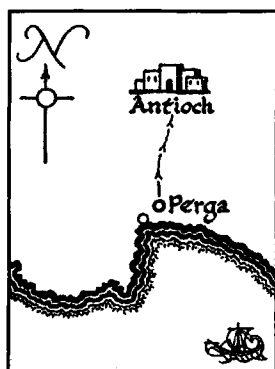
Character Of The People

Antioch was about 100 miles (160 kms) north of Perga, by a route that ran through a mountainous district that was both difficult and dangerous. It was populated by a rough, half-savage people, and infested with robbers. About BC25, Augustus determined to tame these fierce bandits by a chain of posts which included Antioch and Lystra on the northern side, but he was only partially successful. In AD74, Pisidia was linked to the Pamphylian plain in the province of Pamphylia. In Paul's day, therefore, Pisidia was treated as part of Galatia, so that in entering Pisidia, Paul entered Galatia. That fact must be borne in mind when considering the explanation that Paul made to the Galatians regarding the change of plan that caused him to visit their region.

Meanwhile, the area through which Paul and Barnabas moved as they travelled from Perga to Antioch, was extremely dangerous, which could have inspired his autobiographical comments about "perils of robbers" in 2Cor. 11:26.

The warm-hearted, and rather emotional character of the Galatians is referred to by Paul in his epistle. The expressions he used suggest that those of the region who embraced the Truth did so enthusiastically, whilst they also deeply sympathised with Paul in his distress. Far from being repelled by his condition and appearance (Gal. 4:13-14), they saw the influence of Christ in his dedicated activity (Gal. 2:20), and it excited their sympathy and love for him. They went out of their way to relieve his sufferings, acknowledging the great blessings they had received through his ministrations (Gal. 4:15).

The enthusiastic response that Paul received from them, perhaps indicates that the Galatians tended to be moved by emotion, and were somewhat unstable in that they could be easily swayed (cp. Gal 4:17-18, with Acts 14:11). In character they seemed to be somewhat gullible and easily moved (Gal. 1:6).



These were the people among whom Paul was about to preach the Gospel.

**In The Synagogue
At Antioch
(Acts 13:14-52)**

Antioch, the first city in the Galatian area visited by Paul, is called "Antioch of Pisidia," though it was not really in Pisidia at all, but on the Pisidian side of Phrygia, which Mark Antony gave to Amyntas, last king of Galatia. It was a busy city on a main caravan route, and therefore strategically valuable for the proclamation of the Truth. It contained a Jewish population, with a large synagogue, and this was used by Paul to commence his preaching.

On the sabbath, therefore, Paul and Barnabas made their way to the synagogue, and took their seats among the congregation. The entrance of two such men, strangers to Antioch, was noted by the presiding minister.

Some knowledge of a synagogue service will be helpful in following the narrative in Acts. Following prayer, the First Lesson, or *Parashah*, was read, it being a section of the Law. This was followed by the *Haphtarah*, or reading from the Prophets. Then an exposition was normally given. Frequently this would be delivered by any distinguished stranger who might happen to be present, and who would be invited to do so by the chief ruler of the synagogue.

On this occasion, the eyes of many would already have been fixed upon the two strangers who had entered the synagogue that day, and possibly it was also known that they came from Jerusalem. Here was an ideal opportunity of hearing an exposition from one who came from the very centre of Judaism, from the Holy City itself. Accordingly, the invitation was extended to either of them to address the assembly, if they had words of comfort or instruction to speak to their fellow Israelites (Acts 13:15).

It was an excellent opportunity to advance the Truth. Moreover, the set readings for the day in the Jewish synagogue, lent themselves to it. A close analysis of the discourse of Paul suggests that his comments were based upon Deuteronomy 1 and Isaiah 1. For example, he began by pointing out that the "God of Israel" had "chosen the fathers, and exalted the people" of Israel, which finds its origin in Isaiah 1:2; and then he spoke of how Yahweh "suffered their manners in the wilderness," or, according to some (see margin), how "He bare them as a nursing father in the wilderness," which links the statement with Deuteronomy 1:31.

Now, according to the Soncino Edition of the Pentateuch and Haphtorahs, Deuteronomy 1-3:22 and Isaiah 1:1-22 were read in conjunction on the same sabbath. It comments:

"The Haphtorahs read on the three Sabbaths preceding that fast

[the 9th of Av, the Fall of Jerusalem] are called *Haphtorahs of Rebuke*. For the third Sabbath *Devarim*, the opening chapter of Isaiah — the Great Arraignment of Judah — has been selected in order to warn all generations in Israel of the moral and social transgression that led to the downfall of the Jewish State.”

Now that is the very theme of Paul’s discourse, suggesting that the reading for the day was from Deuteronomy 1 and Isaiah 1. It is highly significant that those readings were read on a sabbath preceding the fast commemorating the Fall of Jerusalem, and were called an *Haphtorah of Rebuke*. Thus the very time-setting was appropriate to Paul’s address. It was an ideal opportunity to warn the Jews that the rebelliousness of their leaders in Jerusalem in relation to their Messiah could only result in a further overthrow of the Jewish State such as the prophet Habakkuk had predicted (see Acts 13:27, 40-41). Therefore, whilst celebrating the Fall of Jerusalem, there was a need to beware lest an even worse calamity take place in their day.

That was the subject to which Paul addressed himself as he was called upon to speak. Quickly assessing the situation, moved with emotion at such an opening for the preaching of the Truth, he accepted the invitation to speak, and standing up in his place in an excess of feeling (for normally the speaker sat down — Lk. 4:20), he gesticulated with his hand and commenced: “*Men of Israel, and you that fear God* [i.e. Gentile proselytes], *give audience...*”

Paul’s address, which Luke records in some detail, is a masterly exposition of the readings for the day, illustrated by recent events including the crucifixion of Christ, supported by prophecy, and rounded off by a personal appeal based on a warning of judgment to come (vv. 40-41). It was such an exposition as was calculated to appeal to the Jews and proselytes gathered together in the synagogue.

During the course of his address Paul often drew the attention of the Jews to the evidence of Scripture by directly quoting it, though, at other times he inferred that the evidence could be supplied. For example, he declared that the Jews in Jerusalem fulfilled the Scriptures which they read every sabbath day, by failing to recognise the Messiah as such, and in condemning him to death. This was a provocative statement, and the absence of scriptural proof could well cause those who were interested to think the matter out for themselves, or else seek further information by a personal approach.

It is a very effective form of presenting the Truth.

In the quotations that Paul did make, he frequently provided slight variations of both the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Old Testament, suggesting that he was either quoting from memory, or providing the general sense of the original. Further, he followed the practice of establishing a proposition by linking Scripture with Scripture; thus Isaiah 55:3 is joined with Psalm 16:10 to prove that the Lord Jesus

Paul's First Address

GOD'S PROVISION OF A SAVIOUR TO ISRAEL

It can be divided into four main sections:

[1] The Promise of Scripture of a King — vv. 16-22

- a. The God of Israel called the nation out of Egypt — v. 17;
- b. In His love He cared for it and protected it — vv. 18-20;
- c. He established it as His kingdom and provided it with a faithful ruling dynasty — vv. 21-22.

[2] The Claim that Jesus fulfils the Divine Purpose — vv. 23-31

- a. Jesus Christ came in the line of David as Saviour — v. 23;
- b. John Baptist witnessed to that fact — vv. 24-25;
- c. The Jews of the Diaspora should accept the Gospel though it was rejected by those in the Land through their refusal to carefully heed that which was read continuously in the synagogues — vv. 26-27;
- d. The death of Jesus fulfilled the requirements of Scripture — vv. 28-29;
- e. His resurrection was attested by reliable living witnesses — vv. 30-31.

[3] The Confirmation of Scripture of His Death and Resurrection — vv. 32-37

- a. The death and resurrection of Messiah was predicted — vv. 32-35.
- b. The prophecies could not apply to David as was sometimes taught — vv. 36-37;

[4] Personal Appeal And Warning In View Of Impending National Judgment — vv. 38-41

- a. Forgiveness of sins and salvation is offered through the name of Jesus — vv. 38-39;
- b. Impending national judgment, predicted by the prophets, would destroy the temple worship — vv. 40-41.

Paul appealed to his audience on the basis of the hope of Israel. He did not attempt to turn them away from the Law, but to show how that it was designed as a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ (Gal. 3:24). He expounded the Law, revealed how that it emphasised the reality of sin, but could not justify therefrom in the absence of the redeemer, the Messiah (Acts 13:38-39).

The propositions established by Paul's discourse can be summarised thus:

- Israel's development was through divine Providence;
- David was promised a seed: the Messiah;
- John Baptist testified that Jesus was that seed;
- The Jews of Jerusalem slew him but God raised him;
- The Scripture requires this;

- His death and resurrection were sacrificial;
- Justification through forgiveness of sins, such as the Law of Moses could not provide, is obtainable through him;
- Prophecy shows that the end of the temple worship was at hand;
- As individuals they should accept the way of life in Christ.

would be raised from the dead to life eternal.

The prophecy of Habakkuk 1:5, which he quoted in concluding his address, predicted the overthrow of Jerusalem, and thus of the temple. It therefore constituted a warning against placing confidence in the mere formalism of the Law, now that the antitype had come. Even with the temple in existence, the Law of Moses could not provide real justification from sins, unless those involved saw clearly the forgiveness provided by the Redeemer who had come as the antitype of the sacrifices offered. This would be made apparent when the prophecy of Habakkuk was fulfilled, and the nation overthrown because it rejected Yahweh's mercy.

**The Impression
Caused By
Paul's Address**

Paul's powerfully reasoned address produced a deep impression upon both the Jews and their Gentile proselytes. Immediately on its conclusion, the two brethren, having made their way outside, were accosted by excited members of the concourse as they streamed out of the synagogue. Many requested that further instruction along the same lines should be given, and arrangements were made for this to be done during the ensuing week.*

Others were even more impressed and enthusiastic, and refused to wait even a day. A number of Jews and proselytes accompanied Paul and Barnabas to where they were staying, and requested further instruction. Some were converted and accepted Christ in the way appointed, and were exhorted by the two preachers to remain steadfast in their conviction, and so "continue in the grace of God."

It was ill-health that had driven Paul and Barnabas into the regions of Galatia, but now an amazing door of utterance had been opened to them. Obviously, these circumstances were divinely guided.

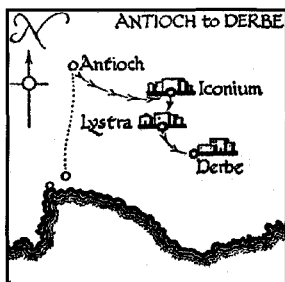
**Opposition From
The Jewish Leaders**

During the ensuing week, tidings of these matters spread throughout the city. This resulted in a vast audience of both Jews and Gentiles from all classes, and so representative of all the city, they

* The words "the Gentiles besought" should not appear. The R.V. renders the passage (Acts 13:42), "And as they went out, they besought that these words," etc.

assembled together in the synagogue on the following sabbath to hear the Word of God.

The enthusiasm manifested aroused the enmity of the chief Jews. There was evidently a proselyting zeal in this synagogue, indicated by the large number of Gentiles who had embraced Judaism and joined its membership (vv. 16, 43), and as the leaders saw the crowds attracted by the two strangers, they were moved with jealousy. Accordingly, they went out of their way to destroy the influence of Paul's teaching. Openly interjecting as he expounded the Scriptures, they contradicted him. Then, as he effectively answered their objections, they commenced to blaspheme by asserting untruths. They manifested all the stubbornness for which Jews are notorious, and displayed a hard-hearted indifference to the appeal of the Word as the apostles submitted it to them.



It was impossible to continue under such circumstances. As tempers heated, Paul and Barnabas recognised that it was best to put an end to the scene, and to cease participation in a form of argument and recrimination that could only end in ungodly debate and riots. Indignantly, they turned to the Jews: *"It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you,"* they declared, *"but seeing you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth!"*

This was a very bold statement, as Luke observes, because it applied a prophecy to the apostles that has application to the Messiah. How could they do so? Because they acted as the ambassadors of Christ, speaking in his name and with his authority (2Cor. 5:18-21; Eph. 6:20). They were really an extension of Christ (Lk. 10:16), for as he is the head of the multitudinous body, they were officially appointed representatives of its members.

Why should Paul claim that it was "necessary" that the Word of God should be preached first to the Jews? Because it was commanded. And why was it so commanded? For the reason we have constantly suggested: namely, because this was an act of mercy toward this people in answer to the Lord's prayer on their behalf (Lk. 23:34). The Acts of the Apostles, therefore, records Yahweh's final plea to Israel before the nation was scattered. When this plea was officially and finally rejected, as it subsequently was by the Jews of Jerusalem and Rome (the Jewish and Gentile capitals of the world), the Truth was directly proclaimed to Gentiles without this restriction. Until then, however, Paul's practice was to seek out cities for the

proclamation of the Word in which were found synagogues, and he established it as a principle that the Gospel should be proclaimed “to the Jews first, and afterwards to the Gentiles” (Rom. 1:16).

Gentiles Seek The Truth

Paul’s teaching that the prophetic Scriptures proclaim the purpose of Yahweh to extend

His salvation to Gentiles on terms of equality with Jews, was accepted by the Gentile section of his audience with enthusiasm. Many glorified the Word of the Lord by readily accepting the Truth and seeking baptism.

As a result, an ecclesia was formed, and this Antioch (like Antioch in Syria) became a centre for extending the Truth throughout the region.

Even though the Jewish leaders had been put to the rout in this initial skirmish with Paul, they were not prepared to concede total defeat. Having been worsted in debate, they sought other means. They exercised considerable commercial influence throughout the city, besides which, among the proselytes were many devout women of honourable status. They warned their Gentile business associates that it might not be to their advantage if they allowed Paul’s influence to go unchecked, and at the same time, urged on the devout women of the synagogue to use their influence on husbands to the same end. Thus contention and opposition grew, and Paul and Barnabas found themselves subjected to pressures from both religious and commercial quarters.

Finally the Roman authorities were called in to calm the growing agitation. They were tolerant of religion, but opposed to fanaticism or religious controversy, and so long as any sect was prepared to behave peaceably, they were quite willing to afford it protection. However, they were not prepared to allow a city to become unsettled through political or religious controversy. As they reviewed the situation in Antioch they could sense danger, and assessing that the trouble had commenced since the arrival of Paul and Barnabas, they ordered their expulsion from the boundaries of the city.

Shaking off the dust of Antioch against those responsible for this action, Paul and Barnabas made their way toward Iconium, which was under a different jurisdiction. Paul was still sick from the malarial infection he had contracted (if this was the case), but was buoyed up by the wonderful results of the adventures he had successfully come through, and which had set his feet more firmly on the path of preaching to Gentiles.

They left behind them the newly formed ecclesia. Saddened as the brethren of this ecclesia were to see Paul and Barnabas leave, they were filled with joy in the new-found Truth, and in the uplifting influence of the Spirit-Word.

**Threatened
at Iconium
(Acts 14:1-5)**

Expelled from Antioch, Paul and Barnabas made their way in a south-easterly direction to Iconium at the western edge of the vast central plains of Asia Minor. They probably took the Royal Road about eighteen miles (29 kms) south of Neapolis. After about another eighteen miles, at the north end of the Lake Karalis, they left the Royal Road and travelled almost due east to Iconium; a total distance of about eighty miles (129 kms).

Iconium stood on a level plateau about 3400 feet (1036 mtrs) above sea level. About six miles (9.6 kms) west of the city, mountains rise to a height of almost 6000 feet (1830 mtrs). From them, a stream flowed down into the city, and other smaller streams flowed into the adjacent area, making the land extremely fertile. To the east lay the plains of Lycaonia.

**Preaching In
The Synagogue**

arranged, and suitable employment found. They would find both, doubtless, among the Jewish community of the city.

On the sabbath day they presented themselves at the synagogue. Once again they were invited to speak, and though the form of address is not recorded, it made such an impression that many of the Jews and proselytes present believed.

But again this stirred up the bitter animosity of the unbelieving Jews, and the synagogue became the weekly scene of furious contention. However, they did not openly oppose Paul and Barnabas, possibly feeling that they lacked the ability to successfully encounter them in verbal debate. Instead, they shrewdly realised that the best way to discredit the teaching of Paul was to influence the leading citizens against him on a political issue, and leave it to the authorities to move in the matter as they had done in Antioch.

Therefore, the unbelieving Jews persuaded the authorities that these preachers who had been ejected from Antioch, were dangerous agitators who would disturb the peace of their city. In so doing, they "made their minds evil affected toward the brethren."

There was a synagogue in Iconium and this provided opportunity to preach the Word. But first, accommodation would have to be



19th-century engraving of ancient Iconium.

An Ecclesia Established

This opposition did not deter Paul and Barnabas. In fact, the contention advertised the Truth, and caused others to investigate its claims. This was what they wanted. Accordingly, they remained there some time, speaking fearlessly and forthrightly in spite of the threats now being uttered; and undeterred by the signs of a gathering storm which were becoming increasingly apparent. So long as they had an audience, Paul and Barnabas maintained their preaching. Their action found endorsement in that many miracles were performed there, and this stimulated further public interest in their labours.

Thus, out of the controversy and opposition that the two brethren received in Iconium, an ecclesia was established.

Meanwhile the enemy also had been busy, spreading lying insinuations on all sides. This policy was so successful that the entire city became divided into pro-Christian and anti-Christian factions.

A Plan To Kill Paul And Barnabas

At last the spirit of faction grew so hot that the leaders of the hostile party plotted to murder the two preachers. They agitated in such a way as to arouse the most violent passions. Both Jews and Gentiles joined in this, the idea being to so incite Paul and Barnabas by their threats as to cause them to retaliate, and then to stone them. The leaders of the Jews would thus be rid of their opponents whilst, at the same time, escaping responsibility for the murders.

But Paul and Barnabas became aware of the plot, and adjudging that their work in the city was now at an end, they left it for Lystra about eighteen miles (29 kms) to the south-west of Iconium.

Preaching at Lystra (Acts 14:6-20)

Lystra was in southern Lycaonia, off the beaten track, obscure and remote from the centre of civilisation, a backwater of a city. The hurried flight of Barnabas and Paul from Iconium would have brought them to this city in about a day.

Perhaps they felt the need of recuperation from the tiring excitement of the preaching in recent weeks, particularly in view of Paul's illness. If this was the reason that caused them to retire to Lystra, it was obviously divinely controlled, for events occurred there that greatly changed the course of Paul's future. Among the few Jewish inhabitants of this backward town was a young man by the name of Timotheus, who was greatly impressed with the message of Paul, and afterwards became one of his principal associates (Acts 16:1).

There was a small Jewish population in Lystra, but apparently no synagogue. The Jews would welcome such visitors as Paul and Barnabas, and to them the apostle preached the truth as it is in the

Lord Jesus. Others were attracted to the message, so that soon the preaching became a regular instruction.

Conversion of Timothy

Timotheus, or Timothy, as he is better known, was the son of a Greek who had married a Jewess (Acts 16:1). It was a divided household, and therefore not a particularly happy one, and this could have had some impact upon Timothy causing him to be rather shy. Timothy's father did not accept Judaism, and in consequence, Timothy was not circumcised. On the other hand, his mother Eunice was a spiritually-minded woman, who doubtless regretted the mistake she made in marrying out of her belief. Following the influence of her mother Lois, Eunice retained her reverence for the things of God, and this played an important part in the ultimate conversion of Timothy (2Tim. 1:5).

Though Timothy was not circumcised, and thus did not embrace Judaism in its completeness, he had been taught in the Scriptures by both his mother and grandmother (2Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15). This gave him a knowledge and a faith that rose superior to his physical disability. For Timothy was not robust in physique. In fact he had an inborn timidity against which he had to struggle (2Tim. 1:7), and when emotion got the better of him, he easily gave way to tears (2Tim. 1:4). Moreover, he was frequently ill (1Tim. 5:23), and so gave every appearance of weakness.

But, in fact, the only weak thing about this young man was his physical condition. He had a deep and strong reverence for God, and a determination to carry out His will. He had been greatly impressed by his study of the Word, and its influence had been seen in his demeanor before Paul appeared on the scene (2Tim. 1:5). He listened



to the preaching of the apostle, and was greatly impressed. He felt drawn to the apostle himself, and greatly admired the courage, faith and skill by which he conducted his preaching in the city. In due course, he presented himself for baptism, thus becoming a son of the apostle in the faith (1Tim. 1:2; 2Tim. 1:2; 1Cor. 4:17). Little did Paul realise, when this rather frail young man presented himself for baptism, and gave his confession of faith, that he was destined to carry on the great work that he had commenced, and would do so with outstanding courage, determination and skill.

Probably through very timidity, Timothy did not obtrude on the apostle during his two visits to Lystra on this journey, so that there was nothing to commend him to the attention of the apostle above others who had been baptised.

A Crippled Man Healed

On one occasion, as Paul was expounding the Word, he noticed a crippled man listening with every evidence of sincerity and enthusiasm. He was well-known in Lystra, for he was a cripple from birth, and had never walked. Paul could see that the Gospel had had a profound effect upon him, and that he was a man of faith. Suddenly, in a loud voice, and to the astonishment of the crowd, he addressed this man: "*Stand upright on your feet!*"

To the onlookers it must have seemed a cruel, senseless thing to say, but to their amazement, this man whom they knew to have been crippled from birth, did so, and as he felt a strength in his feet that he had never previously experienced, he leaped and walked as he experimented with them.

It was a similar miracle and experience to that of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, as performed by Peter (Acts 3). And



in the same way it excited the amazement and interest of the people. They chanted in the native language of Lycaonia: *"The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men!... The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men!"*



They called Barnabas *Zeus* or *Jupiter*, and Paul *Hermes* or *Mercurius*, because he was the chief speaker. And from this we can perhaps gain some impression of the appearance of the two brethren. The god *Zeus* was represented as aged, large, venerable; and this may well have been the appearance of Barnabas. On the other hand, *Hermes* or *Mercurius*, was represented as younger, shorter, active and eloquent, such as Paul must have been at that time.

Looking upon Paul and Barnabas as manifestations of their gods, the people were anxious to pay them the reverence that they felt was due to them.

Paul's Open-Air Address

Of the two gods mentioned, *Zeus*, or *Jupiter*, was considered to be of higher status to the people of *Lystra*. It was common then, for cities to be placed under the protection of a god, and *Lystra* was under the protection of *Zeus*. A statue of the god stood before the principal gate of the city.

Believing that the god himself had visited the city in the person of Barnabas, the priest of *Zeus* arranged for a public celebration and worship. Sacrificial oxen decorated with flowers were led before the city gate and a great concourse of people gathered there for the purpose.

Paul and Barnabas were ignorant of the significance of all this. They had heard the chanting shouts of the people, but because (as Luke observes) this had been in "the speech of *Lycaonia*," they did not understand what it was all about. They had seen the crowds gathered at the gate of the city, and observed the decorated oxen and pagan priests, and doubtless had made their way there in sad curiosity at the superstitious ignorance of the people. But they did not realise that this all was to honour them! This, however, became apparent as the ceremony proceeded. Further enquiries revealed to them the true nature of affairs. They learnt with dismay that their act of mercy and faith in healing the crippled man had so miscarried as to support the very worship they preached to overthrow.

Tearing their clothes in order to openly manifest their protest, they sprang out into the path of the procession, expostulating with the people, calling upon them to see that they were but ordinary mortals like themselves, and proclaiming that the very purpose of their mission was to turn them away from such empty and senseless worship, to embrace the Truth concerning the Creator of heaven and earth.

“Sirs,” they declared, “what foolishness is this that you are doing? We are humans, with emotions as yourselves. We are bringing you the good news to turn away from these useless things to the living God who made heaven, earth, sea, and everything they contain. In days gone by He let all the nations go their own ways, though He did not leave Himself without evidence as Benefactor; for He gave you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons and supplied you nourishment and enjoyment to your heart’s content.”

Yet even though they thus spoke, it was with extreme difficulty that they restrained the people from sacrificing unto them. Their previous enthusiasm dampened, they were, however, reluctant to acknowledge their folly. Yet as their supposed “gods” disclaimed that they were such, they were compelled to submit!

Paul Stoned

The fickle Lycaonians, having been denied their celebrations, now felt a sullen resentment against those whom they previously would have

Paul’s Second Address

GOD THE CREATOR, AND MANKIND’S RESPONSIBILITIES

Paul’s open-air address at Lystra is impregnated with references from the Old Testament, and based directly upon Psalm 146:6: “Yahweh made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is; which keepeth truth for ever.” In such circumstances as he experienced in Lystra, the mind of the apostle automatically turned to the Scriptures. He had the ability to quickly adapt himself to every situation, and to use even distressing circumstances as opportunities to proclaim the Word. A summary of his address on this occasion is as follows:

- **God, the Creator, is alone to be worshipped;**
- **He is living and active, having created all things;**
- **In the past He revealed Himself only to Israel;**
- **Yet all nations experienced His presence: for rain and sunshine, seasons and harvest came from Him.**
- **Gentiles should turn from inanimate idols to worship the living, active, powerful God of creation.**

worshipped. They cast around in their minds for some reason to explain away their foolish actions, and at the same time discredit Paul and Barnabas. They found it in the agitation of some Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who had made it their business to follow the two preachers and destroy the influence they were exerting.

It did not take much argument on the part of these Jews to persuade the people of Lystra that Paul was a danger to the peace of the city, and that his teaching should be avoided at all costs. Indeed, they so played upon the feelings of these somewhat backward, and certainly ignorant, people, as to rouse such resentment against Paul that they would gladly have murdered him.

And this nearly happened. The aroused mob, coming upon the apostle, gave vent to their feelings in invective and violence. Their insults which he doubtless would have ignored, were followed with violence. Soon Paul found himself in the midst of a crowd of people of murderous intent. Rocks were aimed at him with such venom that he suffered concussion, and lay in the dust of the street bloodied and unconscious. Believing him to be dead, they dragged him through the streets of the city and flung him outside, perhaps before the very image of Zeus where they previously would have done him honour.

The members of the recently formed ecclesia were witnesses to this outrage. Filled with horror at what they believed to be the death of the one who had brought them the message of love and life, they gathered around his body, perhaps to save it from further abuse and indignities. They had witnessed in the sufferings of the apostle a vivid example of to what dedication to the Truth can really lead. Perhaps Timothy was a sad witness to these things? Later, Paul wrote to him: "You have fully known my doctrine, manner of life... persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me" (2Tim. 3:10-11). "You, therefore, endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2Tim. 2:3). Again, in outlining the trials he had endured for the Truth's sake, Paul listed this distressing experience: "Once was I stoned," he wrote (2Cor. 11:25).

Meanwhile, the brethren of Lystra stood protectively around the inert body of their beloved friend and brother, believing him to be dead. Then they saw him stir! He was not dead after all! Filled with delight they helped him to his feet and accompanied him back into the city. The brutal violence of the pagan people did not deter Paul.

On The Road To Derbe

Paul realised that it would not be safe for either him or the local brethren if he remained in Lystra whilst the temper of the people was so inflamed against him. And as the Lord had taught his disciples that when they were persecuted in one city, they should

move on to the next (Mat. 10:14, 23), the two companions now shook the dust of Lystra from their feet, and took the road to Derbe, over forty miles (64 kms) west of Lystra.

Confusion over the site of Derbe existed for some time, and it was originally identified with modern Gudelinis. However, discoveries in 1956 and 1962 have identified it with Kerti Huyuk, enabling the journey of Paul to be traced with greater certainty. It was situated on the border of Galatia and Cilicia, and constituted the furthest point to which Paul and Barnabas travelled on this journey.

**Preaching at Derbe
(Acts 14:20-21)**

They apparently had a fruitful campaign at Derbe, and evidently remained there for some time. Since Derbe was near the Galatian border, and as Paul and Barnabas had entered the region of Galatia because of ill-health of the apostle, the time had come to retrace their steps.

Actually, they could have moved on through the Cilician pass to Tarsus, Paul's hometown, and on to Antioch. This, indeed, must have appeared a most attractive route to follow at the time. On the other hand, to retrace their steps would bring them into the area of personal danger through persecution. Yet they determined to do so. Why? Because they felt the need of consolidating and strengthening the small communities they had established. This was Paul's constant practice (see 1Thes. 3:2-4). He was indifferent to personal danger, and saw only the needs of the Truth and the brethren.

Before leaving Derbe, however, another notable disciple had embraced the Truth. Gaius was baptised. Later he became one of Paul's travelling companions (Acts 20:4), supporting the apostle in the difficult journeys he took.

**Confirming the
Believers**

Thus in this journey through Galatia, which had been undertaken by the apostle because of sickness and was not in his original plan at all, at least two outstanding disciples were made: Timothy of Lystra (Acts 16:1), and Gaius of Derbe. Their selfless, dedicated service to the apostle and the cause of Truth, was indicative of what the warm-hearted Galatians were capable of manifesting when their emotions were channeled by the Word.

In addition, ecclesias had been established in the various cities visited and many were now rejoicing in the Truth who previously had been imprisoned in darkness. Thus out of distressing circumstances, a great benefit was received.

Paul's Exhortation

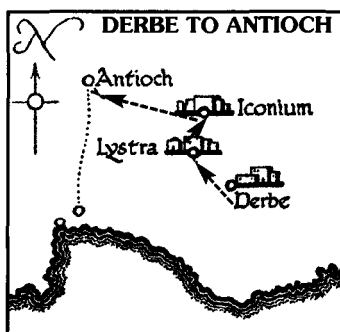
Apparently Paul and Barnabas were not subjected to persecution in Derbe, for it is

not included among the cities listed by the apostle to Timothy, in which he suffered affliction (2Tim. 3:11). Moreover, success attended their efforts there, for they “made many disciples” (Acts 14:21, mg) before they established an ecclesia there, and then made ready to revisit the cities in which they had already preached.

Their return journey was not to preach to strangers, but to “confirm the souls of the disciples.” From place to place they delivered a single exhortation; one that was given added force by their own conduct. The theme was: *“We must continue to abide in The Faith in spite of all opposition, for it is through much tribulation that we shall enter into the kingdom of God.”*

What a powerful exhortation from such men as Paul and Barnabas! The very fact that they had dared to return along a route that had been marked by violent persecution, testified that they were determined to “abide in the faith.” And as for enduring tribulation, the bruises on Paul’s body were a token of endurance. The Lord had warned the apostles to expect such treatment (Mat. 10:21, 22, 38; 16:24; Jn. 12:25-26; 16:1, 2, 33), and the apostles passed on the same message to believers (Rom. 8:17; 1Thes. 3:4; 2Tim. 1:8; 2:11-12; 1Pet. 4:12-16; Rev. 7:14).

Do we experience tribulation today? Not as did the apostles or the first century ecclesias, but in a different way we do. The word translated “tribulation” in Acts 14:22 is *thlipseos* and signifies pressure or compression brought about by evils from without. The world exercises pressure upon us today in many ways. It makes demands upon us which we find difficult to avoid. Later, Paul claimed that such pressures are more difficult than actual violence (2Tim. 3:1). But whether in active persecution, or in the pressures of the modern world, believers must generate sufficient faith to see beyond them, and press on to the Kingdom of God. Paul possibly told the brethren of Galatia, as he moved from place to place, that though there will be one individual in the Kingdom of God who never sinned, there will be nobody who has never been tried. Even the Son of God “learned obedience by the things that he suffered.” It is only by building up a compensating pressure within that we will resist that from without.



The Thoroughness Of Paul’s Preaching

It was not hasty, sketchy exposition that Paul and Barnabas delivered to the believers as they went from place to place. That is shown by a consideration of the Epistle to the Galatians (the very area in

which they were then preaching). Paul carefully instructed them. This is apparent from the subjects to which he briefly refers in the epistle he wrote them. It refers to subjects such as Law, Justification by Faith, Sonship in Christ; it frequently quotes from the Old Testament Scriptures, basing the elaboration of doctrine on the very use of words found therein; it treats of allegory founded on historical incidents, revealing that Paul must have carefully instructed them in the history of Israel. Thus his teaching involved Bible history, prophecy, allegory and doctrine.

He further illustrated the vast change wrought in one's life by Christ, referring to his own personal experience and conversion (Gal. 1:13). He showed how his own endurance under suffering was an open placarding of Christ's sacrifice (Gal. 1:16; 2:20; 3:1) whose sufferings he thus fellowshiped (Phil. 3:10). His exposition of the Law in relation to the Liberty in Christ, clearly revealed the hopelessness of man apart from involvement with the Lord, and the glorious privilege obtained in the Gospel (Gal. 5:1). It was Paul's teaching of liberty in Christ that brought him under the censure of the Jews, and was partly responsible for the persecution that he suffered at their hands (Gal. 5:11).

The Galatians enthusiastically embraced the Truth (Gal. 5:7). The gifts of the Holy Spirit were manifested among them (Gal. 3:5). Strengthened by the teaching of the apostle and Barnabas they found the means of enduring the persecution that they, like them, now experienced (Gal. 3:4).

If the preaching of Paul and Barnabas to pagans had proved successful; their confirmation of the doctrine among those converted proved essential.

Paul and Barnabas carefully scrutinised the members of the various ecclesias, and, guided by the Spirit, they appointed certain ones to the position of eldership. This was not a position governed by ecclesial vote; it was not comparable to arranging brethren in ecclesias today, but was an official appointment determined by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

A great responsibility rested upon those elders to maintain the teaching and example provided by Paul and Barnabas. They needed the strength and communion of heaven to that end. Thus, on such occasions when elders were appointed, the ecclesia was assembled; the appointment was made official by the apostle; and after prayer and abstinence they were exhorted to seek the strength of the Lord Jesus on whom they believed.

Return to Perga

The two valiant soldiers for Christ returned through Pisidia, calling upon the ecclesias for this purpose. Wherever they went they were met with joy and

enthusiasm by the believers, who willingly responded to the teaching and exhortation of Paul and Barnabas, and proclaimed their determination to maintain the faith at all costs, cheerfully shouldering its responsibilities.

So the two missionaries returned to Perga. On the previous visit they had neglected to preach in this city, probably because of Paul's illness. But now he had recovered, and they preached the Word there.

From there they went down to Attalia, a seaport about sixteen miles (26 kms) from Perga, and finding a ship about to leave for Antioch, they joined it as passengers, and so made their way over the Mediterranean to their home ecclesia.

Reporting To The Ecclesia in Antioch

Paul and Barnabas returned to the ecclesia in Antioch to report upon the results of their journey. The members of the ecclesia were gathered together, and Paul outlined to them the results of their preaching. It was obvious that a complete departure from previous methods had taken place. The converts were mainly from Gentiles who had had no previous understanding of the God of Israel. The brethren could see that the work had not been conducted without personal sacrifice on the part of those who had undertaken it. Paul, particularly, showed clearly the effects of the illness and brutal opposition he had experienced whilst on travel (Gal. 6:17). He still suffered fits of acute suffering and intense depression (Gal. 1:10; 6:17), but he returned with a strong desire to continue on the work he had commenced, and to which he had been appointed.

This determination was even more strongly formed in him, and he could now see, more clearly than ever, that the work and destiny in life to which God had specially called him was to be the Apostle to the Gentiles (1Cor. 9:21; Gal. 5:11; Rom. 15:16; Eph. 3:6).

Paul remained at Antioch for a "long time," probably about two years.

Completion Of The First Journey

The first preaching journey properly ends with the arrival of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch. After staying there a "long time," Paul again visited Jerusalem to debate with the Judaisers. This happened about AD51, and as Paul departed on his first journey about AD46, it is necessary to divide the interval from AD46 to 51 between his journey through Galatia and his subsequent abode at Antioch. If the apostle set forth somewhat late in the year AD46, he may possibly have returned toward the close of AD48, occupying some two years in his journey. The years 49 and 50 were spent at Antioch, and in the year 51 he visited Jerusalem. Paul's age at the period of his first journey, therefore, would be approximately between 39 to 41.

CHRONOLOGY OF PAUL'S LIFE

Based upon five leading events, the dates of which can be set with reasonable certainty:

[1] THE CONVERSION OF PAUL — AD37

This is calculated from Josephus, in the light of 2Cor. 11:32 which shows that Aretas was King of Arabia and in possession of Damascus when Paul escaped from the city three years after his conversion. That Paul, as a Jew, should have been able to act so freely against the Christians in the way indicated in Acts 9:2, implies that a government was in power that was sympathetic to the Jews and to the current high priest. Aretas answers to the former qualification, and he became established in Damascus in place of Herod Antipas (who was hated of the Jews) in AD37. In that same year, Theophilus became high priest in Jerusalem, and Paul applied to him for authority to move against the Jewish-Christians in Damascus.

[2] THE DEATH OF HEROD AGRIPPA 1 — AD44

This is recorded in Acts 12:23, and the date determines the return of Paul to Jerusalem with alms as occurring approximately AD44-45. This was a time of recorded famine answering to the requirements of Acts 11:28.

[3] THIRD JOURNEY OF PAUL TO JERUSALEM — AD51

According to Galatians 2:1 this was fourteen years after Paul's conversion. It followed his return to Antioch from the first missionary journey. This has been contested on the grounds that the visit to Jerusalem referred to in Galatians, was that recorded in Acts 11:26; 12:25, written before the Jerusalem Conference, on the grounds that otherwise the decision of the conference would surely have been quoted by Paul. Further, it is claimed that Gal. 1:17 demands that every visit to Jerusalem by the apostle be recorded, and if Gal. 2:1-10 relates to the Jerusalem Conference, Paul omitted the visit recorded in Acts 11:26; 12:25 (See *Galatians* by J. Carter).

But in answer to this:

[a] Paul is not listing his visits to Jerusalem, but his *contact with the apostles*, and the visit of Acts 11:26; 12:25 took place when persecution had driven them from the city (Acts 12:1, 19), or made it inconvenient for them to meet Paul. This was well-known by the ecclesias, and there was no point in mentioning it to the Galatians. Further, if the visit to Jerusalem mentioned in Gal. 2:1-10 related to that recorded in Acts 11:26, it is passing strange that

the apostles should urge Paul that he "should remember the poor" (Gal. 2:10), seeing that he had visited Jerusalem on that occasion for that very purpose (Acts 11:29). We believe that the visit to Jerusalem mentioned by the apostle to the Galatians was for the purpose of the Conference.

[b] Paul states that the visit was fourteen years after his conversion which took place in the year 37, which brings the time of the Jerusalem visit to 51. Paul's second visit to Jerusalem after his conversion (Acts 11:26; 12:25) was during the period of the persecution which terminated with the death of Herod in 44; and fourteen years before that date is far too early for Paul's conversion.

[c] Paul's statement in Gal. 5:11 implies that some were making capital out of his action in circumcising Timothy (see page 120 of *Galatians* by J. Carter), but this did not take place until after the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 16:1).

[d] We conclude, therefore, that the Jerusalem Conference took place in the year AD51, and was the purpose of the visit referred to by Paul in Galatians 2.

[4] THE PROCURATORSHIP OF FELIX — AD60-61

According to Josephus, Tacitus, and Suetonius, Felix was superseded by Festus in AD60-61. Upon this date depends the apostle's arrest in Jerusalem, and his journey to Rome. His captivity at Caesarea which followed the arrest, continued for two years, and must have commenced approximately AD58-59 (Acts 24:27).

[5] THE ARRIVAL OF PAUL IN ROME — AD61-62

This followed soon after the entrance of Festus into his office (see Acts 25:12-13, 21).

These dates provide the structure upon which can be built the chronology of the Acts, and the ministry of the apostle Paul.



Chapter 4

THE CONFERENCE AT JERUSALEM (Acts 15)

The labours of Paul among the Gentiles, and the manner in which the Gospel was now being openly offered to them, aroused the hostility of a Judaizing section of the brotherhood. They had been largely silenced by the action of Peter in taking a number of them with him as witnesses when he visited Cornelius, and later when he presented his report to the brethren in Jerusalem. After all, they could hardly voice criticism of preaching and a witness in which they had participated. But there was some justification for their attitude with regard to the baptism of Cornelius, for even before conversion, he had shown considerable interest in the Jewish beliefs, and doubtless was what was called a Proselyte Of The Gate — one who endorsed the Jewish beliefs but had not as yet submitted to circumcision. But Paul had gone far beyond what was then considered permissible. He was freely mixing with pagans, and giving them full fellowship rights upon their baptism, without requiring them to endorse the Mosaic ritual. Some began to agitate against this; and soon a Judaizing party had developed within the Brotherhood dedicated to demanding that the requirements of the Law of Moses (as they interpreted them) should be properly observed. This led to controversy, and to the calling of a Conference in Jerusalem. Out of the discussions of that Conference there emerged a conciliatory recommendation that was delivered to the affected ecclesias, with the purpose of healing the widening breach. In our treatment of the decision of the Conference, we shall put forward the proposition that it was a compromise that did not work except in certain specific cases, and therefore it was not designed for widespread usage. It is significant that none of the New Testament writers, in the various epistles that they wrote subsequent to this Conference, mentioned the decision arrived at on that occasion, even though they wrote against Judaizers. Why? We shall set down our reasons for this, and recommend that the reader consider them in the light of what others have written that they might be fully confirmed in their own mind.

IMMEDIATELY on their arrival at Antioch, Paul and Barnabas had summoned a meeting of the ecclesia, and given a report of their mission and its success, dwelling particularly on the way in which it revealed that Yahweh had now “opened the door of faith

unto the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27).

News of this soon travelled from ecclesia to ecclesia until it reached Judea. In the ecclesias established throughout the province, the report of Paul's activities aroused the bitterest opposition. Brethren who had been prepared to concede the right of Peter to preach to such as Cornelius who showed great respect for the Law, were incensed to learn that pagans were being invited to accept the salvation it offered on equal terms with the Jews. Believing that the matter had already gone too far they decided to make a determined effort to see that Judaism was not superseded in Christ.

Controversy At Antioch (Acts 15:1-2) A number of these brethren banded together and moved north to Antioch, to challenge Paul before those of the ecclesia in that city. They acted shrewdly. They did not immediately face Paul with their teaching, but waited whilst they consolidated themselves in the ecclesia, in order that they might be assured of some support. They were one-time Pharisees (Acts 15:5), who therefore were well-known to Paul; they were bitter opponents of the liberty in Christ, as had Paul been previously.

As they insinuated themselves within the ecclesia in Antioch, Paul recognised them for what they were: they were "false brethren unawares brought in, who came in secretly to spy out the liberty obtained in Christ Jesus, that they might bring others into bondage" (Gal. 2:4). He realised that a verbal clash was inevitable, and made ready to meet it.

The brethren from Judea carefully selected the issue. They advanced the rite of circumcision as the touchstone of their doctrine. This was a clever approach! Circumcision came not from Moses but from Abraham. It was the token of the Abrahamic covenant. By Paul stating that it was unnecessary, it could be reasoned that he was rejecting the Abrahamic covenant. And would anybody be saved who rejected the Abrahamic covenant? By no means, as all would agree.

Therefore they set their proposition before the ecclesia: "*Except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved,*" they declared (Acts 15:1).

With clever debating technique they did not dispute that Gentiles, in being baptised into Christ, had progressed a certain distance; but they claimed that they had not gone far enough. They discriminated between Jews who embraced Christ, and Gentiles who did likewise, as unbelieving Judaisers did between those whom they called Proselytes of Righteousness, and Proselytes of the Gate (see *The Story of the Bible* pp. 98, 129). The former embraced all the rites of the Law even of being circumcised, and had the right of full worship; the latter accepted the teaching of Moses, but did not carry out the

rites, and could only approach the gate of the temple. Now, in the ecclesia, the same distinction prevailed in the minds of the Judaisers. If a Gentile believer wanted to enjoy the full rights of worship and to ensure his salvation, he must be circumcised. This is what they declared and demanded, and until Gentile believers were prepared to submit, they claimed their salvation was a matter of doubt.

With indignation Paul and Barnabas listened to the clever reasoning of these disciples from Judea designed to undermine the Truth; with sorrow they observed that many were taken in by their doctrine. Vigorously they contended against it, "refusing to give place" to them (Gal. 2:5). Publicly and boldly, Paul and Barnabas refuted their teaching, and by questioning attempted to show the shallowness of their reasoning.

An Appeal To Jerusalem

The firm, loving-kindness of Barnabas, and the forthright vigour of Paul's testimony, were met by the stubborn refusal of the

Judaisers to give way. This caused doubts to arise in the minds of many in the ecclesia.

It was decided to make an appeal to Jerusalem, and to call the apostles and elders together to consider the matter. Paul agreed to this proposal, not that he needed the confirmation of others for what he had done, but to prevent the schism that threatened. He made it a matter of prayer, and received "by revelation" from God the intimation that he should visit Jerusalem (Gal. 2:2). As an apostle appointed by God and Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:1), the visit to Jerusalem would add nothing to his status (Gal. 2:6), but could assist others.

Paul, Barnabas and others were appointed by the ecclesia in Antioch to represent them in the matter. Paul added yet another to those selected: a young man by name of Titus, an uncircumcised Greek, known for his forthright language and ways. He took him as a test case. Paul had no doubts about the divine approval of his preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Had not the Voice from heaven specifically appointed him to that mission? Had he not had evidence of the divine overshadowing of his mission as he went from place to place? Did not the Old Testament Scriptures, to which the Judaisers appealed, testify to the fact that the Gospel must be preached to Gentiles?

Paul was in no doubt at all about the matter. Thus, as the official delegation moved south from ecclesia to ecclesia throughout Phoenicia and Samaria, he proclaimed to the Gentile believers in those places, how Yahweh had appointed him to such a ministry, and the enthusiasm with which the Gospel had been accepted throughout the heathen regions beyond the seas.

Thus the brethren saw the one-time vigorous persecutor now

become the most ardent ambassador of the cause he once so bitterly opposed, and they rejoiced in the goodness of Yahweh (Acts 15:3).

A Private Conference In Jerusalem Arriving at Jerusalem, Paul sought a private interview with the apostles and elders (Gal. (Acts 15:4; Gal. 2:6-9) 2:1). This was not to determine the issue as to whether believers should be circumcised or not, but to settle the personal relation between the Jewish and Gentile disciples, and to divide their fields of labour. Paul desired complete agreement with them to avoid any contention that otherwise could have occurred, to the hindrance of the work. Paul did not want to labour in vain (Gal. 2:2).

To this private meeting he took other brethren, including Titus. The elders and apostles in Jerusalem knew that he was a Greek and uncircumcised, but no pressure was brought to bear by them to demand that he be circumcised, even though controversy was then raging in the ecclesia. Paul made it perfectly clear that the issue was too serious for compromise, and he was not prepared to give place by subjection on any terms.

He told the apostles and elders concerning the appointment he had received of God to preach to the Gentiles. He pointed out that even as Peter had been commissioned to go to the Jews, his labours took him to the rest of mankind.

The power of his reasoning, the evidence he was able to bring to bear to testify that God was with him, the clear indication of Scripture that the time had come to take the Gospel into all the world, were conclusive. They agreed that even as Peter was called to take the Gospel to the Jews, Paul and Barnabas obviously had a commission to take it to the Gentiles. James, Peter, and John, the three great pillars of the ecclesia in Jerusalem, extended the "right hand of fellowship" to Barnabas and Paul in confirmation of this fact. One thing they asked, however, that they should remember the poor among the Jews, an aspect of divine love that Paul already had been foremost in sponsoring.

Paul had established his status with the "apostles and elders." They recognised and publicly accepted that he was an apostle as were they; they conceded his right to preach unto the Gentiles, whilst they would do so to the Jews; and the presence of the uncircumcised Titus in Jerusalem clearly showed that Paul was not prepared to concede the demands of the Judaisers for the sake of peace or for any other reason. Truth must be upheld at all costs.

There were some of the Judaising Pharisees at this meeting who had joined the ecclesia in Jerusalem. They, indeed, rose up in indignation at the concessions granted Paul, and claimed that it was needful to circumcise all Gentiles who accepted the Truth, and to

command them to keep the Law of Moses. Another meeting was appointed for the purpose of discussing this subject.

**The Conference
In Jerusalem
(Acts 15:6-29)**

In due time the apostles and elders met together to consider the question of the day: *Should it be required that a Gentile believer be circumcised and keep the Law as well as be baptised?* The proposition was put and became the subject for debate. Many questions were asked and answered. The circumstances of the preaching of the Word to Gentiles were outlined. Still it did not bring conviction. Paul remained quiet during this time. The decision of the conference would make no difference to him. His commission came from God and Jesus Christ, and only God and Jesus Christ could alter it.

But Peter's work also came up for censure; and quick-tempered as usual, he was not prepared to remain silent as was Paul. Standing upon his feet, he addressed the gathering: "*Brethren,*" he commenced, "*You are well aware that from the earliest days God chose that of you all I should be the one by whom the Gentiles were to hear the Word of the gospel and believe it. God the Heart-searcher vouched for their sincerity by giving them the Holy Spirit just as He gave it to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith He made not the slightest distinction between us and them. Now, therefore, why challenge God by imposing a yoke on the necks of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we ourselves could bear? No, it is by the grace of the Lord Jesus that we believe and are saved, in the same way as they were!*"

A deep silence followed Peter's speech. There was no disputing its logic. It caused brethren to thoughtfully consider the evidence of Scripture in the light of his experience and divine commission, and made them more ready to hearken to the words of Barnabas and Paul who now were called upon to speak.

Barnabas and Paul reported briefly on their labours among the Gentiles, and explained how that God had been with them in the work as was shown by the miracles and signs that He wrought among them.

**James Summarises
The Discussion**

The meeting still kept silence. Nobody arose to challenge the evidence of Paul and Barnabas in spite of the presence of Titus the Greek. It seemed that the opposition had been silenced, and therefore, James, the Lord's brother, as chief of the elders (the voice of the apostles having been heard through Peter), now reviewed the general discussion.

"*Men who are my brethren,*" he commenced, "*listen to me! Simeon [i.e., Peter] has declared how God at the first did visit the*

Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, 'After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after Yahweh, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called, saith Yahweh, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world...'

This first section of James' address introduced the judgment which he then gave (see bordered insert).

The Words Of The Prophets

James claimed that the teaching of the prophets confirmed the action of Peter in preaching to Gentiles. He quoted three of them: Jeremiah, Amos and Isaiah.

Jeremiah 12:15 provides the first proof. The prophet proclaimed the words of Yahweh: "I will return, and have compassion on them..." The context refers to Judah as being taken out of the Gentiles (v. 14), and the influence of the call and action being such that Gentiles may also embrace the Name (v. 16).

The preaching of the apostles first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles illustrated this.

Jeremiah declared: "It shall come to pass, if they [the Gentiles] will diligently learn the ways of My people, to swear by My name, Yahweh liveth, as they taught thy people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of My people" (Jer. 12:16).

Associated with this reference from Jeremiah 12, is a quotation from Amos 9:11-12. The form of words is a variation of both the Septuagint and the Hebrew, probably expressing the sense of the latter. James used the word "men" instead of "Edom" as in the Hebrew, but as both words in ancient Hebrew had the same form, and as the nation of Edom is typical of the Gentiles, James doubtless expressed its correct meaning.

He quoted the passage to show that it was the purpose of Yahweh that Gentiles should ultimately be incorporated into His kingdom when the Tabernacle of David is restored, and therefore there should not be any resistance to the guidance of the Spirit in the preliminary call that was then being made.

Finally, in v. 18, he seems to be providing an adaptation of Isaiah 45:21, "Who hath declared this from ancient time? Have not I, Yahweh?" The context is particularly significant: "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else... I have sworn by Myself... that unto Me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess" (vv. 22-23).

The preaching of the Apostle to Gentiles, therefore, was in accordance with the teaching and predictions of the prophets.

Having established that point, James probably paused to give opportunity for any demur. None forthcoming, he proceeded with his judgment which was endorsed by the company assembled: *"My judgment is, that we trouble not them which from the Gentiles are turned to God: but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses, from old times, has in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day."*

This was accepted, and discussion proceeded how best to implement it.

Peter's Sixth Address

THE EVIDENCE OF GOD'S MEANS OF PREACHING TO THE GENTILES

Peter's important speech at the Jerusalem Conference can be summarised thus:

- He had been appointed to preach to Gentiles (Acts 10);
- God had vindicated such action by bestowing the Holy Spirit on Gentiles;
- He had purified their hearts by faith even as He had those of Jewish believers;
- To claim that justification by the Mosaic Law was necessary for salvation was to limit God and place an impossible yoke on Jews and Gentiles;
- Both are to be saved through faith.

James' Address

THE PURPOSE OF GOD TO DRAW BELIEVERS FROM THE GENTILES

This important outline of the prophetic Word laid the basis for the decision made by the Jerusalem Conference. James impregnated his comments with vital references from the Old Testament.

Consider the first sentence (Acts 15:14). It comprises an epitome of the Book of Exodus, indicating that James saw in the

call of the Gentiles a repetition of the call of Israel out of Egypt.

It can be broken up in this way:

“God did visit...” — The Greek word *episkeptomai* (visit) signifies “to inspect, look upon, with the object of finding something.” This is what Yahweh did in Egypt. He “came down to deliver them” (Exo. 3:8). This Visitation is recorded in Exodus 1:1-11:10.

“To take out of them [the Gentiles]...” — The people were separated at the Passover and the Red Sea as recorded in Exodus 12:1-15:21.

“A people...” — To constitute them the people of Yahweh in truth they had to be educated, and this education took the form of experiences and teaching in the wilderness, recorded in Exodus 15:22-24:18.

“For His name...” — The consecration and dedication of the people took place at Sinai where they entered into covenant with Yahweh, and were given a Law and a Tabernacle. All this is recorded in Exodus 25:1-40:38.

A thoughtful consideration of the Book of Exodus in the light of the break-up suggested above, will reveal how that James’ statement epitomised this wonderful book which constituted the record of Israel’s formation as a nation.

James’ important statement, which summarises the purpose of Yahweh in calling Gentiles to the Gospel further reveals the five steps to salvation. They can be outlined as:

Visitation: “*God did visit the Gentiles.*” He did so in the person of Peter. He does so still when the key of knowledge is offered to anybody.

Invitation: “*To take...*” The invitation is contained in the Gospel.

Separation: “*Out of them...*” The Greek preposition *ek* forms a basic part of the word “ecclesia,” as *ek klesia*. Separation is demanded of all who accept the invitation.

Identification: “*A people...*” The separated ones are united together in Christ as God’s people.

Dedication: “*For His name...*” Isaiah states the principle that “every one that is called by Yahweh’s name... is created for His glory” (Isa. 43:7).

All must take these five steps if they would enter the Kingdom of God. They must recognise a divine Providence in their lives as found in the Word; hearken to the invitation; separate themselves to obey His will; identify themselves as His people; and dedicate themselves to His will.

Chapter 5

THE USE AND MISUSE OF THE JERUSALEM DIRECTIVE

The decision of the apostles and elders at the Jerusalem conference was designed to establish peace within the ecclesias. In the state of the Brotherhood at that time, it constituted the best possible advice, and, therefore, a good proof of its inspired wisdom. However, it did not bring peace. It left too many questions unsolved for that, and these brought some brethren (such as Paul and Peter) in open opposition one with the other. The main admission was that circumcision was recognised as unessential to Gentile believers, who, on the other hand, ought to show a spirit of forbearance in their attitude toward the scruples of Jews regarding the eating of certain meats and other matters upon which the Law pronounced judgment. These concessions removed great difficulties from the path of Gentile converts, and were designed to join them together more completely with their Jewish brethren. But a multitude of pressing questions remained, and left an opening for each party to hold almost exactly the same opinions as before. A Gentile believer was not to be compelled to submit to circumcision and observe the principles of Judaism. That was good. But would it not be better for him to accept them? The Judaising brethren still thought so, and apparently discriminated between Gentile believers who underwent the rite of circumcision, and those who refused to do so, giving the former a higher status in the Truth. The skilful pressing of this form of reasoning was so seductive as to induce many brethren and ecclesias to accept it, leading to the great controversy of apostolic times.

FOLLOWING the conference, the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem Ecclesia decided to send a conciliatory directive to Gentile brethren, advising them that they were under no compulsion to submit to circumcision and similar rites of the Law, but, at the same time, calling upon them to manifest care in the exercise of their liberty in Christ out of consideration toward the scruples of the Jews.

A Letter To Gentile Believers

Paul and Barnabas were selected to take this directive in a letter to the various centres of controversy. To give added weight to this mission, two prominent brethren of the Jerusalem Ecclesia were selected to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, and endorse the

teaching contained in the letter, and the work of the two missionaries.

Accordingly, Judas Barsabas and Silas were appointed for this purpose. Silas was evidently an Hellenistic Jew, for his name is derived from the Latin, *Silva*, and he possessed Roman citizen rights. He greatly impressed Paul, and afterwards became closely related with him in his labours. The appointment of these two brethren was confirmed by the whole ecclesia (Acts 15:22), and the letter they conveyed was as follows:

"The apostles and elders and brethren send greetings unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, in Syria, and in Cilicia. Since we have heard that some of our number, quite unauthorised by us, have unsettled you with their teaching and upset your minds, we have decided unanimously to select some of our number and send them to you along with our beloved Paul and Barnabas, who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We therefore send Judas and Silas with the following message, which they will also convey to you orally: 'It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no extra burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which, if you keep yourselves, you shall do well.' Farewell."

It is obvious, from Paul's later treatment of some of the teaching here advanced, that he considered that the directive was designed to heal a growing breach between Jewish and Gentile believers of the time, rather than to lay down principles of essential doctrine. For example, in discussing the matter of eating meats offered to idols, or that which had not been killed and drained of blood in the normal Jewish manner, Paul told the Corinthian brethren that their partaking or otherwise was a matter of conscience: "Meat commendeth us not to God," he wrote, "for neither if we eat are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse" (1Cor. 8:8).

However, he very forcibly advocated that brethren should abstain from eating meat offered to idols if others were offended thereby. "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles [meat-markets] that eat, asking no questions for conscience sake... If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye are disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake..." (1Cor. 10:25-28).

These instructions show that the apostle considered it a matter of indifference as to whether a person ate meat that had been offered to idols, or poultry that had been strangled, as long as this did not offend the conscience of anybody. That obviously was the conciliatory motive that dictated the directive of the Jerusalem conference.

Why, then, did the letter speak of the various prohibitions as

“these necessary things” if vital doctrine is not involved?

But vital doctrine *is* involved! Not, however, with regard to the eating or otherwise of certain meats, but in showing consideration for the feelings of others. This is the very necessary doctrine of love. The “necessary things” referred to in the letter, therefore, involved an acknowledgement and endorsement of the teaching and ministry of Paul, the release of Gentile believers from the burden of the Law, and the importance of manifesting mutual consideration toward the scruples of others when saving doctrine is not endangered by so doing.

That was always the spirit insisted upon by Paul.

Joy In The Antioch Ecclesia

Among the company that returned with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch from Jerusalem was John Mark. He possibly felt a little sheepish in the company of Paul, and rather sorry for the way in which he had let him down on the first missionary journey.

However, he was now determined to make amends. In this he was doubtless encouraged by his cousin Barnabas, who was always ready to help those in such a need.

Arriving at Antioch, the whole ecclesia was gathered together, and the letter read to the assembled company. It created a general feeling of relief and joy. The Gentile believers rejoiced that their baptism was considered valid and as delivering them from the curse of the Law. They accepted the spirit of the exhortation contained in the Directive, and determined that they would live according to the spirit of the Law (Rom. 2:13-15), avoiding offence to the Jews (1Cor. 10:30-33).

The public reading of the letter was followed by explanatory

“HAZARDING THEIR LIVES”

This statement concerning Paul and Barnabas, contained in the letter written from Jerusalem is significant. The circumstances in which they hazarded their lives are not recorded in Acts, but were evidently well known to the brethren. In 2Corinthians 11:23-28, Paul mentions a number of trials he endured, of which nothing is recorded. For example, the five Jewish scourgings there referred to, two of the three Roman beatings with rods (one was endured at Philippi and is recorded in Acts), and the three shipwrecks, are all unrecorded in Acts. Some had already occurred. That Paul should endure and dare all these rigors in the state of ill-health that he constantly suffered (2Cor. 4:7-12; 12:7-10; Gal. 4:13-14) indicates that he was a man of dedicated determination and resolute will as far as the Truth was concerned. He was a man to admire and follow even as he also followed Christ (1Cor. 11:1).

discourses by Judas and Silas. They were prophets of Jerusalem, and therefore Spirit-equipped for the work of expounding and teaching to the edification of the brethren (1Cor. 14:3). Their expositions confirmed the members of the Antioch Ecclesia in the faith they had embraced, and strengthened the bond of love between the Jewish and Gentile ecclesias in Jerusalem and Antioch.

Their work having been completed and after a short stay, these two brethren returned to Jerusalem. For the time being, at least, the voice of the Judaisers in Antioch had been silenced.

The ecclesia was now free of controversy, and able to give its undivided attention to the proclamation of the Gospel. Following the lead of Paul and Barnabas in that direction, a virile message was delivered as a public witness with great success.

Meanwhile, the journey to Antioch in the company of Paul had greatly impressed Silas. He felt that he would like to give more support to the apostle in his labours, and shortly afterwards returned to Antioch for that purpose.*

Controversy With Peter (Gal. 2:11-17) About this time, the ecclesia in Antioch was visited by Peter. Unfortunately, there occurred an incident that was distressing to the community as a whole, as it was to the principals concerned: Peter and Paul.

It revealed once and for all that terms of conciliation with Judaisers simply could not work, because their teaching would not permit them to work. Those heretics were quite determined to press their point of view, even under the covers of the terms of the Jerusalem Directive, if need be. It showed that the so-called peace in the ecclesias was but a truce, and that the battle had yet to be fought and won.

When Peter first arrived in Antioch, and saw how actively Paul and Barnabas were giving themselves to the proclamation and exposition of the Word, he enthusiastically gave himself to the same labours. He did not observe any scruples with regard to eating with the Gentile believers as did the Judaisers (Gal. 2:12), but following the precedence that he had himself established with regard to Cornelius, he did that which was considered both unlawful and a disgrace by the Jews (Acts 10:28).

All went well until another company of Jewish believers arrived in Antioch, from James. They were of the Judaizing group, and in their strict formalism disapproved of too close an association with Gentiles whether believers or otherwise.

* The statement: "Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still" (Acts 15:34) is omitted in other versions (see Diaglott, R.V. etc.) and is an interpolation.

Peter, well knowing their scruples, and fearing their influence, began to withdraw. He separated himself from the Gentile believers, with whom, previously, he had been on terms of great familiarity, and began to associate only with the Jews.

Peter's sad inconsistency showed that no confidence could be put in the flesh. He who "seemed to be a pillar" (Gal. 2:9), at that moment of trial and error, proved to be but a "reed shaken with the wind."

But saddest of all to Paul, even Barnabas, his co-worker among the Gentiles, the brother who had extended to him the right hand of fellowship and who had loyally stood by him when other brethren refused to accept him — Barnabas who had travelled to Jerusalem with him and had courageously associated himself with him in his contention for the liberty of Gentiles in Christ — even Barnabas, for the moment, as one writer has stated, "was swept away by the flood of inconsistency, and in remembering that he was a Levite forgot that he was a Christian."

Paul was moved to his very being. His passionate nature began to assert itself. Warmly enthusiastic in all things relating to the Truth, he could not tolerate error or hypocrisy, and believed that he could detect both in this action. He determined to oppose and crush such hypocrisy once and for all. To hesitate would have been to see the triumph of the Pharisaic party over the indecision of men like Peter and Barnabas. The circumstances demanded the most vigorous denunciation possible. It was no occasion for private remonstrance; the rebuke had to be as public as the wrong, or the whole cause of the Truth would be imperilled.

It was a difficult action for Paul to take, for he had an intense love for these brethren. Moreover, both were older than he in age as well as in ecclesial associations, and it went against the grain of Paul to "rebuke an elder." On the other hand, there is sometimes a need to "rebuke them that sin before all, that others also may fear" (1Tim. 5:20). The slightest weakness on his part at that time would have meant the triumph of Judaism at the expense of the cause of Christ.

The apostle moved both rapidly and ruthlessly. On some general gathering of the ecclesia, at which both Jews and Gentiles were present, he brought the matter to a head, by addressing Peter in language that demonstrated that he was to be blamed. He did so boldly, openly, publicly, before the brethren, and as an equal, not as a subordinate. "If you, being a Jew, are living like the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why do you demand that Gentiles adopt Judaism?" he asked. (Gal. 2:14). This was a charge of utter inconsistency, and it must have induced the greatest tension in that meeting. Peter was taken aback by the attack, but was unable to justify his action. His inconsistency was only too apparent. Paul continued: "You and I may be Jews by birth, and not 'Gentile sinners,' but we have come to know

that a man is justified by faith in Jesus Christ and not by works of law, and we have accepted that truth by believing in Jesus Christ that we might be justified in our quest for justification in Christ. Since we are 'sinners' as well as the Gentiles, does that make Christ an agent of sin? Never! If I build again the things which I destroyed [i.e., justification by the works of the Law], I make myself a transgressor [for I inevitably break the Law; see Rom. 7:12-20]" (Gal. 2:14-18).

There was no refuting the logic of this declaration, Paul reasoned that if justification by the forgiveness of sins is through faith, it could not possibly be by the Law. And seeing they were all sinners, it could only be by faith, for apart from perfect, sinless obedience, the Law could only curse. Because of the weakness of the flesh as now constituted, sin is inevitable on the part of both Jew and Gentile, and the Law therefore cursed both; therefore both had to look beyond it for justification from sin.

Peter's action in separating from the Gentiles in favour of the Jews destroyed that principle and implied that the latter could find justification easier than the former, and therefore they enjoyed a higher status as worshippers with the aid of the Law than the Gentiles did apart from it.

But, as Paul clearly showed, the facts revealed that both were under sin, and if Jews attempted justification through the deeds of the Law, they were putting their confidence in that which could only curse them and reveal that they were "sinners" equally with the Gentiles. Certainly there was an advantage in being a member of the covenant race rather than "a sinner of the Gentiles," but only because as such, one should possess a knowledge that would reveal to him more clearly the fact of sin, and lead him to seek the means of justification available only in Christ (Gal. 3:21-24).

On the other hand, the Judaising concept that justification was still possible through the works of the Law would bring all under its curse (for nobody could keep it), and therefore make Christ a minister of sin rather than a forgiver of sin.

This bitter and public controversy between two apostles of the Lord was both shameful and distressing to the disciples of Antioch.

It was nevertheless necessary if the Truth were to prevail, to solve the issue and to end the controversy; and it needed a man with the strong, indomitable determination of Paul to properly handle the situation. Peter's action showed that brethren must not be swayed by men, but must seek confirmation for their beliefs and action from the Word. It gave point to Paul's statement in his *Letter To The Galatians*: "Though we [apostles]... preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8).

In Defence Of Peter Peter's action had been roundly condemned as the most blatant hypocrisy, particularly following so closely upon the Directive issued after the conference at Jerusalem. But perhaps that was partly the cause of it! Perhaps he was motivated by a lack of knowledge on the matter, rather than merely hypocrisy.

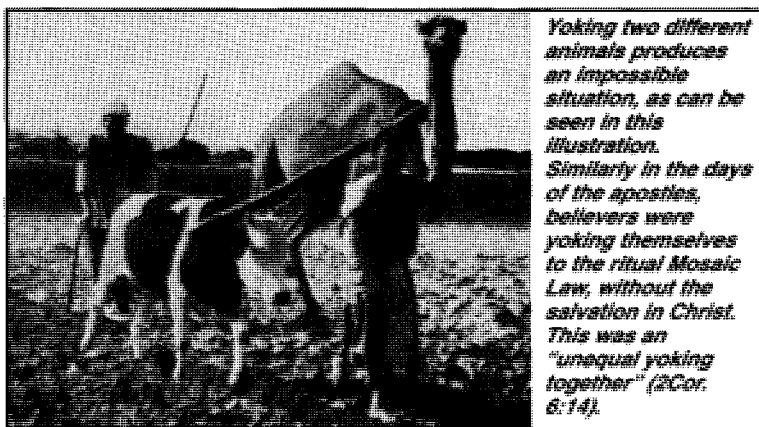
Many have blamed his action on to his natural impetuosity, but such a conclusion overlooks the fact that Barnabas had been likewise carried away; and certainly he was far from unreliable.

We have suggested that the Directive of the Conference at Jerusalem may have been partly responsible for Peter's attitude in Antioch. On what grounds can this suggestion be made? Firstly, that the Directive was a concession and not a command. It called on Gentile believers to respect certain prohibitions of the Law, so as not to antagonise Jews who attempted to keep it (Acts 15:21). Therefore, it did not proclaim a doctrine, but a compromise practice. It is significant that Paul never quotes the decision of the Conference in his epistles; never relies upon it to expound or endorse the doctrine of liberty in Christ. Apart from Acts 16:4, 21:25 (and here the reference to it is rather apologetic), it is never mentioned.

Moreover, the conference decision was very limited in its scope; it was sent only to those areas where dissension had broken out (Acts 15:23); it was not intended for universal observance.

In fact, the Directive from Jerusalem did not proclaim the liberty that is found in Christ, but merely emphasised the need to show consideration toward the scruples of others.

It did not deter the activities of the Judaisers who remained active and successful in proclaiming their doctrines in various centres. Why did success attend their preaching? Why did believers voluntarily place themselves under a yoke of bondage when they had the Directive before them?



Because the recommendation of the Conference being a concession, it left untouched the question of the actual value of the Law to those believers who might attempt to keep it.

Later, Paul expounded the purpose of the Law, and showed that it was intended to show that man is a sinner (Rom. 7:13), as a means of causing him to see the need of a redeemer, even Christ (Gal. 3:24).

The Directive of the Jerusalem Conference never did that! In fact, it could be interpreted by Judaisers as an endorsement of the Law, inasmuch as Gentile believers were compelled to acknowledge its value by exercising care to avoid offending those who attempted to keep it.

In Jerusalem, Jewish believers still frequented the temple, and were “zealous of the Law” (Acts 21:17-21). They obviously saw a benefit in so doing. Of what did that benefit consist? Most likely, such believing Jews would view believing Gentiles who stood aside from the Law, as orthodox Jews viewed *Proselytes of Righteousness* in contrast to *Proselytes of the Gate*. They recognised that both were more righteous than pagans, but they only afforded full fellowship rights to the former, for they submitted to circumcision, whereas the others did not. The latter (such as Cornelius) were sympathetic to the Jewish religion, and acknowledged the God of Israel, but stopped short of a full identification with the Law and therefore were not afforded full rights of worship.

In a similar manner, the Judaisers in the ecclesias could reason that whilst benefits accrued to both Jewish and Gentile believers and that salvation is through faith, a more certain salvation and a greater reward would be the lot of those who, in addition to being baptised, honoured and obeyed the Law. Thus Gentile believers who refused circumcision would be viewed as previously the Jews viewed *Proselytes of the Gate*.

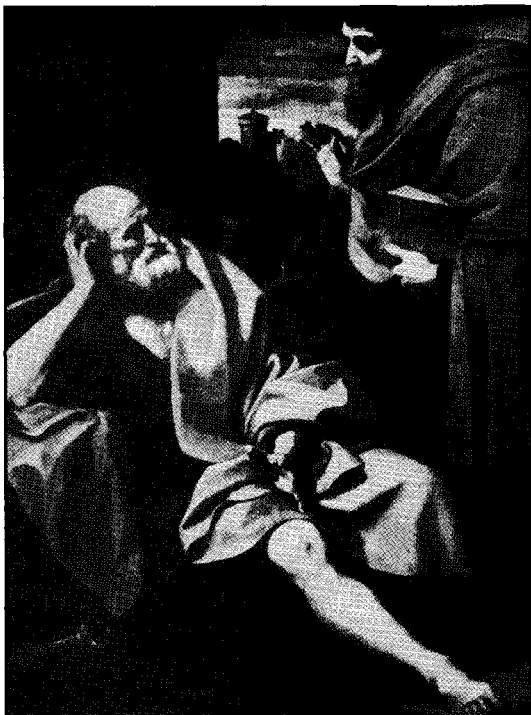
That would give a logical explanation to the otherwise completely inconsistent action of Peter, and inexplicable support afforded by Barnabas. Peter “ate with the Gentiles,” but when the Jews arrived from James, he separated himself from the former, in the spirit of the Jerusalem Directive which called upon believers not to antagonise those who adhered to the Law. Swayed by the reasoning of the Judaisers in the manner suggested above, Barnabas joined him in this action. Such a belief erected a barrier between Jew and Gentile in contrast to Paul’s teaching that “all are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). The Jerusalem Directive was silent regarding this Judaising doctrine, as the action of Peter and Barnabas makes abundantly clear (Gal. 2:14-21). However, the Truth was vindicated by the vigorous and forthright action and words of Paul, so that the controversy was not without its value; through it a clearer understanding, the doctrine of justification in Christ Jesus came to be acknowledged.

Peter Vindicates Paul If it is sad to read of the rift between Peter and Paul, it is most uplifting to learn of Peter's subsequent reaction. With most men, Paul's public challenge and rebuke would result in bitter recrimination and dislike; but not so with Peter. The influence of Christ upon his life was so strong, that he was able to surmount the barrier of hurt feelings that must have resulted from the public attack by his fellow apostle.

We learn of this from his last epistle, and from among some of the final words that flowed from his pen, are the following: "Account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation [this is salvation by faith]; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do the other scriptures unto their own destruction" (2Pet. 3:15-16).

Peter thus considered Paul a faithful and beloved brother, whose epistles he recommended his followers to earnestly study. What would they find in the *Epistle To The Galatians*? The statement that Peter "was to be blamed," that he was guilty of "hypocrisy," and had led others astray!

Peter was willing for others to read that of himself, in order that they might be warned against a similar course of action! Reacting in this manner to Paul's public attack Peter revealed his true greatness; an attitude of mind that will gain for him a place in the Kingdom of God.



A painting of Peter and Paul located in Milan. Peter is depicted as seated, while Paul clasps a scroll.

Chapter 6

THE SEPARATION OF PAUL AND BARNABAS (Acts 15:36-41)

Barnabas had been a faithful instrument in guiding Paul's development in the Truth; but the time had come when it was better for them to part. They did not realise that, of course, and circumstances were not pleasant that brought it about; but undoubtedly the purpose of Yahweh was served by that means. A greater scope of labour was accomplished by the separation; and whilst we may regret the dispute that gave rise to it, it is comforting to know that the two great friends in the Truth were ultimately reconciled; and that Paul finally came to recognise the wisdom of Barnabas' action (2Tim. 4:11).

TIt is always a welcome relief to turn from bitter ecclesial controversy to the public preaching of the Word. Therefore, once the heat of argument and rebuke had cooled, Paul turned to Barnabas with a suggestion that received an instant and enthusiastic response. *"Let us return and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do,"* he proposed.

Paul always recognised the great responsibility that rests upon those in the Truth to provide adequate after-care for new converts. A person having accepted Christ in baptism, must be built up in the faith, and particularly so at a time when false ideas are circulating among the Brotherhood. That was the case then, as all would recognise. And if so notable an apostle as Peter could be led astray by Judaisers, what of lesser brethren! The need to strengthen the ecclesias in true doctrine was urgent, and Paul was anxious to assist in it.

So also was Barnabas.

In fact, the suggestion presented him with an opportunity that he had been seeking for some time.

Contention Over Mark

When Barnabas left Jerusalem for Antioch with Paul, he had taken John Mark with them. Mark, therefore, had witnessed the vigorous manner in which Paul had opposed Peter, and doubtless recalled the driving energy of the apostle during the first missionary journey. Faced with the difficulties of the work, Mark then had weakened, and turned back home, but he was now confident that he could vindicate himself. He had discussed these matters with

Barnabas, who had agreed to give him an opportunity to do so.

So, when Paul made the suggestion to again visit the ecclesias in Asia, Barnabas instantly accepted.

He then made a counter-suggestion: that they should take Mark as their assistant.

Paul was appalled at the idea. In his opinion, Mark was completely unfitted for the hard and dangerous work of preaching in the areas he intended to visit. He had deserted them before (Acts 15:38; Diag.)*, and most likely would again, and Paul was not prepared to jeopardise for family considerations the important work proposed. The journey would subject them to new difficulties and dangers, and he felt that Mark's presence would prove an embarrassment to them as it had on the previous tour.

But Barnabas was adamant. He was confident that Mark would prove equal to the test, and lovable character that he was, he could also be firm and stubborn. He insisted upon Mark going with them with such force as to make it a condition of his own participation. The contention between Paul and Barnabas, which had occurred when the latter had followed Peter, again flared up over Mark, and became even more heated.

Neither would give way; so that separation was inevitable. This they did, each going his own way in the preaching of the Word, never again to work in such close unison, though they never lost the true love and respect that each had for the other. Thus Paul, later, made reference to the self-sacrificing devotion of Barnabas in the work of the Truth (1Cor. 9:6), and referred to him in terms of the greatest endearment.

Was right with Paul? Or was it with Barnabas? It was probably with both, for each apparently considered the matter from different viewpoints. Paul anticipated a hard campaign, and his whole-hearted devotion was such that he was prepared to suffer anything in the cause of Christ. He doubted whether Mark was yet ready for such a complete sacrifice. Better to let him develop a little more before placing him in a situation that could destroy him.

So Paul may have reasoned; and if so, he was doubtless right. The journey he had planned involved him in many difficult adventures and persecution, and it may have been that Mark would have again wilted under the test.

But Barnabas was also right. He wanted to create an opportunity for Mark to vindicate himself in his own sight, in that of the apostles, and before his God. Mark was sure that he would not desert the cause again, and Barnabas had every confidence in him. He was prepared to

* The Greek word rendered "departed" (Acts 15:38) is *apostanta*, and signifies "to withdraw, to apostatise," indicating the seriousness of Mark's action. The Diaglott renders it "deserted."

shelter Mark, and if need be, to curtail the extent of the journey to give him opportunity to develop. The loving characteristic of Barnabas that had induced him to take Paul and introduce him to the brethren when they would have nothing to do with him (Acts 9:26-27); that very spirit that had caused him to "seek for Saul" that he might undertake preaching in Antioch (Acts 11:25), now moved him to try and help Mark, and even to oppose Paul to do it! And to resist Paul in that way must have demanded some strength of character!

So there was right also on the side of Barnabas.

Perhaps he urged Paul to consider modifying the proposed campaign if necessary, in order to give Mark opportunity to vindicate himself, and if so, that could have been why the controversy became so sharp.

Mark, particularly, shows up in a good light at this time. He knew Paul's determination and driving energy; he had witnessed how ruthless he could be when circumstances demanded it in the way that the apostle had publicly opposed Peter and Barnabas; yet in spite of all that, he was prepared to attempt another journey with Paul.

It is evidence of Mark's worth that, having failed once, he would attempt to succeed the second time.

What a wonderful example this young disciple provides. Paul is somewhat above us; but Mark, the traitor, is a more familiar character. We can understand his feelings so well, because we fail so constantly ourselves. But let us also lay hold of the strength of his character: a strength that revealed itself in that, having failed, he tried to make good.

More, in the strength that comes through Christ, he succeeded. Mark conducted himself so faithfully, as to completely vindicate himself in the sight of Paul. A few years later, when Paul was imprisoned in Rome, Mark was with him (Col. 4:10; Philemon v. 24); still later, he co-operated with Peter (1Pet. 5:13); and finally, when Paul was imprisoned the second time and was languishing in prison awaiting death, he wrote to Timothy seeking the help of Mark: "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (2Tim. 4:11).

Did Paul then remember the contention with his old friend, Barnabas? Paul would be the first to admit that he was wrong, if such were necessary; and Barnabas to recognise that under the circumstances, Paul did what was best. Paul's words to Timothy are among the last from his pen, for shortly afterwards he was put to death. On that occasion, he asked that Timothy bring Mark to the very centre of persecution, for he realised that Mark had overcome his previous weakness and could be thoroughly relied upon.

What a wonderful vindication of a lovely character!

So, all three were right.

Paul was right in refusing to permit the work to be hindered by

any considerations; Barnabas was right in giving Mark an opportunity to vindicate himself; Mark was right in attempting and accomplishing it.

Let us take courage from the way in which Mark strengthened himself out of weakness, and despite our own failures, draw upon faith to do likewise. Divine aid is always available for the attempt.

The Friends Separate Agreement being impossible under the circumstances, the two missionaries agreed to differ, and to each go his separate way. Barnabas took Mark and sailed into Cyprus. This was his native country, and he would naturally feel a greater desire to support and strengthen the Truth in that area.

Paul chose Silas, who had evidently returned to Antioch, and with him, departed for Syria and Cilicia, the places specifically mentioned in the letter from Jerusalem (Acts 15:23), to confirm the ecclesias.

From this it seems as though Paul and Barnabas came to agreement in the areas to be visited, and so separated amicably, each to do his work in his own appointed sphere. By this means a wider area was covered, and Yahweh's Truth extended.

Paul left with the grateful thanks of the brethren of Antioch ringing in his ears. They had benefited greatly from his association with them; particularly by his advocacy with the Judaisers. It was with deep regret that they saw him leave, and they commended him to the grace of God.

A Dictionary Of Personalities In The New Testament

ANANIAS: A CONTRAST

There are two men of this name referred to in the *Acts of the Apostles*, but they reveal contrasting characters. Their name signifies *Yahweh has been gracious*, but one disgraced that name whilst the other honoured it.

The first Ananias was the man who conspired with his wife to deceive the apostles in regard to the value obtained for their property (Acts 5:1-6). They were not compelled to sell their property, nor to give all the proceeds of it, but they desired the glory of flesh, and this was the cause of their downfall. One evil led to another. First they conspired, then they deceived, then they fled. It was not to flesh that they did this, however, but to God; and in that lay their greatest sin. What a contrast this husband and wife are to that grand couple, Aquila and Priscilla!

The second Ananias was the disciple who baptised Saul. He was known for his integrity of character, and was a devout observer of the Law of Moses whilst also being a practising follower of the Lord Jesus. Thus he was held in high esteem by his enemies in Damascus

(Acts 22:12). He was prudent, for he was cognisant of the persecuting activities of Saul and had prepared against them (Acts 9:13). He was courageous, for he assumed the guidance and protection of the local ecclesia. He was faithful, for he obeyed the divine summons when directed to go to Saul. He was kind, for he took compassion on the blinded Pharisee when brought into his presence and addressed him with kindness (Acts 9:17). Obviously the influence of Christ deeply influenced this outstanding disciple.

APOLLOS: THE ELOQUENT

Apollos signifies *The Sun* and therefore the destroyer of darkness. He was an eloquent and learned Jew, born at Alexandria, who was deeply versed in the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 18:24; 19:1; 1Cor. 1:12; 3:4-6, 22; 4:6, 16:12, Tit. 3:13).

This educated, cultured Alexandrian Jew was an efficient worker and orator who used his gifts to the glory of Yahweh (1Pet. 4:10). At first he imperfectly understood the things relating to Christ, knowing only the baptism of John. But he was further instructed by Aquila and Priscilla, and then "mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus is Christ" (Acts 18:28).

Apollos first laboured in Ephesus and then went to Corinth (Acts 19:1). He was extremely well received by the Corinthians, who were attracted by his oratory. Ultimately, a faction developed which claimed Apollos as its sponsor (1Cor. 1:12; 3:4; 22; 4:6), and which Paul had to oppose. Apollos, however, did not endorse the faction but rather repudiated it, and so acted as to confirm Paul's confidence in him (1Cor. 3:6; 16:12). Paul thus called upon Titus to assist Apollos (Tit. 3:13).

The following features are revealed concerning Apollos:

- He used his oratory as an instrument of blessing to the glory of God (Acts 18:24).
- His eloquence was not mere wind, but powerful exposition (Acts 18:24).
- He was warmly enthusiastic in his preaching (v. 25).
- He derived his enthusiasm from instruction in the Word (v. 25).
- He exercised care in speech and teaching (v. 25; R.V.).
- He was forthright and bold in manner (v. 26).
- He was humble and was prepared to be led (v. 26).
- He was skilled in debate (v. 28).
- Though exercising much influence, he was not ambitious of personal glory (1Cor. 16:12).

It is a testimony to the good sense of both Paul and Apollos that though their so-called followers sought to flatter them and divide them, they would have none of it, but founded on the Word of Truth, they rebuked the schismatics and both laboured for the unity of the faith in ardent co-operation.

of the Apostle Paul

(Acts 16:1 to 18:22)

Chapter 1

PAUL'S COMPANIONS IN TRAVEL

Paul's second great preaching campaign took him through the region of Galatia which he had traversed on his first journey, but that aspect completed, the Spirit directed him into new areas. At Troas Paul received a significant vision. He saw a man of Macedonia praying him to come over and help them. This introduced a decisive moment in world history. The Truth was about to be introduced into Europe, after which life on that continent would never be quite the same again. For whether taught in truth or error, the influence of Christ has moulded the course of world history. It also brought Paul into new adventures which greatly tested his faith and courage. The journey possibly occupied about three years (Paul was in Corinth for some 18 months — Acts 18:11), and probably took place between the years 51-54, when Paul was about 45-48 years of age. If AD54 is the right date for the termination of the journey it synchronised with an incident in world history that affected the future of both Paul and Jewry; for in 54, Emperor Claudius died, and Nero ascended the throne. Before his ignominious death in AD68, this cruel, sadistic monster had initiated the most brutal persecution against Christians, had martyred Paul and Peter, and commenced the war against Jewry that brought the State to its end.

TIt is significant that whereas Luke records that the ecclesia commended Paul and Silas to the grace of God when they left on their mission, he is silent about any such leave-taking for Barnabas and Mark.

Evidently the brethren had experienced greater help from the apostle than from his associate, and also the consensus of opinion in the contention concerning Mark was generally in favour of Paul.

In Silas, Paul found a worthy assistant. Although a Jew, his name is derived from Latin, and he, himself, like Paul, possessed Roman citizenship (Acts 16:20, 37). Previously, Silas had been closely connected with the ecclesia in Jerusalem, being among the most prominent brethren (Acts 15:22), but his return to Antioch, and the manner in which he threw in his lot with the apostle, indicated that he fully endorsed Paul's teaching on christian liberty. Further, being a recognised prophet of Jerusalem, his companionship went far to fill up the void left in the mission by the departure of Barnabas.

Paul's first object was to confirm the ecclesias already established

and to instruct the brethren in the decrees issued after the conference at Jerusalem.

Leaving Antioch, Paul and Silas journeyed north by land, and passing through the area of Tarsus, made their way to Derbe, and on through the towns previously visited in company with Barnabas.

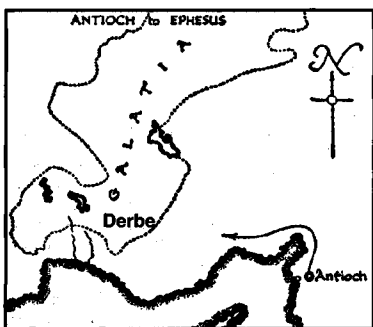
We can imagine the great joy with which the brethren would receive the apostle, bearing in mind the great service he had rendered them, and the personal difficulties he had endured on their behalf.

Paul not only assisted them in the exposition of the Word, but his presence and inspiration revived their enthusiasm for the preaching of the Truth to the world about them. Again, through the blessing of the Father, success attended the efforts, so that the ecclesias were not only confirmed in belief, but increased in number daily (Acts 16:5).

From Derbe, Paul and Silas moved on to Lystra. Here Paul renewed the acquaintance of a young disciple, named Timotheus, who was already respected among the local ecclesias. He was the son of a mixed marriage, for his mother Eunice, and grandmother Lois, were both Jewesses, but his father was a Greek. Timothy had been carefully instructed in the Hebrew Scriptures by his mother and grandmother, but his father had discouraged any closer identification with divine worship, in consequence of which, Timothy was uncircumcised (2Tim. 1:5; Acts 16:3).

On his former visit to the city, Paul had converted all three (2Tim. 1:2, 5), so that Timothy had witnessed the dedicated determination with which Paul went about his work of preaching, for it had been at Lystra that the apostle had been stoned and left for dead (see 2Tim. 3:10-12). Inspired by such an example, Timothy had visited surrounding ecclesias to be of service to the brethren (Acts 16:2), ignoring his own ill-health by so doing. For Timothy was far from robust. In fact, he suffered frequent infirmities (1Tim. 5:23), and was naturally of a timid, retiring and emotional disposition. The enthusiasm with which he embraced the Truth provided him with the strength to overcome all natural disabilities and perform excellent service to the honour of Yahweh and the well-being of his brethren.

With deep affection, expressed even by the shedding of tears, Timothy welcomed back his father in the faith (2Tim. 1:4). He revelled in the opportunity it gave him of gaining further instruction in the Word that he loved so much. And as they spoke together, and Paul observed how the intelligent youth became so completely absorbed in the things of the Truth, he realised that here was one who



could prove an invaluable companion in the work before him, who already completely identified himself with the spirit and ideals of the apostle himself (Phil. 2:19-20).

But would Eunice let her son go? From 2Timothy 1:5 it would appear that she was a widow, and that the household was made up of grandmother, mother and son. If so, her sacrifice was all the greater and nobler for that. In that case, Paul took the fatherless boy under his special care, adopting him as his son, lavishing upon him all the affectionate fatherly-love that, perhaps, had been denied him until that moment of time.

Arrangements were made for Timothy to travel with Paul. But first Paul thought it wise to circumcise him "because of the Jews." This was deemed necessary in view of the circumstances and nature of the preaching undertaken by the apostle. His mission was first to the Jews and afterwards to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46). To that end he sought out cities where there were Jewish synagogues or communities (cp. Acts 17:1), and he used those centres as the basis of his campaigns (v. 2). Now Timothy's circumstances were well-known, as was also his father's opposition to Judaism (Acts 16:3). For Paul to have as his close assistant an uncircumcised half-Jew would have immediately closed a door of utterance to his preaching which to that time had remained open.

Paul circumcised Timothy, not to conform to essential religious requirements; for he consistently taught the contrary (see 1Cor. 7:19; Gal. 6:15), but to prevent any hindrance to the preaching of the Gospel (1Cor. 9:20).

Paul's action in circumcising Timothy was used by his adversaries to press a claim of inconsistency against him. It was alleged that he taught the need of circumcision at some times, and opposed it on other occasions, just as the whim took him. This adverse criticism was pressed against him with such vigour as to demand some rebuttal. Paul wrote to the Galatian brethren refuting the charge: "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision [as some claim], why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased" (Gal. 5:11).

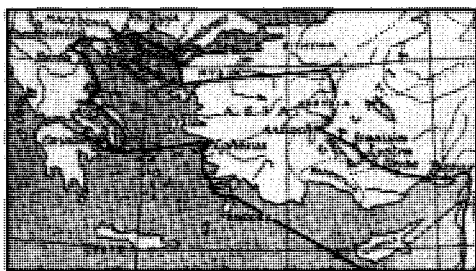
Meanwhile, it would appear that following the performance of this rite, the appointment of Timothy as assistant to Paul on his preaching tour, was announced in a formal gathering of the whole ecclesia. "Before many witnesses," Timothy acknowledged that he accepted the call to "fight the good fight of faith" in the cause of Christ (1Tim. 6:12). Already the voice of prophecy had indicated his ability in this sphere of service (1Tim. 1:18), and despite physical weakness, he graced it with honour.

Like Silas, Timothy also had the gift of prophecy, received through the laying on of Paul's hands following his baptism during

the apostle's previous visit (1Tim. 4:14; 2Tim. 1:6), and this, the greatest of the gifts of the Spirit, helped to equip him for the work and career before him (1Cor. 14:3).

The Vision At Troas Paul, Silas and Timotheus visited the ecclesias throughout Galatia, proclaiming the decision arrived at by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and ministering to the Gospel as occasion permitted. They progressed through the Phrygian region of Galatia, and then crossed the frontiers of the province of Asia; but here they were forbidden by the Spirit from preaching (Acts 16:6), and the prohibition was made absolute for the entire province.

They therefore kept to the north across Asian Phrygia with the intention of entering the adjoining Roman province of Bithynia; but when they came opposite Mysia, and were attempting to go out of Asia into Bithynia, "the Spirit suffered them not" (Acts 16:7). They therefore kept on toward the west through Mysia, without preaching in it, as it was part of Asia, until they came out on its western coast at the great harbour of Alexandria Troas.



They had thus avoided many places that seemed to promise success in preaching, such as the wealthy citizens of western Bithynia, at that time a Roman province, and Ephesus, the capital of Asia, where later Paul preached with great success. But Paul had learned to "commit his ways unto Yahweh; to trust in Him; that He might bring it to pass" (Psa. 37:5), and so allowed God to guide him.

Troas lay about ten miles (16 kms) south of the western end of the Dardanelles, and thus about ten miles south of the site of ancient Troy. In Paul's day it was a thriving port.

Were they to preach in Troas? Paul did not know! Obviously he was being directed in accordance with some specific divine plan, but he did not know what it was. He doubtless pondered the matter deeply, discussed it with Silas and Timothy, and made it a matter of prayer.

And then, one night, he received his answer.

In a vision he saw a man of Macedonia standing with a gesture of appeal, and saying: "*Come over into Macedonia and help us!*"

How did he know that he was a man of Macedonia? Certainly not by his costume, for Macedonians did not wear a distinguishing one. Paul knew that he was from Macedonia because he recognised him;

he knew him! This is obvious from the statement that he saw “a certain man” (see Diaglott), and not a stranger.

Who was he?

He may well have been Luke, for he was from Macedonia, being most likely a resident of Philippi. Moreover, unknown then to Paul, he was visiting Troas, and shortly afterwards he met up with the apostle.

Luke Joins The Company

Luke is the author of the *Acts Of The Apostles*, and became one of Paul’s closest companions. The meeting of Paul and Luke at Troas, is indicated by the use of the personal pronoun “we” (see Acts 16:10). By the way in which he is introduced into the account, Luke was evidently well-known to Paul, for he was instantly drawn into the counsels of the apostle with his two assistants. We can well imagine him meeting up with Paul, and pleading with him to pass over the Aegean Sea to Macedonia and “help us” in the preaching of the Gospel message.

The record says that “after *he* [Paul] had seen the vision, immediately *we* [Paul’s company plus Luke] endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called *us* for to preach the gospel unto them” (Acts 16:10). Luke was a Gentile believer, and could have been travelling home from Antioch where he may have met Paul. His presence and absence from the side of the apostle is indicated by the use or disappearance of the personal pronoun in the subsequent chapters of *Acts*. Apart from Timothy, of all his co-labourers, none came to endear himself to Paul more than Luke. He shared Paul’s travels and trials, his successes and anxieties; he became his narrator and his physician; he helped to comfort and cheer him.

Luke kept constantly at the side of the great apostle, his dear friend. When Paul languished in prison awaiting execution, he wrote to Timothy: “Only Luke is with me!” (2Tim. 4:11). As a physician, Luke was able to minister to Paul in his weakness; as a historian he was a careful narrator; and as a man of education he revealed a cultivated intellect.

Luke met up with Paul in Troas and travelled with him to Philippi. There he stayed for some time consolidating the work initiated by the apostle. A few years later he again met up with Paul, never to part from him, as far as can be ascertained, until death claimed the apostle.

The Truth developed a magnetic appeal in the apostle, drawing fellow-believers to him to render a greater service in Christ, bringing out the best in them that they might honour their Saviour and their God in both word and deed. It was so with Luke, “the beloved physician” (Col. 4:14).

Chapter 2

PREACHING IN PHILIPPI

(Acts 16:11-40)

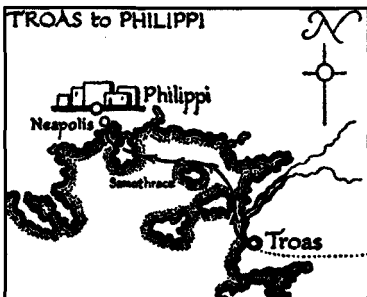
In accordance with the will of Christ, the preaching of the Gospel had widened out from Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, to incorporate Syria, Asia, and now Europe. This was part of the divine program designed to take the message of salvation to "the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

PAUL discussed the significance of the vision with Silas, Timothy and Luke, and they came to the unanimous decision that it was a divine directive to move on across the Aegean Sea to Macedonia for the preaching of the Gospel. They were fortunate to discover a ship about to leave Troas for that destination, and obtaining berths thereon, they set sail, and were soon speeding across the waters helped by a southerly breeze that sent the ship bounding along.

From Troas To Macedonia

With this advantage, they covered in two days the distance that it took them five days to traverse on the return journey (Acts 16:11;

20:6). At the conclusion of the first day's sailing, they apparently anchored to the leeward of Samothracia, a small, mountainous island which afforded them some shelter (v. 11); and on the next day they arrived at Neapolis.



Neapolis was the seaport of Philippi. It was beautifully situated on a promontory which stretched out into the bay and thus assisted in creating an excellent

harbour. As the ship neared the shore the travellers would see on the right, the brown, turbid waters of the Nestos River gushing far out to sea; and on the left, the tall heights of Thasos, an island which protected the bay.



On landing, Paul and his companions did not stop at Neapolis but made immediately to Philippi, some thirteen miles (20 kms) distant. The much-travelled road ascended the Symbolon Hills, which reach a height of 500 feet (152 mtrs) and descend into the plain of Philippi. This plain is bounded on all sides by mountains or hills. On the west rises Mount Pangaeus, and on the east a spur of Mount Orbelos with its conical shape. Philippi was located at the foot of this spur.

It was an important centre, being the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. A great battle was fought on the plain of Philippi in BC42, in which Octavian and Antony, in the cause of Julius Caesar, defeated Brutus and Cassius. After the battle a colony of Roman veterans were settled on the site, which was renamed *Colonia Julia Philippensis*. The colony included the port of Neapolis, and the citizens enjoyed many political and economic privileges of which they were very proud.



PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

(Acts 15:36 to 18:23)

Antioch — Paul and Barnabas separate (ch. 15:36-39).

Syria & Cilicia — Paul and Silas confirm the Ecclesias (ch. 15:40-41).

Derbe & Lystra — Timothy circumcised (ch. 16:1-3).

Phrygia-Galatia — Delivering the decree and forbidden to go into Asia (ch. 16:4-6).

Mysia — Evidence of Spirit guidance (ch. 16:7).

Troas — Vision of Macedonian; Luke joins Paul (ch. 16:8-9).

Samothracia, Neapolis, Philippi — Conversion of Lydia, the Jailor, first European Ecclesia (ch. 16:10-40).

Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica — Riots, Jason before the Magistrate (ch. 17:1-9).

Berea — Good reception opposed by Jews from Thessalonica (ch. 17:10-13).

Athens — Silas and Timothy sent for; Address on Mars Hill (ch. 17:14-34).

Corinth — 18 months work (ch. 18:1-11); before Gallio (ch. 18:12-17).

Cenchrea — The vow (ch. 18:18).

Ephesus — In the Synagogue (ch. 18:19-21).

Caesarea, Jerusalem, Antioch — Reports (ch. 18:22-23).

Lydia: Paul's First Convert In Europe

Paul and his company arrived in Philippi some days before the sabbath, and first arranged for their own lodging and suitable employment, before settling down to the work of preaching.

Their first impressions of the city for the purpose of Gospel proclamation, were not propitious. There were not sufficient Jews there to warrant the building of a synagogue, so that recourse was made to a *proseuche*, a prayer house, by the side of a small stream about one mile (1.6 kms) from the city.

Paul and his companions made their way to this place on the sabbath, only to find it poorly attended by a few women assembled together. A formal address being out of the question, they informally sat down and entered into conversation with the little group (Acts 16:13).



One of the company, a proselytess of Thyatira named Lydia, a seller of purple (for Thyatira was celebrated for its dyeing industry) was deeply impressed by the apostle's discourse. She already had embraced Judaism, but now, as Paul spoke, and she applied her mind diligently to all he said, she could perceive that her previous understanding merely introduced the path that leads to salvation. Further investigation on her part led her to embrace the Truth as a whole, and her example was followed by her household. Then followed baptism, so that she and her retainers constituted the first converts in Europe.

Recognising the great privilege that was hers in being granted the Truth, she desired to make some humble repayments in gratitude for benefits received. To that end, she insisted that Paul's company stay with her for the duration of their visit. *"If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there,"* she urged them.

It was normally Paul's practice to maintain complete independence in such matters, but for the first time he had come into contact with a hospitality that would not be denied. The members of that ecclesia were noted for their generosity, and offered it in such a way that it was hard to refuse. Paul afterwards accepted help from the Philippians, whereas he refused it from others.

Thus Lydia refused to accept "No" for an answer, and compelled Paul and his companions to partake of her hospitality.

Later, when Paul wrote his epistle to the Philippians, he called upon members of the ecclesia to "help those women which laboured with me in the gospel" (Phil. 4:3) among whom was Lydia.

Consider her excellent characteristics:

She was a *business woman*, possessing the mental acumen necessary for such activity. That she was successful in it is indicated in that she commanded her own establishment and household.

She was *devout*, for she worshipped God. As a proselyte she embraced the God of Israel; she did not allow her business to interfere with her prayers.

She was *studious*, desiring to know more of God.

She was *sincere*, seeking to serve God in truth.

She was *intelligent*, applying her mind to its doctrines.

She was *obedient*, submitting to baptism.

She was an *example*, causing her household to follow her in this.

She was *hospitable*, insisting that Paul and his company stay with her.

She was *loyal*; not ashamed of the Lord's prisoners (cp. Acts 16:40), but caring for them when they were bruised and in pain.

The characteristics of Lydia, the pioneer of the ecclesia in Philippi, became the pattern of the ecclesia itself. More than any other, this ecclesia ministered to the apostle in his need, and frequently sent material gifts to assist him in his work. It sent twice to Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16), once to Corinth (2Cor. 11:9), and once to Rome (Phil. 4:10).

Lydia's conversion was followed by others in Philippi (Acts 16:40), so that soon a flourishing ecclesia was in evidence. From that centre the Truth sounded forth with greater power. In general, the members proved to be enthusiastic and generous in their attitude toward the things of Christ. In his epistle to them, written later, the apostle does not make mention of any doctrinal error manifested among them, but writes in terms of highest endearment and affection. The only fault that he had to mention was a degree of dissension that had developed between certain sisters (Phil. 4:2) which perhaps resulted out of the very enthusiasm that they manifested for the Truth.

**Paul Cures a
Demented Woman
(Acts 16:16-18)**

Paul's work in Philippi was cut short by a remarkable incident which thwarted the greed of a few self-seeking persons, and so aroused the anger of the mob against the apostle and Silas, that they were cruelly thrashed and flung into prison.

It developed out of unfortunate circumstances. There was prominent in Philippi a demented slave-girl,* who, in her ravings, was considered to have the spirit of Python (Acts 16:16; mg). Python was the name of a mythical serpent which reputedly dwelt in Pytho at

* "Damsel" (Acts 16:16) is translated from the Greek *paidiskēn*, signifying a girl, and especially "a female slave" — See Strong.

the foot of Mount Parnassus, guarding the oracle of Delphi, but which, in the legend, was slain by Apollo. The name was thence transferred to Apollo himself, who was considered able to pronounce the decrees and plans of the gods. Diviners, soothsayers and ventriloquists were popularly regarded as being inspired by Apollo, or having the spirit of Python.

Possessed Of A Spirit Of Python

The hysterical ravings of this unfortunate girl were considered as having divine significance, perhaps all the more so because they could not understand them. Her wild eyes and excited bearing seemed, to superstitious minds, to be evidence of a divine fire within. Her masters cashed in on this to such an extent that the muttering, and unearthly, fanatical shrieking of the demented girl brought them much lucrative gain.

But sometimes, even a demented mind can proclaim a profound truth, without understanding its significance.

This is what happened on that occasion. The activities of the apostle had been the cause of comment throughout the city, and had penetrated the confused mind of the girl. Then, one day, as Paul and his companions were going to the place of prayer, they were met by this girl. She recognised them, and in the confused darkness of her mind, recalling the basic message of the apostle and the general excitement it caused, she reacted to it in a typical manner, by screaming out: *"These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation!"*

To the embarrassment of the apostle and his friends, she also commenced to follow them, shouting out the message as she did so.

Once would not have been so bad, but the practice became habitual. Each day, as they made their way along, they found the poor afflicted girl waiting for them, ready to follow them with her wild, insane shouts.

It became a serious hindrance to the work of the apostle, destroying any dignity and solemnity in the preaching of the Truth. The daily annoyance grieved Paul beyond measure, so that, on one occasion, as he felt the Spirit surging through him, he turned around and addressed the Python by which the girl was believed to be possessed, and ordered: *"I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!"*

The cure was instantly effected. The girl was given her sanity, and lost the wild, unrestrained appearance typical of her previous condition. The broken harmony of her spirit was restored. She was now quiet where before she had been noisy. Her shouts and shrieks were silenced. According to the superstitions believed by the heathen, she no longer possessed the spirit of Python, and therefore she was no

longer of any interest or use to them.

Her masters viewed her cure with indignation. No more paroxysms could be expected of her, no more wild, unearthly screaming such as had previously thrilled their dupes. Her masters realised that their source of gain was destroyed, and were filled with bitter anger at the action of the apostle.

**Paul And Silas
Thrashed And
Imprisoned
(Acts 16:19-24)**

Touched in their pockets, the masters of the cured girl reacted in a fury, seeking means of revenge. Recognising that they had no real charge against the two Christians, they schemed to manufacture one.

For the moment, as they saw the now sane and silent girl before them, they were taken aback. But this over, they acted violently. They grasped hold of Paul and Silas, and dragging them into the public forum (sometimes called a "marketplace" — Acts 16:19; mg.), demanded justice from the *Archons* (or lesser magistrates).

They claimed that Paul and Silas had been guilty of causing a public disturbance; and as they shouted out their accusations and made their demands, they roused the passions of the gathering people against the two brethren. Calling out that these two men had destroyed a spirit of Python and were challenging the worship of the gods, they so played upon the excitement of the mob that the authorities feared a riot, and commenced to panic.

Without heeding any protests from Paul (cp. v. 37), the *Archons* hurried the two brethren before higher authorities, rulers of the city who assumed the dignity of Roman Praetors, and who were attended by lictors or "sergeants" who executed their orders. These men were proud of the position they held, and tended to act dictatorially.

By now the circumstances were so irregular, the feelings and the threatening of the mob appeared so ugly, that any defence that Paul might have made was unheard or unheeded by these higher officials as well.

Meanwhile the charge laid against the apostle and his companions was proffered: "*These men, being Jews, do greatly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.*" This accusation was calculated to excite the feelings of the mob, and anger the magistrates still further. There is a latent hatred for Jews in every nation, and the accusers of Paul and Silas played upon it. Combined with this, was the implication that these Jewish strangers were undermining the civic pride which was a feature of the city's inhabitants. They gloried in their Roman citizenship, and did not want it disturbed. The charge against Paul was that he was teaching unlawful things, and introducing unlawful practices that could destroy the privileges they enjoyed from Rome.

The feelings of the mob were on the side of the masters of the cured slave-girl. They had viewed her ravings with wonder and superstitious reverence, and looked with doubt upon the stranger in their midst who possessed power to silence Pytho. As the masters of the girl worked on the passions of the people, the multitude rose up in riotous mood to threaten the two Christians. The magistrates interpreted it as a moment of decision. Action was needed to stem the threatened riot. Tearing off the clothes of Paul and Silas, the magistrates handed the two men to lictors and commanded that they beat them.

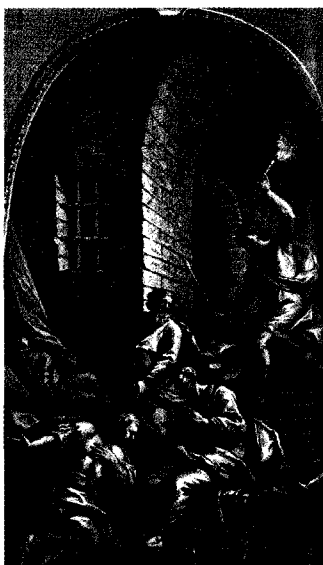
This was done. Before the brethren could utter a word in their defence, or if they did, had their voices drowned by the shouts and threats of the crowd, they were hurried off to the whipping-post in the forum, and beaten. Unlike the Jews, the Romans had no laws of restriction as to the number of blows that might be administered under such circumstances, and in view of the threatening temper of the crowd, and the fact that the prisoners were in so much of a minority, we can expect that the thrashing was very thoroughly performed.

Three times Paul endured this frightful, lacerating punishment, though, as a Roman citizen he should have been exempt from such treatment (2Cor. 11:25). But it never deterred him. In writing to the Thessalonians, he makes mention of this very occasion. He declared: "After that we suffered before, and were shamefully treated at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention" (1Thes. 2:2).

The punishment did not end with the thrashing. With backs bleeding and sore, the apostle and Silas were dragged to the prison, and ignominiously flung therein with a command to the jailor to see that they were kept safely.

Having received such a charge, and imagining that the prisoners delivered unto him must be desperate criminals of the worst sort, the jailor thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

The word translated "stocks" is the Greek *xulon*, wood. "The wood" was an instrument of torture. Sometimes it took the form of a heavy wooden collar put on the neck of a prisoner, sometimes a stock with five holes for arms, legs and neck. By now, in payment for an act



of kindness in curing the poor, demented girl, Paul and Silas had experienced the utmost indignities. They had first been publicly stripped, then beaten, put in the inner prison, and finally fastened in the stocks. They had been treated with the utmost rigor and severity, an indication of the extent of the venom of the people and rulers. They suffered both pain and shame, as Paul told the Thessalonians: gross injustice had been combined with brutal violence.

Earthquake: The Jailor Converted

How did the two brethren react? Did they curse their captors and complain to God of the treatment He had allowed them to receive whilst engaged on His service? Did they lament their lot whilst they squirmed in misery and in pain?

They did not. They challenged the circumstances in faith and rose triumphant over their difficulties. Despite their lacerated bodies and the shame and pain they felt, they recognised the privilege of suffering in the service of Christ, and gave themselves, first to earnest prayer and then to singing praises unto Yahweh.

That night the prison was wakeful; perhaps the atmosphere was sultry and still. Be that as it may, about midnight the silence was broken by the voices of the two prisoners singing praises unto Yahweh.

And the other prisoners heard them!

Here was a witness to the Truth if ever there was one! The adversary might shackle and imprison the bodies of the two missionaries; but he could not limit their spirit. Faith enabled them to triumph over prison, shame and agony, and to lift them from the cell into the presence of Christ (Col. 3:1).

What hymns did they sing? We are not told, but ever since David occupied his throne, Israelites have looked to his Psalms as a source of inspiration for when they were in similar circumstances. On this occasion they gave infinite help to two fellow-sufferers whose bodies were sore and bleeding, whose persons had been subjected to ignominy and shame, whose minds must have meditated upon the injustice of the action of their adversaries, even though they might not give way to such feelings. Truly has it been said of the Psalms:

“The keys that David struck here reverberated ever since. They have found harmony in the heart of the exile, the sufferer, the joyful, the triumphant. They have helped in moments of sadness and of joy, in sorrow and in happiness, in disaster and in triumph, in sin and in righteousness. The Psalms provide the right note for moods of thankfulness, sorrow, despair, hope, rage, love, mercy, doubt, vengeance, faith. In the vicissitudes of David’s life we have a companion who can utter the words we feel in all the trials that come our way — in wandering, escape, captivity, banishment, bereavement, persecution.”

They did so on that dismal night when Paul and Silas languished sore in the prison cell. They can do so for us in all the circumstances of our lives. In fact, Paul and Silas set us a wonderful example. When we suffer, when we feel hurt or shame; let us do what they did: first pray, and then sing praises unto Yahweh.

What Psalms did they sing? We are not told. But perhaps they selected one of the Passover Psalms as expressive of their hope of deliverance. If so, they might have sung from Psalm 79:

Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy Name: And deliver us, and purge away our sins, for Thy Name's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? Let Him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of Thy servants which is poured out. Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee; According to the greatness of Thy power preserve Thou those that are appointed to die.

Whatever Psalms they sung, whatever pleasure the other prisoners might have derived from the glorious words of triumph and melody of sound that came from within the inner cell, it was all suddenly interrupted by the terrible eruption of an earthquake which rocked the prison to its foundations.

The ground shook with earthquake, the prison was rocked to its very foundations, the doors swung open, chains were snapped from their staples in the walls, and the inmates were free to leave if they desired.

Suddenly awakened from his sleep by the earthquake, the jailor



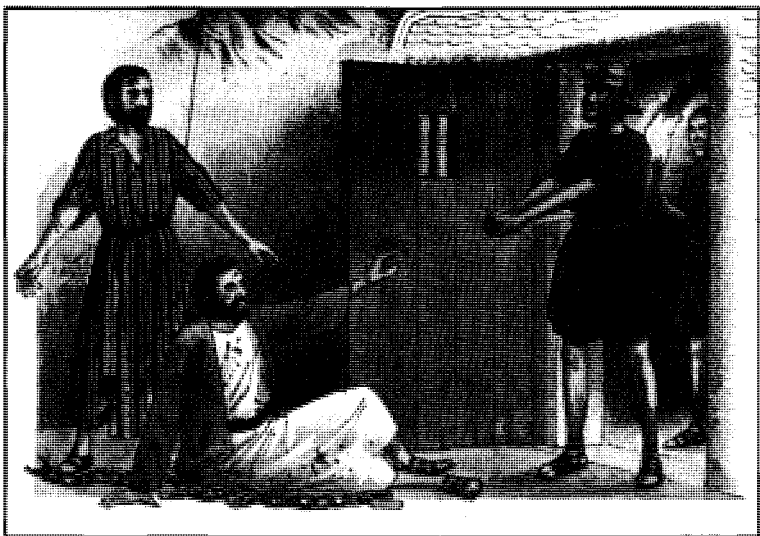
leapt from his bed, and hastening into the prison, found the doors all open. This meant but one thing to him: the prisoners had escaped. He panicked. The loss of the prisoners meant disgrace and death for him, for such was the responsibility laid upon him. In an agony of mind he determined to end his life there and then, and, drawing his sword, was about to plunge it into himself when he was arrested by the voice of Paul: *"Do yourself no harm,"* the apostle called out, *"for we are all here!"*

The combination of the amazing circumstances; the helpless terror induced by the earthquake, the shock of a loss that spelled disgrace and death; the sudden diversion of an attempt at suicide; the remarkable calmness of the two religious prisoners who had suffered so much; the obvious supernatural character of the whole proceedings, deeply affected the man. Doubtless the reputation and mission of Paul had come to his ears, if he had not actually heard him preach. He knew that the apostle was setting forth the principles of a worship that promised salvation. Now circumstances had brought him to the point where he wanted to know more.

Calling for lights, he sprang into the inner prison, and still trembling from shock, flung himself at the feet of the two brethren, and releasing their feet from the stocks, led them out of the cell of disgrace, pleading their help.

"My Lords," he said using a term (Greek: *Kurioi*) that was indicative of their high authority, *"what must I do to be saved?"*

There was but one answer: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, and your house."*



Instead of accepting the adulation suggested in the title of “Lords” that the jailor had used in addressing them, Paul and Silas directed his attention to the “Lord” who could save him.

Deeply impressed, the man at once assembled the members of his household, and in the early hours of the morning, whilst it was still dark, hearkened to the words of eternal life. Thus Paul and Silas rendered good for evil. Before their own wounds were dressed, or their own comfort cared for (cp. Acts 16:30-34), they proclaimed the message of divine love manifested through the Lord Jesus and so elaborated upon the formula stated in their first answer to the jailor.

Unfortunately, that formula has been minimised by many since then, and men have imagined and taught, that all that is necessary is to believe in the fact of the living Christ to be saved. But more than that is involved when even that brief statement of the apostle is closely analysed. For example, the word “believe” involves much more than merely intellectually accepting a fact or understanding a principle. The word is translated from the Greek *pistenson* from *pisti*, “faith,” and it signifies “to have faith; to place confidence in; to trust.” It involves reliance upon the object of it, and not mere credence in it or its existence. In the case of Jesus, it comes from study of the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).

So the first essential for salvation was for the jailor to study the Word of God with the object of understanding the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ, in such a manner as to have complete trust and full confidence in the saving work of the Lord.

Then consider the title expressed to the jailor: *Lord Jesus Christ*. This epitomises all truth. The titles *Lord* and *Christ* in relation to Jesus were demonstrated by his resurrection to glory (see Acts 2:36).

Therefore, to have confidence in the Lordship of Jesus involves understanding how he conquered the flesh in life and through death, and rose to glory and honour. This, indeed, was specifically taught by Paul to the brethren in Philippi (see Phil. 2:5-11).

Jesus is the name of the Lord. It is a combination of two Hebrew words: *Yah* and *Shua*, and signifies: Yahweh saves! Thus the name of *Yahshua* testified that the Lord did not conquer in his own strength, but a strength that came from his heavenly Father. He was “the son of man whom God made strong for Himself” (Psa. 80:17). Paul wrote to the Corinthian brethren that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2Cor. 5:19). This declaration sums up the significance of the name of the Lord, and is expressive of the doctrine of God manifestation. Jesus conquered through the strength of God, and we can only succeed through the strength derived through Christ. That, too, was a doctrine Paul taught the Philippians (Phil. 2:13; 4:13).

Finally, the jailor was requested to show faith in Jesus as the

Christ. The word in Hebrew is Messiah, which means *Anointed*, and it reveals the way in which Jesus was strengthened to become Lord. It was through the *anointing* of the Holy Spirit that Jesus was conceived (Lk. 1:35); it was by the personal *anointing* of the Holy Spirit that his mind was sharpened to receive doctrinal truth (Isa. 11:1-3; Jn. 3:34); it was by the outpouring of Spirit upon him that he was declared Son of God with power by a resurrection to eternal life (Rom. 1:4).

A person anointed was constituted “holy,” or “separated” for a work of God. The prophets, priests and kings of Israel were appointed to their high offices by the ceremony of anointing. This emphasised that the appointment was divine, and therefore authoritative, and reminded them that as their appointment was from above, so they must magnify Yahweh in word and deed before the people.

To have confidence in Jesus as the Christ, therefore, necessitated some understanding of his birth, life, resurrection and status. It demands a recognition of Jesus as prophet, priest, king, altar (Heb. 13:10), tabernacle (Heb. 9:11), law (Heb. 9:19-24), and so forth. Thus, to “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” involves an acceptance of the doctrines associated with his name and title.

“*Believe this,*” Paul had said, “*and thou shalt be saved.*” Saved from what? Saved through what? Saved for what?

Paul’s call from the inner prison had saved the jailor from a suicide’s death; but the words the apostle was now about to speak to him would save the jailor for a higher life than was then possible. But first, the jailor must understand that he was in the service of King Sin in the realm of death; and from this he needed deliverance, involving a change of allegiance through baptism.

Paul’s initial statement to the jailor sounds simple, but involves a comprehensive understanding of the divine purpose. The jailor was deeply impressed, and desired further information.

Preaching The Truth The further instruction took place without delay. That same hour, though it was early morning, and the sun was not up, the jailor gathered the adult members of his family together to be taught the precious gems of Truth. Most likely they had already heard Paul preach, so that their minds were receptive to what he now set before them. In any case, they accepted it gladly, and conviction dawned in their once darkened minds, as they saw the sun arise at the beginning of a new day, to shed its golden rays of light and destroy the darkness that previously had enshrouded the earth.

With rapt attention, the jailor and his family listened to the message of the apostle, and it was only when it was finished, that he observed, apparently for the first time, the condition of the two men before him. With love and pity he tended to their needs, gently

washing their bruised and bleeding backs. Then, having ministered in love to Paul, Paul assisted him and all his household. Thus in measure, it could be said of the jailor that through Paul's "stripes he was healed" (Isa. 53:5). The scars on the body of the apostle testified to the influence of Christ in his life.

Afterwards they returned to the jailor's home, where a table was set and a meal was served. Never had the jailor experienced such joy as that moment, for in the fraternal atmosphere of the home, as he listened to the discourse of the apostle, he rejoiced with all his heart in the glorious communion experienced.

Set At Liberty

Meanwhile, the authorities had been troubled with second thoughts regarding the punishment that had been given Paul and Silas. They realised that their action was completely illegal. Perhaps Luke and Timothy had warned them of this, and urged that their companions should be set free.

Perhaps the jailor had also sent in a report advising the circumstances of the earthquake and the subsequent action of Paul and Silas.

Be that as it may, the lictors who had administered the thrashing the day before, were now, early in the morning, commanded to order the jailor to let the two prisoners go. The message was brought to Paul: "*The magistrates have sent to let you go; now therefore depart, and go in peace.*"

But Paul felt that that was not quite good enough. To submit to such treatment would place the newly-founded ecclesia in jeopardy. Paul knew that he would soon be departing from the city, and he did not want any undue pressure to be brought to bear on those he would leave behind. For the sake of the Truth, not for himself personally, he desired that the authorities should publicly show that those who embraced Christ did not violate the law. Sternly he addressed the lictors who had been sent with the message of release: "*They have beaten us openly uncondemned, we having Roman citizenship rights, and have cast us into prison; and now do they think they can privately cast us out? No truly! Let them come themselves and conduct us out!*"

The lictors hastened back with a message that filled the magistrates with alarm. They recognised that they had not only failed to properly investigate Paul's case, but had openly beaten a Roman citizen. This was quite illegal even if such a person were guilty.

The magistrates knew that Paul and Silas only had to lodge a complaint at Rome for both themselves and the city of which they were so proud, to be in direst trouble. They knew also that if some of their rivals in the city heard of their predicament, they might, themselves, lodge a complaint independently of Paul, with the result

that they would be summoned before the Proconsul's court to answer for their gross illegality.

Full of alarm, the magistrates hurried to the prison as suppliants to placate Paul and Silas. They expected difficulty in so doing. Realising the agony and humiliation they had heaped upon them as prisoners, they trembled for their fate, believing that they would receive scant consideration. But in this they were agreeably disappointed. They found that Paul and Silas had no desire to assert their citizen-rights, but merely desired to illustrate the legality of a person worshipping God in truth, according to his conscience.

The magistrates were only too willing to comply with the request of Paul. They conducted the two brethren out, and made it obvious that a miscarriage of justice had taken place. Doubtless, they considered themselves fortunate to be dealing with men so pliable to the appeal of mercy.

Entreating their pardon, excusing their conduct on the grounds that they did not know their true identity, they urged Paul and Silas to leave the city, probably with the excuse that to do otherwise might incite further mob agitation.

Paul's purpose having been effected, in that the Truth had been publicly vindicated, he agreed to their wish. But first he and Silas returned to the house of Lydia, to make preparation for their departure. They desired to give a final address to the brethren, and this was arranged. At a convenient date, therefore, the ecclesia was gathered together, and Paul exhorted the brethren in love. The brethren of Philippi with characteristic warm-hearted affection, heard with greatest regret that Paul and Silas were to leave them. They knew that it was not because of persecution that they had decided on this course, but because they considered it best to do so under the circumstances, and because they had further work to accomplish.

On the day appointed, Paul and Silas bade the brethren farewell, and leaving Luke and Timothy behind to consolidate the work commenced, took the road to Thessalonica.

Later, when he wrote to the ecclesia in Philippi from Rome, Paul recalled the circumstances of his first visit to the city, and based some powerful words of exhortation upon them. He wrote: "Having this confidence... that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to



*Via Egnatia way:
an ancient Roman
road*

you again. Only let your behavior be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me" (Phil. 1:25-30).

Despite the shameful punishment he endured, Paul's adversaries had not been able to terrify him, for he was prepared not only to believe on Christ, but also "to suffer for his sake." This was the example he had given the brethren in Philippi, which it was now their duty to try and emulate.

Luke And Timothy Some years passed before Luke was again united with Paul in the work of the Truth, and the implication is that he remained in Philippi to consolidate the ecclesia. Perhaps that is why this ecclesia manifested a soundness in the faith above most others, and evinced a greater interest in, and generosity toward, the labours of Paul than was usual. Not only did it send him several gifts of money, but as he stated when he wrote to them, they had manifested "a fellowship in the gospel from the first day" he had appeared in their midst (Phil. 1:5). He referred to them as being "all partakers of his grace" (Phil. 1:7) in the defence and confirmation of the Gospel.

His constant use of the word "all" in this epistle that he wrote to them implies the united interest and action of the whole ecclesia (see Phil. 1:1, 4, 7, 8, 25, etc.).

For a short time Timothy also stayed behind at Philippi. He joined up again with Paul shortly afterwards, when the apostle visited Berea (Acts 17:14).

On The Road To Thessalonica Paul and Silas left Philippi, and moved along the Egnatian Way toward Thessalonica. This paved highway, some fifteen feet (4.5 mtrs) wide, was the great military road which connected Illyricum, Macedonia and Thrace. The route that Paul and Silas took led them through mountain passes in a westwardly direction.

Thirty-three miles (53 kms) further on brought them to the city of Amphipolis. Evidently the prospects of preaching were not propitious there, due, most likely, to the absence of any permanent Jewish community; and so the two companions continued along the Via Egnatia for some ten miles (16 kms). On their left, the road skirted the

sea-coast, whilst on their right, a range of mountains hemmed them in.

Twenty-three miles (37 kms) further on from Amphipolis, they came upon the city of Apollonia. But Paul's destination was Thessalonica, and he led Silas through this city also, moving still westward along the Egnatian Way. The road skirted first Lake Bolbe, and then Lake Coronea, whilst mountains continued to hem in the road on the opposite side. Some forty miles (64 kms) from Apollonia, and they arrived at the city of Thessalonica.



Thessalonica

A Dictionary Of Personalities In The New Testament

ARCHIPPUS: THE FELLOW-SOLDIER

His name means *Master Of The Horse*. Such were noted for their skill in taming, training and guiding this high-spirited animal. Archippus must have shown ability also in the taming, training and guiding of men of the flesh for a life of service in Christ. He is called a fellow-soldier of the apostle which suggests the careful discipline he exercised in his life; and his ability was recognised and used by the apostle in directing the affairs of the ecclesia in Colosse (Col. 4:17). He is mentioned in the very personal epistle to Philemon in such a way as to suggest that he was a son of Philemon. He was given special duties to perform in the ecclesia, probably during the absence of Epaphras, who had left Colosse to visit Paul in Rome (cp. Col. 4:17, 12).

Chapter 3

PREACHING IN THESSALONICA

Thessalonica was an ideal centre for the proclamation of the Gospel. It was a large city, with a population of about 200,000 people. Besides serving as the capital of the province of Macedonia, it was the main stopping place on the Egnatian Way, a naval base, and an important commercial port. Overland caravans made their way there, ships thronged its harbour, Roman officials, Greek sailors, and Jewish merchantmen passed along its streets. Thessalonica was a cosmopolitan city, from where the Truth could radiate out into other parts, as it did (1Thes. 1:8). Whereas Philippi was an important Roman military centre, Thessalonica was a proud "free" city, with its own council, and ruled by politarchs (Acts 17:6).

Paul remained in this centre for some time, supporting himself by labour (1Thes. 2:9; 2Thes. 3:6-10), though assisted by donations from the Philippian Ecclesia (Phil. 4:10), for the brethren there recalled with gratitude how he had suffered on their account (1Thes. 2:1-2). By word, attitude and deed, Paul presented an outstanding testimony to the people, in consequence of which much fruit was brought forth to the glory of the Father.

It was, perhaps, because of Paul's visits to such places that he could send personal greetings to so many in the Roman Ecclesia, even though he had never visited it when he wrote his epistle (Rom. 16).

PAUL and Silas had suffered a shameful and painful experience in Philippi, and must have still felt very sore from the thrashing they had received there, when they arrived at the busy metropolis of Thessalonica. Such an ordeal would have caused most men to exercise care in their preaching, so as to avoid a repetition, but not Paul. He realised that if the proclamation of the gospel was to be effective, it must be fearless and forthright.

In spite of his sufferings, he was determined to speak out with clarity and force. Later he wrote to the brethren of Thessalonica: "Even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as you know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention" (1Thes. 2:2).

There was a synagogue of the Jews in Thessalonica, and as the commission delivered to the apostles was to set the Truth before God's people, before doing so to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46), Paul

decided to make this city the headquarters for preaching.

**Preaching In
The Synagogue
(Acts 17:1-4)**

Having made arrangements for employment and accommodation, the apostle, as was his custom, made his way to the synagogue on the sabbath, to set before the assembled congregation, the Truth in Christ Jesus.

He did so with "much assurance" (1Thes. 1:5). The Jews heard a powerful and compelling address, as Paul pressed home the Truth. Many were moved to consider more closely what he set before them, and a goodly number were induced to accept it (1Thes. 1:6). Moreover, the example of the apostle so impressed these converts that they were drawn to emulate it, so that visitors to the cosmopolitan city of Thessalonica returned home to speak of the virility with which the Truth was held there (1Thes. 1:8).

Paul's basic theme was the Atonement. He opened up the Scriptures to the Jews in the synagogue, and showed how that "Christ of necessity had to suffer, and rise again from the dead." In view of this evidence of Scripture and the fulfilment of it in the life of the Lord, with great emphasis he declared: "*this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.*" Luke records these words of the apostle as a verbatim report of what he actually said (Acts 17:3), and it evidently represented the climax of his discourse.

The exposition of the apostle resulted in some of the Jews accepting the Truth; but the greatest success was found among the Gentile proselytes of the synagogue. A large number of these believed and were baptised into Christ, including some of the chief women of the city. And in Thessalonica, women occupied a freer and more influential status than elsewhere.

Thus an ecclesia was established in that city.

As a good shepherd, Paul helped to guide the members in conduct as well as doctrine. He gave them a wonderful example to follow. His preaching was with power and in full conviction of Truth (1Thes. 1:5). He showed unflinching courage in the face of bitter opposition (1Thes. 2:2). He scorned the use of flattery, plainly declaring the issues involved and clearly stating what should be done (1Thes. 2:5; 4:4-6). He sought no material advantage of his brethren, but scrupulously maintained an honourable and blameless character among them, whereas he could have played upon their sympathies in the light of his sufferings (1Thes. 2:5, 10). He acted as both a father, and as a nursing mother: warning, rebuking, attending to their needs, encouraging them in the way (1Thes. 2:7, 11). He was ever their warm-hearted friend, and, as a shepherd, ready to lay down his life (1Thes. 2:8), leading and guarding the flock (1Thes. 2:11).

His days and nights were filled with activity, either in his employ

as a tent-maker, or in expounding and teaching the Truth: "You remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God" (1Thes. 2:9).

For the first three sabbath days that he was in Thessalonica, he presented himself at the synagogue to set forth the principles of the Truth in Christ Jesus, whilst on the first day of the week, he ministered to the needs of the growing ecclesia in exhortation and communion (compare Acts 20:7). On the other days, he was busy instructing and guiding.

Opposition From The Jews (Acts 17:5-9) Three weeks of intense activity were thus completed, and then the envy and hatred of the Jews erupted in fierce opposition which resulted firstly in the termination of the opportunity of preaching in the synagogue, and then widened out to include active persecution. This bitterness against Paul, Silas and the newly-formed ecclesia, commenced from the Jews but soon spread to the Thessalonians as well.

The proclamation of the Truth in opposition to all other religions was an affront to liberal-minded Gentiles who would prefer all religions to live in amity one with the other; whilst the high level of morality demanded by the Truth and maintained by those who embraced it, was a standing reproach to the immoral ways that were typical of the times.

In consequence, Jewish believers found themselves opposed by members of the synagogue; and Gentile believers "suffered like things of their own countrymen" (1Thes. 2:14).

The Jews were particularly hostile. Moved by envy at the success that attended the labours of Paul and Silas, they hired certain unscrupulous members* of the legal profession who were usually found loitering in the public forum, or market place, prepared to sell their services for any purpose, no matter how dishonourable.

At the instigation of the Jews, these low-class lawyers gathered a company together, and charging the brethren with disturbing the peace, so worked upon the feelings of the people as to have the city in an uproar.

* The expression "lewd fellows of the baser sort," is derived from the Greek *agoraiou*, which literally means, "relating to the market place." The term related to men usually found sauntering in such places, waiting for clients to hire them. It was also used of affairs often transacted in such places, and hence came to describe judicial assemblies. From this association of the word, it became used for a particularly low kind of lawyers who were prepared to engage in unscrupulous activities. Such were now hired by the Jews to press against Paul and Silas a charge of disturbing the peace, and to stir up agitation against them.

The core of this disturbance, was a noisy rabble that, incited by the Jews and promised protection by the lawyer-sharks employed for that purpose, urged that a physical attack be made on Paul. The apostle was lodging with a brother by the name of Jason (the Latin form of Jesus), whose very name, perhaps, helped to rouse the hostility of the rioters. Converging upon the house of Jason, and breaking their way in, they found not Paul and Silas, but only Jason with certain other brethren.

Disappointed at not finding the main preachers, they roughly seized Jason and his companions, and dragging them before the rulers (or Politarchs)* they charged them with insurrection and disturbing the peace, shouting: *"These who have turned the world upside down have come here too; Jason has taken them into his house as guests; they all oppose Caesar's ordinances, claiming there is another king, one Jesus!"*

Paul Banished From Thessalonica

This accusation, shouted out so that all could hear it, excited the anger of both the crowd gathered together, and the Politarchs who ruled the city. They did not want its peace disturbed, and yet, at the same time, the Roman law which they respected, did not permit them to either restrict the preaching of Paul and Silas, or banish them from the city.

The lawyer-sharks had issued a charge of treason against Paul and Silas. This was considered most serious by Roman law, and was punishable by death. Yet the Politarchs did not take this up, possibly for two reasons: firstly, they probably realised that it was a trumped-up charge and could not be sustained; and, secondly, it would have to be referred to Rome, as the two men had Roman-citizen rights.

Faced with this dilemma, they had to find a compromise which would satisfy the mob without violating Roman law. They found it by shrewdly taking security of Jason and the rest of the ecclesia, that the peace of the city would not be disturbed further, and then let them go.

Such a decree must seriously weaken the effectiveness of the apostle's preaching. Obviously, if he continued in his activities, the authorities would move against Jason and the local members. Paul's hands were tied. They could not move against him, but if he defied them, they would move against his brethren. Several times Paul attempted to have the ban removed, but in vain (1Thes. 2:18): "Satan (the adversary) was determined to hinder him." The Jews hated the

"This is the term rendered 'rulers' in Acts 17:6. At one time it was urged that Luke was in error to use such a title for the authorities in Thessalonica as it was unknown in Greek literature. But subsequently an inscription was found at Thessalonica stating that the city was ruled by seven politarchs, thus confirming once again the authenticity of the record.

unrestrained preaching of the apostle to the Gentiles (1Thes. 2:16), and were determined to destroy it.

A Dictionary Of Personalities In The New Testament

ARISTARCHUS: THE FELLOW-PRISONER

Aristarchus signifies *The Best Ruler*. He was a Jew (Col. 4:10-11) of Thessalonica (Acts 20:4). He was with Paul in Ephesus when the riot broke out, and with Gaius when he was seized by the mob and dragged into the theatre (Acts 19:29). He accompanied Paul from Troas to Asia (Acts 20:4-6), and subsequently, to Rome (Acts 27:2). In Rome he was imprisoned with the apostle, and as he is styled Paul's "fellow-prisoner," it seems obvious that he received sentence of imprisonment for the Gospel's sake (Col. 4:10; Philemon 24).

AQUILA AND PRISCILLA: FAITHFUL COUPLE IN THE LORD

Aquila and Priscilla were a Jewish couple from Pontus, resident for a time in Italy, but forced to leave through the antiSemitic decree of Claudius. They took up residence at Corinth where Aquila pursued his occupation of tent-maker. There Paul met up with them, and probably taught them the Truth (Acts 18:1-3). They became his faithful associates, and were thus thrust into the midst of arguments, debates, oppositions and accusations which brought Paul before the authorities (vv. 5-17). They were his fellow-passengers from Corinth to Ephesus where they stayed for a while, setting up house which became a centre for the Truth (1Cor. 16:19). Here they met and converted Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). They afterwards travelled to Rome where they stayed for a while (Rom.16:3), but subsequently returned to Ephesus (2Tim. 4:19).

Aquila signifies *Eagle*, which is used in Scripture as a symbol of strength (Psa. 103:5; Isa. 40:31), and Priscilla signifies *Little Old Woman*. However, for all her apparent smallness, she was evidently a bundle of energy, for of the five times that the couple are mentioned in Scripture, her name is first mentioned four times, as though she was the driving force of the home (In the Greek, the reference in Acts 18:26, places her name first).

Theirs was a united home, for both were keenly interested in the Truth, and both were "given to hospitality." Being in full sympathy with Paul's message they willingly received him into their home, and he remained with them for eighteen months, whilst at Corinth. What a wonderful privilege for them to have Paul in their home, and for him to be in close association with a couple so dedicated to the Truth!

Whilst in association with Paul they saved his life at some personal risk to themselves. The circumstances are not revealed in detail, but Paul makes comment in Romans 16:4, and states that the incident was well known to all the ecclesias.

They kept an open house for the Truth, so that Paul makes reference to "the ecclesia that is in their house" (1Cor. 16:19). In this they provide a wonderful example for couples in the Truth in every age. They appreciated the privilege that Yahweh had extended to them, and desired that others should share it with them. Paul and others were greatly encouraged by their labours.

Chapter 4

OPPOSITION IN BEREIA

The journey from Thessalonica to Berea was about fifty miles (80 kms). Paul found that the Jews of Berea were more receptive to the Truth than those of Thessalonica, and during the short period of his stay there received remarkable success. Their attitude toward the Scriptures stands as an ideal for all to follow who search for Truth.

LEAVING Thessalonica, Paul and Silas travelled westward on the Egnatian Way for about twenty miles (32 kms). Then, shortly after crossing the bridge over the Axios River, they turned southwest on a side road to Berea. Thirty miles (48 kms) later they arrived at their destination. Berea was in a rural district, on a fertile tableland located at an altitude of about 600 feet (183 mtrs).

The Journey

Why Paul selected Berea as his next stopping-place is not recorded in the Word, but most likely, he would have carefully enquired of the brethren in Thessalonica as to the best locality to plant the Gospel seed. If he received some such recommendation, subsequent circumstances fully justified it.

The Preaching

Arriving at Berea, the two missionaries made their way to the synagogue at the first opportunity and commenced to preach the Word. They found that the Jews of Berea were not so narrowed by prejudice as were those of Thessalonica. In fact, they were most receptive to his expositions. They “*received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*” As they compared the Word with the circumstances concerning the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, they became convinced of his Messiahship. Many of them believed, including a large company of Gentile proselytes. Once again the synagogue was providing a bridge for the ecclesia!

The instructing and confirming of these converts must have occupied considerable time, indicating that Paul’s stay in this city was not short. During this period, he again made representations to the authorities in Thessalonica, hoping to be able to return to that city to further assist the ecclesia, but was refused permission to do so (1Thes. 2:18).

The Opposition

Paul's representations to the authorities in Thessalonica probably alerted the Jews of that city as to his whereabouts and activities. They decided to move against him, and sent some of their number to Berea for that purpose. Soon the seeds of opposition planted by these Jews of Thessalonica in the synagogue of Berea bore fruit. Paul again had personal experience of the truth of Christ's words when he warned that his disciples would be "persecuted from city to city" (Mat. 23:34).

Meanwhile, he sent for Timothy to come to Berea to assist in the promising field of labour that had developed. This young disciple had been left behind with Luke in Philippi, but at the summons of Paul, he made his way to Berea to engage in the work of the Truth.

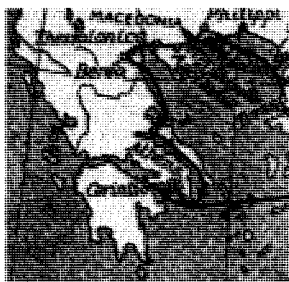
As in other parts, however, the opposition of the Jews soon spread to the Gentiles. The liberal-minded Bereans became agitated by the accusations of the enemies of the Gospel, and ultimately the opposition to Paul personally became so serious, that the brethren urged that he should leave the city for a time.

Sadly the apostle left this promising field of labour, leaving Silas and Timothy to continue on the work so well commenced. The brethren conducted Paul to the seacoast, some 17 miles (27 kms) distant from Berea, where they caught ship for Athens. It is a testimony to the great love that the apostle had stimulated in the hearts of these new converts that they were prepared to go out of their way to such an extent in order to help him.

These unnamed brethren continued with Paul until he arrived at the city of Athens, and there, receiving a message from Paul to request that Silas and Timothy join him in that city, they left him and returned to Berea.

Lonely, tired and depressed, the great Apostle to the Gentiles who had already suffered so much, took stock of his surroundings,

wondering at what opportunities might be afforded him in this sophisticated place to preach the Gospel of self-denial and peace.



Chapter 5

THE GOSPEL VERSUS PHILOSOPHY

Athens was the capital of Greek thought, learning, culture, art and worship. There, it was claimed, human freedom manifested its greatest dignity; human wisdom revealed its noblest depths; human culture displayed its most elegant forms; and human philosophy presented its most compelling and logical reasoning. Athens was a city of sophistication where people freely experimented in teaching and morals. It was the university city of the ancient world, and was named after the goddess Athena. Athena was a goddess of peace and defensive war, the incarnation of wisdom. She was said to have put to flight the obscure deity called Dullness, who until then had ruled the world (see The Myths Of Greece And Rome).

Thus Paul found himself contending in the arena of pagan wisdom, setting before the people of Athens a higher wisdom, the only true antidote to all forms of depression and dullness.

Paul did not see Athens at its greatest. When he visited the city its importance as a commercial and political centre had declined. Nevertheless, it was still respected for its learning, its arts, and its past prestige.

The Acropolis dominated the city, as it does today; and was then, as it is today, the main tourist attraction. It is a steep hill, in the very centre of the city, some 512 feet (156 mtrs) high, with almost vertical drops on all sides but the west. Immediately to the west of the Acropolis, was the bare-topped rocky Areopagus, some 377 feet (115 mtrs) high; and north of the Areopagus was the Agora, or "market-place," the political, commercial, and social centre of the city, where Paul was to proclaim his message.



No effort was spared to make the Acropolis the crown of Athens and her empire. On its high eminence was the magnificent Parthenon (the ruins today clearly evidencing its past glory). It was a huge marble temple dedicated to the goddess Athena. Its base measured 238 feet (72.5 mtrs) in length and 111 feet (34 mtrs) in width. Its encircling row of 46 fluted Doric columns (seventeen on each side and six on each end) stood to a height of 34 feet (10 mtrs), each column having a diameter of 6 feet (1.8 mtrs) at the base. The top of the pediment rose to a height of 65 feet (20 mtrs).

The pediment was filled with sculptures of the chief gods of Greece. In the centre of the group was Zeus, from whose head Athena was said to have sprung fully armed.

The southern slope of the Acropolis supported other structures dedicated to the glory of Athens. There was the Odeion of Pericles in which were performed the cantatas of the Dionysian festivals. Further west was the Theatre of Dionysius where a great festival was celebrated every spring, and which could hold some 17,000 spectators. To the east was the magnificent temple of Zeus. Numerous statues of gods and famous men bordered the walk from the Acropolis, whilst, throughout the city, there were innumerable altars and statues to the gods, and other evidences of the superstitious religion of the people.

It is impressive to visit the city today and see those mute witnesses to the past. It has been our pleasure to climb the Acropolis, to view the Areopagus, to sit in the seats of the Odeion and Theatre, and to wander among the ancient ruins. As we did so, we tried to imagine the scene of 1900 years ago, when the lonely apostle visited these sites and became moved at the waste of money and worship on gods and temples that could not help.

ATHENS is situated about five miles (8 kms) from the coast. The apostle would probably have entered the city along the Pan Athenean Way which led to the Agora, the centre of the city. On all sides he saw the evidence of religion: statues and shrines to pagan gods.



Actually he had not come there to preach, but to await the coming of Silas and Timothy. They were to report to him as to whether the official ban on his presence in Thessalonica (see page 226) had been lifted. Paul was anxious to return to that city and resume his activity among the brethren.

Yahweh had other plans, however!

Meanwhile, Paul engaged in a little sightseeing. He went "through the city surveying the monuments of their religion" (Acts 17:23; Ramsay translation). He was amazed at the childish superstition of these so-called intelligent people. He saw temples and idols given over to every form of worship. The religions of Minerva, Jupiter, Apollo, Mercury, Bacchus and other gods were represented. There were also altars to abstract idols such as Fame, Modesty, Energy and

Pity; and in order that none might be overlooked, there was even an altar with the inscription: *To An Unknown God*. Thus Athens catered for every form of belief: the city was “full of idols” (Acts 17:16; mg).

Paul’s spirit was provoked to anger* by the blasphemy of it all. What a waste that so much religiosity should be expended in such childish superstition, whereas it could be directed along a path that would lead to salvation.

He felt the urge to direct them to the way of Truth.

But where to commence in this city of liberality and pagan learning?

Preaching In The Synagogue

There was a synagogue in Athens, and Paul, as was his custom, made his way there.

Where it was situated is not now known, though a stone slab excavated in the eastern section of Athens bearing the words of Psalm 118:20 might have formed part of such a building. If so, it was an appropriate inscription: “This gate of Yahweh, into which the righteous shall enter.” When Paul visited it, one of the righteous, at least, did enter thereat, though with feelings stirred at the religious folly of the city.

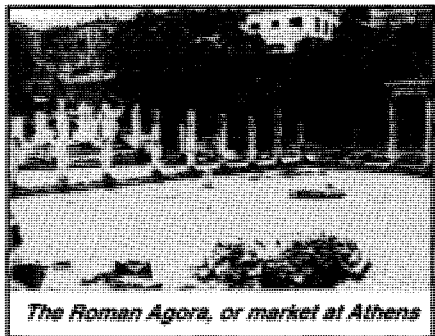
His efforts in the synagogue were disappointed. He disputed with the Jews, but apparently without success. Perhaps the enervating environment of sophisticated learning among which they lived had destroyed any virility of faith they might once have had. They had not even enough interest in their worship to persecute the apostle! Paul turned from his countrymen, disappointed at that approach.

Disputing In The Agora

From the synagogue, Paul made his way to the public “market place,” known as the Agora, as it was called in the Greek. If the

Jews would not listen, perhaps the Gentiles might!

The Agora was the political, commercial and social hub of the city. It was a large open square where people met to do business, discuss the news of the day, or dispute on philosophy and religion. There gathered orators, statesmen, poets, philosophers and people. And there, also, Paul went each day to mingle with the



The Roman Agora, or market at Athens

* The Greek word *paroxunets* rendered “provoked” (Acts 17:16) signifies “to rouse anger” — Vine.

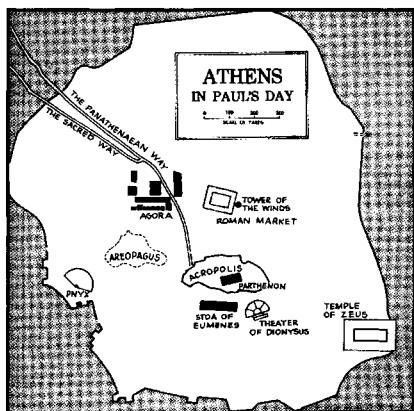
crowds, and seek an opening for the proclamation of the Truth. He entered into discussion whenever the opportunity arose. Soon his presence and message attracted attention. The character of the Athenians ensured that. They were a cosmopolitan community noted for their superficial curiosity, always gadding about "either to tell or to hear some new thing." Even strangers to the city were soon caught up in the same pursuit.

Paul presented something new in the way of religion. The idea of a crucified criminal rising from the dead and revealing himself as the Saviour of humanity, was different from anything the people had ever heard. Besides, his insistence upon a physical resurrection as the way to life challenged the prevailing beliefs in the immortality of the soul. It was all quite foreign to anything they had heard before, and excited considerable interest.

At length his teaching began to disturb the philosophers. Perhaps some had heard second-hand and in garbled fashion what he was preaching; no doubt others had caught phrases directly from his mouth as they moved about the Agora. In any case, it aroused thought and contention.

His teaching captured the attention of the Epicureans and Stoics in particular. They represented two forms of philosophy which were very popular in Athens at the time. The former were the materialists of the day. They derived their teaching from Epicurus who flourished around BC342-271. His object was to discover a practical guide to true happiness now. He did not believe in any hope beyond the grave. He taught that the soul of man disintegrated at death, and the atoms comprising it joined some other form of matter. Therefore men must seek enjoyment now. And it did not matter how they obtained it. True pleasure and not absolute truth was the end at which he aimed; experience and not reason was the test on which he relied. This degenerated into mere materialism, so that his doctrine has been styled *The Philosophy of Self-Indulgence* (Unger).

The Stoics were different. Their teaching represented *The Philosophy of Pride*. "The morality of Stoicism was based on pride, on individual independence, the issue of fate" (Unger). "Reason" was the god worshipped by them, and they claimed that actions that ran counter to fleshly wisdom were evil. Thus they practised self-discipline and denial. They believed that at



death the human soul became part of the universal soul in a very impersonal sense.

There was no place for the Saviour nor for the Resurrection in either teaching, therefore conflict with Paul was inevitable.

Philosophers of both schools of thought encountered Paul in the Agora, and subjected him to questioning in the Socratic method of instruction and debate. But their methods failed to shake the apostle in his doctrine of Jesus and the resurrection. The dispute attracted the attention of others.

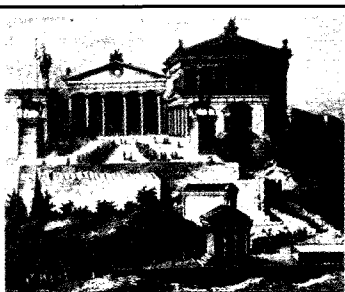
"What is this babbler trying to say?" some asked disparagingly.

"He seems to be announcing foreign gods!" declared others.

They decried him as a "babbler" (Gr. *spermologos*). According to Ramsay, this word signifies "a worthless fellow of low class and

vulgar habits, with the insinuation that he lives at the expense of others, like those disreputable persons who hang around the markets and the quays in order to pick up anything that falls from the loads that are carried about. Hence, as a term in social slang, it connotes absolute vulgarity and inability to rise above the most contemptible standard of life and conduct; it is often connected with slave life, for the *Spermologos* was near the type of slave and below the level of the free man; and there clings to it the suggestion of picking up refuse and scraps, and in literature of plagiarism, without the capacity to use it correctly."

*Top: The
Acropolis
at Athens.*



*Bottom:
View of
Mars' Hill
alongside
the
Areopagus*



To The Areopagus

The training and teaching of the philosopher usually induced in them a good measure of restraint. Their methods of debate were such that they usually had the better of their opponents, or at least reached an impasse where they could agree to differ. This was not the case when they opposed Paul, however. They failed utterly to win any points against him. This

greatly disturbed them, and aroused their anger. Thus they endeavored to heap contempt upon him by the use of such names as *spermologos*, but when that form of abuse failed to shake the apostle, their irritation grew and they laid hands on him, and took him up “unto Areopagus” (Acts 17:19). This word signifies *The Hill of Ares*, the god of war; or, in Latin, *Mars’ Hill* (v. 22), which means the same.

The Areopagus was a bare rock, some 377 feet (115 mtrs) high. Steps were cut in the rock leading to rock-hewn seats where an open-air court met. This court often assembled to discuss matters of education or religion. As there seems to have been no judicial proceedings as far as Paul was

concerned, the philosophers could have taken him there as the most convenient place to continue their debate on religion. Perhaps they did this to determine whether he was teaching such things as would warrant a charge being laid against him.



This altar found on the Palatine Hill in Rome, dated about bc100, is inscribed: “Sacred to a god or goddess,” and was restored by Sextius Calvinus.

Paul’s Open-Air Address: To The Unknown God

On occasions such as this, Paul’s early training stood him in good stead. He was equally at home in disputing in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9), debating with the sophisticated philosophers of the city of Socrates, or answering the legalities of the Latins. Thus, on the elevated platform of the Areopagus, he remained master of the situation.

He welcomed this opportunity of expounding Truth in contrast to the foolish superstitions of the philosophers; whilst they, in turn, heard a well-reasoned, well-presented address that could not fail to impress if they were prepared to analyse it. It is a model of logic on the basis of divine revelation, but blinded as they were by a worldly wisdom that turned them into fools, and closed their eyes to divine facts, it failed to impress them. It was true, as Paul was to write later: “The world by wisdom knows not God” (1Cor. 1:21). Nevertheless the witness was faithfully given.

Introduction: The Subject Introduced

“Men of Athens,” commenced Paul. *“I notice on every hand how extremely devoted*

Paul's Address to The Men of Athens

THE UNKNOWN GOD

In a very direct and logical manner, the apostle Paul drew the attention of his hearers to the identity, purpose and determination of the God of heaven and earth. His address is outstanding as the pattern of a Gospel proclamation effort, commencing with the character and power of the Creator, and concluding with a warning of impending judgment against willing ignorance.

God The Almighty Creator Does Not Dwell On Earth.

"The God who made the world and all it contains, who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples built by human hands... (v. 24).

Man Is Dependent On Him, Not He On Man.

"Neither is He served by human hands as if He lacked anything; seeing He is the Giver of life and breath and all things to every one... (v. 25).

He Created Man, Guides The Destiny Of Nations, Reveals Truth.

"He has made from one person every nation of men to settle on the entire surface of earth, definitely appointing the pre-established periods and the boundaries of their habitations, so that they might seek for God, if only they would feel after Him and find Him... (vv. 26-27).

God Is Always Accessible As Nature Witnesses.

"For He is not far from each of us; 'in Him we live and move and have our being,' as some of your own poets have said, 'For we are His offspring.' (v. 28).

As His Offspring We Should Worship Him.

"Now then, since we have our being from God, we certainly should not have the idea that the Godhead resembles gold or silver or stone or anything humanly manufactured or invented... (v. 29).

The Imperative Need To Now Obey The Divine Invitation.

"However, while God overlooked those times of ignorance, He is now summoning all people everywhere to repent, since He has appointed a day when He will judge the world in righteousness in that man whom He has ordained, whereof He has given assurance unto all men in that He has raised him from the dead" (vv. 30-31).

*you are to the worship of demons, for as I went throughout your city and looked carefully at your sacred objects, I found even an altar with the inscription, **To An Unknown God**. Now what you revere without knowing it, I am going to proclaim unto you...*"

There are certain aspects of Paul's speech that should be noted. Possibly, as he defiantly proclaimed that "*the Lord of heaven and earth dwelleth not in temples made with hands*" he may have



pointed to the Acropolis with its majestic temple called the Parthenon which towered immediately above them. Or when he declared that the Godhead was not an idol made of silver or gold, he contrasted the God of Truth to the multiplicity of idols and statues that abounded throughout Athens.

Thus Paul's discourse was a most challenging one, boldly opposing the form of worship current throughout that pagan city. At the same time, it was one that naturally appealed to the intellect, and should have made some impact upon the minds of men who were prepared to think.

Powerful Points

From Paul's Address

"*You are too superstitious*" (Acts 17:22), declared Paul. The word in the Greek is *deisidaimon*, translated in the *Diaglott* as "extremely devoted to the worship of demons." Demons were considered by the Greeks as the departed spirits of the good and the great, who were exalted to the rank of demi-gods, and who, though invisible, were supposed to exert an important influence on mankind. They were looked upon as the Protectors of those who put their confidence in them.

There is thus a similarity between the Grecian worship of demons (or demi-gods) and the teaching of Roman Catholicism with regard to the protective influence of canonised "saints," whose statues are found in their churches, and to whom it pays adoration or worship. It is significant that the Pope is described as the "God (*Eloah* = Mighty One) of Protectors" in Daniel 11:38 (mg); and



that as Paul predicted a decline in Christianity he warned that the future would reveal some claiming to be Christ's followers, who would set forth a "doctrine of demons," would forbid to marry, and would command to abstain from meats (1Tim. 4:1-3).

It can be said of Roman Catholicism today, as it was said of the people of Athens in Paul's day, that they are "extremely devoted to the worship of demons."

"He hath made of one blood all nations of men" (Acts 17:26). Modern science claims that Paul was wrong in this statement, inasmuch as there are different groups of blood, and all blood is not the same. The word "blood," however, is not in the original, and is excluded by other renditions (see, for example, the Diaglott). The Revised Version renders: "He has made of one....," and that "one" is Adam. Science, in its theory of evolution, may disagree with Paul, but it is wrong, completely unproven.

"The times before appointed" (v. 26). Paul taught that the rise and fall of nations is determined by God, and that the "times of the Gentiles" were designed to permit all to receive the Truth (see Rom. 11:25). There is a "set time to favour Zion," though in the meantime God "rules in the kingdom of men" (see Dan. 4:17; Heb. 11:3; Psa. 102:13). Nebuchadnezzar was told, "God hath given thee..." (Dan. 2:37, 44; see also Dan. 7:25, 11:27, 35, 12:6-7; Isa. 10:12; Rev. 13:7). Peter taught that "known unto God were all His works from the beginning to the end" (Acts 15:18; Isa. 46:9-10). Christ taught that Jerusalem would be overthrown "until" (Lk. 21:24). There is therefore a plan and pattern of history that takes in its predetermined end, and which limits the scope and the time of man's ascendancy. Let the university students of Athens ponder that fact!

"If haply they might feel after Him, and find Him" (v. 27). The Greek word *pselaphao*, translated "feel," signifies "to grope like a blind man." Paul taught that God is very near to man, and has left abundant witness to His existence in the many gifts of creation, yet the heathen, because of their very ignorance (v. 23), groped uncertainly toward Him. Therefore there was the need of a specific revelation and invitation, such as Paul referred to in v. 30: "*God commandeth all men...*"

"Your own poets have said" (v. 28). Paul quoted the evidence of their own writers, as he did on other occasions (e.g. Titus 1:12). The statement: "*In Him we live and move and have our being,*" is from the writings of the Cretan poet, Epimenides, who lived about the seventh century BC, whilst the statement: "*For we are also His offspring,*" is attributed to Cleanthes, a Stoic philosopher, and also to Aratus, a Cilician poet, who both lived during the third century BC.

"He hath appointed a day..." This was the crux of Paul's discourse. It emphasised the second coming of the Lord Jesus, and the

purpose of his appearing. It showed that as God governed times and seasons in the past, so He does for the future.* It draws attention to the Period, the Purpose, the Person, the Promise and the Proof of God's future intervention. It shows that the destiny of humanity rests upon the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

The Mocking Athenians

Paul rested his claim of Truth upon the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. But that was too much for the Athenians. A physical resurrection sounded ridiculous to them. They believed that when a person died the body decayed and nothing remained; that the soul might continue in some form or other, but to imagine that there is any future for the body seemed the height of folly to the educated Athenians. The Areopagus rocked with laughter as the university men of Athens jeered at the doctrine of the lonely Jew in front of them. But though most ridiculed him, some were impressed. Thoughtfully, they pondered the exposition of the apostle, and considered both the man and his message.

"We will hear you again about this," they declared.

However, Paul considered that his work was done. There was no point in remaining any longer. Abruptly he left the mocking assembly, descending the stone steps to the city below.

As he did so, others followed him, and catching up with Paul, requested that he continue to instruct them.

The apostle found, that in the mercy of Yahweh, the nucleus of an ecclesia was established. The results were not as spectacular as elsewhere, for the university environment was not a fruitful one for the Truth. Even the synagogue seemed inflicted by this spirit, for it evidently was too apathetic to even vigorously oppose Paul.

Nevertheless, some outstanding converts were made. Among them was Dionysius the Areopagite, an outstanding member of the supreme court of Athens. Though nothing further is related of him in the New Testament, records outside the Scriptures state that he was an Athenian by birth and eminent for his literary attainments. Certainly, as an Areopagite, his conversion would make a tremendous impression in Athens.

Then there was "a woman named Damaris." Evidently she, too, was prominent in Athens to be singled out for mention like this. Among the Greek cities, the women played an important part (see Acts 17:4), and doubtless the gentle Damaris (for that is the significance of her name) held an influential position in Athens where

** Heb. 11:3 teaches that faith is required to understand the divine purpose in the "framed ages." By this means, a believer can see the beginning and conclusion of the various time periods. See further details in The Christadelphian Expositor: Hebrews. — Ed.*

she could possibly assist the furtherance of the Truth.

There were others, also, not specifically named; but who proved to be outstanding workers in the Truth. Among them were Paul's beloved associate Epaenetus (Rom. 16:5) and the household of Stephanas, who as the "firstfruits of Achaia" (Athens was in Achaia), laid the foundation of the ecclesia (1Cor. 1:16). The members of this household "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints" (1Cor. 16:15), following Paul to Corinth for that purpose, whilst Epaenetus moved to Rome to assist in furthering the Truth in that city.

Thus a good work was effected in Athens as an ecclesia was formed to challenge the sophistication of the educated Greeks. It has been suggested that Paul was disappointed with his address on the Areopagus, and regretted the form of address that he gave on that occasion. But there is no real evidence of that. True, he told the Corinthians that when he came among them he determined to know nothing else than "Jesus Christ and him crucified," but that is also the basis of his talk to the Athenians; it was his teaching of the death and resurrection of the Lord that caused them to jeer and sneer. It is sometimes suggested that he was afterwards sorry for drawing upon the evidence of pagan poets, but, again, there is no evidence of this, but the very reverse, for he does it again, on a later occasion, when writing to Titus with regard to the Cretians (Tit. 1:12).

We can certainly look forward to meeting some in the Kingdom of God who were drawn to the Truth by the courageous message of the lonely Paul in Athens, and who themselves braved the ridicule and laughter of their companions to follow in the footsteps of a man condemned as a criminal, but who rose from the dead.

**Visit of Silas and
Timothy
(1Thes. 3:1-10)**

Despite the success that had attended the meeting of Paul in Berea and Athens, he still felt that Thessalonica presented an outstanding centre for the proclamation of the Truth. Already the earnestness and zeal of the brethren of that ecclesia had spread abroad throughout Macedonia and Achaia, and had stirred others to follow the example set (1Thes. 1:6-8). Paul was convinced that further assistance on his part would result in an intensification of effort on behalf of the local brethren, and was anxious to return. But the ban on his presence that he desired lifted, still remained (1Thes. 2:18).

On arriving at Athens, he had despatched a message to Silas and Timothy (who had remained at Berea), to make their way down to him as soon as possible (Acts 17:15). In due time they arrived, to report on conditions in Berea, and to render assistance to the apostle in the work at Athens.

But Paul was concerned at the silence from Thessalonica. Were

the brethren being subjected to increased persecution? Had they the strength to maintain the faith in the face of the pressures that would be brought upon them? Had they received sufficient instruction? Was it not possible to get the ban against him lifted so that he might return to strengthen them in the faith?

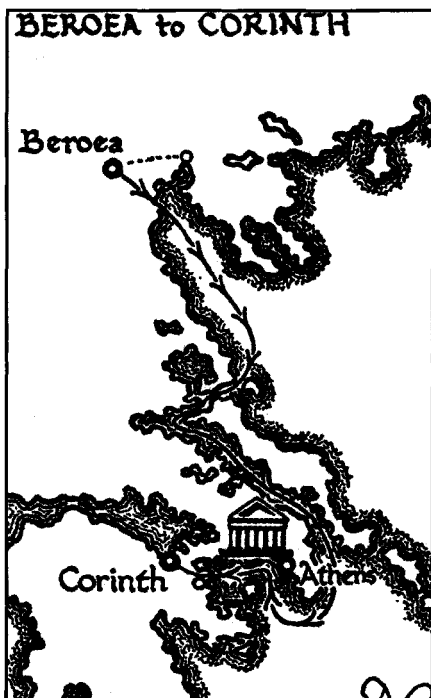
Paul was worried. This does not mean that he did not have confidence in God to help his brethren, but he realised that God expects us to do what we can to further His work. He will bless our labours, if we do our part. Paul realised that the opponents of the Truth in Thessalonica were powerful, and that the newly-formed ecclesia was in need of help. He felt frustrated that he could not return himself, and was anxious for first-hand information of the state of the brethren.

At last, "when he could no longer forbear" (1Thes. 3:1), he decided to send Timothy to Thessalonica to report on how the ecclesia was faring, whilst he remained in Athens. At the same time Silas was despatched elsewhere, probably to Berea. Later, he, with Timothy, again joined up with Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5).

Meanwhile, the strain of the heavy and exacting activity to which the apostle had given himself, together with the persecution he endured, and the mental burden of the many ecclesias whose problems he made personal to himself, was having its toll. He began to experience fits of acute depression, as well as physical sickness. Nevertheless, he felt the urge to preach. That was the task given him by Yahweh, and he was determined to continue it.

He decided to leave Athens for Corinth. This was about 40 miles (64 kms) distant by land, or a day's sail by sea.

Bidding farewell to the members of the Athenian Ecclesia, he made his way to this next city.



Chapter 6

THE GOSPEL VERSUS IMMORALITY

Paul spent nearly two years in Corinth where a flourishing ecclesia was established. He had more trouble and experienced more disappointments with that ecclesia, than any other; and yet he had a greater affection for it than for most others (2Cor. 2:4).

Corinth stood on the narrow piece of land that formed a bridge between the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. Its two harbours (Lechaeum on the Corinthian and Cenchrea on the Saronic gulfs) attracted the commerce of both east and west. Jews and Greeks flocked to the Roman Colony, and the commercial activity they brought with them caused wealth to pour into the city. Splendid buildings enriched with pillars of marble and porphyry, and adorned with gold and silver, graced the metropolis. The products of the world found their way into its marts. But with opulence and plenty there came sophistication, self-indulgence, intellectual restlessness and profligacy. Corinth became the swinging centre of Macedonia, the capital of permissiveness, a veritable Sodom, catering for every form of vice, and every variety of pleasure. It was proud of its modern stadium and its games — its wild beast fights (1Cor. 15:32), its foot-racing contests (1Cor. 9:24), boxing-matches (vv. 26-27), and the fading glory of athletic prowess (v. 25). Its citizens lived in an environment of gross immorality, from which, doubtless, Paul derived his frightful description of paganism (Rom. 1:21-32). In the streets there were prostitutes (1Cor. 6:14-16), the effeminate dandies with their long hair (1Cor. 11:14), the drunkards (1Cor. 6:10). Sexual immorality was rife (1Cor. 5:1; 6:9-20; 10:7-8); extortioners and cheats flourished on every hand, so that Paul refused any relief from the Corinthians lest it be thought that he should be considered as included among the number of such (2Cor. 4:2; 7:2; 8:20-21). In short, two vicious vices plagued Corinth: greed of material gain, and lust. Corinth's bursting wharfs and docks, its busy shops and factories fostered the one; whilst the cult of Aphrodite the goddess of love, entrenched in Corinth for centuries, encouraged the other. The voluptuous, lewd forms of the worship of the goddess, turned the city into a notorious sink of immorality. It led to the use of such terms as "to corinthianise," meaning to identify with the immoral acts of the city; the term "Corinthian girl" denotes the loose type of life engaged in there; and "Corinthian sickness" is used to describe the inevitable physiological and psychological results of

such a life. This sink of wealth, luxury, and profligacy became the new testing ground for the efficacy of the Truth's teaching. It is significant that Paul experienced better results from such a community (at least warm in their affections) than he did from the cold, cynical, philosophical environment of Athens, where the professors, encased in the so-called logic of their learning, had no faith for the things of the Gospel. It is suggestive of the words of the Lord to the cold-hearted Pharisees: "Truly, I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Mat. 21:31).

PAUL arrived at Corinth sick and dispirited. The "care of the ecclesias" weighed heavily upon him (2Cor. 11:28), to add to his concern. In addition, his experience in Athens demonstrated how difficult it was for the Gospel to penetrate the hard, cold, cynicism of Greek philosophy. He determined "not to know any thing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1Cor. 2:2).

Paul Moves To Corinth (Acts 18:1)

Physically ill, terribly lonely, the apostle entered the busy, lusty, cosmopolitan city feeling weak and nervous. Since entering Macedonia, he had gone through some shattering experiences, incidents which were both exhausting and depressing. He lacked self-confidence and arrived "in weakness, fear, and in much trembling" (1Cor. 2:3).

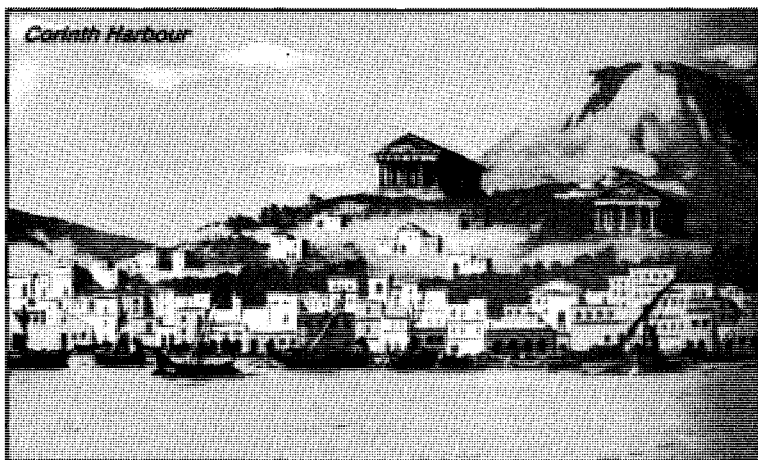


Nevertheless, his determination to preach the Gospel, in spite of his physical and mental state, was as strong as ever. Avoiding the philosophical reasoning in which the Greeks delighted, he planned to present them with the challenging facts of the divine revelation in the strength that comes from Yahweh (v. 4).

But first he had to find suitable employment and accommodation. Corinth abounded with those who exploited their fellow men, and Paul was not prepared to be mistaken for one such. Instead, he set an example of personal labour under extreme difficulty (2Cor. 11:9; 1Cor. 4:11-12; 9:14-15), and even after the ecclesia had been established, he refused to accept relief from it, lest his motives be distorted (1Cor. 9:12; 2Cor. 1:12; 1Thes. 2:9; 2Thes. 3:8; ct. Phil. 4:15).

He made his way to the synagogue, and there found acquaintance with a Jewish couple: Aquila and Priscilla. They had recently arrived in Corinth from Rome because of a recent decree of Claudius legislating against the Jews in that city.* Aquila was a warm-hearted, kindly man, whose wife, Priscilla, was noted for her hospitality. Moreover, Aquila was a tent-maker, the profession followed by Paul.

** The decree of Claudius is mentioned by a writer by the name of Suetonius, who states that it was in consequence of numerous disturbances and riots among the Jews at the instigation of one Chrestus. He assigns this to the Emperor's ninth year, approximately AD49. Many have identified Chrestus with Christos, and as the Romans did not discriminate between Jews and Christians, believe that the disturbances were due to the clash between the synagogue and the ecclesia, and that Aquila and Priscilla had embraced Christ. But if that were the case, Luke would surely have indicated it, or at least have stated that they were believers. Instead, he defines Aquila as "a certain Jew," which would imply that he was not converted at that time. Most likely Aquila and Priscilla were converted by the apostle on this occasion.*



Aquila provided employment for Paul, whilst Priscilla arranged for him to be accommodated in their home. A loving friendship was thus established that continued throughout the life of the apostle.

Meanwhile, regularly, on each sabbath, Paul presented himself at the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews and proselytes on the Scriptures, persuading some of them to look further into these matters.

But he lacked his customary vigour. He was still concerned with the state of the ecclesias he had recently founded, and particularly with the ecclesia of Thessalonica. He longed for the coming of Silas and Timothy that he might know of the progress of the brethren, and determine his future action.

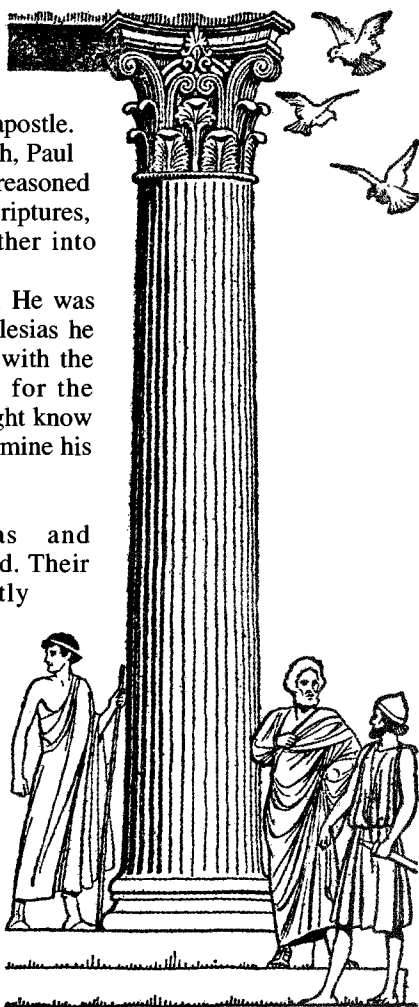
Silas And Timothy Join Paul (Acts 18:5) At last Silas and Timothy arrived. Their presence greatly

cheered the apostle, particularly when he heard the news they brought with them. They were able to tell him of continued activity in the ecclesias he had founded, of how the brethren were determined to maintain the faith, come what may.

This was particularly so with regard to the ecclesia in Thessalonica. Timothy was able to provide a most heartening report. The brethren maintained a "work of faith, a labour of love, and a patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ" (1Thes. 1:3). So much so, that they provided an example to all other ecclesias throughout Macedonia.

Paul's heart overflowed with thanksgiving to God and love for the brethren, and he desired above all things, to return to them. But that was not possible, an official ban having been placed upon his presence in the city (1Thes. 2:14-16). There was but one means left for him to communicate with them, and that was to write to them, despatching it by the hands of the faithful Timothy.

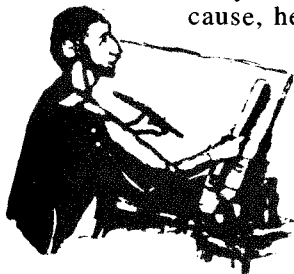
This became all the more necessary because of two matters upon which Timothy reported. The first was the extent of persecution



Renowned Corinthian column

suffered by the recently formed ecclesia, which was beginning to suffer from the hands of their own countrymen, a like measure of that violent opposition experienced by Paul from the Jews (1Thes. 2:14-16); and the second was a question that they presented to the apostle through Timothy: *Would those who fell asleep in Christ experience any loss in comparison with those who would be living at his return?*

The Power of the Pen There was only one way for the apostle to encourage them and answer the question: and that was by correspondence. So, for the first time in such a cause, he took his pen in his hand to write to his brethren. It marked a new form of service on the part of the apostle.



The ecclesias founded upon his first tour lay comparatively near to Antioch, his original headquarters, and could all be visited from that centre in the course of a few months. It was otherwise when his mission-field extended to Europe. The pen was to be more frequently used by the apostle to help his brethren whilst he was absent in distant parts. He not only needed pen and parchment, but also helpers: some to write and others to convey the epistles written. Thus he needed a group of assistants to send near and far among the ever-widening circle of ecclesias.

The benefit of this was immense. It provided the brethren with written instructions and expositions upon which they could base their conduct and studies, and which remained with them whilst the apostle was absent. We, too, benefit from his activities in that direction. What a great loss we would experience today if Paul had been able to travel back to Thessalonica and meet personally with the brethren, without the need to write to them! In His wisdom, Yahweh permitted the authorities of that city to obstruct the apostle's intentions, and so provide not only for the brethren then, but for the countless number of men and women since who have embraced the Truth and have been helped and inspired by these letters.

Paul did not personally write these epistles, but dictated them to others, who wrote them down for him. He possibly suffered from poor eyesight (Gal. 4:15), and found this assistance necessary. Unfortunately this led to some issuing apostolic instruction or teaching in his name, that was not authorised by him (see 2Thes. 2:1-2), and therefore, to prevent this, his custom was to append his personal signature to the epistles dictated to others (2Thes. 3:17).

Paul's First Letter Paul's first recorded epistle, therefore was that written to the Thessalonian brethren. It was intended to encourage them in the face of the bitter persecution

that they endured. He needed a theme designed to that end, and found it in the subject of *Christ As Their Hope*. Throughout this epistle (as in 2Thessalonians also) the coming of Christ is emphasised: 1Thes. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:15-16; 5:23; 2Thes. 1:7; 2:1; 3:5. This is the great antidote to the depression caused by frustration, trouble or persecution. It provides a vision for the future which can give encouragement in all circumstances.

Paul divided his epistle into three parts: the past, present and future.

The **Past** drew attention to the manner in which they had experienced the goodness of God in calling them to the way of salvation, and reminded them of their own enthusiasm and dedication as they accepted it. They had felt the power of the Gospel (ch. 1:5), they had become examples unto others (vv. 6-7); they had proclaimed the Word to unbelievers (vv. 8-10). He wrote of his own labours among them, and the tender feeling that he had for them (ch. 2). His motive was beyond reproach (vv. 1-6), his methods were designed to strengthen (vv. 7-12); his message was based exclusively upon the revelation of God (vv. 13-16).

The **Present** (ch. 4) instructed them on how they should conduct themselves; particularly in view of their hope in the second coming of the Lord.

The **Future** (ch. 5) provided them with a vision to which they could look, and for which they should work.



PAUL'S MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN ECCLESIAS

It is interesting to notice that both Christ and Paul dictated messages to seven ecclesias. Christ's messages are recorded in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, whilst Paul's are contained in his various epistles. Paul penned nine ecclesial epistles to seven ecclesias, from Romans to 2Thessalonians inclusive. As with all Scripture, they were designed to be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction [or restoration, as the word should be rendered], for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2Tim. 3:16-17).

These nine ecclesial epistles of Paul can be divided into a quartette, a trio, and a pair. The quartette (Romans to Galatians) expound Christ in relation to doctrine; the trio (Ephesians to Colossians) expound Christ in relation to conduct; the pair (1 and 2 Thessalonians) expound Christ in relation to hope.

Doctrine or teaching must come first; but it provides only a foundation for conduct; and that assures our hope. *Doctrine, Conduct, Hope* is the natural development in Christ, and it is significant that divine Inspiration arranged for the epistles to be set out in that order; for they are not arranged in chronological sequence.

This development is discernable in the various themes of the epistles:

- **Romans sets forth Christ as the Power of God to us (Rom. 1:16)** — In Christ: *Justification*.
- **1Corinthians sets forth Christ as the Wisdom of God (1Cor. 1:30)** — In Christ: *Sanctification*.
- **2Corinthians sets forth Christ as the Comfort of God (2Cor. 1:3-4)** — In Christ: *Consolation*.
- **Galatians sets forth Christ as the Righteousness of God (Gal. 2:21)** — In Christ: *Liberation*.
- **Ephesians sets forth Christ as the Riches of God (Eph. 1:7)** — In Christ: *Exhortation*.
- **Philippians sets forth Christ as the Sufficiency of God (Phil. 1:21)** — In Christ: *Exultation*.
- **Colossians sets forth Christ as the Fulness of God (Col. 1:19)** — In Christ: *Completion*.
- **1Thessalonians sets forth Christ as the Promise of God (1Thes. 1:10)** — In Christ: *Translation*.
- **2Thessalonians sets forth Christ as the Victory of God (2Thes. 1:7)** — In Christ: *Compensation*.

Notice how that one theme builds on the other. *Justification* by

faith is brought about by baptism, and lays the foundation for true *sanctification*, which, in turn provides the basis for *consolation*. And so on! Thus divine Inspiration not only dictated what Paul wrote, but even the positioning of his various epistles in the New Testament as we have it.

It is remarkable how that the very setting of the books (placed without any relationship to their chronological order as we have noted above) illustrates the principle of 2Tim. 3:16-17: "All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, reproof, restoration, instruction in righteousness."

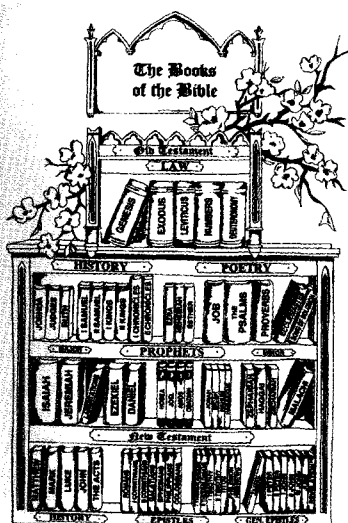
In *Romans* there is set forth **Doctrine**, for it is the most systematic presentation of the Gospel extant. In *1Corinthians* there is **Reproof** as the apostle rebukes the brethren for their misdemeanors. In *2Corinthians* there is **Restoration** (see ch. 2:4-8) as he commends them for implementing the reforms he had earlier suggested. In *Galatians* there is **Instruction in Righteousness**; that being the prevailing theme of the epistle.

Now consider the order set forth in the trio of the Epistles referred to above: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians. In *Ephesians* the principle is established that Christ is the **Head** (chs. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23), the ecclesia is the **Body** (chs. 1:23; 4:16), and individual brethren are the **Members** thereof (ch. 5:30). In *Philippians*, however, Paul warned of the *disjointedness of the members* (chs. 1:27; 2:3, 14; 4:2). In *Colossians* the problem was even worse, for they were guilty of "not holding the head" (ch. 2:1-9).

Ephesians thus sets forth the **ideal**; *Philippians*: a **minor fault**; *Colossians*: a **serious decline**.

The final division suggested above: that of the pair (1st and 2nd Thessalonians), presents Christ as the **Hope**, and then Christ as the **Victory**. Before he can become our *Victory*, he must be our *Hope*. So here, again, there is a proper development of ideas.

The remarkable order in which the epistles are placed reveals that the Bible is the work of Inspiration; not only in what it says, but in the very way it has come to us.



Analysis of the Epistles

PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

Author:

This epistle was written by Paul from Corinth about the year AD52.

Background:

Driven by the Spirit in a way he sometimes could not understand (cp. Acts 16:3-7), but whose guidance he did not doubt, Paul travelled to Troas, a few miles south of the Hellespont in Asia Minor (Acts 16:8). There he received the vision of the man of Macedonia with the appeal to come over and help (v. 9). He obeyed, and was immediately plunged into the most unusual adventures. At Philippi he was thrashed and imprisoned after the multitude had risen against him and his companions (Acts 16:22-23), but this ended in the conversion of the jailor and the founding of the ecclesia. At Thessalonica, 80 miles (129 kms) to the southwest, the preaching of the Gospel was again attended by violent opposition that ended in riots (Acts 17:1-10), and in which the Jewish community took a leading part. The house of Jason was assaulted (v. 5), and so serious and vocal was the opposition, that the brethren "sent away" Paul and Silas (v. 10), and a ban on their presence in the city was imposed (Acts 17:9; 1Thes. 2:18). Paul then moved on to Berea, 50 miles (80 kms) to the west. Here, after an initial success, the influential Jews of Thessalonica stirred up opposition (v. 13), and again Paul was "sent away," this time to Athens, 200 miles (320 kms) to the south. Here, lonely and depressed, he sent for Silas and Timothy to come unto him. They made their way to the apostle, who subsequently despatched Timothy to Thessalonica to report on the situation, whilst Silas probably returned to Berea. Meanwhile, Paul made his way to Corinth, where Silas and Timothy again met up with him (Acts 18:5). Timothy gave an excellent report regarding the virility of the Ecclesia in Thessalonica, though it was tempered with the news that continued persecution was being experienced (1Thes. 2:14-15). He also reported upon a doctrinal problem which needed expounding (1Thes. 4:13). Being unable to personally visit them, the apostle penned this epistle, the first of his writings, to comfort them.

Theme:

The doctrine of the second coming of the Lord Jesus is the source of true hope, inspiration and comfort for all true believers. See 1Thes. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:15-16; 5:23. A key verse is ch. 1:10.

“Wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come” (R.V.).

The epistle, therefore, sets forth the subject of:

CHRIST AS OUR HOPE (TRANSLATION)

1. LOOKING BACK (THE PAST): HOW THEY WERE CALLED — Chs. 1-3

(a) Thorough Conversion: Ch. 1

Salutation	v. 1
Thanksgiving for their conversion (Love manifested)	vv. 2-5
Their faithful example	vv. 6-8
Their virile hope	vv. 9-10

(b) Thorough Preaching: Ch. 2

Paul's work of faith — Earnest Contention	vv. 1-12
Paul's labour of love — Tender Guidance	vv. 13-16
Paul's patience of hope — Virile Expectation	vv. 17-20

(c) Thorough After-care: Ch. 3

A Labour of Love — Sending Timothy	vv. 1-8
A Work of Faith — Prayer	vv. 9-10
The Patience of Hope — Strengthened for the Kingdom	vv. 11-13

2. LOOKING ON (THE PRESENT): HOW THEY SHOULD LIVE — Ch. 4

The work of Faith in Personal Conduct	vv. 1-8
The manifestation of Love toward each other	vv. 9-12
The comfort of Hope in future Anticipations	vv. 13-18

3. LOOKING FORWARD (THE FUTURE): WATCHING AND WAITING — Ch. 5

The assurance of Hope as Children of Light	vv. 1-5
The attitude of Faith — Awake and working	vv. 6-11
The labour of Love — Ecclesial co-operation	vv. 12-22
Final words of Grace	vv. 23-28

Two Highlights:

It is not our intention to expound at length on the epistles of Paul, but merely to present outlines. If they are read with such summaries in mind, the general teaching of the apostle will be more clearly apparent.

However, we draw attention to two highlights in the epistle before us.

1. Note that it begins and ends with a benediction, as the apostle prays that his brethren may experience the divine grace through Christ Jesus (chs. 1:1; 5:28).

2. Note how the three virtues of faith, hope and love, to which Paul drew the attention of the brethren at Corinth (1Cor. 13:13) is interwoven into the fabric of the Epistle to the Thessalonians, like a beautiful pattern in a glorious tapestry. They are found in every chapter, and are imbedded in every statement. Our outline has emphasised this, but notice how it is incorporated in the expressions of the apostle:

Ch. 1:3 — “Your work of *faith*, and labour of *love*, and patience of *hope*.”

Ch. 1:9-10 — “Ye turned (*faith*), to serve (*love*), and wait (*hope*).”

Ch. 3:6 — “Your *faith* and *love* and desire (*hope*).”

Ch. 5:8 — “The breastplate of *faith* and *love*, and for an helmet, the *hope* of salvation.”

Other examples will present themselves to the diligent searcher of the Word.

And one final note. The epistle was written from Corinth and not from Athens as suggested in the subscription at the end of Chapter 5.



Chapter 7

THE APOSTLE IN CORINTH

ABOUT the same time as Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia with their encouraging news, and possibly through their instrumentality, Paul received a further token of good will and co-operation from one of the ecclesias he had recently established. The brethren at Philippi spontaneously forwarded a gift of money to the apostle, to assist him in his proclamation of the Gospel. It came at an opportune moment, and greatly relieved a pressing need (Phil. 4:15; 2Cor. 11:9).

**Paul's Vigorous
Preaching
(Acts 18:5-8)**

With the token of divine blessing from Thessalonica, and the evidence of goodwill from Philippi, Paul was stimulated to set about his task of preaching with renewed energy. The Jews in the synagogue observed the change. They heard the Gospel set forth with a vigour far greater than previously (Acts 18:5). So skilfully did Paul expound the Scriptures and demonstrate how they centred on Christ, that they were no match in countering him. Unable to successfully reason, they gave way to invective, opposing him and blaspheming in the vehemence of their hostility, and trying by all means to prevent his preaching having any effect upon their community.

Their attitude angered the apostle. Shaking his raiment at them, in a figurative action of repudiation (see Mat. 10:14), he announced that he was abandoning the synagogue: "*Your blood be upon your heads!*" he warned them. "*I am innocent. From now on I am going to the Gentiles.*"

His experience caused him to write to the brethren in Thessalonica: "They [the Jews] both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always, for the wrath to come upon them to the uttermost" (1Thes. 2:15-16).

However, the Jewish opposition did not deter Paul. On the contrary, he defied it. Throwing down the gauntlet of challenge, his next move aroused the Jews to a fury of anger. He left the synagogue and commenced to publicly preach the Truth from the house next door! This was occupied by a certain man named Justus, who was a proselyte of the gate like Cornelius before his conversion. Justus had been attracted by the preaching of the apostle, and eventually embraced Christ.

Paul's defiant proclamation of the Gospel in that way had outstanding success. To the bitter frustration of the Jewish community, Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house, and was baptised. Such a notable addition, under such circumstances, demanded some special note of approval, and Paul showed it by performing the ceremony himself. Crispus was one of a very few whom the apostle personally baptised in Corinth (1Cor. 1:14); for he normally left it to his assistants to perform the ceremony.

Paul's open preaching of the Gospel alongside the synagogue, not only attracted some of the Jews, but also many Gentiles. Many Corinthians found his preaching a welcome contrast to the evil permissiveness of the dissolute city, and "hearing believed, and were baptised" (Acts 18:8). They heeded a gospel that called upon them to separate themselves from the idolatrous environment, and to serve the God of morality in truth, in the hope of attaining unto life eternal.

They did so because that Gospel was forcefully and faithfully presented.

Among those attracted to the teaching of the apostle who submitted to baptism in order to wash away their past sins and begin anew, were men and women who had previously been "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers and extortioners." They were "washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus by the Spirit [Word] of our God" (1Cor. 6:9-11).

Paul found that his preaching had a greater impact upon those people than it had on the cold, supercilious Athenians, with minds hidebound in the conceit of their so-called learning and philosophy.

Silas and Timothy assisted the apostle in his work of preaching. The three brethren adopted a positive approach to the Word, dogmatically asserting its truth, setting it before men as a revelation from God, and not as the mere opinion of flesh to be the subject of dispute (see 2Cor. 1:18-20).

Encouragement In Corinth (Acts 18:9-11) The success that attended the preaching of the Gospel did not go unnoticed by the Jews.

The community in Corinth, as similar communities elsewhere, were moved by hatred and envy at the way that the apostle's doctrine attracted both Jews and Gentiles.

They tried to destroy his influence, to close his mouth, but in vain.

In the midst of this growing opposition, Paul received tremendous encouragement from a most unusual source. He received a vision of Christ by night, and heard him say: "*Have no fear, but speak and do not keep still, because I am with you, and none will attack you in order to harm you, because I have many people in this city.*"

With this divine commission, the apostle threw himself more completely into the work. He settled down in Corinth for a protracted stay. During a period of eighteen months, he continued to preach the Gospel without serious interruption, and gradually a large ecclesia was established.

Thus "divine strength was made perfect in weakness" (2Cor. 12:9). Paul had prayed for good health that he might preach the Word more effectively, but had been told that God's grace was all-sufficient. The things he suffered humbled him, and did him good (v. 7). Besides, when others saw a man performing such acts of valour in spite of personal ill-health, they recognised that he was motivated by a greater strength than his own, and that, in fact, the "power of Christ rested on him" (v. 9). Paul thus came to "take pleasure in infirmities" and troubles, recognising the purpose of Yahweh in so permitting them.

He had first arrived in Corinth so ill that it aggravated a condition of timidity, and so, conscious of his infirmities (2Cor. 12:5, 9; 10:1, 10), it induced in him a nervous disorder resulting in trembling and shaking as he began to address people (1Cor. 2:3). He realised the folly of trying to match Grecian philosophy with mere logic of fleshly reasoning and therefore concentrated on the Bible doctrine of the Atonement (1Cor. 1:23; 2:2). He avoided the persuasive words of human wisdom and oratory (1Cor. 1:17; 2:1-5), and set before them a divine wisdom supported by a mighty display of spirit-power (1Cor. 2:5-6; 2Cor. 12:12).

This impressed the people, for it was not only completely different from the shallow reasoning of the philosophers, but was presented with force and conviction. They could see in the complete dedication of this man that he was fully seized with the truth and importance of the things he proclaimed. To him they were more than mere words: they constituted a way of life. The very sufferings he endured in preaching the Gospel "without money and without price" was to them a compelling argument of its truth, giving full weight to his words (2Cor. 1:5-9; 1Cor. 9:16-17; 16:15). During those eighteen months of preaching, many were turned from the materialism and immorality of Corinth to embrace a Truth that demanded the sacrifice of self.

Meanwhile, Timothy had been sent back to Thessalonica, bearing with him the first epistle of Paul to the ecclesia of that city.

Timothy's Return Timothy returned with good news from Thessalonica. Despite continued and increasing opposition and persecution, the brethren were holding fast to the Truth so that their faith "grew exceedingly" and their love "one toward the other abounded" (2Thes. 1:3-4).

Paul was deeply moved by the news, and turned in gratitude to

God for His goodness, thanking Him that the strength of faith was manifested by those Gentile converts. Not only so, but he was able to use the brethren of Thessalonica as an example, in exhorting the believers in Corinth regarding their obligation.

But, mingled with this good news, there was information of a more sombre nature. Timothy reported how some were claiming that Paul taught that Christ's second coming could be expected daily, and that he would soon appear to relieve them of their sufferings. There was a danger in such teaching, for Paul knew that Christ's coming could not be expected for centuries. In fact, he would not come until the great Apostasy developed (known later as Roman Catholicism), and a period known as "the times of the Gentiles" (Lk. 21:24) should be fulfilled.

Christ indeed, could lead them to victory, but his personal coming was not then at hand. It was important for the brethren to realise that, else they might lose faith through very disappointment.

There was nothing else for it, but Timothy must return with a further letter of encouragement and explanation. So the pen was again taken up, and Paul dictated his second letter to the Thessalonians.

Insurrection in Corinth (Acts 18:12-17)

In the summer of 51, Lucius Gallio was appointed proconsul of Achaia, and took up his residence in Corinth, its capital. He was the elder brother of the well-known Seneca, a

Roman philosopher and author, who was one of Nero's teachers. According to Seneca, Gallio was a man of outstanding ability, and of a most amiable disposition. But he was also firm in his determination to uphold Roman dignity and prestige.

His presence in Corinth provided the Jews with an opportunity they had sought for some time. They felt that the kindly-disposed Gallio would not want trouble on his hands immediately upon taking up his appointment, and it could be assumed that he would be most anxious to work amicably with all sections of the community, and particularly with the influential Jewish colony in Corinth. Moreover, they believed that they could presume upon his very inexperience and so obtain a conviction against the apostle.

Upon the principle that he who makes the most noise is bound to be heard the more, the Jews excited a tumult in the city. They rose in a body, seized Paul, and dragging him before the *Bema* or Judgment Seat, a mosaic pavement upon which was placed the chair of office in



which the proconsul adjudicated in matters of law, with noisy hubbub they laid a charge against Paul: "...*This fellow persuades the people to worship God in an unlawful way!*" they declared.

Paul made ready to speak and present his defence; but Gallio completely ignored him. He was determined to show the people once for all that he was not prepared to weakly capitulate to riots or tumult. Certainly, he did not want to listen to a religious argument between two sects of Jews, as it appeared to him.

He dismissed that charge with complete contempt: "*If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O Jews, it would be reasonable to put up with you,*" he declared, "*but if it is a question of words and names and law among yourselves, then it is your own concern. I do not care to be judge of such matters.*"

So saying, he ordered the lictors to clear the court.

But that did not end the matter.

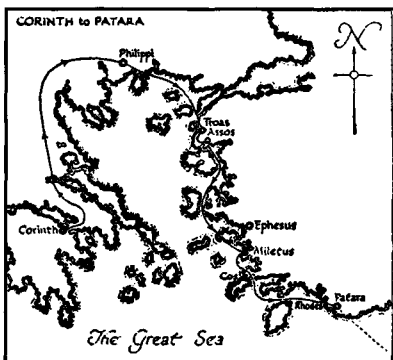
Seeing the Jews so repulsed, and rejoicing in the ignominious dismissal they had experienced, certain Gentile onlookers, in their antiSemitic hatred, took revenge on the Jews by seizing Sosthenes who had replaced Crispus as chief ruler of the synagogue, and openly beating him before the very eyes of Gallio.

Gallio continued to ignore the whole matter. He wanted to make it quite clear that he was not prepared to intervene in matters of religious dispute. He was used to the fanatical ways of Jews in Rome, and recalling the decree of Claudius against them, showed by his action that he was not prepared to become involved in their riots and agitation.

Paul Leaves Corinth The attitude of Gallio made it clear that he (Acts 18:18-21) was not concerned with religious debates, and this ensured unmolested resistance for Paul in Corinth. He therefore continued his work there for some time longer, occupying a period of about two years in all.

Then, in company with Priscilla and Aquila, he took his leave of the brethren in Corinth, and made his way to the harbour of Cenchrea, where an ecclesia had likewise been established (Rom. 16:1).

But before leaving Cenchrea, Paul cut off his hair, a token that he had successfully completed a vow that he had made to Yahweh, in accordance with the requirements of Nazarites (Num. 6:18). What vow had he made? We are not



told, but probably it had relation to this second missionary journey. Under the Nazarite vow, a person gave himself completely to the work of Yahweh for the time that he might specify. During that period, he had to allow his hair to remain uncut as an indication that he was “married” unto Yahweh as a figurative “Bride,” and therefore in subjection to Him. At the conclusion of the vow, however, he was required to cut off his hair, for under normal circumstances, it is a shame for men to wear long hair, as Paul taught the Corinthians (1Cor. 11:14).

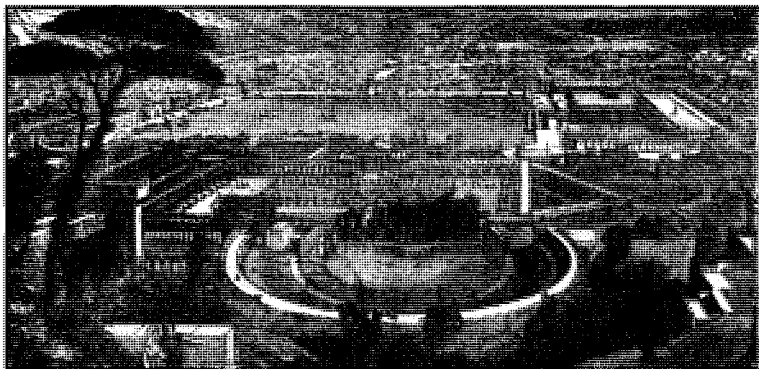
The time period of the second journey was now completed, and Paul’s vow was at an end. Therefore, shaving his head, he made preparations to return to his home ecclesia in Antioch as soon as possible.

It should be remembered, that whereas Jewish believers like Paul recognised that Christ fulfilled all the sacrifices of the Law, the principles of the Law still remained to be fulfilled by them (Rom. 3:31), and therefore “the Law” was recognised “as good, if a man use it lawfully” (1Tim. 1:8). There were many in those days who accepted Christ and continued to observe the principles of the Law (Acts 21:20-27). This is not wrong so long as it is recognised that justification is not dependent upon so doing. It was the curse of the Law that was done away in Christ; whereas believers, in obeying Christ, manifest the true spirit of the Law (Rom. 2:14-15).

Short Visit To Ephesus (Acts 18:19-21)

A little over two hundred miles (322 kms) separate Cenchrea from Ephesus, and under normal circumstances, a few days’ sail would find Paul’s vessel in its populous harbour.

The arrival of Paul, together with Aquila and Priscilla, coincided with a meeting of the synagogue, and Paul seized the opportunity of presenting the Truth to his fellow countrymen of that city. They comprised a numerous colony, engaged in the commerce of the city,



and to them special privileges had been granted by the Roman Emperors. Not only was their religion authorised, but their youth were exempted from military service (Josephus, *Ant.* 14:10:14). They were used to visitors, and welcomed the opportunity of hearing Paul.

Nor were they disappointed. On the contrary, they were deeply impressed with what they heard, and besought him to tarry longer with them. But Paul refused. His work was over for the time being. He bade them farewell, and made preparations to sail for Caesarea. Nevertheless, he promised to return: "*I will return again unto you, if God will,*" he told them.

Leaving Aquila and Priscilla (for they had arranged to stay in Ephesus), Paul took ship for Caesarea.

To Jerusalem
(Acts 18:22)

From Ephesus Paul sailed to Caesarea, and from there went on to "the ecclesia." What ecclesia is not stated, but most likely it was the Ecclesia in Jerusalem. This visit would give him opportunity to report to the other apostles regarding the results and circumstances of his journey. It would have been his fourth visit to the city since learning of Christ.

Nearly four years had elapsed since Paul had left previously, and in view of the rigours of the journey, and the severe persecution he had suffered, he must have been in need of physical recuperation. Doubtless in the fellowship of James and the others, he would be able to relax from the pressures that had been laid upon him, and so gather strength for further labours to be undertaken.

From Jerusalem he returned to what then became his home-ecclesia in Antioch.

His second missionary journey was over, and the borders of the Truth had been extended into Europe.

Analysis of the Epistles

PAUL'S SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

Background:

This letter was written a few months after the first epistle, and was designed to encourage the brethren in view of increasing persecution, and to correct certain mistakes relating to the time of the second coming of the Lord. After touching upon their sufferings in his first chapter, the apostle continued: "**We beseech you brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.**"

Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first..." (ch. 2:1-3).

Paul realised that false expectations of the early coming of the Lord, and anticipations of quick relief from their sufferings, could weaken their confidence and undermine their patience. These false expectations were being stimulated by the teaching of some who claimed to have the Spirit; by others who misunderstood the teaching of Paul (such as a wrong interpretation of his comment in 1Thes. 4:15, "we which are alive and remain at the coming of the Lord"), or by a written epistle forged in the apostle's name, and claiming to represent his teaching (see 2Thes. 2:1-3).

He dictated this epistle to correct these errors, and appended to it his personal signature (ch. 3:17).

Theme:

The coming of Christ will bring victory for the saints, and will reveal due compensation for all their sufferings. But that coming was not then at hand, so that continued patience and faith were needed. A key verse is ch. 3:5, **"The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."**

The three chapters can be headed in turn: *Consolation*, *Caution*, *Command*. The *Consolation* is in the fact that Christ will surely come to compensate his saints. The *Caution* related to the time factor, for expectations that Christ was then at the door would prove false. The *Command* was to continue to walk in faith during this period of probation in confident assurance that Christ will ultimately come to reward those who do so.

CHRIST AS OUR VICTORY (COMPENSATION)

(See chs. 1:7; 2:1, 8; 3:5)

1. CONSOLATION — FROM THE FACT OF CHRIST'S COMING — Ch. 1.

Salutation	vv. 1-2
Thanksgiving For Their Faith And Courage	vv. 3-5
The Compensation For Such At Christ's Coming	vv. 6-12

2. CAUTION: INSTRUCTION ON THE TIME OF CHRIST'S COMING — Ch. 2.

Instruction Regarding The Time Of Christ's Coming	vv. 1-12
Exhortation On How To Occupy That Time	vv. 13-17

3. COMMAND: INJUNCTIONS IN VIEW OF CHRIST'S COMING — Ch. 3.

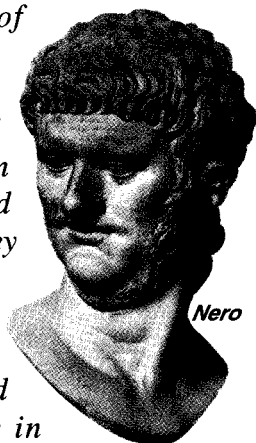
Basis Of Paul's Commands — His Confidence In Them	vv. 1-5
Nature Of Paul's Commands — We Must Work As We Wait	vv. 6-15
Final Benediction And Salutation	vv. 16-18

Third Journey of the Apostle Paul

(Acts 18:23 to 21:18)

WE now enter upon what was perhaps the busiest and most productive period of the apostle's life: his third missionary journey.

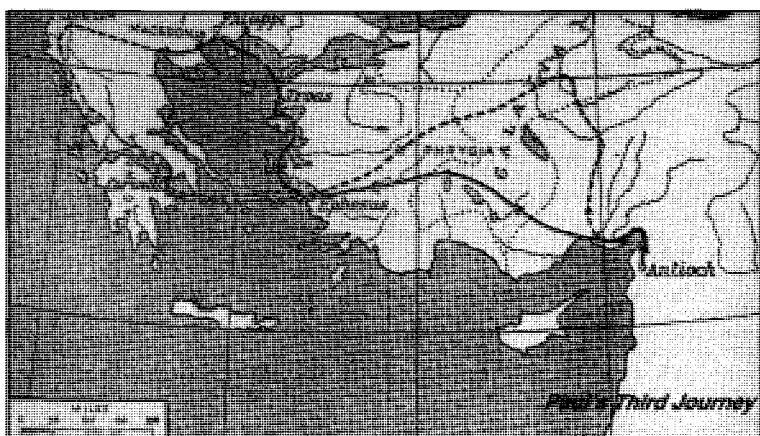
The time was approximately 54-58 AD, a period of about four years, three of which were occupied in Ephesus. Nero (AD 54-68) was emperor in Rome; Felix (AD 52-60) was procurator of Judea; Ananias was high priest in Jerusalem, and Paul was aged approximately 48-52 years. The journey commenced with a tour of Galatia, and ended in Jerusalem where the apostle was taken prisoner.



At the conclusion of the second journey, the apostle stayed a while in Antioch where, in the congenial environment of the ecclesia, he would enjoy the companionship and fellowship of those who were very close to him in the Truth. Under such conditions, Paul had opportunity to recuperate from the rigors of his previous tour, and to gather physical strength for further activity. Doubtless his assistants, brethren such as Timothy and Titus, likewise made their way to Antioch to discuss future plans with the apostle, and to make their own preparations for extending the work of the Gospel.

Paul's third missionary journey began at Antioch (ch. 18:22), as had the first two trips. He went north to the Roman province of Galatia in Asia Minor and then westward to a section of the province known as Phrygia, visiting ecclesias in all these areas (ch. 18:23). At length he moved on to Ephesus to fulfil his promise, where he spent about three years. After the riots incited by the worshippers of Diana (ch. 19:23-41), the apostle travelled further west into Macedonia and from there southward

into Greece (ch. 20:1-2), where he stayed for three months. Again opponents sought to seize him (ch. 20:3), so that he went back to Macedonia, accompanied by seven brethren (ch. 20:4), who evidently went on ahead to Troas in Mysia, Asia Minor. At Philippi Luke joined Paul (ch. 20:6). They sailed from Troas, where Paul's seven friends met them, and spent a week there. From Troas the party went south by land and sea to Miletus (ch. 20:13-15). There Paul said farewell to the elders of Ephesus, for whom he had sent, since he would not see them again (ch. 20:17-38). The apostle and his companions sailed from Miletus to Tyre (ch. 21:1-2), where they spent a week, after which they journeyed by way of Ptolemais and Caesarea to Jerusalem, where the trip of about four years ended.



Chapter 1

THE CONVERSION OF APOLLOS

The remarkable ways of Providence are revealed in the conversion of Apollos, a man who was to cause many to turn unto Christ. The decree of Claudius forced Aquila and Priscilla to leave Rome for Corinth; the fact that Aquila was a tent-maker brought him into touch with Paul; circumstances led him to leave Corinth in company with his friend, but to stay behind in Ephesus. There Aquila and Priscilla met the gifted Apollos, and an eloquent advocate was won over for Christ.

PAUL had promised the Jews in Ephesus that he would return if possible, and after a short stay in Antioch, he initiated preparations for such a visit. He could have travelled by sea or land. The former would have been the more comfortable, but the latter gave him greater opportunity to render a valuable service to the Truth. If he travelled by land to Ephesus, he could traverse the regions of Galatia and Phrygia, calling upon those ecclesias that he had founded there, confirming the believers in the Faith.

Such an action was deemed necessary, for Judaisers were now busy, trying to undermine the influence and teaching of the apostle.

Through Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23) Leaving Antioch, therefore, Paul made his way north, passing through the famous Cilician gates of Taurus, some 412 miles (660 kms) from the city, from there he moved through the eastern regions of Asia Minor, and again visited in order the ecclesias of Galatia and Phrygia.

His objective was to strengthen the ecclesias. Undertones of coming trouble could be heard, and Paul tried to counter them. In Galatia, he ordered a collection to be taken up for the poor of Jerusalem (1Cor. 16:1-2). Having completed this part of his mission, the apostle made his way to Ephesus.

Apollos Visits Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28) Among the thousands of visitors to Ephesus each year was, on one occasion, a Jew of Alexandria named Apollos. He had come to a partial understanding of the divine Purpose, having acknowledged Jesus in the light of John Baptist's teaching, but still failed to recognise the full implications of the Gospel.

Being an educated, eloquent man, fervent in spirit, and skilful in

the use of Scripture, particularly in debate, he brought to bear his talents in the local synagogue. He spoke to the Jews concerning Jesus (Acts 18:25; Diaglott and RV) so well as to impress the Jewish community.

Thus, for the second time, this synagogue of Jews briefly heard of the Lord Jesus, and in doing so became prepared for the work of Paul when he arrived.

Among the audience, listening to Apollos, were Aquila and Priscilla. They were delighted with what they heard. Their hearts warmed toward the eloquent, fervent Apollos, and at the conclusion of the service, they invited him to their home.

There they expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly, and Apollos, with his grasp of Scripture, quickly saw what had previously been lacking in his understanding. Enthusiastically, gratefully, he endorsed the Truth in Christ Jesus.

During the discussion, reference had been made to the growing influence of the Truth in Achaia and particularly in Corinth, and Apollos expressed his desire to visit the ecclesia in that city. Aquila and Priscilla eagerly supported such a desire, and pressed upon Apollos to do so. They perceived that a man of the knowledge, education, and eloquence of Apollos could effect a useful service among the Greeks, particularly in view of their love of learning and oratory. Providing him with "letters of commendation" (Acts 18:27; 2Cor. 3:1) to the ecclesia, they made every arrangement for a successful visit, and wished him well.

Paul and Apollos At Corinth his eloquence produced a great sensation. He became a pillar of strength to the local ecclesia. Sufficient of Paul's influence and methods had been transmitted to him through the ministrations of Aquila and Priscilla to enable him to expound the Old Testament Scriptures with irresistible force and logic, proving that Jesus is Christ.

He thus "watered" what Paul had already "sown" (1Cor. 3:6).

By the time Paul arrived in Ephesus, Apollos had left for Corinth. However, the two great men met later, and each came to admire the qualities manifested by the other, and with mutual love for the things of Christ, enthusiastically co-operated in the work of the Truth.

Paul felt no twinge of jealousy because of the dazzling and impressive gifts manifested by Apollos, even though the latter became the unwitting object of some of his Corinthian converts switching their allegiance. Indeed, the apostle never speaks of him without warm feeling and admiration (1Cor. 3:5-6; 16:12; Tit. 3:13), and he deeply appreciated the attitude of this gifted friend in refusing to revisit Corinth at a time when his presence might have added to the problems that had developed in the ecclesia, even if it might have

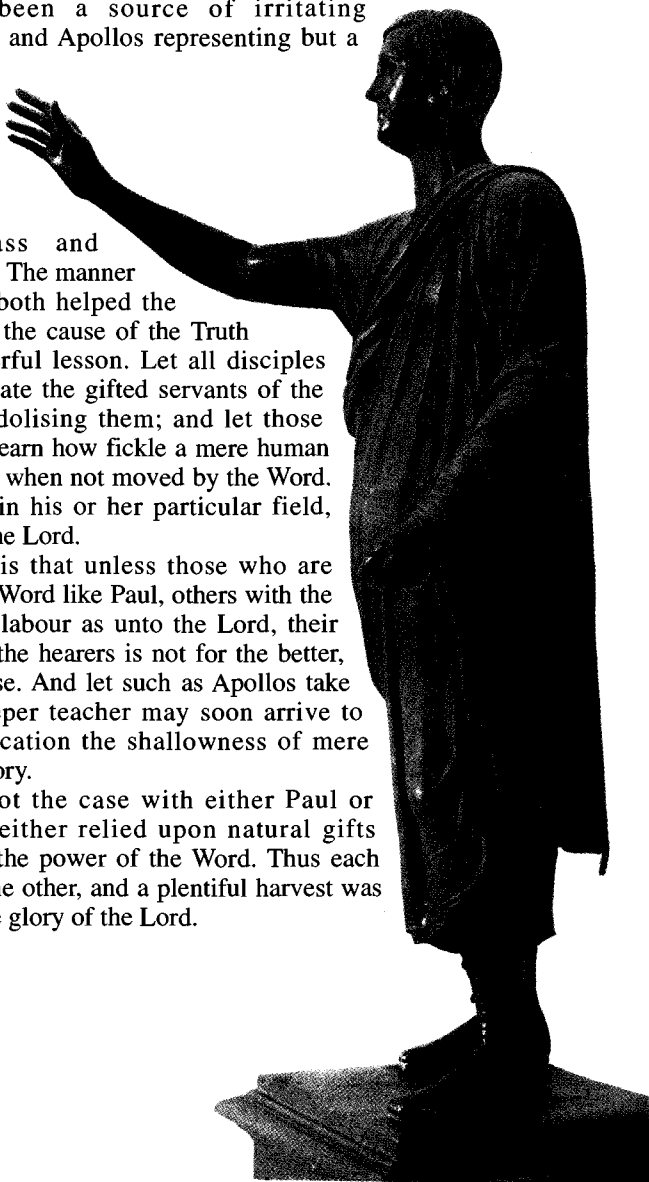
added to his reputation and personal prestige (1Cor. 16:12).

In the attitude of those two brethren, both highly gifted, though in different directions, there is seen the influence of Christ. The Truth destroyed any human pride that may have lingered on in either of them. Without that necessary spiritual quality, Paul would have been a source of irritating embarrassment, and Apollos representing but a

sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. The manner in which they both helped the other to further the cause of the Truth teaches a powerful lesson. Let all disciples learn to appreciate the gifted servants of the Lord without idolising them; and let those who are gifted learn how fickle a mere human audience can be when not moved by the Word. And let, each, in his or her particular field, labour as unto the Lord.

The lesson is that unless those who are powerful in the Word like Paul, others with the gift of oratory, labour as unto the Lord, their influence upon the hearers is not for the better, but for the worse. And let such as Apollos take heed, for a deeper teacher may soon arrive to decry by implication the shallowness of mere intellectual oratory.

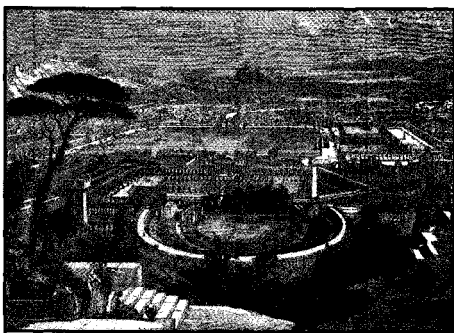
This was not the case with either Paul or Apollos, for neither relied upon natural gifts merely, but on the power of the Word. Thus each supplemented the other, and a plentiful harvest was developed to the glory of the Lord.



Chapter 2

PREACHING IN EPHESUS

(Acts 19)



Ephesus might be described as the third capital of Christianity which was founded in Jerusalem by the ministry of Christ, extended to the Gentiles from Antioch through the disciples, and branched out into all the world from Ephesus in the

work of the apostle Paul. Ephesus lay four miles (6 kms) from the ocean, and was serviced by a busy inland harbour connected with the Cayster River, which wound through the plain to the north of the city. It also stood at the entrance to one of the four clefts in the hills of west central Asia Minor, connecting it with other important centres, so that it became a chief mart for trade. It was a large city of upwards of 500,000 people, with a rich commerce which made it the envy of other cities. Ephesus was noted for the beauty of its buildings but greatest of them all, and one of the wonders of the world, was the temple of Diana. It dominated the city, and was its chief glory. Moreover, it dictated the morals of the city. The worship of this goddess of fertility was lewd and permissive to the extreme. Her very appearance emphasised sexual impurity. Hundreds of priests were connected with her ritual in Ephesus, and a multitude of priestesses were dedicated to prostitution in the temple service. This set the standard of behavior for the whole community. Ephesus was also noted for magic, and for the many forms of the occult which were practised. Devotees to this form of pseudo-science were innumerable. An indication of this, as well as of the prevailing wealth of the city, is shown in that the converts of Christianity in the city burned their books of magic to the value of 50,000 pieces of silver.

The success of Paul's preaching made such a clash as instigated by Alexander the coppersmith inevitable. There could only be open warfare between the Truth



and the worship and morals of the evil Diana. This was also the case with the prevailing cult of magic. Even some of the Jews became involved in attempts at exorcism, and the apostle was involved in controversy on this issue as well. Thus Ephesus became not only the foremost city of Asia Minor as far as commerce, religion and politics were concerned, but also the leading centre for the proclamation of the Truth. This not only challenged the evil way of life for which the city was notorious, but from there the Truth was extended into all adjacent regions.

PAUL'S arrival at Ephesus commenced three years of intense activity to which but the briefest comment is made by Luke in his *Acts of the Apostles*, so that much further detail remains to be fitted into the story.

Familiar Friends With Paul

On arrival at Ephesus, Paul would have been welcomed by Aquila and Priscilla (though this is not mentioned by Luke), and probably would have found employment with Aquila. They were still at Ephesus at that time, and most likely Paul lodged with them, so that their house became a centre of activity in the Truth (1Cor. 16:19).

Titus was also with Paul (2Cor. 8:23), and by the time 1Corinthians was written, Apollos likewise had joined him from Corinth (1Cor. 16:12).

These with Timothy and Erastus (mentioned in Acts 19:22), Gaius and Aristarchus (mentioned in Acts 19:29) and others, comprised a splendid band of dedicated workers to assist the apostle to extend the Gospel.

Luke, apparently, was still at Philippi (cp. Acts 16:10 with 17:1) and did not join the apostle until he met up with him at Troas (Acts 20:5). It was possibly Luke's presence at Philippi that may have been partly the cause of that ecclesia's loving and generous interest in the welfare of Paul.

Conditions Facing The Apostle

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many enemies" (1Cor. 16:8-9). Through all his problems and in spite of his numerous enemies, he patiently and faithfully moved on to ultimate victory. He engaged in both public speaking and an earnest, incessant, laborious, house-to-house ministry of tears (Acts 20:18-35). Though he was greatly blessed by the results, it was a time of overwhelming trial, sickness, persecution, and misery which sometimes brought him to the brink of death (1Cor. 4:9-13; Rom. 16:3-4). Giving himself so completely to the Truth, he

had little time to care for his own requirements, and was frequently in desperate need (1Cor. 4:11), enduring defamation and reviling (even from so-called brethren) for Christ's sake.

Though often in need, he refused the charity of the ecclesias, though he could rightly have claimed it (1Cor. 4:12; 9:11-15). He did not want to be classed among the cheats who flourished in these cities at that time, and tried to set an example of independence. He even laboured to maintain the assistants with him (Acts 20:33-34). Thus, when he sent Timothy and others on their journeys, he helped them financially.

It was, for Paul, a period of incessant labour, of weariness and pain, of sleepless nights, of mingled toil and danger (2Cor. 11:27), of constant anxiety with regard to the many ecclesias he had established as the care of them all "rested heavily upon him" (2Cor. 11:28-29). As one writer has stated: "He was like a general on a battlefield, with his eye on every weak or endangered point; while his heart was constantly rent by news of the defection of those for whom he would gladly have laid down his life."

Hated, threatened, often perplexed, persecuted, depressed, homeless, buffeted, sometimes destitute, abused, slandered; and yet sustained by a tremendous faith (1Cor. 4:8-13; 2Cor. 4:8-9), without which he would have been "of all men most miserable" (1Cor. 15:19).

His life was often in jeopardy, so that figuratively, he had "fought with wild beasts at Ephesus" (1Cor. 15:32), yet he was sustained by the realisation that this life is temporary, and a great future awaits the faithful. Thus, in all this, he was "a spectacle unto death" (1Cor. 4:7; 2Cor. 6:4-5; 11:23-28).

He was particularly hated by the Jews who did not hesitate to attack him physically (Acts 20:19), so that he endured buffeting (1Cor. 4:11). Evidently some of the persecution to which he makes reference in 2Cor. 11:23-28 took place at this time. It has been said: "Many saints of God have toiled and suffered, and travelled, and preached, and been execrated, and imprisoned in the cause of Christ. Singly they tower above the vulgar herd of selfish and comfortable men; but yet the collective labours of some of their greatest would not equal, nor would their collective sufferings furnish a parallel to those of Paul. A very few have been what he was: a great thinker and exponent of the Word, as well as a devoted practical worker in the Truth."

The agony of his tribulation almost drove him to complete despair (2Cor. 1:4-10), but he sought the co-operation of others through their prayers (v. 11), and pleaded with Yahweh to remove his "thorn in the flesh" (2Cor. 12:7-9). He was in much affliction and anguish of heart through ecclesial problems (2Cor. 2:1-4; 6:6-10) and yet found time to organise a collection on behalf of the poor at Jerusalem (2Cor. 8:1-6; 9:1-15).

He was always thoughtful and considerate of others; striving to understand the standpoint of both Jews and Gentiles, meeting both on their own grounds (1Cor. 9:20-23); but at the same time manifesting a driving urge to perform the work of preaching such as could not be assuaged (1Cor. 9:16). In spite of all frustration and bitter disappointment, he maintained clear and certain objectives (1Cor. 9:25-26).

This, then, was the man, who in the power of Christ, took up the challenge of the Truth in opposition to the superstition, idolatry, licentiousness, dishonesty, and immorality rampant in the sophisticated, affluent city of Ephesus.

**The Twelve
Foundation Members
Of The Ecclesia
(Acts 19:1-7)**

Arriving in Ephesus, Paul quickly made his way to the synagogue to make good his promise to visit it again (Acts 18:21). During the course of his discussions with the Jews, twelve men showed particular interest. They claimed they were disciples of Jesus, probably through the teaching of Apollos.

"Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" the apostle asked them.

"We know nothing about the Holy Spirit," they answered.

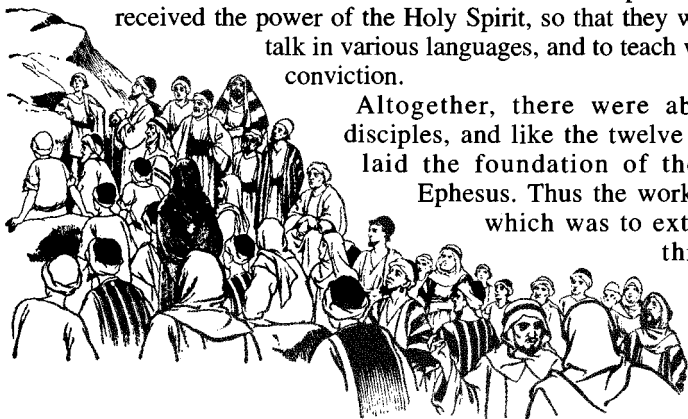
"Into what were you then baptised?" queried Paul.

"Into John's baptism," they replied.

"John truly baptised with the baptism of repentance, telling people that they should believe in the One who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus," Paul explained.

They immediately saw the point. They had been baptised with John's baptism, but had not believed on the Lord Jesus until they heard Apollos preach. And even then they had not understood the doctrine of the atonement aright. Therefore, after the apostle had instructed them in these things, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Afterwards Paul laid his hands upon them, and they received the power of the Holy Spirit, so that they were enabled to talk in various languages, and to teach with power and conviction.

Altogether, there were about a dozen disciples, and like the twelve apostles, they laid the foundation of the ecclesia in Ephesus. Thus the work was initiated which was to extend the Truth throughout the world.



Chapter 3

A CENTRE OF ACTIVITY ESTABLISHED IN EPHEBUS

Paul had briefly visited Ephesus on his return to Jerusalem at the conclusion of his second missionary journey, and when the Jews had shown such interest in the Gospel, he had promised that he would return to set it before its members more completely (Acts 18:21). Now he had returned to the large and busy city of Ephesus to proclaim the Gospel message. His initial attempt at preaching had proved successful in that twelve Jews desired further instruction and were ultimately re-baptised, this time into Christ Jesus (the previous occasion was in accordance with John's baptism). This was a good token for future success. Obviously Ephesus presented a fertile field for the sowing of the Gospel Seed, and accordingly, Paul made preparations for an extended stay in the city. In all, he remained there about three years (Acts 20:31), during which time the ecclesia became a centre from whence the Truth radiated out to the surrounding districts.

NOW that Paul was back in the city, he made it his practice, sabbath after sabbath, to attend the synagogue, and proclaim the Truth to the Jews there assembled. He did this for a period of three months, reasoning with them, and persuading a number of them concerning the things of the Kingdom of God.

Disputing In The Synagogue

But inevitably this aroused the jealousy and opposition of some who were bitterly opposed to the Truth. Paul found his expositions turned into public debates. There was many an anxious moment, and many a bitter struggle in the synagogue in Ephesus, as the opposition became fiercer, and Paul's discourses became more and more subjected to interruption. Those who were seeking the Truth were swayed this way and that, as Paul's opponents tried to counter his reasoning.

But to the unbiased it was obvious where the Truth lay. Paul, with his great command of Scripture and his skill in debate, was more than a match for all his opponents. On the other hand, when they found that they could not match his reasoning, they descended to blasphemy and invective. They spoke evil of the way to life before the multitude, and their language became so extreme and defiant as to cause Paul to recognise that his labours in the synagogue were at an end.

Quietly drawing together those who were prepared to accept Christ, Paul withdrew with them from the synagogue, and separated them into an ecclesia.*

In The School Of Tyrannus

A central meeting place was now required for the brethren, and for the continued proclamation of the Truth. Paul found one in the schoolroom of Tyrannus,** which he hired for the purpose.

According to the historian, W. Ramsay, public life in the Ionian cities ended regularly at the fifth hour (11 a.m.), so that from then onward the lecture room would be disengaged. Normally the remainder of the day would be devoted to home life or rest, but now provided an admirable opportunity for the proclamation of the Gospel.

To proclaim the Truth in this area, Paul, or the ecclesia, continued to hire the schoolroom after Tyrannus' lectures in secular education had ceased for the day. It was a good centre for that purpose and continued for some two years. No doubt there would be a natural curiosity on the part of the students of Tyrannus as to what this other speaker was teaching, after the lectures of Tyrannus (probably in philosophy) had ceased, and probably many stayed behind to hearken to the exposition of the Truth.

In any case, the lecture room became a centre from whence the Truth radiated out into all Asia, so that Jews and Greeks heard the message.

Special Miracles Performed By Paul

As God had wrought special miracles by the hands of Peter in order to endorse his labours with divine approval (Acts 5:15), He did so now with Paul. Handkerchiefs (actually sweat-cloths used by the labourers) and aprons that Paul had used, were taken to some who had fallen ill, and they miraculously recovered. The sweatcloths were indicative of Paul's heavy labour in the Truth; and the aprons represented the manual work that he did to maintain himself and others in the preaching of the Truth.

** The two words "departed" and "separated" (Acts 19:9) are quite significant. The former is from the Greek *aphistemi*, and signifies "to withdraw"; the latter is *aphorisen*, "to mark off by bounds." Paul not only required the disciples to withdraw from the synagogue, but limited their activities in other directions, setting bounds as to what they might do, beyond which they would not be permitted to go.*

*** His name is rather appropriate for the old-time school-master, for Tyrannus signifies A Tyrant, An Absolute Sovereign. Unfortunately, in these modern times, school-teaching has deteriorated as a profession, so that the discipline once exercised over scholars is no longer so much in evidence. This has not been for the better.*

These miracles caused a sensation in Ephesus. The city was notorious for the claims of exorcism and magical rites of healing (Acts 19:13-19), but, except in cases where the power of the mind was exercised over that of the body, these claims were marked by failure. Now, however, people heard of the amazing cures effected through Paul, and the miraculous power of his influence. It caused them to consider his teaching, so that ultimately many embraced Christ. Thus Truth triumphed over Superstition.

But Paul had his imitators.

Ephesus was noted for certain Jews who wandered from place to place* preying on the superstitions of the people. Some claimed to have the power to cure illnesses, particularly distressing mental disorders. Standing over such poor, afflicted patients, they would employ a formula of abjuration, ordering the cure in the name of God.

The remarkable success of Paul's miracles performed in the name of Jesus, the excitement that they caused, prompted them to capitalise upon it. Though ignorant of the Truth in Christ, and destitute of any power of the Holy Spirit, they took it upon themselves to use the name of Jesus to try and effect cures. "*We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches,*" was the magical formula they now used.

It certainly publicised the work of the apostle, but it was not the kind of publicity that he desired, nor which would advance the cause of the Truth. In fact, it was an embarrassment to the apostle, and tended to bring the way of salvation into disrepute. Such blasphemy was particularly odious coming from the lips of Jews who had repudiated the Messiahship of the Lord.

Nevertheless, in a most remarkable manner Paul was ultimately vindicated and the Jewish exorcists discredited in the eyes of the people.

Sceva And His Sons There was a Jewish priest of some distinction by the name of Sceva (which means *Left-handed*), whose seven sons wandered from place to place professing to effect such cures. On learning of the reputation of Paul, and hearing of the cures miraculously performed by the application of his sweat-cloths and aprons, they decided to combine his name with that of Jesus, in an endeavour to effect similar cures in particularly virulent cases.

Perhaps these impostors experienced some initial success. The record in Acts implies that this was the case (cp. v. 14). Certainly it is not impossible. It is well known that under extreme emotion, cures of nervous disorders can be sometimes effected, and that may have been the case with the sons of Sceva in connection with some of their dupes.

* The adjective "vagabond" (Acts 19:13) signifies "a wanderer."

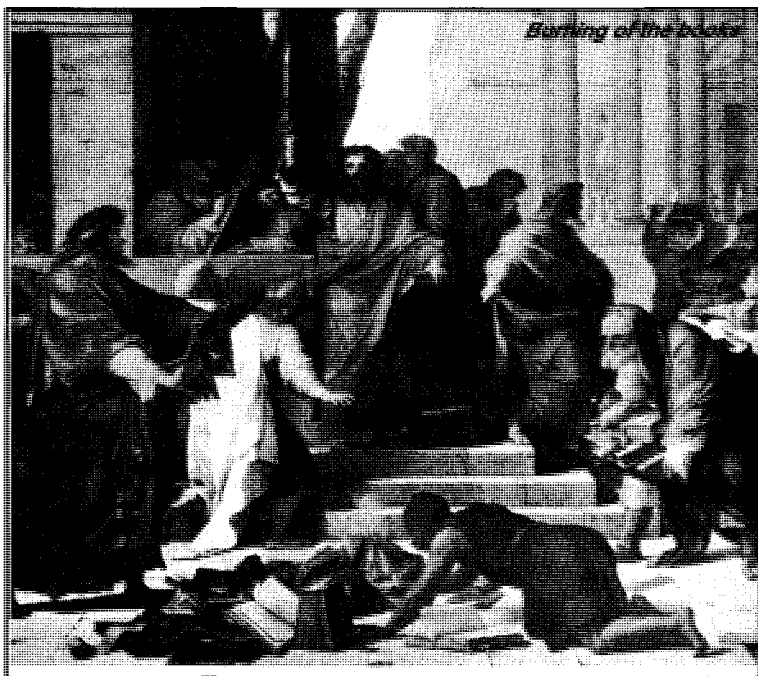
Be that as it may, at least two of Sceva's sons* were called into to cure a man who was a raving maniac, but who, between his attacks, retained sufficient lucidity to reason intelligently. Addressing him, the sons of Sceva ordered his cure in the name of Jesus: "*We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches,*" they chanted.

They were not prepared for what followed.

In a paroxysm of rage, the maniac leaped to his feet, demanding: "*Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?*"

Attacking them with the superhuman strength of madness, he tore their clothes from off their backs, and so beat them, that they had to flee from the house naked and wounded.

The remarkable story spread like wildfire among the Ephesians, both Jews and Greeks. It was recognised as evidence of divine justice against any taking the name of Jesus in vain. Paul's preaching was vindicated and his authority acknowledged. People realised that the Truth he proclaimed could not be trifled with, so that the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified on all sides.



* The R.V. renders "overcame them" (Acts 19:15) as "mastered both of them." The Greek word *katakuriusas* signifies "both" though it is not strictly limited to two.

The Burning Of The Books

The most valuable effect of this triumph of Truth was found within the ecclesia itself.

As the presumption and discomfiture of the sons of Sceva were discussed by the brethren, and it was clearly revealed that the Truth severs one from all connection with magic and superstition, many confessed that they still practised these things.

The fear induced by the danger that had threatened the sons of Sceva, however, now caused such to confess to their folly, and decide to give up all such forms of superstition. They gathered together their books of magic, and publicly burnt them as a witness to their belief. The number of volumes was amazing. It induced somebody to estimate their value, and it was found to be worth some fifty thousand pieces of silver, perhaps \$15,000.

Paul's Labours In Ephesus

With these brief comments, Luke moves on to the final drama of Paul's witness for the Truth in Ephesus: the riot stimulated by

Demetrius the silversmith. Paul's own comments of his sojourn in the city, supplemented by references in his epistles, however, provide further information of the heavy, onerous labour that he engaged in at the time. It was an earnest, incessant, house-to-house ministry (Acts 20:20), designed to personally instruct each individual member of the ecclesia. Though greatly blessed, it was a ministry of tears (Acts 20:31), made even more difficult by the efforts of adversaries in other ecclesias to undermine the influence of the apostle, and rob his work of its power. Thus it was for Paul a time of overwhelming trial, sickness, persecution, and misery, exceeding in sorrow any other period of his life. At times he was "pressed beyond measure, above strength, inasmuch as he despaired even of life" (2Cor. 1:8). Circumstances forced him to make certain short journeys unnoticed in the *Acts Of The Apostles*, and it was probably, at that time, that a few of those perils took place to which he makes reference in 2Cor. 12:23-28. Certainly, during that period, he suffered from unscrupulous opponents within the ecclesias. He wrote of "Perils among false brethren; weariness and painfulness, watchings often, hunger, thirst and fastings often, cold and nakedness; besides those things that are without, that which came upon me daily, the care of all the ecclesias" (2Cor. 12:26-28).



Chapter 4

THE CARE OF ECCLESIAS

Paul's most distressing experiences came from the actions of false brethren who deliberately set out to destroy his work. About this time, reports of their activities began to flow in from many quarters, to give Paul considerable concern. He raised his voice, and took up his pen, to counter their evil influence. He was not concerned with his personal reputation, but was perturbed at the effect of these attacks upon the brethren's attitude toward the Truth. In every way he tried to protect those whom he dearly loved with the paternal affection of a father who had begotten them to a new life in the Truth. The spiritual deterioration of the ecclesia in Corinth gave him particular concern. He learned of the efforts of some to destroy his work in that city by establishing schisms in the ecclesia, or by the propagation of false doctrine. The trouble became so grave as to cause the apostle to leave Ephesus for a quick visit to Corinth, and perhaps, at the same time, to briefly visit Macedonia in the north. On this occasion, he left Timothy in charge of the work in Ephesus, and in order to provide him with the necessary authority to do so, and to give him some guidance as to what was necessary, he wrote to him the epistle that we today know as **The First Epistle To Timothy**. Later, on his return to Ephesus, he dispatched Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia to consolidate what he had established, calling upon them to also make Corinth if possible. Meanwhile, a deputation of brethren from Corinth visited him, to report of increasing problems demanding urgent intervention. As a result, he penned the **First Epistle to the Corinthians**, probably dispatching it by the hands of his trusted assistant, Titus. Either whilst he was at Ephesus, or shortly afterwards, Paul learned that the teaching of the Judaists had swept through the ecclesias in Galatia, causing many to turn from him, and necessitating that he again take up the pen to re-affirm all that he had previously taught them. Thus **The Epistle to the Galatians** was written, either in Ephesus or shortly after in Corinth. In placing **The First Epistle to Timothy** and **The Epistle to the Galatians** at the time we do, we recognise that we are going contrary to the generally accepted periods. Most claim that **The First Epistle to Timothy** was written after Paul's imprisonment in Rome, and that **The Epistle to the Galatians** was penned prior to the Jerusalem conference; but we will provide what we believe to be irrefutable proof that these theories are not sound.

PAUL was deeply concerned at the news he was receiving from Corinth. Perhaps he heard it from Apollos who returned to Ephesus during Paul's three-year sojourn in that metropolis (Acts 18:24; 1Cor. 16:12); perhaps it was conveyed to him by others from that city who were visiting Ephesus.

Be that as it may, the news was so serious as to induce Paul to make a hurried visit to the ecclesia. Circumstances had likewise arisen that demanded his presence in Macedonia as well. Yet it was difficult to leave Ephesus, for as he wrote: "A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (1Cor. 16:9).

A Second Visit To Corinth

Torn between the needs of both, Paul decided to make a hurried visit to Corinth and Macedonia, leaving Timothy in charge of ecclesial activities in Ephesus. In fact, it was so hurried and urgent, that he did not have time to put everything in order before leaving, and not being absolutely sure as to when he would return, he advised Timothy that he would write him on the first opportunity, and would set out for him all that should be done during his absence.

Timothy needed such help and support. Naturally timid, he did not relish the task so suddenly laid upon his inexperienced shoulders, and it was only through the earnest entreaty of the apostle that he finally agreed to stay and take on the responsibilities of the work (1Tim. 1:3).

Luke makes no reference to this journey of the apostle, but, of course, his intention was not to write a biography of Paul, but to record the gradual extension of the preaching of the Gospel. There are many things that he omitted to record, but to which the apostle makes passing reference in his epistles.

This journey is a case in point.

In 2Cor. 12:14; 13:1, Paul, in writing of his intention to again visit the ecclesia, implies that such would be the third visit he would be making. He had visited Corinth for the first time on his second journey before travelling to Ephesus, so that if the further visit referred to above constituted his third, and it took place on his third missionary journey after leaving Ephesus, his second visit must have been a short, hurried, trip during his three years' ministry in that city.

What of the journey to Macedonia that we suggest above?

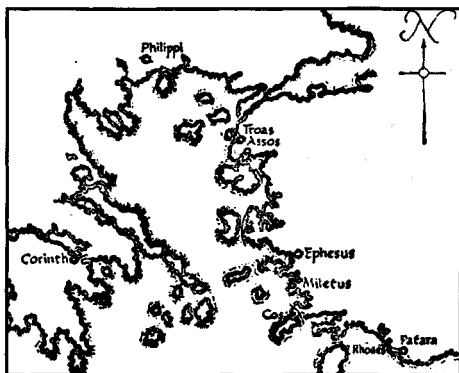
That is implied by the internal evidence of Paul's first letter to Timothy. Though most authorities date this letter after Paul's imprisonment in Rome, we suggest this would be impossible, and that the only satisfactory conclusion is that he took a journey into Macedonia and back, during his three-years stay in Ephesus. This journey, like that to Corinth, is unrecorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

We believe that such a conclusion is necessary because, under Holy Spirit guidance, Paul told the elders of Ephesus when he met

them at Miletus as he was returning to Jerusalem, that “they would see his face no more” (Acts 20:25), whereas, in the Epistle to Timothy, he is explicit that he would return to Ephesus “shortly” (1Tim. 3:14).

Most authorities suggest that when Paul told the Ephesian elders that he would not see them again, he was merely expressing his opinion at the time, but that his release from imprisonment in Rome, permitted him to do so. They suggest moreover, that if he was only making a hurried visit to Macedonia and back there was no need to advise Timothy with regard to the appointment of overseers (“bishops”) and such like, seeing that he had been with the ecclesia for a considerable period.

The obvious reply to that is that at whatever period the journey was taken, Paul hoped to be with Timothy “shortly,” and could then have made any appointments, if he was certain that he would soon be with him. Obviously he was not sure of this. Moreover, it must be remembered that when Paul said he would see their faces no more, he was proclaiming what the Holy Spirit had revealed to him, and there could be no mistake regarding such a prediction.



In leaving Ephesus for Corinth and Macedonia, as we suggest, Paul did not know how long he might be absent. He hoped to return shortly, but he wrote to instruct Timothy how he should act in the ecclesia should he be delayed. That, indeed, is what he stated in 1Tim. 3:14-15, thus: “These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God which is the ecclesia of the living God...”

Therefore, when Paul left for his hurried visit to Corinth and Macedonia, he hoped to be absent from Ephesus a short time, but was prepared to leave the ecclesia in the hands of Yahweh, for the duration of his visit to other parts.

Arriving at Corinth, Paul was deeply concerned at the deterioration he was able to discern in the spiritual condition of the ecclesia. He saw evidences of immorality and licentiousness (2Cor. 12:21), and realised that the situation was such as to demand greater attention than he had time to give them. He exhorted them to turn back to the old ways that he had established among them, both

warning and appealing to them. He also promised that he would return to them in order to strengthen them in the faith.

On leaving the city for Macedonia, he wrote them a short epistle, calling upon them to forsake the growing laxity, and urging them to strictly exclude any association with the prevailing immorality. He referred to this letter in the following terms: "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators; yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must you needs go out of the world" (1Cor. 5:9-10).

As is implied in this comment, his previous letter was misunderstood and ridiculed. His enemies declared that if his demands were logically followed the brethren would have to withdraw completely from any contact with outsiders; and they accused him of being incompetent in exposition.

On the other hand, his words of appeal to them were ignored. His mildness was mistaken for weakness; his hesitation to punish was ascribed to a state of fear of the offenders.

Paul found later that both his visit and his short epistle (since lost) had accomplished nothing; and conditions in Corinth had worsened.

But that was later. Meanwhile, as indicated in the Epistle to Timothy, he moved on to Macedonia for a short visit, and then returned to Ephesus.

It is fortunate for us that Paul was faced with these ecclesial crises, for through them we have the benefit of his instruction both to Timothy and to the ecclesia in Corinth. In this we can see the overriding Hand of Yahweh for the benefit of saints of every age.

Analysis

PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

Object of the Epistle

It was written during a visit to Macedonia (ch. 1:3), and designed to instruct Timothy how to manage the affairs of the ecclesia in everything pertaining to its organisation, office, preservation of pure doctrine and a right disposition on the part of its members. He was to charge some to teach none but apostolic doctrine, and to counteract every injurious influence.

The State of the Ephesian Ecclesia

The ecclesia was developed to a high degree when Paul left Timothy in charge of it, and the epistle is a general outline for its continued conduct. Paul had no doubts as to the coming apostasy

among the ecclesias (Acts 20:29; 1Tim. 4:1), and so put Timothy on his guard against certain ones who could undermine the true Gospel. He warned him of the Judaisers whose influence elsewhere he went to combat when he left Ephesus (1Tim. 1:4-7); he put him on his guard against certain elders who were busy advocating false doctrines which they had embraced (1Tim. 1:3,20); he gave him instructions concerning the conduct of overseers, deacons, and others (1Tim. 3:13); he advised him to insist upon the subordinate position of the sisters of the meeting (1Tim. 5).

Date and Circumstances of Writing the Epistle

In view of Paul's emphatic statement supplemented by the instruction of the Holy Spirit that the Ephesians would "see his face no more" after meeting them at Miletus as recorded in Acts 20:25, it is obvious that the epistle must be placed during the period of his previous three-year stay in Ephesus. It therefore was written during a visit to Macedonia unrecorded in Acts, during which Timothy was left behind in Ephesus.

The Theme

Though written at different periods of Paul's life, there is a common theme running through 1st and 2nd Timothy and the Epistle to Titus. In 1Timothy, there is constant reference to "**the Charge**" delivered unto Timothy (see chs. 1:3, 5, 18; 4:11; 5:7, 21; 6:13-14, 17). Though the A.V. alternates "charge" and "commandments," the R.V. has "charge" in each case. The word is translated from the Greek *parangelia* which, as a proclamation or command, "is strictly used of commands received from a superior officer and transmitted to others."

Paul was the superior officer passing on the command or charge to his subordinate, Timothy, who, in turn, had to pass it on to others.

In 2Timothy, a **Challenge** is set before Timothy. Evil times were coming (2Tim. 3), and the question was: Will the Truth survive in the hearts of those who had embraced it? Would Timothy and his associates be able to maintain the Faith once Paul was taken from them as he expected soon to be (2Tim. 4)? So the **Charge** having been given in 1Timothy; the **Challenge** is set down in the Second Epistle.

In Titus, Paul utters a **Caution**. With all the proclamation of the Truth, with all the energy in organisation, there was, and remains, the need to see the Truth transmitted into action. That is the theme of the Epistle to Titus.

Thus these three "pastoral" epistles, directed to his assistants in the field of service, presented in order: **The Charge, The**

Challenge, and The Caution.

The theme of 1Timothy is: ***The Charge: Guard the Deposit*** (see chs. 1:18; 6:13, 20; R.V.).

1st TIMOTHY: THE CHARGE: GUARD THE DEPOSIT

KEY PASSAGES: *"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy... that thou mightest war a good warfare" (1Tim. 1:18). "O Timothy, guard the deposit which is committed unto thee" (1Tim. 6:20; RV mg.)*

[1] INTRODUCTION — ch. 1:1-20.

- (a) Salutation vv. 1-2
- (b) The Need For Timothy To Remain In Ephesus vv. 3-11
- (c) The Charge Given To Paul vv. 12-17
- (d) The Charge To Timothy Introduced.....vv. 18-20

[2] ECCLESIAL CONDUCT — chs. 2, 3.

- (a) Brethren to be an example of Prayerful Living vv. 1-8
- (b) Sisters to be an example of Modest Subjection vv. 9-15
- (c) Qualifications and Conduct of Overseers ch. 3:1-7
- (d) Qualifications and Conduct of Deacons vv. 8-14
- (e) Qualifications and Conduct of Ecclesias vv. 15-16

[3] ECCLESIAL PROBLEMS — ch. 4.

- (a) The Inevitability of False Doctrine vv. 1-11
- (b) The Possibility of False Example vv.12-16

[4] ECCLESIAL ADMINISTRATION — ch. 5:1 to 6:10

- (a) Attitude toward Older and Younger ch. 5:1-2
- (b) Relief etc. of Widows.....vv. 3-16
- (c) Attitude toward Elders vv. 17-20
- (d) The Need for Careful, Impartial Judgment vv. 21-25
- (e) The Attitude Servants should adopt ch. 6:1-2
- (f) The Discipline to be Manifested toward the Perverse vv. 3-5
- (g) The Virtue of Contentment vv. 6-10

[5] PERSONAL ADMONITION — ch. 6:11-21.

- (a) Fight the good Fight of Faith vv. 11-12
- (b) The Solemn Charge committed to Timothy vv. 13-16
- (c) The Charge to be committed to Others vv. 17-19
- (d) The need to Guard the Deposit vv. 20-21

THE CHARGE OR COMMANDMENT OF 1st TIMOTHY

Reference has been made earlier to the word *paraggelia*, rendered "charge" and "commandment," but which should be uniformly translated "charge." It involved the following orders:

- "That some might teach no other doctrine" (ch. 1:3).
- "To manifest love out of a pure heart and a good conscience" (ch. 1:5).
- "War a good warfare" (ch. 1:18).
- "Teach the profitableness of godliness" (ch. 4:9-11).
- "That sisters be blameless" (ch. 5:7).
- "To manifest impartiality in judgment" (ch. 5:21).
- "To faithfully and unswervingly fulfil the task set him" (ch. 6:13-14).
- "To warn the wealthy against dependence on riches" (ch. 6:17).

"Guard The Deposit"

According to the R.V. mg. of ch. 6:20, Timothy was called upon to "guard the deposit" placed with him. The "deposit" was "the Gospel" that had been committed to Paul's trust" (ch. 1:11), and which he faithfully kept intact (2Tim. 4:7). The epistles thus teach:

- The deposit was entrusted to Paul (1Tim. 1:11).
- In turn it was "deposited" by Paul to Timothy in a special charge (1Tim. 1:18).
- Timothy was exhorted to exercise the greatest care in guarding that deposited with him (1Tim. 6:20).
- Paul expressed confidence in Timothy being faithful to the trust reposed in him (2Tim. 1:12).
- Paul instructed Timothy to "deposit" the precious Gospel with other faithful trustees who are "able to teach others also" (2Tim. 2:2).
- By those means it has come to be deposited with us, and we must be faithful to the trust in our day and generation.

The Need To Guard The Deposit

[1] THE FAITH WAS BEING CHALLENGED:

- (a) Some had made shipwreck of the faith ch. 1:19
- (b) The Spirit spoke of further apostasy ch. 4:1
- (c) Some denied the Faith by neglect ch. 5:8
- (d) Some denied the Faith by undue striving
for material things ch. 6:10
- (e) Some denied the Faith by embracing false
science ch. 6:20-21

[2] HOW TO COUNTER THE CHALLENGE:

- (a) By holding the Truth in a good conscience ch. 1:19
- (b) By sound teaching ch. 3:2

- (c) By a sound standing and great boldness in faith ch. 3:13
- (d) A good ministry nourished in words of faith ch. 4:6
- (e) Skilful fighting in the cause of faith.....ch. 6:12

The Deposit Is Related To Doctrine

[1] SOUND DOCTRINE IS TO BE ENCOURAGED:

- (a) Charge that they teach no other doctrine ch. 1:3
- (b) The Law is for that which is contrary to Truth ch. 1:9-10
- (c) Be nourished in good doctrine ch. 4:6
- (d) Give attendance to doctrine ch. 4:13
- (e) Take heed to the doctrine ch. 4:16
- (f) Give honour to those who labour in doctrine ch. 5:17
- (g) God's doctrine is not to be blasphemed ch. 6:1

[3] FALSE DOCTRINE TO BE OPPOSED:

- (a) Vain talking, false teachers of the Law ch. 1:6-7
- (b) Contrary to sound doctrine.....ch. 1:10
- (c) The doctrine of demons ch. 4:1
- (d) Turning aside unto fables ch. 4:7
- (e) Teaching a heterodox doctrine,
consenting not to Truth.....ch. 6:3

The Objective Of The Gospel: God Manifestation

The term "godliness," so frequently used in the epistle, refers to God manifestation in flesh. In the Greek it is frequently used with the definite article, as indicated below:

• "A peaceable life in all godliness" (ch. 2:2). • "Great is the secret of [the] godliness" (ch. 3:16). • "Exercise thyself unto godliness" (ch. 4:7). • "[The] godliness is profitable for all things" (ch. 4:8). • "Follow after godliness" (ch. 6:11).

The contrary is "a form of godliness denying the power thereof... From such turn away" (2Tim. 2:16; 3:5).

The Three Principles Thus Stressed

The epistle thus showed the importance of Doctrine, Faith and Godliness. One provides for the development of the next. Sound doctrine is a necessary foundation for faith, and that in turn will manifest itself in godliness. Thus sound teaching, will lead to sound faith, and that forms the basis for sound worship.

This development will be reflected in a way of life.

Those were some of the principles Timothy was called upon to stress during Paul's absence from Ephesus.

Chapter 5

CONTROVERSY IN CORINTH PAUL'S RETURN TO EPHESUS

Whilst Paul was busy proclaiming the Truth in Ephesus, controversy was raging in Corinth and elsewhere. The problems this presented lay heavily upon the mind of the apostle, and caused him deep depression. He could see his work being undermined by "false apostles, deceitful workers," and feared for the fate of the brethren whom he loved in the Truth. Luke says nothing concerning this crisis, but the circumstances are clearly revealed in Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, from which we are able to "fill in" the facts of the apostle's life during this period.

PAUL returned to Ephesus deeply perturbed at the ominous turn that ecclesial conditions were taking everywhere. It lay heavily upon his mind, and if he could, he would boldly face those propagating the error and reveal to them the folly of their doctrine.

But that was impossible; he could not be in all places at one time.

He did what he could. Like a general on a battlefield, he sought information from every point, and marshalled his forces to meet the onslaught.

He had intended to return to Corinth almost immediately, but he found that this was not wise. Circumstances forced him to make a change of plans (cp. 2Cor. 1:23; 2:12-13), it being essential for him to remain in Ephesus for the time being. The work there was flourishing, and he could feel that the hand of God was with it. He therefore determined to stay on until Pentecost (1Cor. 16:8-9), after which he would visit Macedonia and Achaia (including Corinth) and then make his way to Jerusalem.

Timothy and Erastus Sent to Macedonia (Acts 19:21-22) In the meantime, Paul despatched both Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia, with general instructions to consolidate the work already established, and to include Corinth if possible (1Cor. 4:17; 16:10-11). Accordingly these two brethren bade farewell to the apostle, and made their way into Macedonia.

This change of plans caused Paul some bother later. His enemies used it to press the charge of unreliability against the apostle, and to allege that he had not carried out his plan to visit Corinth, because he feared to personally meet his antagonists there.

Members Of Chloe's Family Report On Corinth

Shortly after Timothy and Erastus left for Macedonia, Paul was visited by members of the family of Chloe (a prominent sister in the Corinthian Ecclesia whose assessment of the situation could be relied upon). Paul sought from them the latest news of the ecclesia.

What he heard gravely concerned him.

They reported that the ecclesia was rent with party strife (1Cor. 1:11). There were four main factions: those claiming to follow Paul; a second group under the banner of Cephas; a third section setting forth Apollos as their leader; and a fourth faction separating from the others, and alleging that they followed only Christ.

None of the so-called leaders of the factions in Corinth recognised their "following" as legitimate.

For example, Paul would have repudiated those who claimed him for their absolute guide. They were a group who probably set the Law aside completely, and claimed the freedom to do as they pleased, thus turning the liberty in Christ into licence. This was entirely contrary to Paul's teaching, and he would have nothing to do with it.

The Cephas section were generally Judaisers, using Peter's original Hebrew name in a way he would reject.

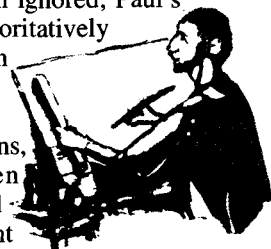
The Apollos group were intellectuals, swayed by Greek oratory. It was perhaps because of this group in the Corinthian Ecclesia that Apollos had removed to Ephesus, thus showing to all and sundry what he thought of this party spirit. He was so disgusted with this so-called following that he refused to return to Corinth, though asked by Paul to do so. Paul subsequently wrote to the ecclesia: "As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time" (1Cor. 16:12).

The last faction was perhaps the most detestable of all: advancing the name of Christ to tear the body apart. They were the "superior party," individually arrogating Christ's name in a factious way to imply the inferiority of all the other groups.

Paul's anxiety for the future of the ecclesia grew as he listened to the report of his visitors. Conditions in Corinth had declined in a way that he had not believed possible. The short letter he had previously written them had been ridiculed and its instruction ignored; Paul's appeal to the brethren, and his failure to act authoritatively toward them to check the growing evil, had been distorted as evidence of weakness.

Stronger methods were obviously necessary.

Paul continued to ply his visitors with questions, only to learn of the appalling conditions then existing. Whilst, on one hand, the party spirit raged with unabated fury, on the other a case of flagrant



gross immorality was reported (1Cor. 5:1). Yet the ecclesia did nothing to discipline the one responsible, nor to correct the fault. It was only too obvious that others were involved in the permissive state of things then manifested, clearly showing the actual spiritual condition of all the parties. The immorality was not limited to sexual matters. Others were dragging their brethren to law, and calling upon Gentile magistrates to prosecute them (1Cor. 6:1). Some failed to see any need to separate from the world in any sense whatsoever, marrying unbelievers, or freely participating with the world in its schemes, and even in its worship (1Cor. 6:12-20).

Obviously something drastic would have to be done to correct the drift.

A Deputation From Corinth

About the same time as Paul received this disastrous intelligence from the relatives of Chloe, a deputation of three brethren arrived from Corinth bearing a communication possibly arising out of the previous letter sent by Paul which, apparently, had been misunderstood (1Cor. 16:17; 5:9-11). They posed a series of questions which Paul answered in his Epistle to the Corinthians (1Cor. 7:1). These concerned the possession of the Spirit gifts, Ecclesial order, the Resurrection and other doctrinal matters. The very nature of these questions indicated the need of doctrinal instruction in Corinth.

Yet Paul was greatly relieved at the coming of the three brethren: Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus, because it indicated that despite the spiritual decline of the ecclesia, it still had sufficient regard for him to accept his guidance in these matters.

All, then, was not completely lost.

Yet action had to be taken, and quickly.

Paul Writes To Corinth

The ecclesial crisis in Corinth demanded some personal action such as Paul was unable to give at the moment. He could write an epistle, answering the questions advanced by the deputation, and warning and rebuking members because of the factions and general spiritual decline; but the crisis demanded some form of personal instruction.

Timothy was not present to help him. And perhaps Timothy was not altogether the best one for the purpose. He was of rather a retiring, timorous nature, though of steadfast faith, and keen determination. However, Titus was available. He had something of Paul's own aggressiveness. He was a much older brother than Timothy, a man of resourcefulness and initiative, able to take and execute orders, or to go ahead of his own account.

He was just the one for the work involved, and Paul called him in

for consultation. Carefully Paul instructed Titus concerning the situation in Corinth. He pointed out the need for personal instruction and guidance to supplement the letter he would write them, and suggested that Titus undertake the difficult and delicate task. And Titus, observing the deep concern and emotion of Paul, willingly stepped into the breach, and having an earnest love of the brethren, was himself anxious to undertake the mission (2Cor. 8:16-17).

He probably returned in company with the deputation that had been sent to the apostle by the Corinthian Ecclesia, bearing with him the epistle known as *The First Epistle Of Paul To The Corinthians*.

Thus, once again, necessity had forced Paul to write. On this occasion, his quill was dipped in tears. Later he described his emotion as he commenced: "And I wrote this same [the first epistle] unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice. For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you" (2Cor. 2:3-4).

From this it would appear, that whereas Paul's greatest affection was reserved for the Philippian brethren, next to them he seems to have felt more personal tenderness for this inflated, wayward ecclesia than for many others. On their part, they were very ready to quickly respond to his teaching and guidance (see 1Cor. 11:2; 2Cor. 7:11; cp. 2Cor. 12:15).



A Dictionary Of Personalities In The New Testament

BARNABAS: THE HELPFUL

His name means *The Son of Prophecy, Consolation* (A.V.), or *Exhortation* (R.V. — Acts 4:36), and he evidently excelled in this aspect of instruction. But it is obvious from his history as recorded in the Acts, that he did not give himself only to the theory of the subject, but supplemented his expositions by a practical demonstration of what is required. Barnabas was not only noted for words, but also for actions. Thus he rose to prominence and became a dominant member of the early ecclesias.

He was noted for his exuberant generosity. He led the way in supporting a fund for the relief of others in need, and his action became an object lesson to all (Acts 4:36-37).

He was trusting, thoughtful and kind. He gave earnest thought, and doubtless prayer, to Paul's appeal to join the ecclesia, and convinced that the erstwhile persecutor was now converted,

went out of his way to extend the right hand of fellowship to him, and to guarantee his genuineness to the other brethren (Acts 9:27).

He was high in reputation as a "good" man. It was his personal integrity that gave power to his exhortations (Acts 11:22-24).

He had an impressive personality. The Lycaonians named him Jupiter (Acts 14:12), so that he evidently had a commanding, dignified and venerable appearance, being older than Paul, whom they styled Mercurius.

He had an inspiring, encouraging manner. He went out of his way to urge Paul to the work (Acts 11:25-26), he ever proved thoroughly reliable (vv. 29-30), he was readily adaptable to the work of Gospel proclamation (13:2), he often took the lead, bearing responsibility of an action (12:25; 13:2, 7; 14:14; 15:12).

He was a devoted, self-sacrificing toiler. With Paul, he did not exercise his right to claim material support from the ecclesias for work that he did on their behalf, but was self-supporting (1Cor. 9:6).

He was a single-eyed, humble worker. Though older than Paul in both years and association with the Truth, and of higher repute at that time than his companion, he willingly submitted to Paul's leadership when circumstances revealed the apostle to be more fitted for it, and accepted a subordinate position with single-eyed devotion to the Truth (Acts 13:7-9, 13).

He was susceptible to influences. We all have a point of weakness in our characters, and this appears to have been a characteristic of Barnabas. He first revealed this in the sharp contention he had with Paul over Mark his relative (Acts 15:36-39; Col. 4:10); perhaps one was too stern and the other too easy. He was swayed by the dissimulation of the Judaisers (Gal. 2:13). These incidents suggest a lack of firmness in the otherwise strong character of Barnabas.

History.

Barnabas was a native of Cyprus and a Levite by extraction (Acts 4:36) who was early converted to the Truth, and gave an outstanding example of generous self-sacrifice. He was in the forefront of the disciples, and when Paul presented himself to the Jerusalem Ecclesia and was repelled, Barnabas took the initiative; extending the hand of fellowship to Paul attesting his sincerity (Acts 9:27).

Barnabas was sent by the Jerusalem Ecclesia to report on the results of the preaching at Antioch, and being impressed, he sent to Tarsus for Paul to assist him in the work before him. For the pace of a year he laboured among them (Acts 11:19-26).

Hearing of extreme poverty in Jerusalem, the brethren of Antioch sent relief by the hands of Barnabas and Paul (Acts 11:23-30). On their return, they brought with them John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (Acts 12:25).

In Antioch, by divine appointment, Barnabas and Paul were selected to preach the Gospel in distant parts (Acts 13:2). Accordingly, a Gospel proclamation journey was undertaken. They visited Cyprus and Asia Minor (chs. 13, 14). At Lystra, they were taken for gods, and Barnabas was named Jupiter (14:8-12). Returning to Antioch, they found the ecclesia disturbed by the teaching of the Judaisers, and were sent with certain others to Jerusalem in order to confer with the apostles on this matter (15:1-29). Among others, Barnabas testified at the conference. Afterwards they returned to Antioch with Judas and Silas of Jerusalem with the recommendation of the conference (15:22-35). At Antioch once again, Barnabas was involved in controversy with Paul due to his support of Peter's Judaistic action (Gal. 2:13).

Following the reconciliation between the two brethren, a second journey was mooted, but the proposition was wrecked by controversy. Barnabas insisted upon them taking Mark; Paul refused. Barnabas went to Cyprus with Mark (Acts 15:36-41), and afterward continued his activities among the ecclesias (1Cor. 9:6; Col. 4:10). Paul's subsequent comments suggest that complete reconciliation took place between these two grand workers for the Truth.

The record of Barnabas, as far as the New Testament is concerned, ends at this point.

BARSABAS: THE WITNESS

[1] This was the surname of Joseph, who was nominated with Matthias to succeed Judas as one of the twelve (Acts 1:23). Barsabas signifies *Son of Summoning* or *Calling*. As this was his surname, he was probably noted for his preaching of the Word. He was also given the surname of Justus, probably because he was foremost in preaching *justification*. Be that as it may, his three names: Joseph (*Increase*), Barsabas, and Justus are all significant, and indicate one who was prominent in proclaiming the Word and increasing the followers of the Lord.

In setting the two brethren forward whom the apostles nominated to replace Judas, the names of Barsabas are given in detail and prominence, in contrast to the second choice of Matthias; yet the lot fell upon the latter. Obviously the apostles felt that Joseph Barsabas was more qualified, but Yahweh overshadowed the vote.

[2] Barsabas is also the surname of Judas, a disciple sent with Silas to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:22).

BERNICE: THE VICTORIOUS

Bernice signifies *Victorious*. References to her are found in Acts 25:13, 23; 26:30. She was the eldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I, who is described as the one "who vexed the ecclesia" (Acts 12:1), and therefore brother to King Agrippa II, in whose company she was at the trial of Paul (Acts 25:13, 23; 26:30).

Bernice was a woman of great beauty, who was first married to Marcus, and afterwards to her uncle, King Herod of Chalcis. When he died in the year 48, she was twenty years of age, and at that time she retired to the home of her brother. Her character was held much in question on the score of chastity, and even her relations with her brother were viewed with great suspicion (Jos. *Ant.* 20:7:3). To allay these surmises, she married Polemo, King of Pontus, who was induced to take the step on account of her great wealth. But the marriage soon broke up, and she returned to Agrippa. Subsequently she became the mistress of Vespasian, then of Titus, son of Vespasian, but when Titus became emperor, he cast her aside.

Agrippa and Bernice frequently appeared in public together. She was with him when he visited Festus after he became procurator of Judea as recorded in Acts. She was with him when he appealed to the excited and exasperated Jews following the abuse of authority by Gessius Florus, the procurator, which led to the Jewish war of AD70 (Jos. *War*, 2:16; 1-5). She was with him when he went to pay his respects to Alexander, the newly appointed procurator at Alexandria (Jos. *War*, 2:15:1).

Bernice, therefore, was a brave but a corrupt and shameless woman. What must have been her feelings as she listened to Paul speak of his dedicated efforts for the Truth to glorify the God of Israel? Her brother said to the apostle: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," but nothing is recorded of Bernice's impressions at the time. Certainly the Herodian family provided an influence for evil over the Jewish people.

See *Agrippa The King* (page 85).

BLASTUS: ASSOCIATE OF HEROD

Blastus was a palace chamberlain who had the attention of Herod Agrippa, and was used by the men of Tyre and Sidon to influence the king in their favour (Acts 12:20). His name means *Sprout*, or *Shoot*. Some give it as meaning *Sucker* which is appropriate to the character in which he is presented in Acts of the Apostles.

CANDACE: THE QUEEN

The exact name of this Ethiopian queen is unknown, but her name is said to mean *Ruler of Children*. Candace was more the name of a dynasty, not of an individual, and was used by many queens of Ethiopia, just as Pharaoh was the title of many different kings of Egypt. She is unimportant in the narrative of Luke (the only occurrence is in Acts 8:27), but her minister, the Eunuch, returning from worship in Jerusalem, is of vital significance. Philip the Evangelist taught him the Truth which he took back with him into Ethiopia. It is interesting that in Acts 8, 9, 10, we have recorded in sequence the conversions of an Ethiopian, Jew and Roman. They represent the three great families of the human race: Ham, Shem and Japheth — indicating how the Truth was extending out to all mankind.

CARPUS: PAUL'S HOST

His name means *Plucked Fruit*, and this became his destiny inasmuch as he accepted the Truth. He was a resident of Troas, and Paul stayed with him briefly on his way to Rome on the second occasion. At the time, Paul was pre-occupied and worried about the state of the ecclesia in Rome in view of the brutal persecution of Nero, so that he left his cloke behind in his home. When later the apostle wrote to Timothy during his second imprisonment, he asked him to fetch his cloke with him "and the books, but especially the parchments" (2Tim. 4:13). The cloke would provide him with physical comfort; the books or pads would enable him to continue to encourage his brethren by writing; but the parchments (upon which were inscribed the Scriptures) were most needful in his distress, as providing him comfort of the mind and spirit. Thus Carpus is remembered for his hospitality.

CLEMENT OF PHILIPPI

His names means *Kind*, or *Merciful*, and he has the wonderful distinction of being commended by Paul as having his name "written in the book of life" (Phil. 4:3). Paul commends him to the attention of the brethren as being an earnest co-labourer with him in the Gospel.

CHLOE: THE COURAGEOUS

Reference to this sister is found in 1Cor. 1:10-11. Her name means *Green Shoot* and in the Greek represents the first green shoot of plants. Chloe is emblematic of fruitful grace and beauty. She was the head of a household in Corinth that had been converted to the Truth, members of which reported to Paul of contention and bickering in the ecclesia in Corinth. Paul reproved the brethren for this, publicly mentioning the source of his

information. Chloe must have been very courageous to have permitted her name to be thus used so prominently. Doubtless she sought the good of her brethren rather than her personal reputation among them.

CLAUDIA: PAUL'S ASSISTANT

Her name means *Lame*, and she is referred to only in 2Tim. 4:21. Tradition says that she was the wife of Pudens, with whom she is mentioned, and that Linus (also mentioned in the same verse) was their son and rose to great prominence in the ecclesia in Rome. Be that as it may, the fact that she is associated with Paul in his time of trial when others had deserted him (chs. 1:15; 4:10) testifies to her devotion and courage. It was dangerous then to be known as a Christian, and particularly to be identified with Paul, who was about to be executed. But Claudia did both.

CLAUDIUS: THE EMPEROR

As emperor, he succeeded Caligula on 25th January, AD41. According to Josephus, he received the appointment through the eloquent pleading and solicitation of Herod Agrippa, whom he thereafter favoured and supported. Through Herod, the Jews were given every consideration by Claudius, although those of Palestine often suffered oppression at the hands of his governors. About the middle of his reign, those who abode at Rome were banished (Acts 18:2), among whom were Aquila and Priscilla, who made their way to Corinth where they met up with Paul. The conduct of Claudius, as far as his rule was concerned, was generally mild and popular, and he made several beneficial enactments. He married his niece, Agrippina, who prevailed upon him to set aside his own son, Britannicus, in favour of her son, Nero, by a former marriage; but discovering that he regretted this step, she poisoned him in AD54.

CLAUDIUS LYSIAS: CHIEF CAPTAIN

He was chief captain of Jerusalem at the time when Paul visited the city. He interrogated the apostle when his centurion had rescued him from the mob (Acts 22:28; 23:26). He told Paul that he had obtained his freedom "with a great sum." Messalina, one of the wives of Claudius the Emperor, used to sell the freedom of Rome, firstly at a high price, but later more cheaply, because Lysias stated that he had paid a lot for the right of freedom; he implied that he had held it for a considerable period. It is likely that he took the name of the Emperor Claudius, and attached it to his own name, Lysias, because of the freedom he had obtained. He treated Paul with consideration, though in his letter to Felix he incorrectly claimed that he had rescued Paul because he believed

that he was a Roman and he desired to uphold the dignity of the empire (Acts 23:27). In fact, he had ordered Paul to be examined by scourging (Acts 22:24), and was only dissuaded from this course when he heard that Paul could claim Roman citizenship. In fact, the status of the apostle, as a freeborn Roman citizen, was higher than that of Claudius Lysias.

CORNELIUS: THE CONVERT

One meaning given to his name is *The Beam Of The Sun*. It is most appropriate to the circumstances of Cornelius, for the "beam of the Sun of Righteousness" shone in his face, once he had been converted. We believe that he can be identified with the Roman Centurion of Luke 7:1-10, who sent for Jesus to heal his servant. The character of this centurion with that recorded of Cornelius, show points of identification.

They were both lovers of Israel. "He loveth our nation and hath built us a synagogue" (Luke 7:5). "He gave much alms to the people... of good report among all the nation of the Jews" (Acts 10:2, 22).

They were both lovers of God. "He is worthy for whom you [Jesus] should do this" (Luke 7:4). "Cornelius... a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house... a just man" (Acts 10:2, 22).

They were both lovers of the Lord Jesus. "Lord, don't trouble yourself, I am not worthy" (Luke 7:6). "You know of the word preached... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth... who went about doing good and healing" (Acts 10:37-38).

Cornelius had become disgusted with paganism, and had turned to the God of Israel. He was what was called a Proselyte of the Gate: one who was drawn toward Judaism, but had not accepted it completely. Peter was sent to this good man, and educating him in the true principles of grace, baptised him into Christ Jesus. Thus one of the barriers against the preaching to the Gentiles was lowered.

The character of Cornelius is worthy of emulation. Though he was a man in high authority, he proved himself to be kind and thoughtful to those under him; humble and considerate before those whom he recognised were appointed of God; and pious and faithful to the Creator Himself. Moreover, he was intelligent, and thought deeply upon all that was brought to his attention. Thus he was drawn toward the Truth and embraced it thoroughly. He was a "centurion of the Italian band," and therefore in charge of some of the first-class Roman troops. He was a man of war, but was drawn to peace in Christ Jesus (Acts 10:36), and in order to embrace that "peace" must have resigned his commission.

Analysis and Recapitulation

PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

Environment of Corinth

In BC146, Corinth challenged Rome and was defeated, the Roman Consul, Mummius, burning the city to ashes. The accidental fusing together of different metals during the conflagration is said to have led to the discovery of Corinthian brass for which the city became famous. The city was rebuilt in BC44 by Julius Caesar. Due to its strategic position, it soon became a prosperous trading centre. It was made the capital of the Roman province of Achaia, and was ruled by a proconsul.

"Two vices plagued the town: greed for material gain and sexual lust. Corinth's bustling wharves and docks, and its busy shops and factories fostered the one. The cult of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, entrenched here from time immemorial, fostered the other" (Unger, *Archaeology Of The Old Testament*).

The voluptuous and vicious forms that the worship of the goddess took, made the city a notorious seat of immorality. "Such terms as 'to corinthianize' meaning to enter into the immoral practices of the city; 'Corinthian girl,' to denote the type of life engaged there; and even 'Corinthian sickness' to indicate the inevitable physiological and psychological results of such a life, made their impress upon the Greek language itself." (Unger).

This sink of wealth, luxury and profligacy became the testing ground for the efficacy of the Truth's teaching.

Introduction of the Truth

As we have already shown, Paul arrived at Corinth from Athens thoroughly dispirited (1Thes. 3:1-3; Acts 18:1). It was approximately AD50 (Gallio — see Acts 18:12 — the new proconsul was installed in the summer of AD51, and the apostle after eighteen month's sojourn was hailed before him apparently shortly after he had been newly installed). Paul obtained accommodation and apparently employment from Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus. Here Apollos was converted (Acts 18:24-28), and afterwards made his way to Corinth where he ministered for some time. Meanwhile, Paul returned for a long stay to Ephesus (Acts 19:1-2), remaining there some three years in all (Acts 20:31).

From Ephesus he evidently made a brief unrecorded visit to Corinth, implied in such references as 2Cor. 12:14; 13:1. He became concerned at the environment of the ecclesia and its

influence upon its members (2Cor. 12:21). He both warned and appealed to them to take care, and on leaving, supplemented his labour with a short letter, exhorting the brethren to strictly exclude the pollution of the prevailing immorality from out of the ecclesia (1Cor. 5:9-10). But his appeal was ignored.

Meanwhile Paul returned to Ephesus, and later Timothy and Erastus left for Macedonia (Acts 19:22) with a general instruction to try and make Corinth, though there was no certainty that they would do so (1Cor. 16:10).

Why the Epistle was Written

Paul's fears for the brethren were confirmed by news he suddenly received in Ephesus. Members of the family of Chloe, brethren who could be relied on, reported that growing contention was manifest in the ecclesia through party strife (1Cor. 1:11). The ecclesia was torn by four factions: the *Paulists* (calling for complete rejection of the Law, demanding a liberty that was really licence); the *Cephasites* (who were really Judaisers); the *Apollosites* (mere intellectuals swayed by Greek eloquence); the *Christ* party (the superior party, claiming Christ's name to justify a faction that would imply the inferiority of all others).

Further investigation (1Cor. 5:1) revealed that whilst the party spirit raged unabated, a flagrant case of gross immorality was permitted and condoned, indicating the actual spiritual condition of all the parties. There were also cases of litigation one against the other, showing the absolute want of brotherly love (1Cor. 6:1); on the other hand there was no true appreciation of the status of the ecclesia in the world, nor of the need of separation from it (1Cor. 6:12-20).

About the same time as this disastrous intelligence was received, a deputation of three brethren arrived from Corinth bearing a communication, possibly arising out of Paul's previous letter which they had misunderstood (1Cor. 16:17; 5:9-11). They asked a series of questions which Paul proceeded to answer (1Cor. 7:1). Other queries (whether contained in the letter from Corinth or obtained by the apostle by questioning is not revealed; see 1Cor. 15:35) dealing with the Spirit gifts, ecclesial order, and doctrinal problems, were also answered.

This first epistle handled all these matters. The difficulties in Corinth, therefore, brought about the writing of this important treatise dealing with ecclesial order, as well as other matters, which are of extreme value today. The Epistle is, therefore, *Corrective, Constructive* and *Encouraging*.

Theme:

**CHRIST: THE WISDOM OF GOD TO US
(SANCTIFICATION)**

Key Passages:

"Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (ch. 1:17). "Unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (ch. 1:24). "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (ch. 2:7-8).

[1] INTRODUCTION — ch. 1:1-9

- (a) The call of Christ's Followers vv. 1-3
(b) The privileges of Christ's Followers vv. 4-9

[2] REPROOF: CONCERNING SCHISMS — ch. 1:10-4:21

(They were factiously glorying in men — ch. 1:12).

- (a) Man-exalting Factions are wrong.....vv. 10-16
(b) Because the Gospel makes foolish the

Might of Man vv. 17-25

- (c) And God calls Humble men to Glorify Him vv. 26-31

- (d) They had been converted

by Simple Words of Power ch. 2:1-8

- (e) Only the Spiritually Minded can grasp that Wisdom vv. 9-16

- (f) Their Factions illustrated that they

Lacked Wisdom.....ch. 3:1-4

- (g) For Leaders are but Fellow-workers for God vv. 5-15

- (h) They are but Gifts to the Ecclesia vv. 16-23

- (i) True Leaders are Responsible only to God ch. 4:1-7

- (j) The Apostles' Sufferings are in

Submission to His Will.....vv. 8-13

- (k) They Possess the Authority to Rebuke.....vv. 14-21

[3] CORRECTION: CONCERNING INCONSISTENCIES:

chs. 5:1 to 6:20

(Their "glorying" — ch. 5:2, 6 — was a mockery in the face of flagrant evils that they condoned).

- (a) The Ecclesia must Expel Impurity ch. 5

- (b) Want of Brotherly Love in Litigation Rebuked ch. 6:1-8

- (c) Complete Separation from

Worldly Practices a Necessity vv. 9-20

[4] INSTRUCTION: ANSWERS TO PROBLEMS:

chs. 7:1 to 15:58

1. Concerning The Marriage State — ch. 7:1-17

- (a) The need for Mutual Consideration in Marriage . . vv. 1-6
- (b) Advice for the Unmarried vv. 7-9
- (c) Instruction on Separation and Divorce vv. 10-17
- 2. Regarding Circumcision and Slavery — ch. 7:18-24**
 - (a) Ignore it vv. 18-24
- 3. Regarding Virgins and Marriage — ch. 7:25-40**
 - (a) In View of the Present Distress remain Single . vv. 25-40
- 4. Regarding Meat Offered to Idols — chs. 8:1 to 11:1**
 - (a) Knowledge Liberates from
Defilement of Conscience vv. 1-8
 - (b) But we still need to Consider the
Conscience of Others vv. 9-13
 - (c) Paul did not use Permissible Liberties
Lest the Gospel be Hindered ch. 9:1-15
 - (d) He Humbled Himself to Better
Serve the Gospel vv. 16-23
 - (e) The Call of Christ demands such Discipline . vv. 24-27
 - (f) The Warning of Israel: Baptised, Separated
but Seduced ch. 10:1-14
 - (g) The Test of True Communion is Not What is Lawful
but What is Expedient unto
Edification vv. 15 to ch. 11:1
- 5. Regarding Sisters in the Ecclesia — ch. 11:2-16**
 - a. Their Head Covering a Token of Subjection . . . vv. 2-16
- 6. Regarding the Lord's Supper — ch. 11:17-34**
 - (a) Must be Used not Abused vv. 17-34
- 7. Regarding Spirit Gifts — chs. 12:1 to 14:40**
 - (a) Unity in Diversity — ch. 12
 - Diversity of Gifts but One Spirit vv. 1-11
 - Diversity of Members but one Body . . . vv. 12-27
 - Diversity of Service but One Ecclesia . . vv. 28-31
 - (b) Spirit Gifts Valueless without Love — ch. 13
 - The Absolute Necessity of Love vv. 1-3
 - The Moral Excellency of Love vv. 4-7
 - The Abiding Supremacy of Love vv. 8-13
 - (c) The Greatest Gift is Prophecy — ch. 14
 - It Edifies the Ecclesia vv. 1-22
 - It Convinces Outsiders vv. 23-28
 - It should be Used to Greatest Effect . . vv. 29-40
- 8. Regarding the Resurrection — ch. 15:1-58**
 - (a) Christ's Literal Resurrection Validates the
Gospel vv. 1-11
 - (b) The Believers' Literal Resurrection
 - Proved by Christ's vv. 12-19
 - (c) The Order of the Resurrection vv. 20-28

- (d) The Folly of Apostolic Sacrifices
if there is no Resurrection vv. 29-34
- (e) How and For What Kind of Body
Shall Believers be Raised vv. 35-44
- (f) The Analogy of the First and Second Adams . .vv. 45-49
- (g) The Change to Immortality vv. 50-54
- (h) The Challenge of the Resurrection vv. 55-58

[5] GENERAL MATTERS — ch. 16

- 1. The Ecclesial Collection vv. 1-4
- 2. Paul's Proposed Visit vv. 5-9
- 3. Instructions regarding Timothy vv. 10-11
- 4. The Reluctance of Apollos to Visit Corinth v. 12
- 5. Closing Exhortation vv. 13-14
- 6. Final Greeting and Salutation vv. 15-24

PAUL'S NOBLE EXAMPLE

We know more concerning Paul through the Epistles to the Corinthians than through any other of his writings. He set a noble example of service. He did not merely teach the message; he demonstrated it. He did not write: "Do as I say," but also "Do as I do." He set his own personal example forward to be emulated. He manifested:

- [1] Loyalty in message, method and motive ch. 2:1-5
- [2] Sound principle in founding and building ch. 3:10-23
- [3] Fidelity as a steward of saving truth ch. 4:1-6
- [4] Patient endurance under tribulation ch. 4:9-16
- [5] Due consideration for weaker brethren chs. 6:12; 8:13
- [6] Liberal mindedness by waiving real rights
and dues ch. 9:12-18
- [7] Self-denial in preaching the Truth ch. 9:19-23
- [8] Self-discipline in body and behaviour chs. 9:27; 10:23
- [9] Self-restraint in public assemblies ch. 14:19-20
- [10] Self-abnegation and active gratitude ch. 15:9-10

Paul The Pattern Preacher

Notice his methods as outlined in ch. 2:1-2 —

"I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom" — He did not seek for personal prestige or reputation.

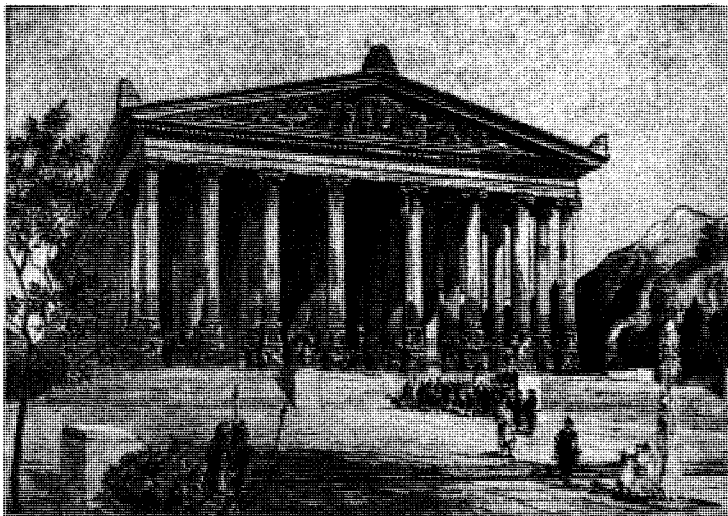
"I determined..." — This suggests meditation, preparation and resolution. He gave due thought to the work before him.

"Not to know anything but Jesus Christ..." — Having put himself completely out of the picture, he filled it with Christ.

Let us emulate the example of Paul and our work of preaching will not lack success. He co-operated with God, and laboured assiduously under difficulty; and his prayers and work were divinely blessed.

Chapter 6

RIOT IN EPHESUS (Acts 19:23-41)

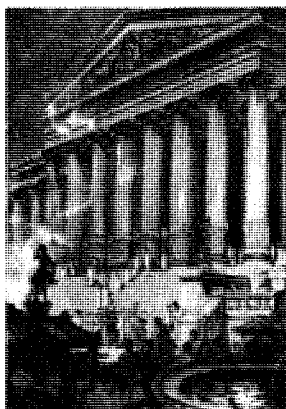


The Temple of Diana was the most grandiose and dominant building in Ephesus. It is reported to have been some 425 feet (130 mtrs) long, with 127 elegant columns some sixty feet high (18 mtrs) gracing its front, side and back. Its façade glittered with colour, and with the precious metals and marble that were lavished upon it. Within it were found the most priceless works of art of the time, and countless hoards of treasure deposited there for safety by the Asiatic States. It was one of the seven wonders of the world, and, together with the goddess that it housed, the pride of the Ephesians. But the goddess did not match the elegance of the temple. She was a crude idol quite unlike the goddess of the same name worshipped by the Greeks. The idol was supposed to have fallen down from heaven (Acts 19:35), and mysterious symbols, called "Ephesian letters" were inscribed on the crown, girdle and feet of the goddess. They were used as a charm to heal those who were deranged, and for such purpose they were written and carried about as amulets. The study of these symbols was an elaborate science, and books both numerous



and costly, were compiled by its professors. Paul's amazing miracles in Ephesus therefore, challenged the power of the goddess, and the public burning of books of magic by believers was an act of war.

Diana is the Latin name of the idol, and Artemis in the Greek. The form of worship was crude and lustful in the extreme, being similar to that given to the evil goddess Ashtoreth (Astarte) of the Canaanites. The form of service was designed to arouse the frantic and fanatical feelings of its devotees who then gave themselves to the most evil debauchery. Great gain came to the silversmiths of Ephesus through making and selling small images of the goddess to tourists who flocked the city and the temple.



Diana of the Greeks and Romans was a virgin; Diana of the Ephesians was a mother goddess who encouraged impurity among her devotees. In "The Two Babylons," Hislop states: "She is represented with all the attributes of the Mother of the gods, and as the Mother of the gods she wore a turreted crown, such as no one can contemplate without being forcibly reminded of the tower of Babel. Now this tower-bearing Diana is by an ancient scholiast expressly identified with Semiramis... and was worshipped under the name of Rhea, 'The Lady'." Thus in line of descent, the evil woman on the beast (Rev. 17:5) imitated the ways of Diana (cp. vv. 2, 4 etc).

The preaching of the Gospel in Ephesus constituted a challenge to Diana and her paramours, and this erupted into a riot which terminated Paul's activities in that city.

PAUL'S original intention, as he had told the brethren of Corinth, was to finalise his activities in Ephesus, and sail from that city direct to Corinth. However, ecclesial conditions forced him to change his plans. He decided to first visit Macedonia, and then move down south to Corinth, after which he would return to Jerusalem. "After I have been there," Paul announced to the brethren, "I must also see Rome" (Acts 19:21).

Final Preparations in Ephesus

Paul busied himself to complete the work he had commenced in Ephesus. He consolidated the affairs of the ecclesia so that it might continue to develop in his absence, and then organised a collection of

money to relieve the poor brethren in Judea.

At the same time, Titus was despatched to Corinth with the general instructions to implement the reforms suggested by Paul, and then hurry back to Troas to report to the apostle as to the success or otherwise of his mission.

Paul's intention was to remain in Ephesus until Pentecost (1Cor. 16:8). This would include the month of May, which was called the Artemisian by the Ephesians, for during it the city was given over to celebration of the national games, and to the honouring of Diana. May, therefore, was the month of rejoicing for Ephesus. Flamboyant processions constantly made their way to the great temple; drunkenness and debauchery were rife; and the feelings of the people were excited more than normally.

But this year, doubts were being expressed throughout the city as to the efficacy of Diana. Paul's amazing miracles, the public burning of books of magic, the constant and successful preaching of the Gospel, constituted a direct challenge to the worship of the goddess. This had its effect upon the commercial interests of the city. Obviously, if people were going to be daily challenged by the Christians fortified with such unassailable arguments, the very worship of the goddess, and the profitable sale of the images, would be seriously affected.

This became a matter of great concern to those who gained their livelihood from the worship of Diana.

Demetrius Agitates Against Paul

Among those most seriously affected by the teaching of Paul was a man by name of Demetrius. He was a silversmith who made silver shrines of Diana which brought him and his associates no small gain by selling them to her worshippers. He viewed with much concern the successful preaching of the Gospel by Paul, and instantly recognised that this could challenge the source of his wealth. He organised a meeting in a public place in the city of all those likely to be affected. When they were gathered together, he addressed them, urging them to do all in their power to destroy the influence of Paul.

"Men," he commenced, "you know that we are deriving a good living from this trade. Now you observe and hear how not only at Ephesus but in about all Asia this Paul is alienating many people by persuading them that gods made by human hands are not real gods. So there is danger not merely that our trade will come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess, Diana, will be looked upon as nothing and her magnificent glory will come to an end — she whom all Asia and all the world worship."

Thus Demetrius appealed to the cupidity of his audience. Not only was the worship of Diana challenged, but also the pockets of the

workmen. The speech was a remarkable testimony to the success of Paul's preaching. It declared that it was spreading throughout all Asia, as well as in the city of Ephesus.

Such an inflammatory speech was designed to rouse the workmen to the height of fanaticism. Already they were concerned at the drop in trade, and excited at the controversies that must have swept the city as visitors in that festival month came face to face with Christian resistance. All they required was somebody to lead them into action. Demetrius fulfilled their need. Under his influence they proceeded to agitate and to organise for a riot. Immediately they began to chant:

"Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

"Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

The noise was heard by others. Crowds came flocking from every corner to learn the cause of the tumult. Soon a huge concourse was gathered together, and the spirit of fanaticism began to sweep through it. The whole city was thrown into a state of riot, and a move was made toward the Jewish quarter, and doubtless to the home of Aquila with whom Paul was particularly associated.

What happened next in the confusion is not recorded. The life of the apostle was in great danger, and it could have been that it was on this occasion that Priscilla and Aquila intervened at personal risk to save him (Rom. 16:3-4).

Balked of its intended prey, the mob laid hands on two of his travelling companions: Gaius and Aristarchus, of Macedonia, rushed them into the huge theatre which was a feature of Ephesus, and capable of holding some 25,000 spectators.



The Great Theatre at Ephesus

Help From The Authorities

The lives of Gaius and Aristarchus were in danger. The temper of the mob was such that it desired blood. The angry passions of men erupted in shouting and tumult that could be heard all over the city.

Paul, in his place of hiding, could also hear it. He demanded to know what had happened, and when he learned that Gaius and Aristarchus had been seized by the mob, dragged into the theatre, and were in great danger of their lives, he endeavoured to follow them there himself, and personally face the anger of the crowd in an attempt to secure the release of his two brethren.

In this, there is a further example of the fearless courage of the apostle. In order to save his friends, he was prepared to face the rage of a rioting crowd that would have delighted to tear him to pieces.

And yet the same person, so determined and fearless under such circumstances, so ruthless in his demands upon himself, could weep unashamed tears of emotion when forced to rebuke those he loved; or was sometimes reduced to moments of extreme nervousness when he set about proclaiming the Gospel to save perishing humanity.

The disciples of Ephesus, however, refused to allow Paul into the theatre. They had probably already appealed to the authorities for help, and had been assured that the best thing to do under the circumstances, was to leave it to them to gain the release of their brethren. Indeed, as they were dissuading him from venturing into the place of danger, a message was received from some of the friends of the "chief of Asia" who were also friends of Paul, warning him against entering the theatre.

Who were these "certain of the chief of Asia," and why should they be classed as "friends" of Paul?

According to *The Companion Bible* these Asiarchs (as it is expressed in the Greek): "were persons of wealth and position chosen to preside over the public festivals and games, and defray the expenses. About this time a decree was passed that the month Artemisius (May), named after the goddess (Diana or Artemis) should be wholly devoted to festivals in her honour. The decree is extant, and opens with words that sound like an echo of v.35: 'Ye men of Ephesus...'"

Ephesus was still under the power of Rome, and Rome prided itself on its religious liberty. So long as the State was not threatened, Rome refused to interfere with the worship of its subjects, nor permit them to do so with minority groups in their communities. Moreover, Paul was a Roman citizen, and therefore could demand the protection of the Roman power. Perhaps the Ephesian Asiarchs knew this. According to W. Ramsay, in *Paul The Traveller And The Roman Citizen*: "The Asiarchs, or High Priests of Asia, were the heads of the imperial, political-religious organisation of the province in the worship of 'Rome and the Emperors;' and their friendly attitude toward Paul is a proof both that the spirit of the imperial policy was not as yet hostile to the new teaching, and that the educated classes did not share the hostility of the superstitious vulgar to Paul. Doubtless some of the Asiarchs had, in the ordinary course of dignity, previously held priesthoods of Artemis (Diana) or other city deities; and it is quite possible that up to the present time even the Ephesian priests were not at all hostile to Paul. The eclectic religion, which was fashionable at the time, regarded new forms of cult with equanimity, almost with friendliness; and the growth of each new superstition only added to the influence of Artemis (Diana) and her priests."

The friendliness of the Asiarchs toward Paul was not due to any compromise in his preaching.

As in Athens, he would not have hesitated to proclaim the fact that his teaching was opposed to that of the advocates of the worship of Diana. But though Paul would never be deterred from plainly and bluntly stating the facts of the Truth, he did not go out of his way to be impolite to his opponents. On the contrary, he met Gentiles with courtesy from their own viewpoint, as was seen from his address in Athens, and as he told the Corinthians (1Cor. 9:21), reasoning with them both logically and scripturally. It was an evidence of his skill in presenting the Truth that the apostle could do it forcibly, and at the same time retain the goodwill of these Asiarchs.

It now stood him in good stead, and secured his own protection as well as the acquittal of his friends. But for the moment, the Asiarchs bade their time, awaiting an opportune moment to intervene, whilst counselling moderation to those who would listen.

The Jews Put Forth Alexander

Inside the theatre arena absolute chaos reigned. Some cried out that the Christians should be punished, others counselled restraint, whilst most looked on in wonderment, not knowing what it was all about. It was generally recognised that the trouble-makers were of Jewish extraction, and therefore hostility turned toward the Jews whose opposition to pagan worship was well known.

In an endeavour to make it perfectly clear that they had nothing to do with either the riot or with Paul, the Jews urged one of their number, a man named Alexander, to address the mob to that effect. Alexander was a clever man and an eloquent speaker, probably well-known throughout Ephesus. Moreover, to dare the anger of the crowd as he did, he must have been bitterly antagonistic to Paul, and ready to do him a disservice. He could well have been the Alexander mentioned by Paul in 1Tim. 1:20, who the apostle had disfellowshipped, together with Hymenaeus, because of their Judaistic beliefs. Alexander probably had returned to the synagogue, and had seen this as an opportunity to have his revenge. It is a point in the identification of the early writing of the epistle as we have suggested. Later, at the close of Paul's life, there was an "Alexander the coppersmith" who testified against him in Rome (2Tim. 4:14), and he could have been the same individual.

Alexander struggled through to the forefront of the crowd to address the people, the Jews putting him forward; but to no avail, for the mob refused to listen to him. Instead, when the people recognised him as a Jew, they thought he was about to defend Paul, and increased their tumult. Now roused to a frenzy of fury, for about two hours they kept up a loud chant to the honour of the goddess Diana: "*Great is Diana of the Ephesians!*"

"Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

The Town Clerk Appeases The People

To the concern of the Asiarchs, the noise of the shouting could be heard far beyond the confines of the theatre, throughout the city of Ephesus. They became worried as to whether it might attract the attention of any Roman authorities who may have been on hand, and who might well call them and the city to account for what was happening. One Roman law made all such commotions of the people capital offences against those who raised them, and the danger was also that the city itself could be called in question because of the riot, and perhaps lose some of its privileges.

Under those circumstances, even Demetrius would have recognised the value of calling a halt; and, therefore, when the Town Clerk stood forward to attempt it, he received some support. He was a man of ability and intelligence, and he commanded the respect of the people to the extent that they ceased their senseless bellowing to listen to his recommendation. He declared:

1. The Riot Is Undignified For All Know The Devotion Of The Ephesians: vv. 35-36

"Fellow Ephesians," he enquired, "where is there a person who does not know that Ephesus is the temple guardian of the great Diana and of her image that fell from heaven? Since this is undeniable, you should compose yourselves and not do anything rashly."

2. The Riot Is Unjustified: No Formal Charge Of Sacrilege Has Been Made: v. 37.

"For you have brought these men here, who are neither temple destroyers nor insulters of our goddess."

3. The Riot Is Illegal. Otherwise Let Demetrius Disclose His Accusation: vv. 38-39.

"Now then, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a complaint against anyone, courts are in session and proconsuls are available; let them bring charges against each other. But if you have further complaint, then let it be straightened out in legal assembly."

4. The Riot Is Disorderly. It Could Bring The Romans Upon Them: v. 40.

"For we are in danger of being accused of riot on account of today's affairs, since there is no reason whatever that we can offer for this disorderly gathering."

He thus reasoned that if neither pride nor a sense of justice moved the people, the fact that they might personally suffer in consequence of it should do so.

His words had their desired effect. The people listened, and as their passions calmed down, they probably felt a little foolish at the way they had previously behaved. He dismissed them, and leaving the theatre, they went on their way.

Chapter 7

PAUL LEAVES EPHEBUS FOR TROAS

(Acts 20:1; 2Cor. 2:12-13)

The account in Acts records that Paul left Ephesus for Macedonia, but 2Corinthians 2:12 reveals that he first visited Troas, hoping there to meet up with Titus on his return trip from Corinth. The last days of Paul in Ephesus were most depressing. His physical health declined, and his concern was deepened by reports of ecclesial troubles that were flooding in upon him. About this time he learned of the disaffection of the Galatian ecclesias through the propagation of the Judaistic theory.

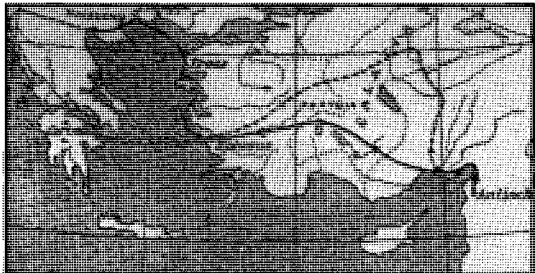
PENTECOST having arrived (1Cor. 16:8), Paul made arrangements to leave Ephesus for Troas, at which place he had arranged for Titus to meet him after the completion of his work in Corinth.

But first he had to bid farewell to the brethren of Ephesus. After three years' activity among them, a bond of deepest affection had developed between Paul and the ecclesia. The brethren were sorry to have to part with him, though they realised that they had to share him with others.

An Ecclesial Farewell Calling the ecclesia together for a last meeting, Paul doubtless exhorted and encouraged the members in the faith.

Then followed a tearful farewell, as his warmth of nature asserted itself. With fraternal love he embraced them, and then left. He went, probably with Tychicus and Trophimus, for they were with him later in his travels (Acts 20:4).

At about this same time, Aquila and Priscilla also left Ephesus, where they had remained (1Cor. 16:19), to make their way back to Rome (Rom. 16:3-4). It may have been their departure for that mighty city that had induced Paul to tell the ecclesia at Ephesus that after he had visited Macedonia, Achaia and Jerusalem he also intended to visit Rome (Acts 19:21).



Difficulties At Troas Most likely Paul sailed by ship from Ephesus to Troas. That was by far the easiest and speediest means of transport available to him, and in view of his failing health, and anxiety to meet Titus, he would have most likely sought out the best way to travel.

He did not anticipate staying long at Troas, but having heard a firsthand report of conditions in Corinth from the lips of Titus, he desired to quickly move on with him to Macedonia and Achaia.

But circumstances again forced a change of plans, and brought added difficulties for the apostle. He found, on arrival at Troas, that, ominously, Titus had not arrived.

Impatient to learn the fact concerning the state of the ecclesia in Corinth, and the success or otherwise of the mission of Titus, Paul was cast into the deepest depths of depression by his absence.

Did it mean that the mission to Corinth had failed?

Paul was not in a fit physical state to take this frustration. The strain of constant activity and of heavy toil, supplemented by the extreme worry caused by the attacks of false brethren, and their propagation of error, had drained Paul of his strength. Never strong physically he now became so ill as to despair of life itself. He later wrote to the brethren in Corinth: *"We want you to know brethren, about the trouble that came to us in Asia, how we were weighed down beyond all possible endurance so that we really despaired of life. Indeed, we passed the sentence of death on ourselves, but it was in order that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He rescued us from so perilous a death and will rescue us again; we hope in Him, for He will yet deliver us, while you also co-operate by your prayers for us, so that thanks may be given by many on our behalf for the blessings that came to us through many"* (2Cor. 1:8-11).

Paul's serious illness was a matter of deep concern to brethren in many parts. News of it swept through the ecclesias, and prayers ascended from hundreds of lips beseeching Yahweh Ropheka to extend His healing balm to the apostle in his distress. And from such a source, a measure of relief came. Paul slowly gained in strength.

Paul would have left Troas immediately, and gone in search of Titus, but now a further hindrance arose. A "door of utterance was opened to him" (2Cor 2:12). He found a ready reception of the Truth. People hearkened and accepted the message of salvation. He could not leave Troas until an ecclesia had been formed there.

It was difficult work. It had to be maintained whilst Paul was oppressed with the gnawing anxiety of lack of news from Corinth. In spite of the success of his preaching, he "had no rest in his spirit" because he found not Titus his brother" (2Cor. 2:13).

At last the strain became intolerable and, having established an ecclesia at Troas, he felt free to leave for Macedonia.

Chapter 8

GOOD NEWS AT PHILIPPI

Paul's anxiety remained in Macedonia despite the welcome that earnest ecclesias would have given him. It had assisted him in the past in material things, and now tried to help him in his ill-health. This, doubtless, assisted to soothe his feelings, and restore his serenity; but the greatest relief came when Titus also arrived at Philippi bearing good news for Paul: the mission to Corinth had been a great success.

 **MAKING** ship at Troas, Paul and his companions sailed across the Aegean Sea, and landed at Neapolis, the port of Philippi. He was now in Macedonia, and as part of his mission was to take up an ecclesial collection to relieve the wants that afflicted the ecclesias in Judea, Paul made his way to Philippi, which was the foremost city of Macedonia.

Here he enjoyed the fellowship of brethren who had a deep and abiding love for him, and who would not only help to comfort him in his distress of mind and body, but also generously assist with the organising for the benefit of the Jewish ecclesias.

But there was still a lack of news of Titus.

Almost At Death's Door (2Cor. 7:5)

Paul's anxiety became acute. He felt completely frustrated. Sick in mind and in body, he began to fear the worst. He was afflicted with severe depression. "*When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears*" (2Cor. 7:5).

Faith alone could help under such circumstances, and upon it Paul rested. With earnest prayer unto the "God of all comfort" and consolation (2Cor. 1:4; Rom. 15:5), he steeled himself to do the work of the Truth, as far as was physically possible, and even beyond measure, he gave himself to the work of the Truth, debating with outsiders, whilst edifying the ecclesia by exhortation and instruction.

Collection For The Poor

In addition to preaching throughout the ecclesias in Macedonia, the apostle busied himself with organising a collection for the poor of Judea. The generous and warm-hearted Philippians would doubtless respond instantly. This was typical of them. Twice when he was in Thessalonica, immediately after their own conversion, they

had sent relief to him (Phil. 4:16). Again they did the same when he was in Corinth working for Aquila (2Cor. 11:9); and this without request on his part. These had been tokens of gratitude, not from members of an affluent ecclesia, but such as had overflowed out of "the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty" (2Cor. 8:2).

Why did Paul organise such a collection?

Firstly, he had given a solemn undertaking to help the poor (Gal. 2:10), and he was determined to faithfully carry it out. On a previous occasion he had done so (Acts 11:29-30), and now again, as conditions remained difficult throughout Judea, he continued the practice.

Paul saw in such offerings not merely tokens of love, but demonstrations of the unique position of Israel in the sight of Gentile believers. The latter had been made partakers of their spiritual heritage, and should respond with material benefits when they had the means so to do (Rom. 15:27). As far as Jewish believers were concerned, the fact that Gentile believers so liberally and spontaneously responded to their needs, was an evidence that they were one with them in all circumstances (Rom. 15:31).

In Corinth, the fund had been commenced a year before (2Cor. 8:10; 9:2), though due to the strained relations between Paul and the brethren of Corinth, it had been allowed to lapse. One of the duties of Titus was to revive interest in it, and the *First Epistle To The Corinthians* included instructions regarding the method of collecting that should be adopted (1Cor. 16:1).

Whether or not this had been implemented, Paul had no means of knowing until Titus arrived. But meanwhile, the Macedonian contribution could be organised, and doubtless was, whilst Paul waited for Titus.

Therefore, giving himself to prayer and labour Paul filled in the time of waiting. Meanwhile, his health deteriorated; his feeling of depression remained acute; he felt that he was at death's door and despaired of life. The brethren did what they could to comfort him, but never did Paul spend a more difficult time than when he awaited news from the ecclesia in Corinth; an ecclesia for which he had a deep and abiding love.

In fact, it was this Love: Love of God and Love for the brethren that was the cause of the depths of his anxiety. "I will gladly spend and be spent for you," he wrote to the Corinthians (2Cor. 12:15), "though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."

But relief for Paul was on the way.

Chapter 9

TITUS REPORTS TO PAUL

"Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me, so that I rejoiced the more" (2Cor. 7:6-7).

ONE of the best cures for depression is activity. And as a servant of Jesus Christ, Paul faithfully gave himself to the work of the Truth, instead of sinking under the gloom of depression that beset him at that time and distressed him so much.

Among other things, he moved from ecclesia to ecclesia organising a collection to relieve the dire poverty that continued to afflict the Judean ecclesias (2Cor. 8:1; 9:2). It is most likely (though we do not know for sure) that he made Philippi his headquarters.

Titus Meets Paul

If so, then it was to Philippi that Titus eventually made his way, to meet up with the apostle. He did so jubilantly, convinced that Paul would thrill to the news he had to give him, and that it would lift the burden of anxiety which rested so heavily on the shoulders of the apostle.

Titus Delivers the Report

On his part, Paul could hardly believe the account he eventually heard from the lips of Titus. It was better than anything that he had thought possible. The apostle could now see the hand of God in the distressing circumstances that previously had afflicted him, and thus he was enabled to turn in thankfulness and praise to Him as the God of all comfort (2Cor. 1:3). For Titus reported that, rather than being repelled by Paul's letter to them, the brethren in Corinth had been deeply moved by it. It had caused them to consider their own conduct objectively, had forced them to recognise the folly of their ways, and had drawn them more closely to Paul in consequence.

There were three outstanding features manifested by the brethren of Corinth, that gave Paul particular comfort (2Cor. 7:7):

- *They regretted their past misconduct and were moved to open confession and lamentations because of it.*
- *They maintained an attitude of fervent love toward him, which his care of them had increased rather than diminished.*

• *They longed to see him personally, despite the indictment of his forthright letter.*

Their repentance was not a matter of words merely, but of action. Instantly recognising how reprehensible had been the conduct of the erring, incestuous brother referred to by Paul in his first epistle (1Cor. 5:1-13), and how inconsistent in permitting him fellowship they also had been, they had called a general meeting of the ecclesia, and on the vote of the majority (2Cor. 2:6), had excluded him from fellowship.

This, in turn, resulted in a salutary effect upon the one concerned. He had come to acknowledge the error of his ways, with the result that he had broken off the unnatural and evil practice. He now manifested every indication of genuine repentance, and desired to again associate with the ecclesia.

What now should be done? The brethren of Corinth did not want to make a further mistake, and therefore besought the apostle to give direction as to what their course of action should be (2Cor. 2:5-11).

Titus spoke of these things to Paul, and the apostle's heart warmed to the brethren in Corinth. Previous to the coming of Titus, when the burden of depression had been heavily upon him, and he had been filled with foreboding as to how they would react to his letter, he had come to regret the severity of its tone; but now he joyfully realised that it was all for the best (2Cor. 7:8). Not only had they upheld the requirements of the Truth as far as this erring brother was concerned, but they had been moved to grief at the way they had given such concern to Paul.

The apostle determined to put their minds at rest by immediately writing them a further epistle; this time, one of comfort.

Titus had given a vivid picture of the mourning ecclesia. He had described how its members had reacted: their godly sorrow; their earnest desire to clear themselves; the action they had taken against the erring brother; the keen indignation that they felt against themselves because of their previous blindness; their fear that they still may not have done all that Paul desired of them; their vehement desire to meet him personally and lavish their love on him; their zeal to carry out all the apostle's requirements; their avenging of themselves by the action they had already taken (2Cor. 7:11).

Titus thus referred to seven steps that the Corinthian brethren had taken to clear themselves in the sight of the apostle:

First step: a general one: an earnest diligence to carry out all Paul's requirements.

Two steps with regard to themselves: first an apology (to clear themselves), then the manifestation of indignation (regret at their past conduct).

Two steps with regard to Paul: fear (a respect for his decision), and desire (a love for him personally).

Two steps with regard to the offender: zeal (an immediate consideration of his case), and revenge (judicial decision).

**Reason For
Titus' Delay**

The reformation effected by Titus caused the brethren to take action; but it had taken time to effect such a change. It would have been easier, and quicker, to have ordered them to obey the apostolic injunction, but they might have resented such a command, and certainly their action then would not have stemmed from the heart. Titus had stayed longer than was originally intended in order to effect this thorough reformation, so that what had previously been the cause of great concern to Paul, was now found to have been necessary, and the foundation of a greater joy.

It had not been easy for Titus. He had gone through many an anxious moment before he had experienced the success he now reported to Paul. The vote of the ecclesia had not been unanimous (2Cor. 2:6), and Paul still had his enemies in its midst. Nevertheless, the final satisfactory result was one of relief and comfort to Titus, as it was later to Paul: *"Therefore we were comforted in your comfort; yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus because his spirit was refreshed by you all"* (2Cor. 7:13).

Further Trouble

But though Paul rejoiced at the way in which the brethren had responded to his appeal, Titus had further news to break to Paul that was not so good. Probably as he gazed into the anxious face of his friend, and observed the lines of worry and care so deeply etched thereupon, he tactfully had delivered the good news first, before passing onto matters that he knew would give Paul further concern and worry.

However, it had to be told; and so, reluctantly, Titus moved on to make mention of new problems in Corinth. They affected the apostle personally. New enemies, the Judaisers, were raising their heads and challenging his credentials. By undermining his influence they hoped to destroy his doctrine. It was obvious that a further epistle was required from his pen.

Paul's first epistle had effectively silenced the Apollo and the Pauline groups. The first gloried in fleshly wisdom; the second claimed a licence to do as they pleased, which they presumptuously tacked on to the apostle's doctrine of liberty in Christ. They falsely claimed that they were followers of Paul.

Those two groups having been silenced, there remained only the Judaisers. They claimed Peter as their leader — though he would have repudiated it — and proclaimed that justification was by the Law. They had not been dealt with specifically in the first epistle, but it was

obvious that Paul would have to come to grips with them now.

Charges Laid Against Paul

The Judaising group in Corinth had received support through the visit of a number of brethren from Judea, of like persuasion, who arrogantly claimed apostolic authority and were busily engaged in swaying many to their cause (2Cor. 11:4, 13). To do this they sought to undermine Paul's personal character. His change of plans was advanced as evidence of complete unreliability (2Cor. 1:16-18), or of cowardice as being afraid to meet his opponents (2Cor. 1:23); whereas Paul had always had their welfare at heart (2Cor. 2:1-3). They claimed that he corrupted the Word (2Cor. 2:17), and lacking letters of commendation from ecclesias, had not the support of those in authority in Jerusalem (2Cor. 3:1-4). They accused the apostle of dishonesty (2Cor. 4:2; 7:2; 8:20-21), mocked at his personal appearance, ridiculed the simplicity of his speech, accused him of being a paper-soldier: powerful in letter-writing but cowardly in personal discussion (2Cor. 10:9-10; 11:16). They cast doubts upon his apostolic authority (2Cor. 10:8; 11:5), claimed he refused ecclesial maintenance because he knew he was not worthy of it (2Cor. 11:7), and yet inferred his dishonesty in taking up a collection for the poor (2Cor. 12:17). They challenged his doctrine concerning the Law (2Cor. 11:21-22), demanded proof of his apostolic credentials (2Cor. 13:3), and spread rumours doubting his sanity (2Cor. 11:16-19).

It is shocking that a man so dedicated as Paul should be the subject of such charges on the part of those claiming to be his brethren, but his experience was not unique. The prophets suffered similarly, as also did the Lord Jesus; and others, since that time, have felt the biting tongue of jealous, unscrupulous enemies.

This experience on the part of Paul enabled him to fellowship the sufferings of Christ. Doubtless he derived comfort and help through the Lord's own experience and teaching: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Mat. 5:11-12).

Paul Rebuts the Charges

The scandals urged against Paul would have been hard to endure at any time; they were especially so at a time when the apostle was suffering overwhelming distress: a combination of fears without and fightings within, which produced a mental and physical prostration (2Cor. 7:5). Under normal conditions, he could have afforded to ignore such lying charges made against him by such unscrupulous enemies, but to do so now would have been disastrous. It became a

duty and a necessity, no matter how distasteful, to defend himself. Personally he neither required nor cared for any self-defence. But before God in Christ, he felt bound to clear his character from these detestable innuendos, because they were liable, if unnoticed, to hinder his work both in Corinth and elsewhere; and his work had on him a sacred claim.

Hence, though nothing was more repellent to his sensitive humility than any semblance of egotism or boasting, he was driven by the unscrupulosity of his opponents, to adopt such a tone of self-defence, that the word "boasting" occurs no less than twenty times in his epistle. He neither could nor would appeal to any letters of commendation, or to any certificate from his fellow apostles, because he had received his own apostolate direct from God. Hence he was forced to appeal, on the one hand to his visions and revelations; and on the other hand to the seal of approval which in every way God had set on all his activity.

The second Epistle to the Corinthians, therefore, written out of anguish of heart, and by one powerfully stirred by tremendous emotion, is the least systematic of all the epistles of Paul. It has been described as "written with a quill dipped in tears." All the emotions struggle for mastery: joy, relief, anger, concern. It is first one and then the other as he turns from friend to foe. He had experienced joy and comfort from the way in which the brethren of Corinth had responded to his appeal and corrected their previous errors; there was growing concern and anger as he wrote of the efforts of unscrupulous brethren to destroy the work established. He thus wrote to praise, to comfort, to guide, to warn.

He wrote not for his enemies, but for his friends. His epistle expresses warm comfort to those who had heeded his previous letter, whilst it warned against those who resisted his apostolic authority. Thus the word "comfort" occurs some fourteen times. He wrote of the *Source* of comfort (chs. 1:3; 7:6). the *Purpose* of comfort (1:4; 7:13); the *Compensations* of comfort (1:5-6); the *Duty* to comfort (2:7); the *Need* to derive comfort in tribulation (7:4); the *Importance* of recognising the comforting hand of God in adverse circumstances (7:6); the *Mutual* comfort available (7:6; 13); the *Command* to seek divine comfort (14:3).

He answered the charges advanced against him. He explained why he had not been able to visit them previously (chs. 1:15-24; 2:1-3); to praise them for obeying his first letter (7:4, 15); to urge the restoration of the repentant sinner (2:6-9); to warn those who were unrepentant (12:21; 13:2); to challenge false teachers (11:3-4, 13); to vindicate his authority in the ecclesia (ch. 12); to urge them to pay their promised contribution to the Jerusalem Fund (8:10-11).

He also wrote to rebut the scandals circulated against him. He did

not hesitate to plainly reveal his opponents for what they really were. He pointed out that though they criticised him for refusing ecclesial aid, they were not too dignified to take all the material benefit they could extract (ch. 11:20). They might claim to be ministers of Christ, but were they prepared to suffer for the Lord's sake (11:23)? They spoke of visions and revelations, but what if Paul had revealed that which had been granted unto him (12:1-7)? The greatest challenge, however, was not that of personalities and authority, but the fact of false teaching (11:4). They sought to undermine his influence by besmirching his character that they might insinuate their false doctrine.

The epistle, therefore, became one of personal vindication of the apostle himself, comfort and encouragement to the faithful, warning to those who were being influenced by errorists, rebuttal of false claims advanced by the now powerful Judaising group, and, in consequence of all this, the most autobiographical of all Paul's epistles. We know more of the apostle because of this letter than all the other letters he wrote.

Moreover, how divine inspiration is manifested in this epistle! But for Paul's experiences, and the very Providence-controlled circumstances that prevented his personal appearance in Corinth at that moment, this epistle would never have been written, and we would have been denied the great comfort that can be derived as we consider the sufferings and frustrations of Paul in the light of our own experiences.

Let us profit today from Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, as the brethren of that city must have done when they received them at the hands of Titus.

Analysis

PAUL'S SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

Written from Macedonia following the report of Titus of conditions in the ecclesia in Corinth.

Why The Epistle Was Written

To comfort the distressed brethren of Corinth; to advise them to restore the previously erring but now repentant brother, to answer the charges of Paul's enemies, to call upon the brethren to make good their promised contribution to the fund for Jerusalem, and to make arrangements for his own impending visit to the city of Corinth.

Theme:

**CHRIST: THE COMFORT OF GOD TO US
(CONSOLATION)**

Key Passage: *"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God"* (2Cor. 1:3-4).

[1] INTRODUCTION: THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE — chs. 1:1-11.

- a. Salutation vv. 1-2
- b. The Value of Suffering.....vv. 3-7
- c. The Experience of Suffering vv. 8-11

[2] EXPLANATION: PAUL THE MINISTER — chs. 1:12 to 5:21.

- A. Concerning His Motives — chs. 1:12 to 2:11.*
 - (a) The Vindication of Motive vv. 12-22
 - (b) An Explanation of Action v. 23 to ch. 2:4
 - (c) A Direction to Comfort the Repentant vv. 5-11
- B. Concerning the Ministry — chs. 2:12 to 5:21.*
 - (a) The Power of its Message vv. 12-17
 - (b) Paul's Authority Endorsed by the Effect of his Teaching
ch. 3:1-6
 - (c) A Refutation of the Judaisers vv. 7-18
 - (d) His Personal Integrity in Preaching ch. 4:1-6
 - (e) The Tribulations that He Endured in Preaching vv. 7-11
 - (f) The Faith that Sustained Him vv. 12-18
 - (g) His Confidence in Salvation ch. 5:1-10
 - (h) The Cause of His Concern vv. 11-16
 - (i) The Purpose of His Ministry.....vv. 17-21

[3] EXHORTATION: PAUL THE FATHER — chs. 6:1 to 9:15.

- A. Concerning Things Spiritual — chs. 6:1 to 7:16.*
 - (a) An Appeal for Consistency Under All Circumstances
.....ch. 6:1-10
 - (b) An Appeal for Consecrated Living ch. 6:11 to 7:1
 - (c) An Appeal for Continued Loyalty.....ch. 7:2-16
- B. Concerning Things Material — chs. 8:1 to 9:15*
 - (a) An Appeal to Emulate the Example of the
Macedonians in Relieving the Poor. ch. 8:1-8

- (b) An Appeal to Emulate the Example of Christ
by Denying Themselves for Others vv. 9-15
- (c) The Integrity of Those Taking the Collection vv. 16-24
- (d) An Appeal to Them to Vindicate His
Confidence in Them.....ch. 9:1-5
- (e) The Results That Follow the Helping of Others vv. 6-15

[4] VINDICATION: PAUL THE APOSTLE — chs. 10:1 to 12:18.

A. The Critics and their Pretensions — chs. 10:1 to 11:15.

- (a) As an Apostle He Commands Their Obedience ch. 10:1-6
- (b) His Answer to the Criticism of the Christ Party vv. 7-11
- (c) The Claim to Divine Authority Tested vv. 12-18
- (d) Paul's Fear for the Corinthians ch. 11:1-4
- (e) Their Folly in Being Drawn Away by Others vv. 5-15

B. The Apostle and His Credentials — chs. 11:16 to 12:18.

- (a) His Fleshly Qualifications are as High as any
of the Judaisers (the Petrine Party) ch. 11:16-23
- (b) His Sufferings on Behalf of Brethren are
Greater than others vv. 24-27
- (c) His Concern is Personal and Intimate vv. 28-31
- (d) His Dangers Date from his very Conversion vv. 32-33
- (e) His Revelations from God are Greater ch. 12:1-6
- (f) The Physical Infirmities they Despise should
Demonstrate that He is moved by God's power ..vv. 7-10
- (g) His Work and Attitude among them
vindicated his apostleship vv. 11-18

[5] CONCLUSION: FUTURE INTENTIONS — ch. 12:19 to 13:14.

- (a) His Intention in Writing was to Prepare Them
for his Coming ch. 12:19-21
- (b) Let Them Prepare for his Coming, for he would
not Spare ch. 13:1-6
- (c) His Prayer and Desire on their Behalf vv. 7-10
- (d) Final words of Cheer vv. 11-14

It will be seen from the analysis above, that having laid the foundation of his epistle by explaining the value of suffering, and recording his own personal experience of it, Paul spoke to his beloved brethren in Corinth from the standpoint of a Minister of the Gospel; a Father to the Faithful; and Apostle to the Elect; and an Overseer with Authority to Command.

Chapter 10

FURTHER TROUBLE AT CORINTH

Paul's worries did not cease on his arrival at Corinth, for news had come through of the defection of the brethren of Galatia. Thus, once again, the apostle had to take up his pen in defence of the Faith and in rebuke of brethren who should have known better. Shortly afterwards, he wrote to the ecclesia at Rome, to advise the brethren that he hoped to visit them shortly, after which he would take the Gospel into Spain.

PAUL always exercised care to avoid any action on his part that would cause the voice of criticism to be successfully advanced against him, and so weaken the work to which he had dedicated himself.

Therefore, though he engaged himself in raising contributions for the poor-fund to be sent to Jerusalem, he was careful to have it properly accounted for by arranging for representatives of the donating ecclesias to accompany it. They were "chosen of the ecclesias" to travel with Paul that they might be present when the gift was made (2Cor. 8:19).

Labouring Throughout

Macedonia (Acts 20:2) The Macedonian ecclesias, in their typical warm-hearted manner, had enthusiastically responded to the appeal of Paul to assist in the Jerusalem fund, but the same readiness had not been manifested in Corinth. The collection in that ecclesia had lapsed due to the strained conditions between Paul and its members, and it had been the duty of Titus, among other matters, to revive interest in it. He had done so (2Cor. 8:6), but there was need for greater enthusiasm, and Titus was instructed to generate this, that he might "also finish in you [Corinthians] the same gift [grace, the gift of love] also" (v. 6).

Titus went, bearing the letter we know as *The Second Epistle To The Corinthians*. He did not go alone. Paul arranged for him to be accompanied by others who would support him in the work. One of these is called "the brother," and the other "our brother." The former was a brother of highest repute in the local Macedonian ecclesias, who had been appointed by them to be their representative in bearing the gift to Jerusalem (2Cor. 8:16-20). His presence would assist Titus in his exhortation to the Corinthians to be generous in their contribution also. The other brother is described more personally by

Paul as “our brother” whom “we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things.” The personal pronoun, “our,” suggests one closer to Paul than the more impersonal “the” in the former reference, and could well have referred to Luke from Philippi.

Investing Titus with authority to act authoritatively on his behalf (2Cor. 8:23), Paul sent him, with his companions, to Corinth to call upon the ecclesia to show its “proof of love” and Paul’s confidence in it, by its generosity toward the collection, and its faithfulness in repudiating false doctrine.

Meanwhile, Paul remained behind to complete the work in Macedonia. As his assistants, he had Timothy and others (cp. Acts 19:22; 2Cor. 1:1), and with them he planned a campaign to consolidate the work among the local ecclesias before moving south. Accordingly, he “went over those parts,” and then travelled down to Corinth.

Paul in Corinth

How Paul made his way to Corinth, whether by land or sea, is not revealed. Luke passes over the events that took place at that time with the greatest brevity, for they did not have great bearing on the main intention of his narrative.

His delay in Macedonia, after sending Titus to Corinth, was both tactful and valuable, providing opportunity for the Corinthian brethren to consider his letter, and put into effect any reforms necessary, before he appeared on the scene. By the time he arrived in Corinth, the groundwork of reform would have been completed by Titus, and the brethren would have been ready to greet Paul.

Arriving at the city, he was accommodated by Gaius, whose liberal hospitality was well known to all (Rom. 16:23). The brethren knew that he would not take exception to them calling upon the apostle, so that his house became a meeting place for the whole ecclesia, as brethren and sisters took the opportunity of speaking with Paul. Among them he found enthusiastic helpers. There was sister Phebe, who had already rendered valuable service to the local ecclesia, and was ready to do so for Paul. She was a member of the ecclesia at Cenchrea, a port not far distant from Corinth (Rom. 16:1). There was Tertius, a scribe, who was pleased to provide Paul with whatever assistance he required (Rom. 16:22), and undertook to write any letters necessary. There were Timothy and others, who had accompanied Paul, and were inspired by his wonderful example to render similar service (Rom. 16:21).

The mission of Titus had proved successful. Paul found ready response to his appeals. There was now no lack of support for the Jerusalem Fund; on the contrary, the local brethren considered it a pleasure to assist. Thus the ecclesias of Achaia joined with those of

Macedonia in contributing to the Jewish brethren of Judea. By that manifestation of love, Jew and Gentile were drawn together as one in the Truth (Rom. 16:26).

Paul also found that the Truth had made progress in Corinth. There were even some in high positions, including Erastus, the treasurer of the city, who had embraced it (Rom. 16:23). As is often the case, the very troubles the ecclesia had passed through had been an assistance to the Truth inasmuch as its basic principles were better understood as a result.

Trouble in Galatia It was probably about this time that Paul suffered another blow, in that he heard of the defection of many in the ecclesias throughout Galatia. It was with the deepest sorrow that he heard the news; in fact, he could hardly believe what was told him. He recalled the loving ministrations of these warm-hearted, if rather fickle, brethren, when, through illness, he was induced to visit Galatia, and they lavished a tender care upon him as he preached the Word to them.

They had seen in his dedicated life the influence of Christ Jesus, for through Paul the sufferings and sacrifice of the Lord had been plainly placarded among them (Gal. 3:1). Therefore, he was astonished that men and women who had manifested such enthusiasm, should so easily and quickly be swung to a contrary way of thought.

He felt angry resentment arise against the Judaisers, who were intruding themselves into other men's labours, sowing the seeds of discord and error. In an excess of feeling, he "wished they were cut off which troubled them" (Gal. 5:12).

As his informant told of the manner in which the Judaisers, with no personal risk, stole, in his absence, into the folds where the sheep were gathered, to trouble them with their sterile formalisms of a Law they did not understand, and their artificial approach to God Whom they did not worship in truth, his indignation rose against them. He knew the Galatians: the warmth of their affections, the emotionalism of their natures, the fickleness of their attachments, and could understand how they would prove easy victims for the fierce ruthlessness of the Judaising wolves.

Vexed at the vacillating fickleness of the Galatians, and stung with righteous indignation at those who had taken advantage of it, Paul seized his pen to express in the most unmistakable, forthright language his opinion of the shallowness of the deluded, and the worthlessness of the theories to which they had succumbed.

The language is direct, fearless, vigorous. It was no time for the language of diplomacy, for the delicacy of pleading, for polished phrases that might appeal: Paul advanced into the arena as a warrior,

prepared to do battle to the death. In his hands he held the sum that he had been collecting from Gentile believers for "the poor saints of Jerusalem," but in the report from Galatia he had evidence of the bitter hostility that some of those of Jerusalem could expend against the very Truth which was his life. What Paul did he did for Christ, whether it be relief of the poor or attack of the enemy, and so he now wrote a letter of such a kind as would surely make him an enemy of many in Jerusalem.

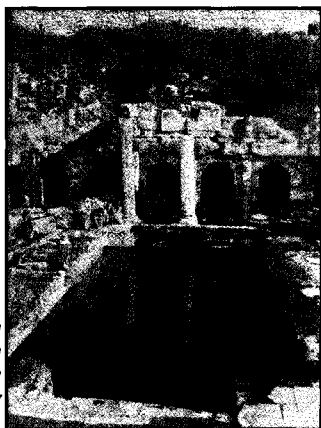
When Was the Epistle to Galatians Written? Many believe that *The Epistle To The Galatians* was the first epistle penned by the apostle Paul, and that it was written before the Jerusalem Conference. However, on pages 177-178 of *The Story Of The Bible*, we have shown that this is impossible, and that those aspects of the chronology of the apostle which can be set down with some certainty, rule out completely the suggestion that the visit to Jerusalem, described in Galatians 2, relates to that recorded in Acts 11:30. We therein showed that Paul's conversion took place about the year AD37, and that the visit to Jerusalem recorded in Acts 11:30; 12:25, took place about AD44-45.

As Paul clearly shows that the visit to Jerusalem recorded in Galatians 2 took place fourteen years after his conversion, it must have referred to his visit to the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15) which would have occurred about AD51.

We mention this, because the biographical note in Galatians 2 is important in establishing the background of the apostle's life, particularly with relation to his visit to Corinth. It may have been that the apostle had heard of the trouble in Galatia before arriving in Corinth, and it may have been early intimation of the defection of the brethren of Galatia that contributed to Paul's ill-health as he hastened from Ephesus to Troas, and on to Macedonia seeking for Titus; and that when he arrived in Corinth his fears were confirmed by the information he then received during his sojourn in the home of Gaius.

All of this contributed to the writing of the fierce little *Epistle To The Galatians*, and the systematic and warning *Epistle To The Romans*.

The Fountain of Pirene in Corinth. The apostle might well have rested in the shade of its quadrangle, or have spoken to those who assembled here after a day of toiling at tent-making.

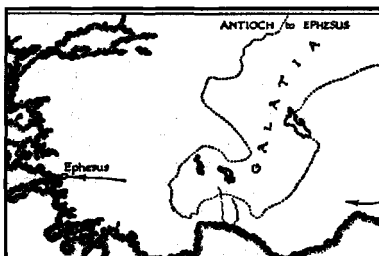


Analysis

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

The Province of Galatia

Galatia, was a Roman Province, including Antioch in Pisidia, Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium. These were visited by the apostle in company with Barnabas on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:14 to 14:26). Overtaken by some physical infirmity, Paul's



course had been changed, and this brought him into the region of Galatia, whereas it had not been his purpose to visit them at all (Gal. 4:13). Ramsay suggests that this was due to an attack of malarial fever brought on during his stay in the low-lying and notoriously unhealthy district of Pamphylia on the south coast (Acts 13:13). It would be natural to go north to Antioch to recuperate, and then, with returning strength, to preach. Thus God over-ruled the movements of Paul to preach the Gospel in a new region. The Galatians had observed how that Paul preached to them out of the depths of his misery due to his physical malady, and in warm gratitude, they had acknowledged their indebtedness to him with many spontaneous tokens of affection (Gal. 4:12-15).

Character of the Galatians

The Galatians were warm-hearted but fickle. This is indicated by the attitude of the people of Lystra, who first desired to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas as to gods, and afterwards to persecute them; then moved by anger, so stoned Paul as to place his life in jeopardy (Acts 14:8-19). They were emotional, eagerly accepting the Truth when it was presented to them, but quickly being led astray by the persuasive eloquence of the Judaisers. It could be said that there was too much head and not enough heart with the Judaisers, and too much heart and not enough head with the Galatians — treating “heart” as emotion, and “head” as knowledge and understanding. Thus the latter were quickly drawn out of the way by scheming and unscrupulous false-teachers.

Theme of the Epistle

Paul's detractors had attacked him personally, for they realised that they had to destroy his influence before they could overthrow

his doctrine. They firstly cast doubts upon his Apostolate, claiming that it came not from God or Jesus Christ, but from men. He was therefore a subordinate of the other twelve; perhaps not a real apostle at all, and thus did not possess full authority.

It was necessary, therefore, for Paul to confirm his authority, which he did in the first two chapters of this epistle, showing that it stemmed from God, and was never subject to any man, whether he be an apostle or an elder like James (chs. 1:1, 15; 2:1, 2, 8-11; 6:17).

His detractors had claimed (doubtless on the grounds that Paul had arranged for Timothy to be circumcised — Acts 16:3) that he preached circumcision when he wanted to, and opposed it when it suited him (Gal. 5:11). The apostle's reply was that if he preached circumcision, why was he persecuted by the Judaisers? This was unanswerable logic, for he could show from the very marks in his body what he was prepared to endure for Christ's sake (ch. 6:17).

The Judaisers set forth the principle that justification was through the Law, and therefore it was necessary to seek it in that direction. Paul answered this error in chapters 3 and 4. Drawing upon the experience of Abraham, he showed that his belief was accounted for righteousness before the establishment of the Law, and in a masterly exposition in a few words, he revealed the purpose and limitations of the Law in relation to justification.

His last two chapters reveal the manner of life expected of those who enjoy liberty in Christ Jesus from the curse of the Law. He is careful to reveal that liberty must not be confused with licence. Whilst one has been delivered from the curse of the Law through forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus, those who proclaim error, even in the name of Christ, remained under the curse (Gal. 1:8). Therefore, liberty in Christ required manifestation of the principles of Christ.

In orderly fashion the epistle expounds experiences *Personal*, teachings *Doctrinal*, and principles *Practical*.

Theme:

CHRIST: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD TO US (SANCTIFICATION)

Key Passages: "*If righteousness come by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain*" (ch. 2:21). "*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness*" (ch. 3:6). "*If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law*" (ch. 3:21). "*We wait for the hope of righteousness by faith*" (ch. 5:5).

- [1] INTRODUCTION AND SALUTATION — ch. 1:1-5.**
 (a) Paul's Apostolic Authority vv. 1-2
 (b) The Ecclesia's Only Source of Grace and Peace vv. 3-5
- [2] THE PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE — ch. 1:6-9.**
 a. A False Gospel Preached vv. 6-7
 b. The Anathema for its Authors vv. 8-9
- [3] NARRATION: PERSONAL DETAILS —
 ILLUSTRATING THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE
 GOSPEL — chs. 1:10 to 2:21.**
 (a) Paul Received it from Christ Direct.....vv. 10-12
 (b) Witnessed by his Remarkable Conversion.....vv. 13-17
 (c) Confirmed by the Endorsement of
 Judean Ecclesias vv. 18-24
 (d) Vindicated in Controversy ch. 2:1-5
 (e) Endorsed by Apostles and Elders.....vv. 6-10
 (f) Demonstrated in Public Debate vv. 11-14
 (g) Proved True by Logical Reasoning vv. 15-21
- [4] EXPOSITION: DOCTRINAL — A DECLARATION OF
 THE GOSPEL — chs. 3:1 to 4:31.**
A. Justification by Faith — ch. 3:1-14.
 (a) An Appeal to Experience vv. 1-5
 (b) Abraham Blessed by Faith vv. 6-9
 (c) Israel Cursed by the Law vv. 10-12
 (d) Christ Redeems from the Curse.....vv. 13-14
B. Faith's Relationship To The Law — ch. 3:15-29
 (a) The Promise vv. 15-18
 (b) The Law vv. 19-24
 (c) The Faith vv. 25-29
C. Relationship of Faith To The Law Illustrated — ch. 4:1-31.
 (a) Childhood and Sonship Contrasted vv. 1-10
 (b) A Personal Appeal Based on Past Relationships vv. 11-20
 (c) The Limitations of the Mosaic Covenant
 Illustrated by Allegory.....vv. 21-31
- [5] EXHORTATION: PRACTICAL — THE DEMANDS OF
 THE GOSPEL — chs. 5:1 to 6:18.**
A. The Call Unto Liberty — ch. 5:1-12
 (a) The Appeal v. 1
 (b) The Alternative.....vv. 2-6
 (c) The Warning.....vv. 7-12

B. Liberty in Reality — ch. 5:13-26.

(a) Not in Licence but in Love vv. 13-15

(b) Not in Indulgence but in Denial vv. 16-26

C. Freedom in Christ Must be Mutually Enjoyed — ch. 6:1-10.

(a) Bearing One Another's Burdens vv. 1-2

(b) Bearing One's Own Burden vv. 3-5

(c) Personal Responsibility vv. 6-10

[6] CONCLUDING REVIEW — ch. 6:11-18.

a. The Epistle Written in Large Letters v. 11

b. A Final Warning Against False Teachers vv. 12-16

c. The Practical Credentials of the Apostle v. 17

d. Closing Benediction v. 18

It is noteworthy, that whereas Paul normally dictated his letters to others (cp. Rom. 16:22), authenticating them with his signature at the end (2Thes. 3:17), apparently he wrote the whole of this epistle himself, his poor eyesight only permitting him to do so in large letters (Gal. 6:11). He was suffering ill-health at the time, and the defection of the Galatians added to his worries. His action in laboriously writing the epistle himself, was designed to impress them with his deep concern for them. The large, clumsy letters in which it might be written would recall to their minds his previous ill-health when in their midst, when, as he reminds them, they had shown such love for him that "if it had been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes, and given them to me" (Gal. 4:15).

PAUL'S NOTABLE EXAMPLE

Notice how the theme of Grace in contrast to the Law runs through this epistle. As Paul looked back on his life, he could observe a divine overshadowing of his development bringing him to the point of proclaiming Christ to the world.

[1] *"It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen"* (Gal. 1:15-16).

How was Christ revealed in the apostle? By the crucifixion of the flesh. Thus:

[2] *"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me"* (Gal. 2:20).

Therefore, whilst Paul by word of mouth preached "Jesus Christ and him crucified," he also exhibited his principles by the

manner of his life. People saw a living witness of Christ in the apostle. He told the Galatians:

[3] *"Jesus Christ hath been openly placarded, crucified before your eyes"* (Gal. 3:1).

What Christ did literally upon the stake, Paul had done figuratively in "crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24); teaching that all who would follow Christ must do likewise. Paul concluded:

[4] *"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"* (Gal. 6:14).

In this statement Paul revealed the sharp line of demarcation that should exist between a son of God and the world. A believer must treat the world as a criminal (crucify it), recognising that the world treats him similarly. Thus there is no basis of affinity between Christ and the world; one must destroy the other.

The four comments above set forth in graduated order what is expected of a believer.

[1] To recognise God's purpose in him calling him to the Truth.

[2] To crucify the flesh that Christ might be revealed in his life.

[3] To openly manifest Christ to others.

[4] To recognise and maintain the sharp separation and antipathy that should exist between the believer and the world.

Paul's Epistle to the Galatians provides many other themes for study and meditation, particularly in relation to the subject of the Atonement.

Priest of the leading pagan deity of the Galatians. Though the people in the cities of Phrygia, including Galatia, observed the cult of the Emperor, the most popular deity was Cybele, the Great Mother. The priest is represented as holding three twigs and fruits, emblems of fertility. By him are ritual cymbals, drum, flute, pipe, scourge and cista.



Chapter 11

FIRST CONTACT WITH ROME

It was obvious to Paul from the beginning of his appointed ministry in the Gospel that ultimately he must take the message to Rome. The very principle that it had to be preached throughout the world "for a witness unto all nations" before the end of the Jewish age would be brought to completion (Mat. 24:14) demanded this. Moreover, the act of mercy that Yahweh had extended to Israel in answer to the prayer of His Son to forgive them (Lk. 23:34 — see "The Story of the Bible," pages 27-28), by arranging for the Gospel in the name of Jesus Christ to be preached first to the Jews (Rom. 1:16), as a final last chance for the nation to repent and be saved from the threatened judgment, required that the Gospel be preached in both Jerusalem and Rome: the respective capitals of the Jewish and Gentile worlds, and the headquarters of the Jews of the land and those of the Diaspora (Dispersion). Thus, as Paul's third missionary journey neared its end, his mind turned to Jerusalem and to Rome. There was a further minor fact that could have added to his desire: two greatly beloved friends of the apostle were missing from the ecclesia at Corinth and had removed to Rome: Priscilla and Aquila (cp. Acts 18:1-2; Rom. 16:3-4). In the epistle that Paul wrote to the ecclesia at Rome to apprise it of his intention of visiting it, he sent greetings to his two friends. We may be sure that on their part they learned of his impending visit with the greatest excitement.

FOR three months Paul remained with the ecclesia at Corinth, instructing the brethren in the Word, proclaiming the Gospel to Gentiles and Jews. The news of the defection of the brethren of Galatia had been a shock to him. He recognised the need for clearly setting out before Gentile Ecclesias a clear exposition of the Atonement, that the members might be equipped to meet and rebut the false teaching of Judaisers.

Among ecclesias that could be affected, was the ecclesia in far-away Rome. Some of his associates in the Truth had taken up their residence there, and through them it was possible for Paul to teach the brethren. There were Aquila and Priscilla, who, at the peril of their own lives, had, on one occasion, defended Paul. They had removed to Rome, and according to the information that he received from them, in typical fashion, had immediately engaged in the work of the Truth, so that their home was open house to the brethren (Rom. 16:3-5).

Doubtless they had kept up a correspondence with Paul, and advised him of the progress of their affairs, and of the Truth in that city.

There was Paul's "well beloved Epaphroditus," who was the first to be baptised in Achaia (v. 5); Mary, who had bestowed much labour on him; Andronicus and Junia, who, in some unrecorded incident, had suffered imprisonment with the apostle for a short time, who were of note among the apostles, and had accepted the Truth before Paul himself (Rom. 16:7). There were others whom Paul knew personally.

Paul, therefore, knew of the development of the Truth in Rome. He had heard of the keen zeal for the Gospel, manifested by the brethren of Rome, so that their "faith was spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1:8). The existence of such a community in a place so isolated from Jerusalem, the presence of so many of his dearly beloved friends in the Truth there, the need to ensure that the facts of the Gospel were firmly entrenched so that there was no possibility of the Judaisers making any impact, as well as the commission given him to preach the Gospel first to the Jews and afterwards to the Gentiles in all possible places, made it extremely desirable for Paul to visit Rome.

He had long thought of this, and planned for it, but had not been permitted to put his plans into effect as yet. He made it a matter of fervent prayer that the way might be opened for him to do so: *"For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift to the end you may be established. That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I would not have you ignorant brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you (but was hindered hitherto), that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles"* (Rom. 1:9-13).

Accordingly Paul made his plans. He would visit Jerusalem to deliver the gift of money with which he had been entrusted to relieve the desperate poverty then experienced by the ecclesias throughout Judea, and then he planned to visit Rome and Spain (Rom. 15:23-24).

Meanwhile, he would send a letter of instruction and encouragement to the ecclesia in Rome. He called for Tertius, and commenced to dictate the most comprehensive and systematic exposition of the Gospel contained in the Word: *"Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God... to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world..."*

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

The Ecclesia in Rome

No record is given regarding the founding of the ecclesia in Rome. It probably came into being by Jews converted at Pentecost and returning to the metropolis. At the time Paul wrote, it was made up of both Jews (Rom. 2:17-19; 4:1; 7:1) and Gentiles (Rom. 1:13; 15:15-16), though it seems that Gentiles predominated at this time. Some two-thirds of the names mentioned in chapter 16 are Greek in origin.

Though Paul had never visited the ecclesia in Rome to the time of writing the epistle, he knew many of its members personally as is shown by the terms of his greetings. Some of them had been his close associates in the work of the Truth elsewhere, such as his faithful friends, Aquila and Priscilla (Rom. 16:3). Most likely he received regular reports from them, for he was familiar with such personal details of how they opened their home to the brethren for ecclesial gatherings (Rom. 16:5).

The ecclesia in Rome, like that in Corinth, existed in an environment of the greatest immorality, corruption and evil. According to the Roman historian, Tacitus, into that city flowed "all things that are vile and abominable, and there they are encouraged." The first chapter of Paul's epistle lists some of these evils; and it speaks well of the brethren that they maintained a consistent standard of behaviour in spite of their surroundings. Indeed, the faith of its members was spoken of throughout the world (Rom. 1:8), but Paul recognised a need to strengthen that faith. His epistle was designed to that end.

The epistle witnesses to three facts that are significant:

- [1] It is significant that this epistle, which outlines the restoration of Israel more than any other (see Rom. 9-11), was written to the ecclesia in the very city that was to bring about the destruction of the Jewish state.
- [2] It is significant, that in all the personal greetings that Paul sent (and there are many — see Romans 16), not a mention is made of Peter, falsely claimed by Roman Catholics to have been bishop at the time.
- [3] It is significant that not one distinguishing doctrine or practice of Rome is referred to in the epistle — no pope, exclusive churchship, dispensations, pardons, indulgences, canonisations, pilgrimages, confessions, purgatories, masses, holy water, christening, rosaries and so forth; but doctrines and instructions

that are diametrically opposed to those of the modern Church of Rome. In other words, whilst the epistle was sent to the ecclesia and accepted by it, the church has rejected it.

Outline of the Epistle

The epistle is divided into three main sections, to which can be added two further minor ones: the Introduction and the Epilogue. These three sections are:

DOCTRINAL: How the Gospel relates to Salvation;

NATIONAL: How the Gospel relates to Israel;

PRACTICAL: How the Gospel relates to Conduct.

Doctrinal: How the Gospel Relates to Salvation

Paul commences by revealing the vital need of a Gospel of salvation. The unrighteousness of man has resulted in the widespread manifestation of God's wrath. Gentile blasphemy and immorality (perhaps revealed in their worst forms in Rome to where the epistle was addressed and in Corinth from where it was written) demanded and received the outpouring of the righteous judgments of God (Rom. 1:18-32).

But Jewish formalism likewise failed to measure up to the requirements of Yahweh, and earned similar judgment (Rom. 2; cp v. 24). Despite the great privileges granted to Israel, the nation, as a whole, failed to adequately respond, and generally the people sought justification by deeds of the Law, failing to recognise that the Law cursed sinners (Rom. 3:1-18). Therefore, there was no promise of life in the Law to those who broke it, no basis for forgiveness in the absence of the Redeemer who had come, and whose sacrifice was typified by those under the Law. Justification, real forgiveness, was only possible by faith. Further, as God was God of Gentiles as well as of Jews, justification was possible to both on this common basis (Rom. 3:19-21). Outside of Christ, it is impossible for man to be justified in God's sight (Psa. 143:2; Ecc. 7:20; 1Cor. 1:30).

Paul's proposition as stated in this first portion of the epistle, therefore, is this: Seeing that God's wrath is revealed against both Jews and Gentiles because of unrighteousness, where is righteousness to be found? It is not found in hypocritical Judaism (Rom. 2:1-6); it is not set forth in a formalised ritual of religion, nor in striving for justification from a law it was impossible to keep (Rom. 2:17-22; 3:20); but only in the recognition of the reality of sin, man's dire need for forgiveness and redemption, and the seeking of such through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

He shows that righteousness is first *imputed* (Rom. 3:21 to 7:6), and then *imparted* (Rom. 8).

As a skilful advocate, Paul argues and proves that Gentiles believing and accepting Christ, have just as solid a title to the blessings of God's Covenant and Gospel as have the Jews.

He shows that the racial plight is twofold. Firstly, both Jew and Gentile have sinned (Rom. 2:12); secondly, they are both "in sin," both subject to a state of things brought about by sin, and that leads to sin, and are therefore "under sin" (Rom. 3:9-10).

"Sins" (actual transgressions) are dealt with first judicially then experimentally. First (see Romans 3:21 to 4:25) Christ is set forth as the propitiation (or mercy seat) through which alone forgiveness can be obtained (Rom. 3:21-31). Paul shows, by reference to Abraham and David, that the principle of justification by faith is clearly set forth in the Old Testament (Rom. 4). Next, Paul shows the effect experimentally on the believer. He receives peace with God, access to Him by faith, and love poured into the heart so that he responds back to God in love (Rom. 5:1-11). He learns to love God because God has revealed love to him in drawing him to the Truth and providing a cover for sins.

"Sin" (singular as relating to the lusts of the flesh) is also dealt with first judicially then experimentally. Judicially in Rom. 5:12 to 7:6, where reference is made to the federal headship of Adam, the change of allegiance to a new master in baptism, the new "marriage" by which one is joined to Christ. Experimentally, in the actual impact of "sin" on one ("the things that I would do, I do not;" Rom. 7:7-24), and then the deliverance from this state culminating in a physical change (Rom. 7:25; ch. 8).

National: How the Gospel Relates to Israel

Paul expounds upon the standing of Israel in the sight of Yahweh: Past, Present, and Future, which aspects can be considered as *Selection* (Rom. 9), *Rejection* (Rom. 10), and *Restoration* (Rom. 11). The apostle explains that the temporary setting aside of Israel as a nation in favour of Gentiles does not annul God's purpose with the former, for it is but an extension of the very principle by which Yahweh originally selected Israel. That was on the basis of God's Will, and not personal merit (Rom. 9:11). Israel was not greater than other nations so as to justify such a selection, but it was done because the nation was "beloved for the fathers' sake." Therefore, God could extend the same privilege to Gentiles without setting aside principle (Rom. 9:14-15). Jacob was selected at the expense of Esau before either had done good or ill, though the record of history reveals that choice was a wise one

based upon divine knowledge. In view of that fact, faith should accept that a similar choice of Gentiles by God would likewise be both wise and good. In a masterly fashion, the apostle shows that this is accomplished by God without setting aside His purpose with Israel, which is not subject to change (Rom. 11:29). Therefore, ultimately, "all Israel" (i.e., all the tribes) shall be saved, and "the Deliverer shall come to turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:26).

Practical: How the Gospel Relates to Conduct

There is a systematic development in this epistle. The doctrine of salvation which comprises its first section, lays the foundation for acceptable living in Christ; God's treatment of Israel which comprises the second section, reveals that there must be a practical outworking of right conduct; and the instruction that follows in the third section, sets down the practical principles which believers should follow in their manifestation of the Truth.

This section of the epistle, like the former sections, is divided into clearly defined parts. Social, civil and ecclesial responsibilities are set forth in that order. Chapter 12 lists the first, calling upon believers to "be not conformed to this world" (v. 2). Chapter 13 sets forth the second, commencing: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" (v. 1). Chapter 14 treats with the third: "Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations..." (v. 1).

This section reveals how closely each member of an ecclesia should be bound to the other. It reveals the ecclesia as a living organism rather than a dead organisation: each member drawn together as one in Christ. It constitutes the multitudinous Christ, and as such, each member must assume the responsibilities of his or her call.

Thus Paul taught the brethren in Rome that the doctrine of salvation in Christ is more than a legalistic theory. It is a way of life that must be reflected in action, in a transformed character, before it can be really claimed that one has found the Truth.

Theme:

CHRIST: THE POWER OF GOD TO US (JUSTIFICATION)

Key Passage: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16-17).*

[1] INTRODUCTION — ch. 1:1-15.

- (a) Salutation vv. 1-7
- (b) Paul's deep interest in the welfare of the Ecclesia....vv. 8-12
- (c) His desire to visit it to fulfil his debt to all vv. 13-15

[2] DOCTRINAL: HOW THE GOSPEL RELATES TO SALVATION — Ch. 1:16 to 8:39.

A. Condemnation: ch. 1:16 to 3:20.

- (a) The Gospel's transforming power vv. 16-17
- (b) God's wrath manifested against blasphemy
and immorality vv. 18-32
- (c) Jewish Condemnation of Gentiles Illogical if
the same principles are followed ch. 2:1-5
- (d) A Day of Judgment impending for those in light.....vv. 6-16
- (e) Mere Jewish formalism will not save in that day ..vv. 17-29
- (f) The Proof of Scripture for this ch. 3:1-20

B. Justification — ch. 3:21 to 5:21

- (a) The Law Condemned, therefore Justification
must be sought elsewhere vv. 21-31
- (b) Abraham received justification by faith not law.....ch. 4:1-5
- (c) David described the benefits of Justification by faith vv. 6-8
- (d) Abraham's case proves that formal circumcision
is not necessary. vv. 9-12
- (e) Abraham's Justification came before the Law vv. 13-17
- (f) Abraham's life provides an example of faith
to be emulated.....vv. 18-25
- (g) The benefits of Justification ch. 5:1-11
- (h) How God made it effective for all mankind vv. 12-21

C. Sanctification — ch. 6:1 to 8:17

- (a) Manifested by a new way of life.....ch. 6:1-14
- (b) Manifested by a change of masters vv. 15-23
- (c) Likened to a new marriage ch. 7:1-6
- (d). Not that the Law is evil. vv. 7-12
- (e) Nor itself responsible for death vv. 13-23
- (f) But because of the weakness of flesh deliverance
can only come through Christ vv. 24 to ch. 8:4
- (g) The triumph of the Spirit over the Flesh vv. 5-11
- (h) The manifestation of the spirit-life leads to the
maturity of sonship vv. 12-17

D. Glorification — ch. 8:18-39

- (a) The ultimate manifestation of the Sons of God
by a change of nature vv. 18-25
- (b) What Christ is now, we can become vv. 26-30
- (c) Victory can be ours for God is on our side vv. 31-39

[3] NATIONAL: HOW THE GOSPEL RELATES TO ISRAEL

— ch. 9:1 to -11:36.

A. Selection — ch. 9.

- (a) Paul's love of Israel ch. 9:1-5
 - (b) Israel's disbelief does not frustrate God's
purpose of Election vv. 6-13
 - (c) Nor does election imply unrighteousness on
God's part vv. 14-18
 - (d) There is always wisdom and purpose behind
God's choice vv. 19-24
 - (e) Both Gentiles as well as Jews are the subjects of
His choice vv. 25-29
 - (f) Selection demands the manifestation of faith vv. 30-33
- ##### *B. Rejection — ch. 10*

- (a) The cause of Israel's failure ch. 10:1-4
- (b) The Law revealed faith is necessary vv. 5-10
- (c) Scripture predicted opportunity would be given
to Gentiles as well as Jews vv. 11-15
- (d) Scripture shows that some would harden themselves
against God's mercy vv. 16-18
- (e) Israel rejected the message, so God turned
to Gentiles vv. 19-21

C. Restoration — ch. 11

- (a) Israel's rejection never absolute —
a remnant saved ch. 11:1-10
- (b) Israel's rejection only temporary vv. 11-24
- (c) The secret of the restoration revealed vv. 25-32
- (d) The depths of God's wisdom revealed in
His plan of national redemption vv. 33-36

[4] PRACTICAL: HOW THE GOSPEL RELATES TO

CONDUCT — ch. 12:1 to 15:13

A. Social Responsibilities — Rom. 12

- (a) The root: consecration and renewal ch. 12:1-2
- (b) The fruit: Service and love to others vv. 3-21

B. Civil Responsibilities — Rom. 13.

- (a) Its expression: conscientious submission ch. 13:1-7
- (b) Its foundation: love to one's neighbour vv. 8-10
- (c) Its urgency: the times demand observance
of these principles vv. 11-14

C. Ecclesial Responsibilities — Rom. 14:1 to 15:13

- (a) The principle: mutual consideration ch. 14:1-23
- (b) The incentive: Christ's example ch. 15:1-13

[5] EPILOGUE: PERSONAL MATTERS

— Rom. 15:14 to 16:27.

- (a) Paul's confidence in the brethren ch. 15:14-21
- (b) His desire and intention of visiting them.....vv. 22-24
- (c) His prior mission to Jerusalem.....vv. 25-29
- (d) His plea for their prayers vv. 30-33
- (e) Personal greetings.....ch. 16:1-16
- (f) Final warning and encouragement vv. 17-20
- (g) Greetings from fellow-workers vv. 21-24
- (h) Final benediction vv. 25-27

The main divisions suggested above are established by Paul, who concluded each section with appropriate praise to Yahweh. See Romans 8:38-39; 11:33-36; 15:13; 16:25-27.



Near this temple was the first Christian meeting-place in Corinth. The wide sweep of landscape beyond the site of ruined Corinth is treeless, except for the pillared cypresses, fit associates for the seven remaining columns of the temple of Apollo. In the background, the mountains of "Golden Greece" vary in the sunlight from honey-colour to warm russet. This Doric ruin was an important pagan sanctuary in the Apostolic Age, and an active centre of the city's debased forms of idolatry. On the height of Acro-Corinth — not seen in the picture — stood the temple of Aphrodite, where corrupt rites were practised. From such contaminating influences, Paul laboured with personal exhortation and written word to free his converts, whose first meeting-place was on the Lechaëum Road, within sight of these columns.

Chapter 12

PAUL LEAVES CORINTH FOR TROAS (Acts 20:3-6)

Paul's work in Corinth having been successfully completed, he made arrangements to return to Jerusalem. However, his preaching in Achaia had antagonised the Jews so much that they plotted to destroy him, and this forced upon him a change of plans.

 **HE** writing of *The Epistle to the Romans* was probably among the last duties that occupied the apostle's time before leaving Corinth. It was committed into the care of Phebe, an outstanding sister of the neighbouring ecclesia of Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, about nine miles (14 kms) from the city (Rom. 16:1).

Phebe, possibly a widow, or unmarried, possessed considerable wealth, for she enjoyed the independence and means to act as Paul's messenger. She was noted for her liberality in the local ecclesia (Rom. 16:2), and had assisted Paul personally, so that he had no hesitation in commending her to the ecclesia at Rome.

After a three months' stay in Corinth, Paul arranged to take ship directly to Syria to return to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25). However, as the boat was about to sail, and evidently whilst Paul was on board, he was informed of a plot against his life by the Jews. The details are not given. Scenes of tumult, violence, near escape and dangerous adventure, were so frequent in the life of Paul, that many are not recorded. It had become a feature of his life with which he was thoroughly familiar, as he told the Corinthians (2Cor. 11:23).

In this case, the plot was so desperate as to cause Paul to change his plans. He left the ship, and arranged to return through Macedonia. There travelled with him a deputation of brethren, who were evidently the representatives of ecclesias bearing the gift for the ecclesias of Judea. Paul had insisted upon the various ecclesias choosing representatives to accompany the gift to Jerusalem (2Cor. 8:19), and those who now travelled with him evidently did so on behalf of the various communities.

Thus the Galatian Ecclesias (1Cor. 16:1) were represented by Gaius of Derbe and Timothy; the Macedonian Ecclesias by Sopater of Berea and Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica; the Asian Ecclesias by Tychicus and Trophimus.

There seems one notable exception. The ecclesias of Achaia (Corinth, Cenchrea, Athens) were not represented. Unless it be, as would appear most likely, that the Corinthian Ecclesia insisted upon Paul being their representative, as a slight compensation for the

trouble it had given him, and in witness of their confidence in him.

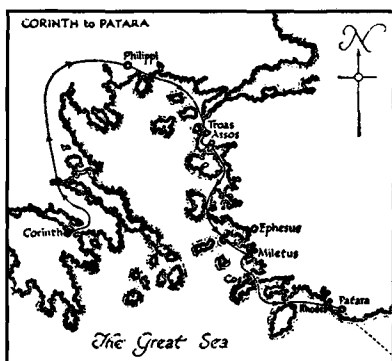
Moving up through Macedonia they came to Philippi. Here Paul again met up with "Luke the beloved Physician," who had evidently returned to his home ecclesia. Doubtless, at the express request of the Philippian ecclesia, which, time and again, had shown its warm-hearted love for the apostle by assisting him in material things, Paul was induced to remain with them for a short time longer. Therefore, sending the others on to Troas, he arranged to stay in Philippi until after the Passover.

We can imagine how this ecclesia which had such love for Paul and for whom he had such deep affection, would enjoy the quiet interlude. They would observe, with deepest sympathy, the marks of suffering on his face; they had seen him earlier so ill and depressed, and yet so patient and considerate as he awaited the arrival of Titus and news from Corinth; and now they had opportunity to lavish upon him some of the tenderness that they felt for him.

A Slow Journey to Troas

On the conclusion of the Feast of Passover, Paul and Luke made their way from Philippi to the adjacent port of Neapolis, and took ship for Troas. The winds were evidently contrary, for five days were occupied in sailing, in contrast to two days on a previous occasion when the winds were favourable and voyage swift (cp. Acts 16:11; 20:6).

This slight detail has become of importance in a doctrinal controversy. It is alleged by some (such as the community of "Jehovah's Witnesses") that communion in the form of consuming bread and wine should be only practised once a year, at Passover. It is claimed in support of this, that when Paul "broke bread" with the disciples in Troas (Acts 20:7), he did so on the "first sabbath" after Passover. But the stated delay in the apostle's journey is fatal to the theory. Paul had remained in Philippi for the full eight days of the "feast of unleavened bread" (which in itself, would take him beyond the "first sabbath" after Passover), and then had been delayed a further five days crossing the water. He remained a further seven days in Troas, the last day of which was a "first day of the week" on which he enjoyed communion with the brethren. Obviously, his original intention had been to leave Philippi with sufficient time to arrive in Troas before the "first day of the week," in order to be with the brethren as they met to remember Christ, but he had been prevented from doing so by the contrary winds. This caused him to await there a further seven days.



Chapter 13

THE RAISING OF EUTYCHUS

(Acts 20:7-12)

It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and the stormy winds that delayed Paul's arrival at Troas were to the benefit of the ecclesia in that city, giving them opportunity to engage in a seven days' special effort with the apostle. Many long hours were occupied in the exposition of the Word, so that by the end of the week, some were feeling tired. Eutychus was among such, and during the course of a long address by the apostle, he fell out of the window, and was taken up dead. In the mercy of the Father, however, life was restored through the instrumentality of the apostle.

FOR seven days, Paul remained with the ecclesia in Troas ministering to their needs, expounding the Word, and probably preaching it to strangers as opportunity afforded.

The presence of the apostle with his travelling companions would have provided the basis of a most exciting week of activity for the ecclesia, and doubtless the brethren took full opportunity of the occasion.

Memorial Meeting in Troas

On the conclusion of the seventh day of the week, and as the "first day" of the next week commenced, the ecclesia met together as normal to "break bread."

The Jewish day commences from what we would call 6pm the previous day. Thus on six o'clock Saturday, the "first day of the week" (we call it Sunday) commenced. This was a most appropriate time for believers to meet to remember their Lord, for it was at such a time that Jesus rose from the dead (Mat. 28:1). The apostles normally attended the synagogues on the seventh day to proclaim the Gospel to the Jews (Acts 17:2), and therefore met with the brethren on the "first day of the week" (1Cor. 16:2).

Though this was apostolic custom, no express command is given to meet on either the first or the seventh day. The "first day of the week," is not a "holy day" such as the Sabbath was appointed under the Law, but provides believers, both then and now, with the best opportunity to regularly meet together for the purpose of communion. They met on a stated time, and the apostolic command is that believers should "not forsake the gathering of themselves together" (Heb. 10:25).

How were Memorial Meetings conducted in those early days? Very similar to the way we do today. One ancient writer, Justin Martyr, described the conduct of such a meeting in the following manner:

"On the day which is called Sunday, all who dwell in town or country come together in one place. The memoirs of the apostles, and the writing of the prophets are read for a certain time, and then the President of the meeting, when the reader has stopped, makes a discourse, in which he instructs and exhorts the people to the imitation of the good deeds of which they have just heard. We then all rise up together, and address prayers; and when our prayers are ended, bread and wine are brought and the President, to the best of his ability, offers up both prayers and thanksgiving, and the people assent saying, 'Amen!' And then the distribution of the bread and wine, over which the thanksgivings have been offered, is made to all present, and all partake of it."

We can imagine Paul at such a gathering with the brethren in Troas. It is some time after 6pm on what we would call a Saturday, but to them, with Jewish reckoning in mind, it commences the first day of the week. They are gathered in a home of the members to remember the sacrifice of Christ in the way appointed, and the room is crowded. The Scriptures have been read, and the apostle called upon to speak.

The brethren hearkened to a man who knew what sacrifice meant; whose very body showed the marks of persecution, and whose life was a complete dedication to the cause. There were no empty platitudes in his talk, no pretty language designed to attract without real meaning; but direct, forthright exposition of the Word, compelling in its power.

All present knew that Paul was to depart on the morrow, and were prepared for a long session. They realised that now was the opportunity to hearken to an incomparable exposition of the Word, and therefore they began to ply him with questions.

The address became a very lengthy one, and was prolonged until midnight. As the hours ticked away, the room became rather warm and the atmosphere heavy. There were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together, and these made the crowded room even hotter, causing drowsiness more readily.



One young man, Eutychus by name, gradually felt tiredness overcoming him. He desperately

tried to keep his eyes open, but continually found himself nodding until finally "he sunk down with sleep."

Unfortunately he was sitting on the window-ledge of the lattice, which was wide open to allow air into the room. As sleep claimed him, he overbalanced, and fell out of the third-storey window to the ground below. Horror-stricken, the assembled company hastened down to the yard below to find poor Eutychus huddled up on the ground, dead. A cry of horror arose from the company; it was a tragic ending to what had previously been a most happy occasion. But Paul, making his way through them, fell on Eutychus, and embracing him, called upon the brethren to cease their weeping.

"*Make no ado,*" he said, "*for his life is within him.*"

It was a striking testimony to the power of God, comparable to the raising of Dorcas by Peter. The brethren were deeply moved by



wonder at the miracle. As for Paul, he left the young man to the care of others who probably returned him to his home for rest and quiet, and ascending to the upper chamber, continued his discourse. After they had enjoyed communion by the breaking of bread, the assembled company shared a meal together.

It was now early in the morning, but still the conversation continued. The formal part of the meeting having been completed, the time was now taken up by informal conversation. This continued until the break of day.

Later that morning, the whole company proceeded to the harbour where Paul and his companions were to take ship for Assos, some twenty-four miles (39 kms) distant. There Eutychus also made his way. He looked quite well, and none the worse for his strange adventure the night before, which comforted them all not a little.

Eutychus certainly experienced the meaning of his name which signifies *Good Fortune*. His greatest fortune, however, was that he made contact with the Truth and Paul.

Paul Walks to Assos (Acts 20:13-14)

In order to reach Assos, the next port of call, the boat had to negotiate Cape Lectum, which considerably lengthened the journey. On the other hand, the journey by land cuts directly across the promontory. This meant that it was possible to walk the distance in the time that it would take the ship to sail it. Requesting his companions to take the ship, Paul decided to exercise himself by

walking the twenty-odd miles (32 kms). It provided opportunity for quiet meditation and communion with God, through pleasant countryside, and along good roads. It was a relaxation for which he felt the need, for the tension on the apostle over the past months had been extreme. Even the drain on energy induced by the constant expositions, exhortations, and conversation of the last few days had been considerable, and the apostle felt the need to replenish his nervous energy.



In addition to which, in every place that the apostle had visited since leaving Corinth he had received warning through the Holy Spirit that “bonds and afflictions” awaited him in Jerusalem (Acts 20:23). To be forewarned is to be forearmed, and the apostle felt the need of constant communion with God to prepare for whatever lay before him. So he commenced his lonely walk to Assos.

By Ship to Miletus (Acts 20:14-15)

At Assos, Paul again met up with his companions, and took his place with them on the ship. The moonless nights (it being now well after Passover) made sailing at night dangerous in view of the many islands that dot the waters of the Aegean at that point, and this resulted in many stops. But by day, it must have been both pleasant and relaxing. Sailing close to the land, they would have the advantages of a sea-voyage as well as enjoyable and varied scenery; whilst the time doubtless was spent most profitably in quiet and relaxing conversation around the Word. What an opportunity that would have been! How delightful to enjoy such a voyage in company with a man of such knowledge as Paul! No wonder Luke takes time to tell us of the short voyage. It was a serene, pleasant interlude in the life of Paul, a great contrast to the agitation and controversy that normally marked his course.

So they sailed to Mitylene, the capital of the island of Lesbos, providing a deep and spacious harbour on its north-east coast. Temporarily stopping there, they again set sail, and the next day passed along the narrow strait that divides the mainland from the Island of Chios. The next day they arrived at Samos, a large island opposite Ephesus; and the following day they came to Miletus.*

* The A.V. states that “we tarried at Trogyllium.” It is “the rocky extremity of the ridge of Mt. Mycale, on the Ionian coast, between which and the southern extremity of Samos the channel is barely a mile wide.” The statement, however, is omitted by many versions, and is not included in the Revised Version.

Chapter 14

WITH THE ELDERS OF EPHEBUS (Acts 20:16-38)

Paul was anxious to bypass Ephesus, for he knew that should he visit that ecclesia, the members would not permit him to leave until he had ministered to their needs. It was important to his purpose to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost, and having delayed at Philippi and Troas, he had no time to stop at Ephesus. However, the ship was due to stop at Miletus sufficiently long enough for the elders of the ecclesia at Ephesus to make their way to the harbour and meet Paul for a final word of instruction and exhortation.

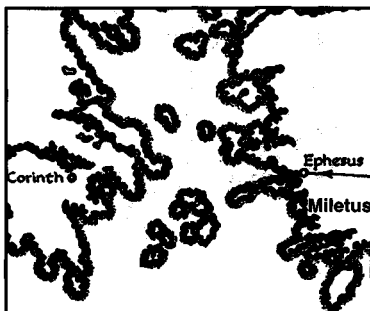
IN the days of Paul, Miletus was an important commercial and maritime centre, situated about 28 miles (45 kms) south of Ephesus, and on the south-west coast of the Gulf of Latmos. This Gulf has since silted up, so that today Miletus lies about eight miles (13 kms) inland.

At Miletus, the vessel stopped for sufficient time for Paul to despatch a messenger to Ephesus, and apprise the elders of the ecclesia that he would be at the harbour for a short time, prior to moving on to Jerusalem, and would like to meet them again if possible.

The invitation was eagerly accepted. The elders of the ecclesia in Ephesus had a deep and abiding love for the apostle, and were anxious to meet him. Moreover, the day was most propitious, for it was again the "first day of the week."*

Paul's Speech

Paul enjoyed communion with the company of elders and disciples who arrived from Ephesus, and then concluded with a farewell address of warning and exhortation. As he recounted to them the experiences of the past they relived again the exciting moments of debate and opposition they had gone through. They acknowledged that Paul not only believed and proclaimed the Truth, but lived it as well. His speech was an epitome of his preaching.



** Paul left Troas on Monday, arrived in Assos on Tuesday, reached Mitylene on Wednesday, proceeded to Chios on Thursday, harboured at Samos on Friday, and disembarked at Miletus on Saturday, enabling the elders to make their way to him on Sunday.*

Paul's Address to The Elders of Ephesus

THE CALL AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TRUTH

It was a sad, yet vital moment with the brethren from Ephesus as the apostle set before them his last words. He was about to leave them, and would see them no more in his mortality. He knew the dangers facing the Brotherhood of those times, as we recognise similar problems today, and therefore felt the need to straightly tell them of those false brethren that they had to avoid, and of the foolish teachings that enemies of the Truth would present. His words are full of emotion, and worthy of the utmost consideration. The address is recorded in Acts 20:18-35, and further details are to be found in "The Christadelphian Expositor: Acts." He declared:

His Humble Dedication to a Difficult Task — vv. 18-19.

"You yourselves are well acquainted with my way of life among you from the first day that I set foot in the province of Asia, and how I continued afterward, serving the Lord with all humility in tears and in the midst of adversity and trials which befell me, due to the plot of the Jews" (these are not recorded).

The Fidelity and Thoroughness of His Preaching — vv. 20-21.

"I kept back nothing from you that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, from house to house, constantly and earnestly bearing testimony both to Jews and Greeks, urging them to turn in repentance to God and manifest faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

His Determination to Complete the Ministry Set Him — vv. 22-24.

"And now you see, I am going to Jerusalem, bound by the Spirit, obligated and compelled by it, not knowing what will befall me there; except that the Holy Spirit clearly and emphatically affirms to me in city after city that imprisonment and suffering await me. But none of these things move me; neither do I esteem my life dear to myself, if only I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry entrusted to me by the Lord Jesus, faithfully to attest the Gospel of God's grace."

The Responsibility Now Resting Upon the Elders — vv. 25-31.

"And now observe, I perceive that all of you, among whom I have gone in and out proclaiming the kingdom, will see my face

no more. Therefore I testify and protest to you on this our parting day that I am clean and innocent and not responsible for the blood of any of you. For I never shrank or kept back or fell short from declaring to you the whole purpose and plan and counsel of God. Take heed, therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the ecclesia of God which he has purchased with His own blood.* For I know this, that after my departing shall ferocious wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and even of your own selves shall men arise, speaking distorted and corrupt things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore be always alert and on your guard, and remember, that by the space of three years, I ceased not to seriously admonish, advise and exhort you one by one with tears.”

His Commendation of Them to God and the Word — v. 32.

“And now, brethren, I commit you to God, I deposit you in His charge, entrusting you to His protection and care. And I commend you to the Word of His grace, to the commands and counsels and promises of His favour. It is able to build you up and to give you inheritance among all God’s sanctified ones.”

His Example of Integrity and Liberality in the Gospel — vv. 33-35.

“I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold or costly garments. You yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have given you an example in all things how that so labouring you ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said: It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

This speech epitomised Paul’s completely dedicated ministry. In spite of plots against his life and opposition to his preaching, he consistently and humbly laboured in continuous service to assist others to life eternal.

* The literal Greek is ‘*dia tou aimatos kou idiou*,’ “the blood of His own.” It was the work of God, but the blood-shedding was of His Son, the Lord Jesus.

His determination was well-known to them. Even then, as he steadily pursued his journey toward Jerusalem, it was with the realisation, made known to him by the Holy Spirit, that bonds and afflictions awaited him in that city.

But the knowledge of what awaited him in Jerusalem did not deter the apostle. He had a duty to proclaim the Truth there, and was determined to fulfil it. Meanwhile, the circumstances would be such, that they were to see his face no more in that life.

Therefore, there was a need for the elders to accept the responsibilities of their position, and equip themselves to faithfully minister to the flock that had been purchased with such a price as the "precious blood of Jesus." It was particularly necessary for them to do this in view of his warning that ferocious wolves would attack the flock, and, that of their own selves, men would arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them.

The apostle had given them an example of what they should do. He had given himself incessantly to the study and exposition of the Word, whilst, at the same time, ministering to his own material necessities, and, by incredible labour, similarly helping those who laboured with him. That work was now theirs to perform.

Paul concluded his comments (v. 35) with a statement of the Lord Jesus that is not recorded elsewhere. Evidently this was one of the many sayings of Christ that were carefully preserved by word of mouth, but which, as John observes (Jn. 21:25), were not specifically recorded by pen. Calling upon the elders to recognise that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," Paul concluded his address.

The Tearful Farewell Paul's words brought a pall of sorrow over the little community. Emotionally moved by the occasion, the apostle kneeled down, to lead them in prayer. They, too, were deeply affected by the occasion. Paul's speech had recalled to them the unwearied labour, the deep humility, and the loving consideration that he had ever manifested toward them. They realised that they were losing a father and a friend, and overpowered with the touching solemnity of the occasion, one after another broke down in unrestrained weeping. They sorrowed most of all over the statement that the Holy Spirit had revealed that they should see his face no more. Each one embraced the apostle, and kissed him farewell in the depth of their affection.

They then accompanied him to the ship upon which he embarked with his friends. Soon he was on his way, and his brethren of Ephesus, waving their hands in tearful farewell, receded into the distance. They returned to Ephesus, saddened by the knowledge that they would see his face no more, but buoyed up in determination to maintain the principles he had so clearly set before them, in hope of meeting him at the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God (Rev. 2:1-3).

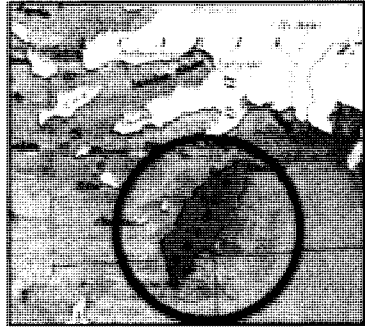


Chapter 15

SEVEN DAYS AT TYRE (Acts 21:1-6)

The apostle left the group at Miletus to take ship bound for Patara. Later, arriving at Tyre, and associating with the brethren there, Paul received further warning of the fate that awaited him in Jerusalem.

On board ship, the winds proved favourable and the vessel made good progress in a straight course unto Coos, modern Stanchio, and the next day arrived at Rhodes, an island with a capital of the same name. It was usual for ships to stop at Rhodes, but Luke does not indicate whether they did so or not.



From Miletus to Patara

If they did, it was only a short stop, and they moved on to Patara, a large city of great magnificence on the coast of Lycia. This was evidently the terminus of the ship's journey, and there they disembarked.

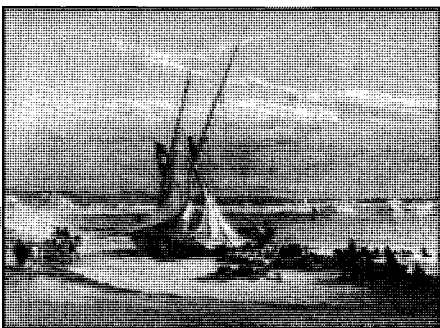
From Patara to Tyre At Patara, they were fortunate to find a ship about to sail direct to Phoenicia. This direct route, instead of following the coast along to their destination, greatly shortened their journey. They secured berths, and went aboard. Once more they were favoured by the wind, and were swiftly borne along their course. Soon the large island of Cyprus came into view, and as they passed it, Paul may have recalled his earlier adventures when he set out with Barnabas and Mark.

Shortly after they were entering the harbour of Tyre: journey's end as far as that vessel was concerned. Here it was due to have its cargo unladen.



Seven Days With the Ecclesia at Tyre

There was a small ecclesia at Tyre, though Paul was ignorant of its whereabouts. However, a search being made, they located the brethren and arranged for a seven days' stay. How the local brethren would have rejoiced at the opportunity of having the apostle and his associates in their midst for a week's effort! We can be sure that they took every opportunity to profit from his presence, and by



the rich gems of Truth he was able to impart unto them. During his sojourn there, some of the members, through the power of the Holy Spirit, predicted that bonds and afflictions awaited him at Jerusalem.

The prophecy caused general dismay. They recognised that it had been given by the Spirit, and therefore would be fulfilled. They pleaded with Paul to avoid Jerusalem at that time.*

Did Paul do wrong in moving on to Jerusalem in spite of this Spirit-utterance? By no means, or he would have desisted. What then was the purpose of these Spirit-inspired prophecies? They were a witness and an example to the people. They saw the determination of the apostle in his desire to fulfil the will of the Father in spite of the troubles that faced him, and recognised that he was moved by a burning zeal to further the cause of the Truth, an attitude that they should emulate (see 2Cor. 6:4-7; 1Cor. 4:9).

The week's activity at Tyre permitted the apostle and his travelling companions to enjoy communion with the local ecclesia. By the time that their stay had come to an end, they had so endeared themselves to the brethren, that when they made ready to go, the whole ecclesia, together with the children, accompanied them out of the city.

They came to the sands of the shore, and there, in sight of the ship, and with the rolling waves of the blue Mediterranean before them, they all knelt down on the shore and prayed.

Once again the meeting ended in an emotional farewell, as they embraced each other (see *Diaglott*) and parted: one group to take ship, and the other to return home.

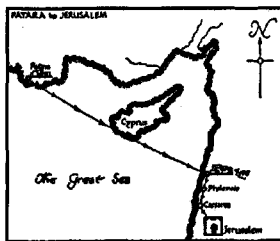
* The record states that the disciples "said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem" (Acts 21:4). This does not mean that the Spirit commanded Paul to avoid the city, for if so, he would have obeyed its decree, but that the brethren, because of what the Spirit had revealed, pleaded with Paul not to go there.

Chapter 16

IN THE HOME OF PHILIP (Acts 21:7-14)

Lodging in the home of Philip the Evangelist, Paul was again reminded of conditions he might expect in Jerusalem, but proclaimed his determination to push on regardless.

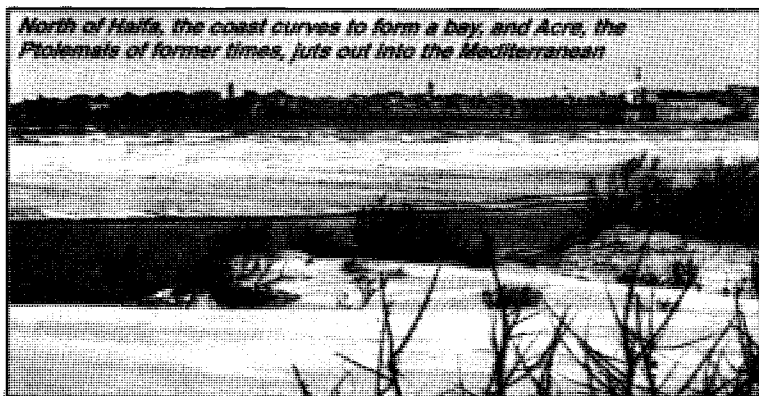
The ship they had taken only went as far as Ptolemais (modern Acre), about thirty miles (48 kms) from Tyre. From here they set forth for Acre. The distance was quickly covered, and far more comfortably than if the travellers had gone by land, negotiating the steep mountainous barrier that divides Syria from Palestine. At Acre, they left the ship, and calling in upon the local ecclesia, abode with the brethren for one day.



From Acre to Caesarea

On the following day, they left Acre for Caesarea, some forty-four miles (72 kms) south. They now travelled by land, and as it was springtime, they saw it again in all its beauty. Passing over the Carmel range they entered the plain of Sharon: plentifully sprinkled with flowers at that time of the year, and moved onwards to the Roman settlement of Caesarea.

Here Paul and his companions stayed for several days. They were among the last days of freedom he was to enjoy. The travellers lodged in the house of Philip, who evidently was sufficiently well off to



North of Haifa, the coast curves to form a bay, and Acre, the Ptolemais of former times, juts out into the Mediterranean

afford a dwelling of that dimension. Philip the evangelist, was one of the seven, including Stephen, appointed by the early ecclesia. What a change Philip now discerned in the previous persecutor. How dramatic that Paul should dwell with him just prior to the time of his imprisonment. Philip's household was dedicated entirely to Christ. He had four unmarried daughters who gave themselves to the Truth, rather than to seeking a husband, so observing the spirit of Paul's advice to the Corinthians (see 1Cor. 7:25-38), for the circumstances of the times (see v. 26).

The Warning

Prophecy of Agabus

The pleasant sojourn in the home of Philip was disturbed by the symbolic action and grim prophecy of one Agabus. He was a well-known prophet of Jerusalem, whose name signifies *Locust*, and who was noted for predicting trouble (see Acts 11:28). On this occasion, in the home of Philip, he ceremoniously took the girdle of Paul, and binding his own hands and feet, turned on the assembled company, and said: *"The Holy Spirit declares, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."*

Once again the premonition of trouble was pronounced, and this time, with Jerusalem near at hand. It deeply perturbed the assembled company, so that even Paul's travelling companions, who had so continuously heard the same prediction, now joined their pleading with that of the local members in beseeching the apostle not to go up to Jerusalem.

He explained his motive, but in vain. They continued to press objections upon him, becoming increasingly emotional as they did so, pleading with him to remain in Caesarea. At last Paul could stand it no longer. He was not insensible to their affection; nor indifferent to the requirements of the situation. He was not willingly rushing into trouble without due consideration as to what Christ required of him. He was, as he had told the Corinthians, "a spectacle" unto all in the way that he set himself to proclaim the Word and fulfil its requirements, in spite of the difficulties incidental to it. The foreknowledge of trouble would not stop him for, like Christ before him, he was prepared to go through with it all for the sake of the Truth. Meanwhile, their well-meant but really inconsiderate advice, only hurt him: *"What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart?"* he asked. *"I am willing not only to go to Jerusalem to be bound, but even to die, for the name of the Lord Jesus."*

This caused them to stop, observe and ponder. They recognised the folly of their emotionalism, and that the will of the Lord should be carried out, come what may. Reverently, they responded to the apostle's appeal: *"The will of the Lord be done,"* they declared.

Chapter 17

PRESENTING THE GIFT (Acts 21:15-18)

One of the purposes of Paul in visiting Jerusalem was to deliver the gift of money that he had collected from the Gentile Ecclesias to relieve the poverty experienced throughout the ecclesias of Judea. That was the most pleasant task that he performed during his stay in the city of Jerusalem.

It is nearly eighty miles (129 kms) from Caesarea to Jerusalem, which involved a three day's journey in those days. Packing up their baggage (including the precious gift from the Gentile ecclesias), Paul and his companions, accompanied by some of the brethren of Caesarea, commenced their journey. It being the time of Pentecost, lodging would be most difficult to obtain in Jerusalem, but the brethren had taken the precaution of arranging for Paul and his companions to be accommodated by Mnason, a Cyprian, and one of the original disciples.*

It must have been a wonderful occasion for the Gentile brethren who accompanied Paul. Perhaps for the first time, they trod upon the soil of Israel, walking through districts made rich in memory by many an incident of which they had read in the Word.

Moving into Judea proper, and ascending the road that climbs the high hills encircling Jerusalem, they beheld afar off the "city of their solemnities," the future capital of the world. So they moved on to the city itself, where the brethren received them gladly. Paul met many a friend, and his warm spirit received encouragement from the affectionate greeting he received from them.

He felt greatly uplifted by it all. His purpose in coming to Jerusalem in company with the appointed representatives of the Gentile Ecclesias bearing the gift with them, was to demonstrate by this practical gesture of love, that in Christ, Jew and Gentile were one. The fact that the Jerusalem brethren received him so well spoke of the way in which the earlier barriers against accepting Gentile converts on equal terms with Jewish members had been broken down.

With the Elders

On the day following, Paul conducted his companions into the presence of James and the elders of the Jerusalem Ecclesia. He saluted them affectionately, probably by a kiss of peace (1Thes. 5:26), and then provided a

* The statement, "brought with them one Mnason" (Acts 21:16) is rendered by the Diaglott: "conducting us to one Mnason."

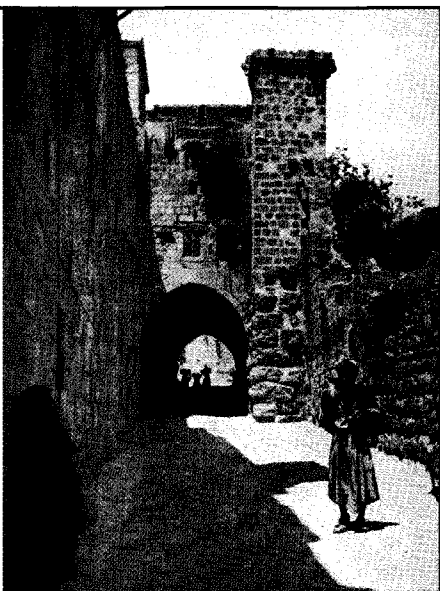
detailed report of his activities abroad.

It was an impressive account he rendered. Since he last “saluted the ecclesia” (Acts 18:22), he had consolidated his labours in Galatia and Phrygia (v. 23), had established a flourishing centre for the Truth in Ephesus, had strengthened the brethren in Asia, Macedonia and Achaia, had vigorously corrected heresy and wrong conduct, had taken up alms for Jewish disciples, and had helped the ecclesias at Miletus, Tyre, Acre and Caesarea.

And all this had been accomplished in the face of the bitterest opposition and violence. Doubtless Paul reported on the activities of the Judaisers and the pernicious influence of some who were busily spreading their theory from Judea. There were others who were spreading malicious lies about the apostle to discredit him in the eyes of those zealous of the Law, and his report showed the groundlessness of all such accusations.

But he did not claim to have done this in his own strength. He declared “what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.” It was a work of God. And as token of the manner in which he had upheld divine principles, even with regard to Israel’s privileged status as a nation, he was able to present the representatives of the Gentile ecclesias with their gifts to the poor of the Judean ecclesias. The basis of their action in presenting the gift was an acknowledgment that as they “partook of Israel’s spiritual things, their duty was to share with them in material things” (Rom. 15:27).

This ruined minaret beside the heavily-topped arch, which spans the road beyond the north-west corner of the temple area, is often pointed out as the Tower of Antonia in Jerusalem. Authorities allow that the massive masonry of its base is a survival of the Herodian fortress which in New Testament times was the barracks of the Roman garrison. To this fortress Paul was taken for safety by the tribune in command of the cohort. From the stairs connecting the building with the temple, the apostle was permitted to address the infuriated mob of Jews who were clamouring for his death (Acts 21:40).



A Dictionary Of Personalities In The New Testament

CRESCENS: THE INCREASER

His name means *Increase*. He was a companion of Paul in his final imprisonment, and was sent by the apostle to Galatia (2Tim. 4:10).

CRISPUS: RULER OF THE SYNAGOGUE

Crispus, whose name means *Curled*, was the chief ruler of the synagogue at Corinth (Acts 18:8). He was one of the few in Corinth whom Paul personally baptised (1Cor. 1:14). All his house similarly believed on the Lord, as a result of which many others "believed and were baptised."

DAMARIS: OF ATHENS

Her name means *Gentle*. She was converted by Paul after his discourse at Mars Hill in Athens. She must have been of some prominence in Athenian life to have been singled out for particular mention, and, perhaps, was among the chief women of the city (cp. Acts 17:34).



DEMAS: WHO FORSOOK PAUL

Demas signifies *Ruler of People*. He was a companion of Paul during his first imprisonment, and joined with the apostle in sending greetings to the ecclesia in Colosse (Col. 4:14; Phm. 24). At that time he was prepared to share the rigors of preaching the Word with the apostle, and may have been with him during the many adventures that he experienced. But the circumstances of Paul's second imprisonment, when bitter persecution was levelled against the ecclesia by the Roman authorities, and Christians were being torn to pieces by wild animals, brutally murdered, crucified on stakes and burnt to death, were too much for Demas. He forsook Paul in his love for the present world (2Tim. 4:10). The word "forsaken" in this verse signifies in the Greek, "to leave in the lurch." Demas did that to Paul and must yet stand trial for his defection. We can but hope that he repented later on and changed his ways. Meanwhile, let us remember the opposition he had to face, and remember that Christ will not condemn Demas at the judgment seat and let us go free if, in fact, in heart we are traitors like Demas proved to be at that moment.

Trials in Jerusalem and Caesarea

(Acts 21:19 to 26:32)

Chapter 1

PAUL IN THE TEMPLE (Acts 21:19-26)

The elders of the Jerusalem Ecclesia were greatly impressed with the success that had attended the labours of the apostle among the Gentiles. Recognising the need to consolidate the work of unity and peace between Jewish and Gentile believers, they now appealed to Paul to assist them in refuting a false rumor that was circulating concerning him, by attending the temple in a purification service on behalf of certain believing Jews who were just about to complete a Nazarite vow that they had taken upon themselves. Paul agreed to do so. In recording the story of what took place, we will outline the motives that would have dominated the apostle at the time. These reveal that he was not inconsistent in so acting.

he elders of the ecclesia in Jerusalem hearkened to Paul's report of his labour among the Gentiles with great pleasure. They recognised it as a work of God, and "glorified the Lord" for the success that attended it.

Moreover, the gift of money that Paul had brought with him from Gentile converts to relieve the poverty then rife among the ecclesias in Judea, was tangible evidence of their love for their Jewish brethren, as well as an acknowledgement of the great debt due to Israel by believing Gentiles (Rom. 15:27). It demonstrated that those Gentiles not only rejoiced in the hope of Israel, but desired the close fellowship of those of its sons who accepted Christ.

Recognising the value of unity in Christ, the elders were desirous of establishing it more firmly. They were aware of how Paul's detractors were spreading lies concerning him, busily indoctrinating Jewish believers with such misinformation regarding him as to develop in them an intense hatred of him. The word used to describe this, and which is translated "are informed" (Acts 21:21), is *katechethegan*, and signifies to instruct, to indoctrinate, to inform. It is the Greek form of the English word to "catechize," which suggests teaching by constant repetition, and indicates the persistence by which Paul's enemies urged their false accusations against him.

The impression created by their lies had to be refuted if the Truth was to make headway, and as argument had failed to effect this, the elders suggested other means.

"Brother, you can see for yourself how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law," they said

to Paul. *"Now they have been informed concerning you, that you teach all Jews in foreign countries to forsake Moses, urging them that they ought not to circumcise their children, nor to follow after the customs of the Law. What is to be done therefore? It is obvious that as soon as the congregation hears that you have come, it will meet together. We suggest that you take this course: We have four men who of their own accord put themselves under a vow. Join these men and share their purification, making the necessary payment for them after which they may shave their heads. This will prove to them all that there is no truth in the things they have been told about you; but, on the contrary, you are guided by obedience to the Law. As to the Gentiles who have become believers in Christ, we wrote giving our decision, that they abstain from meat that has been offered to idols, from blood, from anything that has been strangled, and from fornication"* (Acts 21:20-25).

Paul, recognising the wisdom of this course, agreed to carry it out.

What The Request Entailed

Was Paul inconsistent in what he now proceeded to do for the cause of peace? We do not think that he was. It must be recognised, that whereas Paul vigorously opposed the teaching of Judaism, he did not oppose the legitimate use of the Law. On the contrary, he taught that the Law was good if used lawfully (Rom. 7:12; 1Tim. 1:8), and he sometimes reasoned doctrinal Truth from the standpoint of the Law (1Cor. 9:9; 1Tim. 5:18). In fact, the Law provided an excellent foundation for teaching redemption in Christ Jesus, for when considered aright, it revealed that both Jew and Gentile were without hope: the former because it made him conscious of sins and thereby cursed him; the latter because it revealed him as being outside the covenant of promise, and thereby without the promise of life. The Law thus acted as a schoolmaster, leading one to Christ (Gal. 3:24), making obvious the need of that Redeemer which it promised (Deu. 18:15-18).

The Judaism which Paul so vigorously opposed was a perversion of the teaching of Moses, and in attacking it, he did not set himself against Israel's great leader. In fact, there existed a wide gulf between the legitimate use of the Law as a way of life, and the Judaism of the Pharisees which was merely an accommodation of the Law to Jewish tradition. The latter destroyed the spirit of the Law, as Christ warned the leaders of the nation (Mat. 15:6. See also Mat. 23); and it was in the light of that fact that Paul repeated the warning of his Lord. Nowhere did he teach that believers were exempt from obeying the spirit of the Law, though he did show that the grace of God, available through Christ Jesus, can deliver one from the curse of the Law, by providing for the forgiveness of sins.

A believer comes much more under the influence of the Law and sees far more in its teaching, than does a Judaiser. He recognises that the offerings of the Law are given substance in Christ (see Heb. 9:15); that its sacrifices foreshadowed that of Christ. He discerns the limitations of the former, for they remained dead after being offered, whereas their antitype rose from the dead: a token that they would do likewise (Rom. 6). Moreover, Christ ever lives to provide for the justification, or the forgiveness of sins, of those who join themselves in covenant with him (Rom. 4:5), and to make intercession on their behalf. A true believer acknowledges that if he placed his hope of justification in the dead animals of the Law, his hope of the future would be as dead as the sacrifice, for it is not possible "for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." The animals offered pointed forward to the Redeemer who should come, and every intelligent Israelite, from the days of Moses onwards, was required to see in the sacrifices he offered, tokens of the Redeemer who was promised and would surely come (Gen. 3:15; Psalms 40:6; 50:7-14; 51:16; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8; Jeremiah 7:21). Thus David, for example, looked forward to the death and resurrection of his greater Son as his hope of salvation (Psalms 16:8-11; Acts 2:29-31).

This was the lesson Paul had learned when he sat blinded in the house of Judas in Damascus so many years earlier, and carefully pondered the ways of Yahweh, praying for enlightenment (Acts 9:11). Though physically blinded he saw the light for the first time, receiving and acknowledging "the revelation of the secret, which was kept hidden since the [Jewish] world began" (Rom. 16:25). In Christ Jesus he discovered a new meaning in the Law, and came to honour and respect it as he had never been able to do as a Judaiser. He saw that he could use it as it was designed to be used; and therefore, was not opposed to its teaching and legitimate use, but merely to its perversion.

Paul's attitude to the Law is summarised in 1Cor. 9:20-21. "*Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the Law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without Law, as without Law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law.*"

The Revised Version and Diaglott add a very important clause to v. 20, rendering Paul's words as follows: "*To them that are under the Law, as under the Law, not being myself under the Law, that I might gain them that are under the law.*"

What did Paul mean?

The answer to this question has a great bearing upon his action in Jerusalem at the behest of the elders, an action that was not inconsistent with his teaching against the Judaisers, as some have alleged.

Paul's Concessions Paul's words in the Epistle to the Corinthians, shows that he respected the scruples of all, whilst carefully preserving his liberty in Christ. He had knowledge, but blended it with love and understanding; he had rights, but did not exercise them at the expense of others. It was by such considerate action, that Paul gained so many converts for the Kingdom.

He reasoned with both Jew and Gentile from their respective standpoints, trying to comprehend their point of view, and making allowance for it. The concessions that he granted stemmed from a thoughtful mind governed by the Word and the generous condescension of a loving spirit. His attitude was not dominated by fear of man (Isa. 29:13), but by the spirit of Christ's own sacrifice, and with the desire that the Truth might be extended to the glory of God and the wellbeing of those who heard it.

In so doing, Paul did not sacrifice principle. He elevated the Truth as the most important consideration, and set forth a noble example (1Cor. 11:1), which he called upon his brethren to emulate (1Cor. 8:11-13).

The Law In Relation To Both Jews and Gentiles In the reference quoted above from the Epistle to the Corinthian, the apostle placed mankind into three categories. Unbelieving Jews are described as being "under the Law"

(1Cor. 9:20). The word "under" is *hupo* with the accusative in the Greek, and signifies "in the power of" (see Bullinger's Lexicon). Unbelieving Jews, therefore, are "in the power of" the Law, for it reveals them as being guilty of sin, and brings them under its curse: "cursed is every man that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them" (Gal. 3:10).

Unbelieving Gentiles are described as being "without law" (1Cor. 9:21), or beyond its scope. As such, they are without hope (Gen. 17:10; Rom. 1:24), being "alienated from the life of God through ignorance" (Eph. 4:18).

Believing Jews and Gentiles are "under the law to Christ" (1Cor. 9:21). In this expression, the word "under" is a different word in the Greek from that referred to above. It is *anamais*, and signifies "within the sphere of law." In Christ, they walk within the scope of the Law without incurring its curse. They do this, because, through faith, they fulfil the requirements of the Law (Rom. 2:13-15; 3:31; 13:10), having access to the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus. Thus the Truth enables them to manifest the true meaning and spirit of the Law, causing Paul to write: "*He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God*" (Rom. 2:29).

A believing Gentile is accounted a "Jew" of the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16) when the influence of Christ becomes so powerful in him as to induce him to perform God's will of his own desire. There were many doing that in the apostle's day, even in Rome, and of them he wrote: *"When the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or excusing one another"* (Rom. 2:14-15).

It is not "natural," but the very reverse, for man to obey God; but Paul's references were to those who, being Gentiles, yet have "the Law written in their hearts" by the Gospel to such good effect, that they instinctively obey the spirit of its teaching.

In Christ, therefore, believers discover a new relationship to the Law. That which condemned both Jew and Gentile outside of Christ, and by its very curse proved a relentless tyrant and master (the Jew being under — Gr. *hupo* — or in its power; and the Gentile being by it barred from hope) is, in the Gospel, a beneficent friend, pointing the way of life. Thus Paul, for one, delighted in fulfilling its requirements in Christ.

The relationship that he sustained to the Law in Christ enabled him to take his stand with either Jews or Gentiles. With regard to the former, he was able to expound the true meaning of the rites, ceremonies, and scruples of the Law and the temple, and so draw them to Christ. With regard to the latter, he was able to ignore the ritual and concentrate upon the spiritual significance of these matters, causing them to obey the spirit of its teaching. Thus he had a compelling message for either Jews or Gentiles, and was able to draw both by the power of his preaching.

These considerations governed Paul's reaction to the suggestion of the elders. He saw nothing inconsistent in doing what they asked. It is obvious, from references in the *Acts of the Apostles* (see ch. 3:1; 5:20) that believing Jews continued to frequent the temple, and observe the various festivals. In Christ, however, they perceived the inner meaning of all that was done. To them, the offerings were types of the Lord's one sacrifice; sabbath observance taught the need of resting from the works of sin each day; the temple itself provided a symbol of the spiritual temple of living stones of which they hoped to form a part; Pentecost pointed to the new revelation in Christ rather than back to the covenant given from Sinai.

The Jewish brethren recognised that without Christ and the justification which is by faith, all the ordinances of Moses were without true meaning; a mockery of religion. They viewed the sacrifices, the festivals, the temple with different eyes, seeing them as centering upon the risen Lord.

That being the case, Paul had no hesitation in accepting the suggestion of the elders to publicly endorse the action of the four men who had taken upon themselves the Nazarite vow. He agreed to pay for the sacrifices that they were required by the Law to be offered at the termination of the period of the vow.

What Paul Had To Do What was involved? Four men (Jewish Christians) had taken upon themselves the Nazarite vow, and the time of its completion was at hand. The custom at the time was to announce the impending termination of the vow a week before it was completed. At the end of that time, certain sacrifices had to be offered, and these involved such financial cost as to be beyond the scope of the poor. In that case, a wealthier person was permitted to identify himself with his poorer brother, and take over the cost of the sacrifices. This practice had become quite common at the time, as Josephus shows.

Of course, Paul would not have agreed to the suggestion of the elders if the four men had believed that justification came only through the works of the Law (cp. Gal. 2:16). As we have stated before, it was not wrong to support the requirements of the Law, providing it was recognised that it had been fulfilled and superseded in Christ. Paul had circumcised Timothy because circumstances warranted it (Acts 16:3); had himself taken on a vow on an earlier occasion (Acts 18:18); had advised believing Jews that they should not disown their Jewish associations (1Cor. 7:17-19); and was ready to conform himself where no principle of Truth was jeopardised by so doing (1Cor. 9:19-23). At the same time, he was unyielding in his demands that the Truth in Christ be acknowledged, and sternly refused to have Titus circumcised merely to please the whims of Judaisers, realising that such would have established a precedent with regard to all Gentile believers (Gal. 2:3-5).

On this occasion, however, he not only agreed to stand the expense of sacrifices to be offered by the four men at the termination of their vow, but also took on a vow himself of seven days' duration (Acts 21:26).

This meant that for a week, Paul would have had to live with the four Jewish believers in the chamber of the temple which was set apart for this purpose; and then to pay for fifteen sacrificial animals and the accompanying meal offerings (including his own). He would then be required to stand with these Nazarites while the priests offered the sacrifices: five he-lambs of the first year without blemish for burnt offerings, and five ewe-lambs of the first year without blemish for the sin-offerings, and five rams without blemish for peace offerings. He would then, with the men, have his head shaven, the hair of which would be burnt under the boiling cauldron of the peace

offerings; and watch while the priest took five sodden shoulders of rams and five unleavened cakes out of the five baskets, and five unleavened wafers anointed with oil. These would be placed on the hands of the Nazarites, and waved for a wave-offering before Yahweh, which, with the wave-breads and the heave-shoulders, the priest afterwards took as his own prerequisites (See Num. 6:13-21).

Paul agreed to do all this to demonstrate that what was being urged against him was untrue; namely, that he taught Jews to forsake Moses. The advice of the elders was designed to weaken the attacks of Judaists among the ecclesias, as well as to turn away the hatred of unbelieving Jews that had been manifested against the apostle. At that time, the people of Jerusalem were in a most inflammable state of mind, and rumblings of revolution were heard on all sides. The Christians were daily coming into greater prominence, and Paul's name was being bandied about by those who sought to undermine his teaching. A state of tension existed of such a nature that the very mention of Paul aroused the most antagonistic feelings, and the elders realised that as soon as it was known that he was present in Jerusalem, the whole ecclesia would gather together to ascertain exactly what he did teach.

Accordingly, Paul made due preparations and made his way with his four companions into the temple.

Paul Recognised In The Temple

The seven days were almost ended when Paul was recognised in the temple by some Jews visiting Jerusalem from Ephesus and other parts of Asia. They viewed him as a hated apostate who had challenged the authority of the synagogue when visiting their cities.

His presence in the temple provided them with the opportunity to wreak their vengeance upon him. In Asia, their hatred against him had been held in check by the pagan authorities, but here they were not so restricted. They commenced to agitate against him, drawing the attention of other Jews to him, claiming that his teaching was destroying the worship of the temple. They played upon the emotions of the people to such an extent that others were induced to join them in an attack upon him. Then, rushing upon him, they roughly seized hold of him, calling upon others to assist them.

"Israelites, help!" they shouted. "This is the man that teaches all men everywhere against the Jews, and the law, and the temple. Yes, and besides all this, he brought Greeks into the temple, and has polluted this holy place."

On an earlier occasion they had seen Paul in company with Trophimus, an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.



The explosive temper of the crowd was easily aroused. The cry for help, the shouted accusation, drew the attention of the people in the court. They came running from every quarter, converging upon the spot where Paul was struggling in the arms of his accusers. Roughly seizing hold of him, the crowd dragged him from this inner court, down the fifteen steps that led to the large court of the Gentiles, and there they began to violently set upon him.

Meanwhile, the temple officers came hurrying out. Seeing what they supposed to be the beginning of a riot, they hastily slammed the great gate of brass called "The Beautiful" gate of the temple, which gave access from the Inner Court to the Court of the Gentiles, in order to preserve the sacred place from the pollution of human blood.

And now the fury of the crowd could not be restrained. They had their hated enemy in their hands and they desired his blood. Shouting insults at him, they began to assail him with violent blows, as they dragged him toward the city gates through which they might ingloriously fling him with the purpose of stoning him to death.

The tumult aroused others. They, too, came running to the spot to be caught up with the hysteria of the mob, and to join their voices with the others in demanding the blood of the apostle. Men began to converge upon the temple area from all directions, so that soon it became the scene of a mass of hate-ridden men, screaming for the death of a man who represented the hated sect to them. It seemed that nothing could prevent a riot developing such as could involve the whole city.

But, meanwhile, the row had alerted the Roman centurion who was stationed under arms with his soldiers at a spot where he could overlook the temple courts. Quickly he reported the trouble to his superior officer, Lysias, the commandant of the Tower of Antonia, advising him that the Jews had seized somebody in the temple, and were trying to kill him.

Lysias was used to such crises. Instantly he gave the command, and surrounded by a well-disciplined contingent of centurions and soldiers, he clattered down the steps of the tower, and into the Court of the Gentiles. The sudden appearance of the Roman legions with their swords at the ready, caused the Jews to pause in their attack on Paul. They knew the ruthlessness of these soldiers, and realised that if the command was given, the attack would be instant and the slaughter heavy. They did not dare resist the Romans.

Steadily Lysias advanced, and forcing his way through the throng to the place where Paul was, he took him from the hands of his enraged opponents. Binding the apostle's arms to two soldiers by two chains, he demanded of the mob who the man might be, and what he had done? The answer came in a series of discordant shouts from the mob as all kinds of accusations were made, and one contradicted the other.

No proper information was to be obtained from the crowd, and therefore Lysias ordered that Paul be marched to the Tower of Antonia which served as barracks for the troops. It was situated on the northwest corner of the temple, and the ascent to it from the Court of the Gentiles was up a series of stairs. As the soldiers turned their backs to the mob to march Paul up these stairs, their spell over the people was broken. Afraid that they were going to be balked of their prey, the made a concerted rush at him, crying: "Kill him! Kill him!" The rush of the people knocked the fettered Paul off his feet and, unable to steady himself, he was carried off his legs, and dragged up the stairs in the arms of the surrounding soldiers. The people crowded the stairs, manhandling the soldiers, who were thus unable to use their weapons. Once at the top, however, they were able to turn and face the angry crowd, and with drawn swords, hold them at bay.

Paul's Address to the People (Acts 22:1-22) The refuge of the Tower had been reached, and the danger was over. But before moving into the Tower itself, Paul appealed for an audience with Lysias. Speaking in the Greek language, he asked: "*May I speak with you?*"

The request, and the language in which it was made, surprised Lysias. "*Can you speak Greek?*" he asked. "*Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago raised an insurrection, and led four thousand bandits out into the wilderness?*"



"No," replied Paul. *"I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of a city of some importance, and I beg of you to allow me to speak unto the people."*

There was something compelling in the personality of Paul that impressed Lysias, and he granted permission for the apostle to speak to the people.

At the top of the stairs, Paul looked down upon the people beneath who were still screaming invectives at him. He had a deep affection for Israel (Rom. 9:1-3), and he looked down in pity upon them. He saw that their hatred and anger were born out of ignorance. Perhaps his mind went back to his own early upbringing. Twenty-two years earlier, when he was about thirty, he would have been with the crowd below, "breathing threatnings and slaughter" against the Christians (Acts 9:1). What a change had been wrought in his life!

Full of emotion, he lifted up his manacled hands and gestured to the people to be silent. As they looked up at the one before them, whose face was probably bloodied by the hammering he had received, they gradually calmed down.

Then he addressed them in the Hebrew tongue. This, in itself, was a defence of his attitude to the Law, for he was a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5), and as such, one who was used to conversing in the Hebrew tongue. Whereas many of the people used Aramaic (a Syriac dialect) in normal conversation, the stricter Jews, conversed only in Hebrew, as they do today. Paul's use of that language under such circumstances demonstrated to the people his strict adherence to the things of Yahweh. As one writer has said: *"The sound of the holy tongue in that holy place fell like a calm on the troubled waters. The silence became universal and breathless, and the apostle proceeded to address his countrymen."*

For Paul it was a great moment. He had opportunity of setting before the people the fact of his conversion, and seeing that he had been well-known as a persecutor of the Christians, this should surely convince them of the truth regarding the Lord Jesus.

He commenced by recapitulating the story of his life, and explaining the cause of the great change that had been effected in him.

The People Reject His Appeal

To that point, the people had listened in silence. There was no disputing the facts that the apostle placed before them. That so prominent and bitter a persecutor of the Christians could himself become converted, indicated strong and powerful reasons for so doing. The reasons were the revelation and words of the Lord Jesus. Once they were accepted as fact, who could dispute that Paul had received a further revelation to preach to the Gentiles!

Paul's Address on the Steps of the Tower in Jerusalem

A TESTIMONY TO A CHANGED LIFE

Finding himself under the challenge of his fellowmen in Jerusalem, Paul sought to explain the reason for his new-found faith. He had a love for Israel, declaring to those in Rome that he had "great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh..." (Rom. 9:2-3).

The apostle then set out chronologically the reasons for his teaching, and the example of his life.

His Early Judaism — vv. 1-3.

"Brethren and fathers, listen to the defence I now make to you!

"I am a Jew, a native to Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city. At the feet of Gamaliel I have been educated with exacting care in our ancestral Law, with a zeal for God such as you all have today."

His Persecution of Christians — vv. 4-5.

"As such I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me out. For from them I received letters to the brethren at Damascus, where I was going, to bring the believers there back as prisoners to Jerusalem for punishment."

His Amazing Conversion — vv. 6-10.

"But as I was nearing Damascus on my journey, suddenly at noonday an intense light from heaven shone around me, and as I fell to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' But I answered: 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me: 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.' Now my companions saw the light, but they did not hear the voice of the one who spoke to me.

"I said: 'Lord, what shall I do?' Then the Lord said to me: 'Rise and go on to Damascus. There you will be told about all the work that has been laid out for you to do'."

His Blindness, Cure and Baptism — vv. 11-16.

"However, because of the brilliance of that intense light, I was blinded; so I entered Damascus guided by the hands of my companions.

"Then a man named Ananias, a man devoted to the Law* and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, called on me, presented himself, and said to me: 'Brother Saul, recover your sight,' and

** Notice how Paul emphasises the devotion of Ananias to the Law indicating that believing Jews saw no reason to change the customs with which they were familiar from youth.*

instantly I looked up at him. He said further: 'The God of our fathers has prepared you beforehand to know His will, to see the Just One* and to hear a message from his own lips; for you will give testimony for Him to everyone concerning what you have seen and heard. Now then, why hesitate? Rise; be baptised and, calling on his name, be cleansed of your sins'."

He Is Commanded To Preach to Gentiles — vv. 17-21.

"Then when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple,** I had a vision and saw him and he said to me: 'Hurry, get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not welcome your testimony about me.' I replied: 'Lord, they know well enough that I went from synagogue to synagogue, arresting and beating those who believed in you, and when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I myself was standing by and approving, and I watched over the clothes of those who killed him.' And he said to me: 'Go, for I shall send you far away to the Gentiles...'"

** The "Just One" is an Old Testament title of the Messiah with which the Jews would be familiar — Jer. 23:6; Psa. 72:2; Isa. 53:11. See also Rev. 19:11.*

*** Showing that Paul did not abandon worship in the temple when he embraced Christ, though he undoubtedly viewed that worship from a different standpoint.*

Paul anticipated that the record of his remarkable conversion would change the minds of others, probably forgetting that on an earlier occasion, he, himself, had been impervious to such a witness! In fact, for all his knowledge of Jewry, Paul was altogether too naive, and did not fully assess the extent of their blind bigotry. Perhaps his great desire to render them a service blinded his eyes to the extent of their hard-heartedness, as the appearance of Christ on the road to Damascus had physically blinded his eyes, but brought to him great understanding and spiritual light.

Be that as it may, he no sooner reached the point of recording how he had been commissioned to preach to the Gentiles, than the silence was broken by the fury of the mob which erupted into the most extreme tokens of hatred.

A terrible, ominous shout broke forth from the people: "Away from the earth with such a fellow; for he is not fit to live!"

They gave way to signs of uncontrollable fury. Gesticulating angrily at him, they made it clear that they would treat him as he had treated Stephen many years before (Acts 7). They kept screaming at him, and in a paroxysm of rage tore open their clothes, threw dust in the air, and made as though they would storm their way up the stairs.

Lysias Examines Paul Paul had spoken in Hebrew, a language that Lysias did not understand. He had noticed the respectful silence with which the mob had listened to Paul's discourse delivered in the Hebrew language, and then the mad, sudden rage and furious shout which drowned its conclusion. What did it all mean? He did not know; but he realised that the people were on the point of storming up the stairs, and he would have a riot on his hands if he stayed there any longer. He commanded that Paul be brought into the refuge of the Tower, and that he be examined by scourging to ascertain the cause of the trouble.

The soldiers made ready to do as they were bidden. They tied Paul to the whipping block, ready to flog him with the cruel scourge. But as they did so, Paul addressed the captain in charge: *"Is it legal to flog a Roman citizen without trial?"*

The captain was taken aback at the comment. It was a very serious crime to do this, and one punishable with the severest penalties. He ordered a delay in proceedings and hastened to Lysias.

"Be careful what you do," he warned his superior officer, *"for this man is a Roman."* Lysias was instantly on his guard. He realised that if Paul were a Roman citizen, he had already gone too far in permitting him to be bound ready for scourging. He hastened back to the apostle himself.

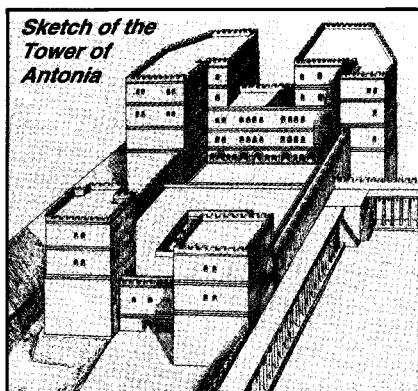
"Tell me," he asked, *"are you a Roman?"*

"Yes," replied Paul.

Thoughtfully Lysias looked at his captive. Who was he? It was possible, at that time, for foreigners to purchase Roman citizenship. This practice was introduced by Messalina, the wife of the Emperor Claudius, and originally it cost a large sum of money, though lately, in the days of the apostle, it had been offered much more cheaply. Perhaps his Jewish captive had recently purchased the freedom of Rome at a cheap rate. That had not been the case with Lysias. He had paid a large sum of money for the citizenship rights that he possessed, indicating that his status was of long-standing (he perhaps took the additional name of Claudius in consequence — see Acts 23:26). He therefore addressed Paul: *"With a great sum obtained I this freedom!"*

But Paul replied: *"I was actually born a citizen."*

This increased the concern of Lysias. If Paul were a freeborn Roman citizen, he had clearly exceeded his authority in ordering the soldiers to bind him, let alone commanding that they scourge him. He immediately ordered that the apostle be released, deciding to ascertain the reason of the riot on the morrow.



A Dictionary Of Personalities In The New Testament

DEMETRIUS: A CONTRAST

Demetrius means *Belonging to Demeter*, or *Ceres*, the goddess of agriculture and rural life. There were two men of that name in the New Testament: [1] the silversmith at Ephesus who traded in the silver models of the temple of Diana: and [2] the brother, highly commended of John in his Third Epistle (v. 12). Demetrius the silversmith stirred up the tradesmen of Ephesus against Paul which resulted in a riot, causing the apostle having to leave the city. Demetrius the believer had a good report of all men, and lived consistently with the Truth that he so enthusiastically espoused. It is thought by many that he was the bearer of the epistle that John wrote, and that the epistle was written from Ephesus. If that be so these two men with identical names, and from the same city, provided a sharp contrast in their attitudes toward the Truth: one bitterly opposing it, and the other enthusiastically endorsing it.

DIONYSIUS: THE AREOPAGITE

He was one of those converted by Paul's masterly discourse on Mars Hill. His name is of a pagan origin, being the name of the god of wine. His title signifies that he was a member of the supreme court of Athens, and therefore a man of some consequence. It is said that he was eminent in Athens for his literary ability, and had studied first at Athens, then at Heliopolis in Egypt (Unger's Dictionary). The conversion of a man of such eminence was a triumph for the preaching of the Gospel. He had the ability and wisdom to recognise a higher philosophy than that of Greek culture (See Acts 17:34).

DIOTREPES: THE TROUBLEMAKER

His name means *Nourished By Jove*. He professed to be a follower of the Lord, but refused to humble himself under the authority of John the apostle. He was filled with personal pride, and delighted in having the pre-eminence in the community (3John 9). He wanted to be the head, and thus laid claim to the position which is the prerogative of Christ alone (Col. 1:18). Diotrepes was loud in mouth and free with malicious boasts against John in particular. He was short-tempered and dictatorial, refusing to tolerate those who opposed him, even in minor matters. He was pharisaical in outlook, and ruthless in his rejection of others, providing a most evil example to those who looked up to him (3John 9-11); and there were many who did.

Chapter 2

PAUL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN (Acts 23:1-10)

It is amazing how the experiences of the Lord Jesus before his accusers were repeated in the case of Paul. As the mob demanded that Jesus be crucified, so the people now rioted against Paul. As the Lord was interrogated by the Sanhedrin, so also was the apostle. As the Gentiles acquitted Christ but capitulated to the demands of the Jews, so they did in the case of his servant.

The next day, Lysias commanded that the Sanhedrin meet. He was anxious for Paul to appear before this Jewish Council, in order that he might ascertain the facts concerning him. Was he really a Roman citizen? If so, what was the reason for the riot?

The Hall Gazith, in the temple area, was reserved for meetings of the council, and was situated not far from the Tower of Antonia. However, it was within the balustrade that had been erected at the end of the Court of the Gentiles, to prevent Gentiles going beyond that point. As Lysias was anxious to hear the evidence brought before Paul, he desired to be in attendance, so that, most likely, the meeting was convened in some other place, in which Lysias and the guard could likewise take their places.

Clash With The High Priest

Paul found himself face to face with the very council that twenty-two years earlier had commissioned him to persecute the Christians, and which had given him written authority to do so on their behalf in Damascus. He was now fifty-two years of age, and the year was AD58. He probably was much changed in appearance from the earnest, dedicated, zealous young Pharisee whom the members of the Sanhedrin had earlier employed. The rigors of his active life, the persecutions he had endured, the tension under which he constantly lived, must have prematurely aged Paul, so that he would appear as a much older man (Philemon 9).

Brought before the council, Paul gazed earnestly at the members (Acts 23:1), as though to awaken in them some twinges of conscience. "Brethren," he said, "*I have behaved myself in the presence of God with an altogether clear conscience to this very day...*"

It was but the beginning of his defence. But it was immediately interrupted by the overbearing attitude of the high priest, Ananias.

Though generally respected by the Jews, this Ananias was a violent, haughty, gluttonous man. He was a typical politician. He had been sent as prisoner to Rome to answer to the charge of sedition, but by his adroit handling of matters, had been confirmed in his office by the Emperor Claudius, and had recently returned to Jerusalem.

Now he haughtily turned to the attendants, ordering them to strike Paul on the mouth, because he had not been invited to speak. Paul was taken back by the ruthless brutality of the man. The warmth of his fiery nature asserted itself, and before he could prevent himself doing so, he had replied in an intemperate way.

"God is about to strike you, you whitewashed wall," he angrily told the priest. *"You are sitting here to judge me according to the Law, and you order me to be struck contrary to the Law!"*

Paul's words were prophetic. According to Josephus, Ananias was deposed by Agrippa toward the close of the governorship of Felix about two years after Paul appeared before the Council, and died in the siege of Jerusalem by the daggers of the sicarii.

Having thus spoken, Paul was challenged by another member:

"Are you prepared to insult the high priest of God?" he questioned.

Paul regretted his hasty words. He had not recognised Ananias as the high priest. There had been constant changes of such priests, and Paul had been absent from Jerusalem. Often the high priest elect, called the *Sagan*, presided over the Sanhedrin in the place of the high priest, and seeing that the council had not met at its usual place in the Hall Gazith, the apostle, quite understandably, had not recognised the status of Ananias. He regretted his hasty words. Addressing the council, he said: *"I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You must not defame a ruler of the people'."*

The Council Is Divided

It was clearly obvious to Paul, however, that he could not expect justice from that council.

The members would not be prepared to hearken to such a speech as he had delivered to the people, nor objectively consider the reasons for his abandonment of the role of the persecutor of Christianity to become its chief advocate. Knowing full well the rivalry that existed between the various sects of the Jews, he adroitly turned the investigation from personalities to teaching. He perceived that the council was divided between Sadducees and Pharisees, and therefore he cried out: *"Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead I am accused!"*

It was a clever piece of debating strategy that Paul came to regret later (see Acts 24:21), because his main object was not to secure his acquittal but to convert his hearers. For the moment, though, it served his purpose of diverting attention from himself. Astutely, Paul had

introduced a subject which, as a Pharisee, he knew would sharply divide the assembly. The Sanhedrin was made up of both Pharisees and Sadducees. The former (the name "Pharisee" means *Separatist*) were members of a religious party that was composed mostly of scribes. They were ritualists who professed to hold strictly to the letter of the Law, though they had departed from its spirit and nullified it by their traditions. The Sadducees, on the other hand, embraced a religion of expediency, and self-indulgence. They were rationalists

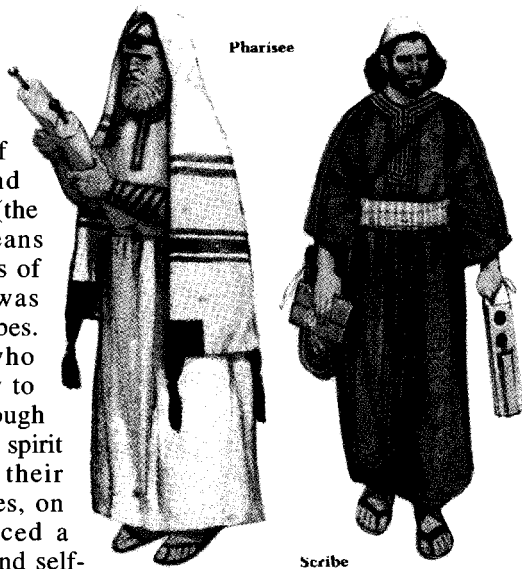
who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, nor in angelic beings (Mark 12:18; Acts 23:8).

Paul's claim introduced a subject to the council that was always hotly debated by members of the two sects. It won some of the Pharisees to his cause. They reasoned that if he was called in question upon that doctrine merely, then he should be acquitted. The Sadducees argued to the contrary, and the Sanhedrin became hopelessly divided. The argument became a dispute, and as passions became heated, the outcry in the council room became deafening. Paul was forgotten in the bitterness of the debate. Arguments and invectives were shouted across the council room, as Paul quietly looked on.

It was an amazing scene to Lysias the Roman. He received firsthand experience of the explosive nature of the antagonism that always existed between the Jewish groups; an antagonism that developed into a state of hopeless disunity a few years later when Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans, and the mutual antipathy of Jews for each other erupted in the violent slaughtering of one another within the walls of the city, until the very precincts of the temple ran with blood.

Now the hatred resulted in tumult, until finally, some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party got up and heatedly declared: "*We find nothing bad in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him...*"

The rest of the sentence was drowned in the clamor that now broke out. Indeed, the discord grew so heated and bitter that the



commander, afraid that Paul might be torn to pieces by counsellors, ordered a detachment of soldiers to march down and conduct him from their midst, and bring him back into the barracks.

The appeal to the Sanhedrin had not assisted either Lysias or Paul.

Encouragement

For Paul

Paul must have been very despondent when he returned to the Tower of Antonia, and found himself once again virtually a prisoner to the Roman soldiers. He probably found very little encouragement in the activities of the day. He had spoken against the high priest; he had adroitly divided the council; but the cause of Christ had not been advanced.



Once again in his time of need (as on the road to Damascus, and later in the city of Jerusalem) the Lord Jesus appeared to support and sustain his servant. That night, Paul received a vision of Christ, and heard outstanding words of encouragement: *"Take heart, Paul! For as you have borne me witness in Jerusalem, just so it is necessary for you to testify at Rome."*

The truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ had been faithfully proclaimed to the Jews of Jerusalem and throughout Judea, and they had been warned of the consequences of rejecting the message. In the witness thus presented, the Lord's prayer to the Father when dying upon the cruel stake had been answered. He had prayed: "Father, forgive them: they know not what they do." On that basis, the mercy of Yahweh had been extended to the erring nation, in that a further opportunity was given it to repent. The knowledge of their wrong action had been faithfully brought to their attention by the apostles and the preachers that had been sent out to deliver the message. Time and again the people had been told that the action of the nation in rejecting its Messiah had stemmed from ignorance. Finally, Paul visited the city, and proclaimed the same message to its leaders, and then the divine Patience came to an end. The guilty city and nation were about to be abandoned to their own resources: resources that would result in the destruction of the first and the scattering of the second by the hands of the Romans in AD70.

At the same time, a similar message and warning had been given to the Jews of the dispersion as Paul went from city to city preaching the Gospel "to the Jews first, and afterwards to the Gentiles." This method of approach was to climax in the apostle's appeal to the Jewish leaders in Rome, the capital of the Gentile world. It was necessary for Paul to witness there, as he had in Jerusalem, so that the Jews might have opportunity to repent. Once that was done the specific mission to the Jews, as required by Christ's appeal from the cross, would be brought to an end, and no longer would it be necessary to preach the Gospel "first to the Jews and afterwards to the Gentiles" (Rom. 1:16).

Therefore, as we shall see, once Paul had proclaimed the message to the Jews of Rome, and they had officially rejected it, he opened his hired house to all who desired to hear the Gospel message whether Jew or Gentile, no longer making it a condition that it should first be preached to the Jews (cp. Acts 28:30-31; 13:46).

Chapter 3

A CONSPIRACY TO MURDER PAUL (Acts 23:12-35)

Paul was soon given tangible evidence of the manner in which the Lord would care for him in all his trials. First he received a vision that served to encourage him with the fact that the Lord was with him in spirit; then a plot to murder him was overheard by one sympathetic to his cause; finally he found support from the Roman guard (Acts 23:19). Well may Paul appreciate the encouragement of the words he later wrote: "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and, I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5-6).

Paul had every reason to feel exhausted and depressed by his experiences among the Jews. To add to his trouble, he was locked up in the Tower of Antonia, and denied the encouraging fellowship of the brethren. Nevertheless, he must have been greatly uplifted by the vision of the night, whilst early the next day he had evidence of the Lord's overshadowing presence with him in his trials.

The fury of Jewish hatred against him was so unquenchable, and the bitterness of disappointment that the Romans should have snatched him from their vengeance was so great in his enemies, that early next day, over forty Jews presented themselves before the Sanhedrin with a proposition. They had joined themselves together in conspiracy, and had placed themselves under a curse to neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul; and now they asked for the co-operation of the priests and elders to that end.

The Jews And Their Vow

"We have sworn ourselves under a great curse, to taste of nothing until we have killed Paul," they declared. "Now then, you, in co-operation with the Sanhedrin, send word to the commander to have him conducted to you as if you wanted to determine more particularly about his case. Then we, before he comes anywhere near, are ready to do away with him."

Once again, Paul experienced the same trials as his Lord. As there was a Judas ready to betray Jesus, so the priests and elders of Judea, in their hatred of Paul, were prepared to betray the sacred trust committed them in the Law of Yahweh by joining the conspiracy and do as was suggested.

But there was a divine overshadowing of Paul's life. It is difficult

to keep a secret when over forty know of it. The men under vow were boasters, and spoke freely of their plan. It was bandied from mouth to mouth, and its anticipated success savoured with pleasure.

This proved to be the undoing of the conspirators.

There was living in Jerusalem at the time, a married sister of Paul. She had a son, a mere boy, and he happened to overhear the boasts of the conspirators.

Swiftly he made his way to where Paul was imprisoned, and told him of what he had overheard. The apostle acted with good sense and promptitude. Calling one of the centurions to him, he advised him to take his nephew in before Lysias. *"Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him!"* he ordered.

The centurion did so.

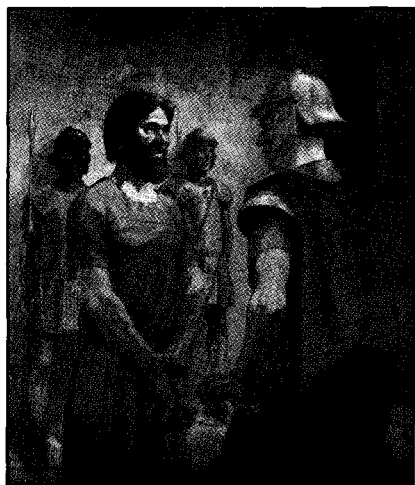
"Paul, the prisoner, summoned me to request that I bring this young man to you, since he has something to tell you," he declared.

The Roman commander received the Jewish boy with kindness, indicative of his sympathy for the cause of Paul. Taking him by the hand, he led him to one side so as to secure the greatest privacy, and enquired: *"What is it you have to tell me?"*

The boy disclosed what he had heard:

"The Jews have agreed to ask you that you bring Paul down tomorrow before the Sanhedrin, as if they were to investigate more particularly about him; but do not give in to them, for more than forty of them are lying in wait for him and have pledged themselves with an oath to neither eat nor to drink until they have killed him, and right now they are in readiness, only waiting for your assent."

Thoughtfully, Lysias pondered the significance of this information; then swiftly formulated his plan. Obviously his prisoner was a man of considerable importance, and as a freeborn Roman citizen, entitled to every protection that could be afforded him. Warning Paul's nephew not to disclose to anybody that he had told of the plot, he sent him on his way. Then summoning two centurions, he issued his orders: *"Have two hundred soldiers ready by nine tonight to march to Caesarea; also seventy cavalry and two hundred spearmen. Provide animals, too, for mounts for Paul to ride, and conduct him safely to Governor Felix."*



Whilst his captains were making these preparations, he wrote the following letter:

*Claudius Lysias to His Excellency
Governor Felix:*

"Greeting. When this man was set upon by the Jews and was within an inch of being murdered by them, I went with my men and rescued him; for I learned that he is a Roman. In the hope of discovering the reason for their accusation, I took him down to their Sanhedrin and found that the complaint relates to questions of their law, but without accusation of crime that deserves death or prison. But when I was informed that there would be a plot against this man, I sent him to you at once and have directed his accusers to have their say to you."

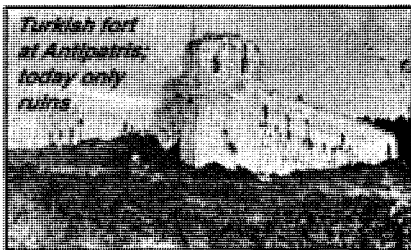


The letter was carefully worded. It provided Felix with a clear account of the circumstances relating to the attack on Paul, whilst also, by stretching the truth, guarded against any possible charge being laid against Lysias of wrong imprisonment of a Roman citizen.

To Caesarea By Cavalcade

That night, when it was dark and the streets deserted, the large military escort stood ready. The prisoner and letter were delivered to the centurion in charge, and soon they were on their way. Lysias, doubtless, was glad to see the last of his prisoner, and to be rid of the embarrassing responsibility. All that remained for him to do on the morrow was to advise the Sanhedrin that he had sent Paul to Caesarea, and for them to make ready to present their charges before the Governor.

Meanwhile, the escort made its way through the dark streets of the city, and onwards through the open countryside beyond. It followed the winding road which descended through the hill country of Judea, and riding on horseback, made swift progress to the town of Antipatris, some thirty-eight miles (61 kms) distant. Here they rested for the remainder of the night. Next day, the legionaries and spearmen returned to Jerusalem, leaving it to the cavalry to conduct Paul on the rest of his journey. Thus the apostle returned as a prisoner to the city of Philip at whose home the prophet Agabus had



*Turkish fort
at Antipatris;
today only
ruins*

predicted that he would be bound as a prisoner if he proceeded to Jerusalem (Acts 21:10-11).

Such a large cavalcade entering the city of Caesarea must have attracted many curious glances. Perhaps Philip, Agabus, or other believers saw it. If so, they must have been startled to see the apostle return to the city as a prisoner of Rome; and to realise that the prophecy had been so soon fulfilled!

The centurion made his way to the palace of Felix the Governor, giving him Lysias' letter, and conducting the prisoner into his presence. Felix read the letter, and viewed with some curiosity the prisoner before him. He was interested to learn that this Jewish-Christian was also a Roman citizen.

"*From what province are you?*" he enquired, doubtless checking on Paul's claim of citizenship.

"*Cilicia,*" was the reply.

"*I will hear your case when your accusers have arrived,*" declared the Governor.

He handed the prisoner over to a soldier to be kept in one of the guardrooms attached to the Palace of Herod which the Roman Procurators of Judea now used as their residence.



The Fate of The Jews Under The Vow What of the Jews who had taken the vow not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul?

Their fate was not as bad as might be supposed. They suffered, not so much from hunger and thirst as from acute embarrassment at the failure of their plot.

Their vow was a very convenient one for those concerned, for as with the Papists today, the doctrine of sacerdotal absolution was held among the Jews.

The Talmud instructed: "*He that hath made a vow not to eat anything, woe to him, if he eat; and woe to him if he do not eat. If he eat, he sinneth against his vow; and if he do not eat, he sinneth against his life. What must such a man do in this case? Let him go to the wise men and they shall loose him from his vow, as it is written (Pro. 12:18): 'The tongue of the wise is health'.*"

So, very conveniently for them, they would be loosed from their vow, immediately that it was found that their victim had escaped.

Chapter 4

PAUL BEFORE FELIX (Acts 24:1-27)

Paul and Felix provide contrasts. Paul we know, but who was Felix? His name means "Happy." He was originally a slave, who was liberated by Claudius Caesar for some unknown service. He was appointed procurator of Judea on the banishment of Ventidius Cumanus, about AD53. Suetonius refers to the military honours conferred on him, and states that he was the husband of three queens or royal ladies. He was notorious for his cruelty. Tacitus declares that during his governorship of Judea he indulged in all kinds of cruelty and lust, exercising regal power with the disposition of a slave, and considering himself licenced to commit any crime. Having a grudge against Jonathan the high priest, who had expostulated with him on his misrule, he made use of Doras, an intimate friend of Jonathan, in order to get him assassinated by a gang of villains who joined the crowds that were going up to the temple to worship, a crime which subsequently led to countless evils by the encouragement which it gave to the sicarii, or leagued assassins of the day, to whose excesses Josephus ascribes the overthrow of the Jewish State. While in office, he became enamoured of Drusilla, a daughter of King Herod, who was married to Azizus, King of Emesa, and through the influence of Simon, a pretended magician, prevailed upon her to consent to a union with him. Felix was seated with this adulteress when Paul reasoned with him (Acts 24:24). Drusilla was the second wife of Felix by that name. She was a Jewess, and through her influence, Felix had some knowledge of the Christianity of the time (Acts 24:22). Two greater opposites than Paul and Felix could hardly be imagined. See further details in Unger's Dictionary; Josephus, Ant. 20:7.

In due course, the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was advised that Paul had been sent to Caesarea in the care of Governor Felix, and it was invited to press its case against him in the audience of the Governor. The elders of the Jews realised that they had been outwitted, and they smarted under the embarrassment of defeat. The conspiracy had turned into a farce. Not only had Paul escaped them, but they were forced to release the plotters from their vow.

Both Pharisees and Sadducees now must have felt thoroughly ashamed in setting one against the other, and were now united in a common hatred of the apostle. They were determined to destroy him,

and doubting their own ability to effectively set forth their case before the governor, employed the services of an orator by name of Tertullus, to handle their brief.

Preparations By The Sanhedrin

Five days later, all was ready, and Tertullus, representing Paul's accusers, stood before the governor. Everything was done with due formality in accordance with the legal procedure of the day. First Tertullus formally lodged the complaint with Felix (Acts 24:1). Then the prisoner was brought forth to hear, and refute if need be, the case laid against him.

Tertullus was a practised speaker, and presented the case on behalf of the Jews with compelling eloquence. He first flattered the judge, and then poured invective on the prisoner, accusing him of crimes he had never committed. Said Tertullus: *"Since we enjoy peace through you, most excellent Felix, and since reforms are being made for this nation through your provision, in every way and everywhere we welcome this with deep appreciation. However, not to take more of your precious time, I beg of you by your courtesy to listen briefly to us.*

"For we have found this man to be a veritable plague, stirring up, as he does, all the Jews on earth, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to defile the temple. So we seized him (and would have sentenced him by our law, but the commander, Lysias, came and took him from us with great force. He ordered his accusers to present themselves to you). If you will cross-examine him yourself, you will be able to discover on what counts we accuse him."

The words enclosed in brackets are not found in a majority of ancient manuscripts, and most likely should be eliminated from the text. There was no advantage to the Jews' case to raise doubts concerning a fellow Roman in Lysias. Tertullus, as a Roman advocate, doubtless recognised how weak was the Jewish charge against Paul, and made the best use of available evidence. It comprised a clever piece of pleading, larded over with flattery which could not help but appeal to the vanity of Felix.

Tertullus referred to the benefits enjoyed by the Jews through the appointment of Felix, but they were conspicuous by their absence. True, Felix had suppressed some brigands, but, according to Josephus (*Ant.* 20:8:5), he had encouraged others; and, generally, the Jews hated him.

Fundamentally, Tertullus presented a fourfold charge against Paul:

- 1. He was a Pest — a public nuisance that should be suppressed.**
A charge of Agitation.
- 2. Insurrection among the Jews — he excited factions among the Jews throughout the world. This constituted (as presented by**

Tertullus) an offence against the Roman Government, and treason against the Emperor. It was a charge of Sedition.

3. A Ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes — *this constituted heresy against the national religion, requiring that he be delivered up to the high priest for judgment.* It was a charge of Heresy.

4. A Profaner of the Temple — *an offence against both Jewish and Roman law.* It was a charge of Sacrilege.

The Charges Presented

These were charges most likely to succeed as far as the Roman court was concerned.

Generally, Rome was very tolerant in matters of religion, and took care not to interfere with the national worship of those people dominated by it. It was opposed, however, to agitators, whether political or religious, and it was on that ground that Tertullus based his charge. Paul, he claimed, was an Agitator, Seditious, Heretical, and Impious.

Felix was not concerned with matters of doctrine except where they might disturb the public mind or offend against the morals or wellbeing of a nation; but he was responsible for the peace of the country over which he had jurisdiction. Lysias had mentioned in his letter that the complaint “related to the questions of their law” but lacked a substantial accusation of “crime that deserved death or prison.” The address and pleading of Tertullus argued otherwise. The Jewish elders added their evidence and on that note the case against Paul rested.

Tertullus had clearly set forth the charges against Paul, and without further comment, the governor gestured to the apostle to present his defence.

Paul’s Defence

Paul’s speech matched that of Tertullus in its eloquence and logic. It was a frank, open, manly statement of facts; a contrast to the servile flattery of the advocate, whose lack of sincerity is easily detected.

Systematically, Paul answered the charges laid against him, clearly revealing the lack of evidence to sustain them. At the conclusion of the apostle’s address it was obvious that Felix had been more impressed by Paul’s answer than by the Roman Advocate’s address in prosecution (cp. v. 25).

The apostle commenced by reminding Felix of the unreliability of Jewish charges at any time, and the constant agitation maintained by that nation.

The Charges Rebutted

He declared: “*Because I know that you have been judge over these people for many years, I find it easier to defend myself against these charges. It will be possible for you to ascertain that it is not more*

than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship, and neither did they find me arguing with anyone in the temple, nor raising a riot among the people, either in their synagogues or in the city. Neither can they produce any evidence to substantiate these charges."

They could, of course, have proved that he was a ringleader of the Nazarenes, as the Jews styled the Christians, but as yet such were not banned by Rome; and that, in itself, did not constitute an indictable charge.

His Heresy Is Conformity

"I confess this to you, however, that according to the way which they call heresy, even so I worship the God of my fathers, believing in everything written in the Law and the Prophets; for I possess that hope in God which these men themselves hold as their own, that there is to be a resurrection of the just and unjust. And so I exert myself always to have a clear conscience in my relations with God and with men."

This was an extremely clever thrust on the part of the apostle. He invited Felix to examine the Jews' charge of heresy. The "way they call heresy" was, in fact, the way of Truth. He supported the doctrine of the Resurrection. His Sadducee accusers did not. They, not he, were heretical in repudiating God's power to raise the dead. Let Felix examine the Sanhedrin (the witnesses ranged against Paul that day) as to this subject, and he would soon find that it was completely divided among itself. Paul's comment must have caused a chill of apprehension to be felt by his Jewish accusers. Paul thus repudiated the charge that he was guilty of Sedition or Heresy.

The Charge of Sacrilege Rebutted

"After many years I came to bring to my people alms and offerings, and while I was doing this they found me in the temple after I had completed the ceremony of purification — not at all with mobs or riots. But there were some Jews from Asia who should have been here to complain if they knew anything tangible against me. Or else let these men here say what wrong they found in me as I stood before the Sanhedrin, unless it is that one remark I expressed in their presence, 'Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day'."

That concluded the apostle's defence. He not merely rebutted the charges against him, but pointed out that legally there was no case to answer, for the proper witnesses were not there to give evidence. In the absence of such, the case must collapse. Or else, as Paul virtually invited them to do, let those members of the Sanhedrin present publicly testify that what he said in their presence regarding the resurrection is heretical. They would not be prepared to do that, for it

would mean a repetition of the disgraceful tumult that took place in Jerusalem in the presence of Lysias.

Conclusion Of The Case

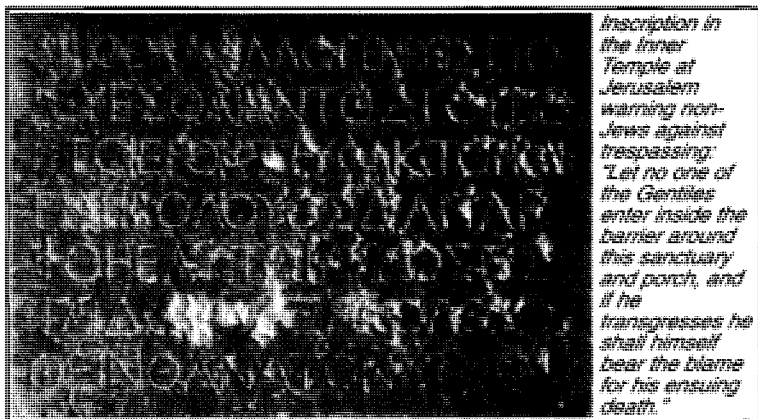
It was obvious to Felix that Paul was innocent of the charges laid against him, and a more honourable and stronger personality would have acquitted and released him. Felix had knowledge of Judaism from Drusilla his wife, and of Christianity from the proclamation of the Truth by the ecclesia in Caesarea; but he did not want to offend the Jews, and therefore he adjourned the case.

"When the commander, Lysias, comes down I shall decide your case," he publicly announced to Paul.

He gave orders that Paul should be guarded, but with relaxed control, and that none of his friends should be prevented from rendering aid to him.

That ended the matter for the time. It was a triumph for truth and righteousness. Luke's narrative reveals a dramatic moment in the life of the apostle told with simplicity and force. One writer (A.C. Hervey) has summed it up as follows:

"The bloated slave sitting on the seat of judgment and power, representing all the worst vices of Roman degeneracy. The heads of the sinking Jewish Commonwealth, blinded by history and mad with hate, forgetting for the moment their abhorrence of their Roman masters in their deeper detestation of the apostle Paul. The hired advocate with his fulsome flattery and false charges. And the great apostle with his inimitable skill in debate — pure-minded, upright, fearless, pleading his own cause with consummate force and dignity, and overawing his heathen judge by the majesty of his character. A graphic description of a noble scene."



*Inscription in
the Inner
Temple at
Jerusalem
warning non-
Jews against
trespassing:
"Let no one of
the Gentiles
enter inside the
barrier around
this sanctuary
and porch, and
if he
transgresses he
shall himself
bear the blame
for his ensuing
death."*

Chapter 5

FELIX, DRUSILLA AND THE APOSTLE PAUL

Drusilla, the wife of Felix, was a Jewess, the daughter of Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1). Through her, Felix had been drawn to consider the worship of the one God of Israel in contrast to the many gods of Rome. That provided a medium by which he had come to a better understanding of the principles of Christianity, which, of course, had its representatives in Caesarea.

Paul's defence had aroused the interest of Felix. He had some understanding of Christianity already, and in discussing the case of the apostle with his wife, the Jewess Drusilla, both felt they would like to know more. They agreed to hear Paul together in a special audience at which he would be invited to speak to them upon his beliefs.

As a Jewess, Drusilla was interested in the developing influence of Christianity, particularly in the light of its power to attract both Jews and Gentiles. Though a pagan, Felix likewise desired to know more of the Truth. Perhaps the example of Paul excited his interest. In the apostle he saw a man who was prepared to sacrifice every present material gain for the God he worshipped. This moved the covetous governor so that he wondered at the cause of it. Perhaps the religion of his wife had already loosened his attachment to pagan principles whilst his contact with Christianity through the ecclesia in Caesarea, may have furthered his interest in the true hope of Israel.

Preaching The Truth Whatever it was, he sent for Paul, and Paul welcomed the opportunity of proclaiming the Truth. He set it before Felix in such a compelling manner as to cause the governor to be visibly affected thereby. But the world had a firm grip on Felix, and he resisted the appeal of the Word; he was not prepared to pay the sacrifice that the Truth demands.

Paul pressed home the urgency of the matter, reasoning with Felix of "righteousness, temperance and judgment to come," with such force as to cause the governor to tremble. But still he prevaricated. "Go your way now. When I can spare the time I will send for you," he declared, ending the discussion.

What Paul Taught Felix

Why had Paul chosen to speak on these matters to Felix? Because he realised that they were most appropriate to a man in his position. Already Felix had a good understanding of the principles of

the Truth (Acts 24:22), and therefore was in a state of responsibility. If he refused to accept Christ he would be called to account at the Judgment Seat in the future. Paul had already instructed the ecclesia in Rome, that they who "obey not the Truth but obey unrighteousness," will receive "indignation and wrath" (Rom. 2:8). To the Corinthians he wrote: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ... Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2Cor. 5:10-11). This truth he now pressed home to Felix.

Paul first spoke to him of *righteousness*, or justification. This involves the forgiveness of sins, and is available to those who obey the will of God in submitting to baptism (Rom. 6:17-18). In reasoning with Felix concerning righteousness, therefore, the apostle urged upon him the need of baptism.

He then spoke of *temperance*. Temperance is the manifestation of restraint in action, and therefore the limiting of our desires according to the precepts of Christ. Baptism, in itself, will not save us; the forgiveness of sins is not sufficient; we must build into our lives the divine principles manifested by the Lord Jesus. In Gal. 5:23, Paul lists temperance as the final fruit of the spirit "against which there is no law." To Felix, therefore, Paul urged the need of a changed way of life.



Finally, he solemnly warned of *judgment to come*. He did this, doubtless, because he discerned that Felix had resisted the appeal of the Truth. He pointed out that knowledge brings responsibility (John 12:48; 15:22; Acts 17:30), and that it is better not to have known the way of righteousness, than, having known it, to turn from walking in it (2Pet. 2:21).

He pressed the point of individual responsibility upon Felix with such eloquence and reality that the governor trembled. Yet even so, the world still had a powerful attraction for him. He delayed making a decision for Christ, and put Paul off with the words quoted above.

So Paul was dismissed.

Felix Resists The Truth

As for Felix, once Paul left, the spell was broken. Conviction fought with covetousness for the ascendancy over the governor, and covetousness won. He continued to call for Paul to hear him, but he

had hardened his heart against the Truth, and no longer did it make any impression upon him. He began to look upon Paul as a simpleton, as very gullible, and called for him frequently, hoping that he might obtain money from him to secure his release.

Thus two years went by and Paul remained in imprisonment.

Two Years In Caesarea

Two years' imprisonment seems a sad waste of time for such an active man as Paul, with such a mission in life. But the time was not wasted. A new field of labour was about to open for him, and the time spent in enforced bodily idleness, provided the opportunity for study, meditation, prayer and communion, such as could better equip him for the new work to shortly open up for him.

Certainly they were not wasted years. The ecclesia in Caesarea was bound to have profited greatly by the presence of the apostle; whilst it became the centre to which many turned for advice, help and instruction such as Paul could provide.

Felix Recalled

These two years (AD58-60, with Paul aged approximately 52-54) were difficult years for Judea. The political condition worsened. The impatience of the people under the maladministration of Felix became increasingly implacable. He sought to pacify the leaders by such illegalities as keeping Paul imprisoned (Acts 24:27), but their hatred against him grew. Disturbances became more frequent throughout the province, and even within Caesarea itself, whilst constant complaints were lodged at Rome.

Caesarea was a semi-pagan city. It had been largely rebuilt by Herod, and named after Caesar. It was pagan in character: with its amphitheatre, its temples, its palace. It had a large Jewish population which was wealthy and sophisticated; but it also had a considerable Greek population which was constantly in conflict with the Jews. Toward the end of Paul's imprisonment, the Jews and Greeks came to an open, violent quarrel in the marketplace in which the Greeks were defeated. The tumult came to the notice of Felix, and he appeared on the scene at the head of his soldiers. His sympathies were with the Gentile faction, and he ordered his soldiers against the Jews. The slaughter was considerable, after which the soldiers plundered the homes of the Jews.

Such a flagrant act of injustice could not go unnoticed. The most vigorous protest was lodged at Rome. Felix was recalled to answer the charges, and in an attempt to palliate the Jews, left Paul imprisoned. It did not assist him before Nero. He was indicted for the abuses of his ministration, heavily fined and banished. Thus, having rejected the true riches that Paul had offered him, he vanished from history into obscurity and disgrace.

Chapter 6

PAUL BEFORE FESTUS (Acts 25:1-12)

Porcius Festus was appointed proconsul in the autumn of AD60, and died two years later. He was a far worthier and more honourable ruler than Felix, and had he lived longer, he may have been able to correct some of the evils then dominating Jewish politics. He inherited the government of a country in which anarchy triumphed and internal quarrels were conducted in the most violent spirit of revenge. Conditions were deteriorating to the point of revolt against Rome. These finally erupted in the Jewish-Roman war and consequent destruction of the Jewish State and the city of Jerusalem in AD70.

Festus entered upon his authority in an energetic spirit of reform. He was anxious to do what he could for the country, and perhaps, with time, his wise administration may have averted the crisis that resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem.

But it was not to be. The divine judgment threatened against the guilty nation and city was inevitable, seeing that the leaders and people refused to repent of their ways. The preaching of John Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the apostles had failed to meet with sufficient response from the nation.

Judea was doomed.

Meanwhile, Festus arrived at Caesarea as governor, and allowing only three days for his installation into office (Acts 25:1), he visited Jerusalem to meet with the elders of the people.

The Jews Still Seek To Murder Paul

The Jews' implacable hatred of Paul had not diminished with the passing of the years. They had many complaints against the administration of Felix which they felt Festus should correct, and one of them was the fate of Paul. With vindictive hate, they pressed their case against Paul with all the cunning of diplomacy, representing to Festus that he would obtain favour in the eyes of the Jews if he would only send the apostle to Jerusalem for proper treatment.

Their object, however, was to murder him. They had their hired assassins ready for that purpose.

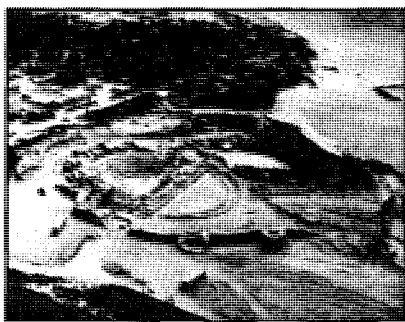
Festus was not taken in by their representations. He was of too honourable a character to attempt to win popularity by committing a crime. He saw through their cunning and would not capitulate to their importunities. As Procurator, he was determined to act with justice,

firmness and fairness, and here was opportunity to clearly reveal the firm and just administration they might expect. He told them: *"It is not customary with Romans to hand over a man until the accused has faced his accusers and has been given an opportunity to defend himself against the charges"* (Acts 25:16). He told them that he would shortly return to Caesarea, and instructed them to prepare their case against the prisoner, so that he could immediately hear and judge the evidence. *"Let those who are prominent among you come along with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, bring your charges against him,"* he ordered.

The Trial

Some eight to ten days later, Festus returned to the palace at Caesarea; and the very next day took his place on the judgment seat to hear the case. On this occasion, the Jews did not engage the services of a lawyer to prepare the evidence for them, and as a consequence the trial degenerated into a scene of disorderly accusation, argument, and counter-charge.

These were so contradictory, as to be without proper value as evidence (Mat. 26:60; Acts 25:8, 18), so that Paul had no real charge to answer. His defence was simple and to the point, and consisted of a general refutation of the charges laid against him on the



earlier occasion by Tertullus. To Festus he made the general statement: *"I have committed nothing wrong either against the Jewish Law, or against the Temple, or against Caesar."*

This placed Festus in a quandary. Obviously, Paul should be set at liberty; but if Festus did that, he faced a crisis with the Jews. It was clear from the confusion of the charges, and the unreasonable anger manifested by the Jews, that their opposition to the prisoner stemmed from some obtuse point of the Jewish religious law beyond his comprehension. In an attempt to curry favour with the Jews, and at the same time, manifest a spirit of true justice toward Paul, the Governor put a proposition to the apostle: *"Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried before me on these charges?"*

He could not order Paul to do this, because, as a Roman citizen, it was not necessary for the apostle to stand further trial; the matter had already been determined by Felix. But he hoped that Paul might agree to his proposition for the sake of peace; although he was ignorant of the extreme measures that the Jews were prepared to take to rid themselves of their hated enemy. But Paul would have none of this.

"I am standing at Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried," he answered. "I have in no respect wronged the Jews, as you understand well enough. In case I am guilty and have committed anything deserving death, then I am ready to die; but if there is nothing in their charges against me, then no one can surrender me to them. I make my appeal to Caesar."



Paul made the appeal to Caesar in order to end his imprisonment in Caesarea and move on

to Rome. True, he might be imprisoned there, but anything was better than the interminable waiting in Caesarea. Festus should have released him, but even that worthy man had begun to quail before the fierce and fanatical anger of the Jews and was seeking for some means to palliate them. Paul was not prepared to be the means. He had certain political rights, and saw no reason why he should not use them. Every Roman citizen had the right to appeal to the Emperor for justice. Once he did that, every mouth against him was closed until he appeared before the highest court of justice (yet not always was justice there!) in the world at that time.

So when Paul dramatically declared: ***"I appeal unto Caesar!"*** it meant the end of the case as far as Festus was concerned.

Both Jews and Gentiles were taken by surprise by Paul's appeal. The Jews realised that this was the end of their hopes of murdering the apostle; Festus was taken aback that his own authority was superseded in that way. He conferred with his council as to the legality of the appeal, and receiving assurances that it was all in order,

answered the apostle: ***"You have appealed to Caesar, unto Caesar you shall go!"***

The governor arose, and the case was at an end.



Chapter 7

AGRIPPA AND BERNICE (Acts 25:13-22)

King Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa, who died in AD44 (Acts 12). Agrippa was then 17, and Claudius deemed him too young to inherit the kingdom of his father, and turned Judea into a Roman Province. In AD48, Agrippa's uncle, Herod, king of Chalcis, died, and Agrippa was appointed to the position. At the same time, he was made superintendent of the Temple, and manager of the Treasury with power to remove the high priest, which power he freely exercised. About AD53, he was removed from his position of Governor of Chalcis, and given greater power over the tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanias throughout the north and north-east of Palestine. He made Caesarea Philippi his headquarters. He was not popular with the Jews, and on the outbreak of the Jewish-Roman war, threw in his lot with the Romans. Bernice was his sister: a woman of great beauty but low morals. On the death of her husband she returned to the home of her brother, and even their relations with each other were viewed with great suspicion. They were frequently together in public, and she publicly identified herself with his political policies. She was about a year younger than Agrippa, and he would have been about 33 years of age when he visited Festus on this occasion.

 few days after the trial, and before Festus could organise the means of transporting his prisoner to Italy, the governor was visited by King Agrippa II and his sister Bernice. It was an act of courtesy which Agrippa usually paid to each procurator as he was established in power, for as he, himself, owed his authority to Rome, and not to his popularity with the Jews, he found it politic to support the government of the former.

Agrippa And Bernice Visit Festus Among the things that they discussed together was Paul's case. Perhaps Festus thought that Agrippa, being a more liberal Jew than those of Jerusalem, might be able to give him some advice as to the circumstances themselves. Nothing could now prevent Paul being sent to Rome, but Agrippa's help may be useful in other similar cases that might arise. He therefore broached the matter to him:

"There is a prisoner left here by Felix," he commenced, "concerning whom, when I came to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews made their appearance requesting sentence against

him. I answered them that with Romans it is not customary to hand a man over until the accused has faced his accusers and has been given an opportunity to defend himself against the charges. So, when they assembled here, I lost no time in occupying the judgment seat on the next day, and I ordered the man brought in. When his accusers stood up they brought in no criminal charges against him such as I expected; but they had some controversies against him that concerned their own religion and a certain Jesus who had died, whom Paul asserted to be alive. As I felt uncertain about the proper investigation of such issues, I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and be tried there on these complaints; but since Paul appealed that his case be retained for a decision by Augustus, I ordered him to be held until I send him on to Caesar."

Agrippa listened with interest. He knew of the Christians, and doubtless had heard something of Paul.

"I would like to hear the man myself," he replied.

Festus was delighted. He would have the assistance of this man who was more skilled in Jewish law and religion than himself. Instantly he replied:

"Tomorrow you will hear him!"

Having appealed to Caesar, Paul was sent in safe custody with a military escort to Rome. The uniform worn by the infantrymen was the same as that seen on this group of legionaries carved on the marble pedestal of the column memorial to Antoninus Pius. Weapons were the two-edged sword and the javelin (pilum) which was an iron blade attached to a wooden shaft. Protection was afforded by the leathern cuirass with metal bands, a shield, and greaves.



Chapter 8

PAUL'S DEFENCE BEFORE AGRIPPA (Acts 25:23 to 26:32)

This was not a trial in the judicial meaning of the term. Agrippa had not the power to condemn or acquit Paul, and the authority of the procurator had been overridden by the apostle's appeal to be heard by Caesar. It was more in the nature of entertainment, designed to satisfy the idle curiosity of the King and the Procurator, and the guests whom the latter might invite. The growing influence of Christianity was obvious in all parts of the world, and was well-known to Agrippa, Bernice, and those whom Festus might invite, and they would be interested to hear a defence on the part of the main protagonist of the sect.

t the request of Festus, the auditorium was prepared for the occasion, and the chief officers of the army, and the principal men of the city, were invited to attend. The objective of all this was not merely to listen to Paul, but to honour Agrippa and Bernice.

The Court Assembles At the due time Festus made his appearance, doubtless in full uniform as befitted his authority, and attended by his personal bodyguard. He took his place in the chair of state that was prepared for him, at the side of which were two others, prepared for his distinguished visitors.

Agrippa and Bernice likewise appeared with great pomp and display. He was probably clad in his purple robes, wearing a golden circlet of royalty; whilst she would be resplendent in jewels and appropriate clothes. Attending them were their followers, so that the Roman Governor might be honoured by the glory of their pomp and state.

What a sight that was for Caesarea! These two children of Herod displayed their dazzling appearance in the very city where their father had been ignominiously eaten by worms, because he did not pay glory to God (Acts 12:23).

What a contrast between the fleshly glory of these rulers and the appearance of the prisoner, who, at the command of Festus, was likewise led into the chamber. Two years' imprisonment must have made its mark upon Paul. He appeared before them as a shackled prisoner: poor, worn and pale with sickness (cp. Acts 27:3). The resplendent company must have looked at him with great curiosity.

Festus opened the proceedings with a short speech in which he

honoured Agrippa, and recapitulated the circumstances of Paul's case:

"King Agrippa and all you men here present with us, you are looking at the person on whose account the whole constituency of the Jews have made complaint to me both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any more. But I discovered nothing he has done that deserves death, and since he appealed to the Emperor, I have decided to send him. I have nothing substantial to write His Majesty, and for this reason I have brought him before you, and particularly before you, King Agrippa, so that after due examination I may have something to report. For it seems to me odd to send a prisoner without signifying the charges against him."

Festus paused. But there were no accusers present who were prepared to formally present a charge against the prisoner. In any case, this was not a judicial enquiry, and therefore the Jews would not advance their cause by now appealing against Paul. If they wanted to proffer charges, it must now be before Nero himself.

In the absence of any such action, Agrippa spoke up: *"You are permitted to speak on your behalf,"* he said to Paul.

Stretching forth his shackled hand as would an orator, Paul moved with emotion, commenced his address (see pages 395-397). He was listened to with great interest as the apostle set before the assembled royalty, the coming of One of greater authority. He put the case



confidently before them, showing why he had so changed in his beliefs and teachings, and yet asserting that what he declared conformed to the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, with which, he said, King Agrippa was quite familiar!

Festus Interjects
(ch. 26:24-27)

Paul was quite at ease among the illustrious company. It mattered not to him that he was speaking to a king, a procurator, and the leading lights of Caesarea: the headquarters of Roman rule in Palestine. After all, he was the ambassador of a greater King, even though they might not acknowledge his authority (Eph. 6:20). He spoke with all the confidence of one exercising the status of an emissary.

His obvious sincerity, and the well-known facts of his case, made an impression upon his audience. The Jews present would have known him as the one-time bitter opponent of the Christians, and may have wondered at the change in him. The change was so remarkable, the sacrifices that he made on behalf of his present attitude were so obvious, that it was apparent that some amazing happening had caused it.

The Jews believed in miracles, and had no reason to doubt that Paul had received some divine message, even if they hesitated to accept the conclusion.

Not so Festus. It all seemed preposterous to him. Here was an obviously highly intelligent man of a good family background, a freeborn Roman citizen, an educated man of undoubted qualifications and learning, babbling about a resurrection from the dead! Like the Greeks of Athens, the Roman Procurator scoffed at such a teaching (Acts 17:32; 1Cor. 1:18-31). A dead person was dead, and was without hope as far as his bodily state was concerned. How foolish that a man of knowledge (and Festus would have known of Paul's habits of study by repute and observation) should place confidence in such fantasies.

And yet, Festus was impressed. He could not help so to be. Here was a man standing in judgment upon all the audience about him, claiming that both Jews and Gentiles failed to have Truth, sacrificing all present advantage, because he believed that a man executed by Pilate as a criminal had risen from the dead!

It was completely stupid.

Festus could not help but express himself. Speaking in a loud voice, charged with emotion, he declared: "*You are raving, Paul; your excessive study is driving you mad!*"

But back came the dignified reply: "*Most illustrious Festus, I am not mad but am giving utterance to words of truth and sane thinking. The king knows about these matters, to whom I speak freely. I do not*

believe any of these things are unknown to him, for they have not occurred in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe!"

**Agrippa's
Embarrassment
(vv. 28-29)**

The auditorium was now tense with emotion. The puzzled Festus sat in his chair of state pondering the scene before him, wondering at these strange people over whom he had been established in power. The prominent men of Caesarea, both Jews and Gentiles, thoughtfully considered the shackled prisoner before them, recalled (if they were familiar with them) the circumstances of his changed life, and found no answer to the mystery of it all, except that set forth by the apostle. The voluptuous king, sitting by the side of Festus, was embarrassed by Paul's challenge. Agrippa felt the eyes of all turned upon him. How could he answer the prisoner! If he confessed that he did believe the prophets, he would be forced to accept their teaching, and thus be looked upon as mad by the sophisticated Romans; to deny that he believed would incite the anger of the Jews. He was in a fix!

Agrippa did believe the prophets. Moreover, he had developed a healthy respect for Paul's ability to set forth truth, and did not want to risk a public discussion with him. In fact, he had been shaken in his convictions, and seriously impressed by what he had heard from the lips of the apostle that day.

"With but little persuasion, you would almost make me a Christian!" he declared.

The term "Christian" was the Gentile name for believers; Jews called them Nazarenes (Acts 24:5). Agrippa thus accommodated his expression to the Gentile court without necessarily endorsing the messiahship of Jesus. He felt a little uncomfortable being so directly questioned and challenged in front of his sophisticated Gentile friends.

Earnestly, Paul turned to Agrippa, having the last word. Lifting up his shackled hands, he declared: *"I would pray to God that whether with little persuasion or with great, not you alone but all who are now listening to me today might be in my condition — not including these shackles."*

They were courageous, faithful, wonderful words. They testified that Paul had a vision that saw beyond his trials to the glorious reality of the Kingdom of God (2Cor. 4:15-18). In that very court, he was able to lift his mind to Christ and to that which he shall establish upon the earth. He saw the future as tangible and real, and his sufferings as a necessary means to an end. He had earlier written to the Corinthians: "For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal!" (2Cor. 4:18).

Paul knew that his imprisonment, his troubles, his sufferings would soon come to an end, and that before him, to be revealed in the future, was an eternity of glory without end.

He was more illustrious than any of his judges in that court, wiser than the greatest of them, and for all his poverty, in possession of riches such as they would never attain.

The Judgment (vv. 30-32)

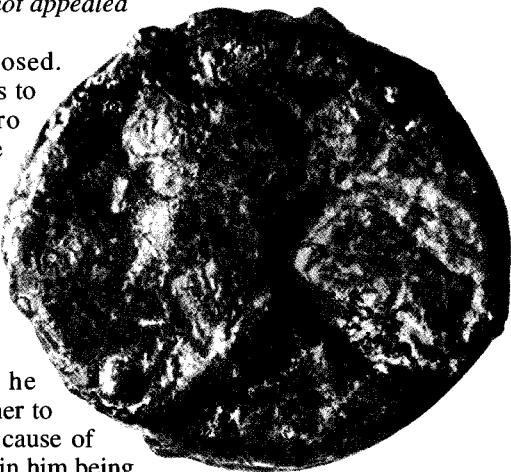
At this point, the king abruptly terminated the proceedings by rising from his seat. He had been emotionally stirred by the discourse of the apostle, particularly when, at the conclusion of the trial, he found himself, by a strange twist of circumstances, in the witness box on trial himself, rather than presiding as a judge. He had not liked the interrogation on the part of the prisoner, for he had been virtually forced to confess to the power and truth of what the one before him had proclaimed in his defence.

Agrippa, with Bernice, Festus, and the principal men of Caesarea withdrew from the public auditorium to an adjoining private room where they could freely discuss the case. It was obvious to them all that the Jews had no case whatever against the prisoner. "*This man has done nothing that deserves death or prison,*" they declared, endorsing the finding of Lysias (Acts 23:29).

And now Agrippa summed up his conviction of Paul's innocence of the Jewish charges. Speaking to Festus he said: "*This man could have been set free, if he had not appealed to Caesar.*"

With that, the debate closed. But, at least, it enabled Festus to send some facts to Nero concerning the prisoner. He could advise that, in his opinion, endorsed by that of Agrippa, who was a Jew, Paul had not offended against the national laws or customs of Judea, as had been alleged.

This advice, which he doubtless sent with the prisoner to Rome, probably assisted the cause of Paul in that city, and resulted in him being more leniently treated than otherwise would have been the case.



*Coln of Agrippa II,
first century AD.*

Paul's Address before King Agrippa

THE HOPE OF ISRAEL DECLARED

Without any hesitation, the apostle Paul set before the assembled court his defence, showing the reasons for his remarkable conversion. Yet, at the same time, he established that he fully upheld and believed the true hope of the fathers, and presented the facts concerning the resurrection.

His Audience Knew The Beliefs Of The Jews (Acts 26:2-3).

"Concerning all the charges against me by the Jews, I consider myself fortunate, O King Agrippa, that I am to defend myself before you; for you are thoroughly familiar with all the Jewish customs and problems. So, please listen to me with patience."

He Was Brought Up With A Bias Toward Judaism (vv. 4-5)

"All the Jews are acquainted with my behaviour from my youth up, both among my own people (in Tarsus) and in Jerusalem. They are fully aware, if only they were willing to bear witness, how from the very first I have lived as a Pharisee in agreement with the strictest sect of our religion."

He Still Endorses The National Hope of Israel (vv. 6-7)

"And right now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise which God made to our fathers, and which our twelve tribes expect to obtain as they worship night and day. For this very hope, O King, I am accused by the Jews."

This Involved Resurrection — So Why Dispute A Living Christ? (v. 8).

"What? Is it considered incredible among you that God raises the dead?"

Paul's Amazing Conversion Argues A Divinely Established Conviction (vv. 9-18).

"The fact is that I was possessed of the idea that I should in every way oppose the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, and so I did in Jerusalem. Many a saint have I shut up in prison, furnished as I was with authority from the chief priests: and when they were executed I cast my vote against them. In all the synagogues I often forced them by torture to deny their religion. Yes, in my boundless rage against them I persecuted them as far as foreign cities.

"With the authority and approval of the chief priests I was travelling to Damascus for this purpose, when on the road at noon I saw, O King, a light from heaven, more brilliant than the sun, shining around me and my fellow travellers. And when we all fell to the ground I heard a voice

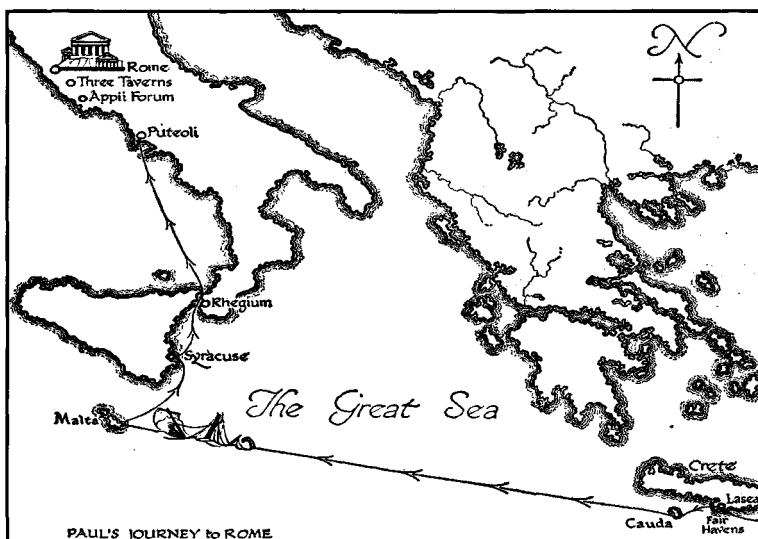
saying to me in the Hebrew language: ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ But I said: ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said: ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you a minister and witness both of the things that you have seen and of those in which I will still show myself to you. I will deliver you from your people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you for the opening of their eyes and their turning from darkness to light, and from the power of the Adversary (sin) to God, to obtain forgiveness of sins and their allotted portion among those made holy through faith in me.’”

His Preaching Was Designed To Turn Men To God — For This He Was Condemned (vv. 19-21).

“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and then all over Judea and among the Gentiles, I preached that they must repent and turn to God, and do works consistent with repentance. For these reasons, the Jews caught hold of me in the temple, and sought to kill me.”

His Preaching Comprised An Exposition Of The Law And The Prophets (vv. 22-23)

“So, as I have enjoyed the help of God until this day, I take my stand witnessing to both small and great, without saying anything, however, except what the prophets and Moses said would take place: that the Christ was to suffer, and that he, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to our people and to the Gentiles.”



Paul in Rome: Final Days

(Acts 26:32 to 28:31)

Chapter 1

PAUL'S VOYAGE TO ROME (Acts 27:1 to 28:15)

Why is the account of this voyage to Rome given in such detail? Perhaps for two reasons. Firstly, it provides a wonderful example of faith, and secondly, it sets forth in parable the victory of faith. As to the first, it records Paul's calmness, confidence and patience of faith in the face of uncontrollable adverse forces, panic and despair. On this journey, he experienced at least the fourth shipwreck he endured in preaching the Gospel (2Cor. 11:25). In this instance, the storm was so terrible that even Luke capitulated to the circumstances, and forgetting faith, acted according to human prudence and panic (Acts 27:16, 19). On the other hand, Paul, recognising that conditions had gone beyond human control, accomplished by fervent prayer that which human prudence and ingenuity could not bring about. It is the Paul of the Epistles who is revealed on this voyage, providing an example, under actual conditions, of the attitude he commends in his letters. The circumstances showed that he was no mere theorist, but manifested in action those things he advocated. As to the second reason, the parable is discerned in the significance of the order in which the names of those places visited appear, as the narrative reveals.

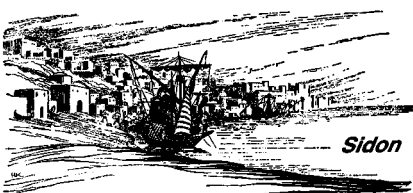
It was already late in the year for sailing, so, at the first opportunity, Paul and other prisoners who were waiting to travel to Rome for the purpose of an appeal, were despatched by boat to Italy.

Refreshment At Sidon

They were placed in the charge of Julius, a centurion of an Augustian cohort, portion of the bodyguard of Augustus, and therefore a very famous contingent of legionaries. Roman soldiers were responsible with their own lives for the security of their prisoners, and therefore, had established the custom of keeping the prisoners safe by chaining them with a long, light chain, by the right wrist to their (the soldier's) left wrist. This must have been irritating to both parties. Certainly it must have been so to Paul, whose sensitive nature would be jarred by being in such close contact with one so lacking in feeling for the things of God as a Roman soldier. However, on board ship, this practice was discontinued.

Two brethren travelled with Paul as his assistants: Luke the

physician, and Aristarchus of Thessalonica. No doubt, the fact that Paul had these associates with him would elevate his status even more in the eyes of Julius, who would have received information concerning his distinguished prisoner in Caesarea.



The voyage began well, and the boat made excellent progress. With favourable winds they swiftly sailed north, and the next day anchored at Sidon, some seventy miles (112 kms) distant. Paul welcomed the stay at this port, for he was far from well. Julius noted his condition, and treated him with great courtesy and kindness. He gave him leave to visit the ecclesia in Sidon, and receive necessary medical attention.* The strain of imprisonment and trials had evidently affected Paul, and perhaps this had been aggravated by sea-sickness. Be that as it may, we may be sure that the Sidonian Ecclesia received the apostle with every kindness, and ministered lovingly to his every need.

Rough Seas To Myra Leaving Sidon, they encountered the prevailing westerlies which forced them to

* The Greek words translated "refresh himself" (Acts 27:3) comprise a medical term, implying that Paul was ill. Luke, the narrator, as physician, would use it in that way. Paul never experienced robust health, and his physical condition on this strenuous journey must have constituted an additional trial.



sail east to Cyprus. From there they made for the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, creeping on from point to point, seeking to take advantage of temporary land breezes, and of the steady westward current that runs along the coast. The captain took advantage of every opportunity of making a few miles, but often lay at anchor in the shelter of the winding coast when the westerly winds made progress impossible.

Thus travelling was slow and difficult; the sea was becoming rough, and the time was rapidly drawing on in which navigation would be closed for the year.

At last they reached Myra in Lycia. This was as far as this ship could take them. They dropped anchor in the mouth of the river Andriacus, opposite to a hill on which was built this former capital of Lycia. The Adramyttium harbour was a regular port of call on the Egyptian service which plied between Egypt and Italy, and Julius could well expect to continue his voyage by another ship.

At The Fair Havens Julius soon found a grain ship of Alexandria about to leave for Italy, and securing berths for his company of soldiers, prisoners and their assistants, he made his way on board, and prepared for the long voyage ahead.

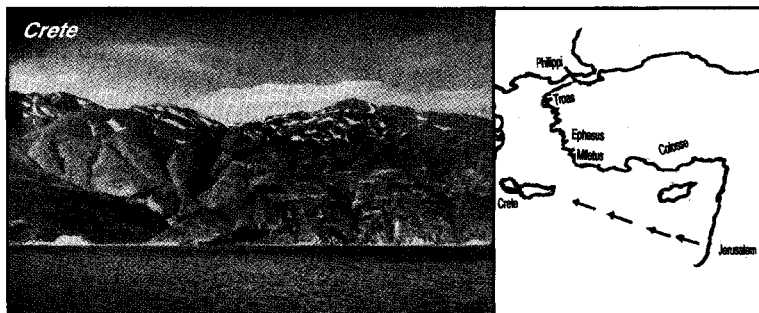
By now the winds were becoming increasingly difficult, and the sea was rising. The ship made but slow progress. It took "many days" to cover the distance of approximately one hundred and thirty miles from Myra to Cnidus. But at this point, the winds

became so tempestuous, that the company could neither enter the pleasant and commodious harbour, nor continue their passage in the normal direct line north of



The Fair Havens

Crete. The only alternative left them was to make for Cape Salome on the eastern side of Crete. They reached the Cape, but then, again, felt the full force of the wind, and only with



difficulty rounded it. Continuing along the eastern coast of Crete, they eventually arrived at a place called Fair Havens, a little to the east of Cape Matala, south of Crete, and thus protected from the strongly blowing westerlies.

Here they anchored. It was now late in September, and they had left Caesarea about mid-August, so that progress had been slow. They remained in The Fair Havens, not far from the small town of Lasea, for quite some time; Luke observes, until after the day of Atonement, which was probably celebrated in early October.

Meanwhile, discussions took place as to whether they should winter where they were or choose the first favourable opportunity of pushing on round Cape Matala to Phoenix, a more suitable harbour about forty miles (64 kms) distant. Julius, as representing the emperor, had requisitioned the ship in his name, and in the discussions acted as President. Paul was allowed to give his opinion, an indication of the high opinion that Julius had of his prisoner, and in view of the stormy conditions emphatically urged in favour of remaining where they were. "Sirs," he declared, "*I discern that this voyage will involve damage and considerable loss not merely to the cargo and ship but to our lives as well!*"

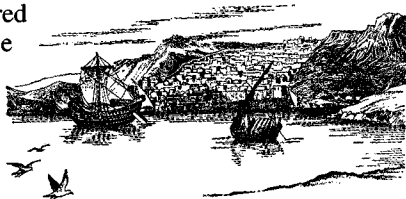
The pilot and captain, however, gave contrary opinions and urged that the voyage be continued. Others supported them; particularly in view of the nature of the harbour. It was far from commodious, and the prospects of being held up there over the winter months were not very appealing. Phoenix, only about forty miles (64 kms) distant, offered much better facilities and prospects of pleasure for the soldiers and sailors, and they preferred to take the risk and move on to the better harbour.

They Set Out For Phoenix

Soon they had their opportunity. The strong westerlies died down, and a soft breeze sprung up from the south. Gladly weighing anchor and setting sail, they followed the coast to the point of Cape Matala, and then prepared for a pleasant run of a few hours to the beautiful and alluring harbour, for which they abandoned The Fair Havens.

The southerly breeze sung pleasantly in the rigging, the ship cut its way through the blue waters of the ocean, the passengers and crew gathered on deck enjoying the mountainous coastal scenery which passed gently by them, or busied themselves with their duties.

At last the Cape was rounded and they moved into the broad waters of the large Bay of Mesara. Then, suddenly, without warning,



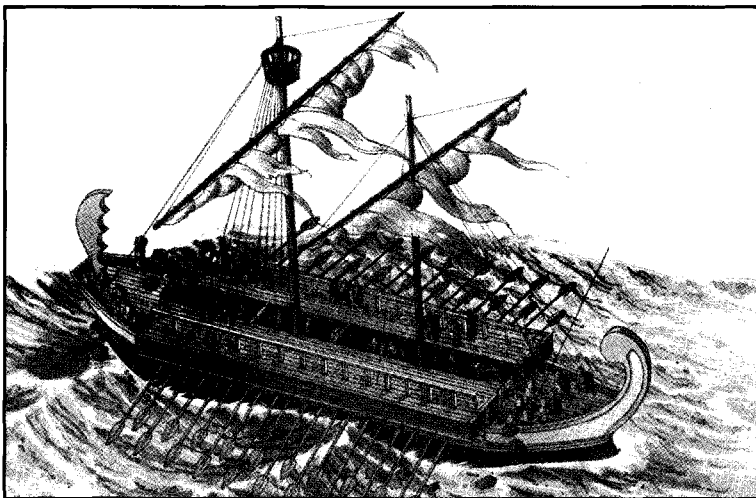
they were hit by a typhoon. This tempestuous wind, called by the name of Euroquilo,* swept down upon them from the Cretan Mountains which towered some 7,000 feet (2,100 mtrs) above, tossing them about, first in one direction and then in another, blowing first from the east, and then from the north.

As the fierce wind swooped down upon the ship, the ocean was churned into a cauldron; and the previous enjoyable conditions were instantly changed into unpleasant ones fraught with the greatest peril. The suddenness and fury of the blow left the sailors no opportunity to apply their skill in reducing sail, or to doing anything but to allow the ship to be driven madly forward before the typhoon. After a fearful run of some twenty-five miles (40 kms), they reached the lee of a small island called Claudia, where they received some respite. For the moment the ship was sheltered from the full fury of the storm, and this gave the captain some opportunity of taking stock of the situation.

But he had to act quickly. There was no possibility of harbouring at Claudia, and once they left the shelter of the island, they would again be at the mercy of the storm.

Already the ship was showing the effect of the buffeting she had received. Ships of those times had one mainmast and one mainsail. The sailors had had no opportunity of taking in the huge sail that had billowed out to its fullest extent when the typhoon had struck, so that the pressure upon the vessel from the leverage of the mast was

* See R.V. It is derived from "Euros," the east wind, and "Aquilo," the north wind. The word "Euroclydon" in the A.V. is derived from "Euros," the east wind, and "Kludon," to billow, bash over, a surge of the sea. Both words suggest a fierce storm of wind with rising, angry waves.



terrific. This had strained the timbers of the ship and caused it to spring a leak. Every preparation had to be made immediately and quickly to guard against every eventuality. The ship's lifeboat which had been towed behind the vessel in the calm waters before, had become water-logged, and it was deemed wise to haul it on deck. This was done with difficulty, the passengers, and even Luke, being pressed into helping, while the sailors rushed about their other duties (Acts 27:16). Next it was decided to undergird the ship. This was done by passing stout hawsers several times under the prow, and tying them as tightly as possible round the middle of the vessel. Finally, they reduced sail as much as possible, in order to lessen the driving of the ship and relieve the strain on the ship's timbers.

Quicksands Ahead! Once the lee of Claudia had been passed, they felt again the full impact of the wind. The ship was driven in a southerly direction toward the north coast of Africa, toward a spot feared by sailors because of the proximity of some quicksands, called the Greater Syrtis. These were notorious for their danger to mariners from very early times, both with regard to the character of the sands, and because of the strong cross currents of the adjoining waters.

Thus the day that had commenced with soft breezes and joyous anticipation ended with the men in deadly danger, with a ship being driven before a typhoon that threatened to wreck it on the quicksands of northern Africa.

The Cargo Jettisoned Conditions the following day appeared desperate. The weak sun arose upon an angry ocean, and from the ship nothing could be seen but a heaving mass of water, in which huge waves ran on to the vessel as though as to bury it in a watery grave. The ship rose and fell with the motion of the waves; and in spite of the precautions of the sailors, it was obvious that the timbers were strained, and the ship was leaking badly.

It was needful to lighten the ship, and that meant that some of the cargo must be jettisoned if lives were to be saved. Accordingly, portion of it was flung overboard. Thus another dark day of anxious watching slowly went by. The heavy clouds above matched the angry sea beneath; whilst the wind howled around the doomed vessel, seemingly shrieking its pleasure at the impending fate of the hapless folk aboard.

The next day, the third day of the storm, saw little change. Passengers and crew were beginning to panic. For three days they had been tossed to and fro by the violence of wind and wave, whilst both sun and stars had been hidden from view. In an excess of fear, believing the ship might founder, the passengers joined the crew in

casting overboard any moveable items they came upon (v. 19). So the ship was lightened to continue on its way, being driven to and fro by the action of wind and current.

Paul's Calmness

Everything possible, according to human ingenuity and skill, had been done by the crew, and all that now remained was to await the inevitable. The ship was at the mercy of wind and tide, and was being driven to and fro, though generally in a westerly direction. The roar of waves, the howl of tempest, the gloom of day and night in which both sun and stars were hidden, the sickening lurch of the ship as it was lifted high by the waves, and thrust deeply into their troughs, the fear of sudden disaster, continued day after day. A state of fatalistic apathy settled on the whole company, so that each one despaired of being saved, and awaited the approach of death. Even the need of food was forgotten as complete despondency took hold of them all. They sat doing nothing, eating nothing, waiting for the ship to sink.

All but one man! Filled with faith, Paul had given himself to prayer. In some way he had received assurance from God that the ship's company would be saved. This was the divine repayment, possibly, for the kindness shown by Julius to Yahweh's servant. Now, at the moment of darkest despair which had even depressed his companions, Paul was able to stand up with a message of encouragement. The apostle addressed the men about him, who, weak from abstinence of food, and sick through the lurching of the ship, had lost interest in life.

"Sirs," he said, "you should have listened to me and so spared yourselves this damage and loss, and not have put to sea from Crete. Even now I advise you to cheer up; for not a single person among you will perish... only the ship. For this night there stood by me an angel of God, Whose I am and Who I serve. He said, 'Have no fear, Paul. You have to stand before Caesar, and be assured that God has granted you all that are sailing with you.' Therefore be of good spirits, men; for I have faith in God that it will happen in accord with what was told me. But we have to be stranded on an island."

Whilst the crew had tried ineffectually to save the ship through skill of seamanship, and the passengers had given themselves over to despair, Paul had placed his confidence in God. Thus faith came to the rescue, and brought with it encouragement. Yet at no stage did Paul presume on faith. He had urged prudence, warning Julius against leaving the refuge of The Fair Havens (v. 10). His advice had been rejected, and this had brought them all into desperate trouble. Yet even then faith had enabled him to exhibit a calm assurance, permitting him to speak a message of hope to those who had given way to panic.

His action at such a time provides a wonderful example. Whilst Paul never neglected prayer, he always used the means at hand to assist him. He sought the blessing of God on his endeavours, but always laboured on his own account. He manifested faith, but he also exercised vigilance, for he realised that God will not protect men from their headstrong foolishness (cp. vv. 30-31).

His calm, faithful confidence on the deck of that storm-tossed ship was like a gleam of sunlight in the gloom that enshrouded it, providing renewed strength and encouragement for the despairing men. His faith and courage defied the violence of wind and wave.

Land Ahead!

For fourteen days they were held in the grip of this terrible storm, drifting to and fro on the heaving waters of Adria, as the Mediterranean between Greece Italy and Africa was then called. Then, suddenly, on the fourteenth night, the sailors fancied that they discerned signs of land ahead. Perhaps they heard the roar of breakers above the noise of the storm, or detected ahead in the darkness, the white surf of waves as they crashed upon rocks. That is such as could well be expected at the point they had reached. One geographer, James Smith, in commenting upon the storm recorded by Luke, claims that a ship drifting from Clauda, could not enter what is today known as St. Paul's Bay, without passing the low, rocky point of Koura, which bounds it on the east. The noise of the breakers on these rocks may well have given warning to the sailors that they were approaching land.

The shout of "*Land ahead!*" was given, and dropping the lead, the sailors found that they were in twenty fathoms of water. A little later, and sounding again, they found that they were in fifteen fathoms. Their suspicions and fears were now turned to certainty, and with trepidation they awaited further dangers that the terrible voyage might reveal. Fearing to go any further lest they break up on some iron coast, they cast four anchors from the stern. Anchors are usually dropped from the bow, but in this case they did so from the stern to prevent the ship swinging around from the wind, and breaking up on the rocks. The ship was steadied but, still filled with anxiety, they "wished for the day."

Mutiny

Throughout the rest of that long, dark, stormy night, passengers and crew stood face to face with death. The gale still howled around the ship; mountainous waves swept angrily upon it, hurling it high one moment, and flinging it down the next, constantly threatening to smash it up. In the distance, adding to the fiendish noise of the storm, could be heard the sullen roar of the breakers, as though waiting to devour them.

Gradually the eastern sky grew a little lighter, and the early

morning sun struggled to appear. Now they could see through the murky atmosphere that they were anchored off a low point, against which the sea roared, to roll back again in a seething, swirling foam. This was Point Koura, on the north-east side of Malta, though, on that dark early morning, its true identity was not recognised.

But it was land, and there was some hope in that fact. The sailors conspired together to abandon the ship and the rest of the company, and to save themselves in the boat which had been hoisted up on deck at the beginning of the storm. Therefore, pretending that they were throwing out other anchors, they untied the boat, and began to lower it into the sea. Had they succeeded they probably would have been destroyed by the violence of the waves swamping it, and certainly all those who remained on board the large ship would have perished though inability to handle the vessel.

From this danger all were saved by the vigilance of Paul. Discerning their intention, he quickly drew the attention of Julius to what they were doing. *"You cannot be saved unless these men stay by the ship,"* he warned.

He said "you," not "we." He had been given the assurance that he would see Rome, and knew that the divine Providence would accomplish that intent, but the divine Promise of safety to the rest of the company was conditional upon each one co-operating to that end.

The soldiers heard Paul's remark, and without hesitation acted upon it. They drew their swords, and cut through the boat's ropes, letting it fall into the ocean. The sailors, apparently, saw it go without comment. The boat represented but a forlorn hope of safety, and they could not argue with the swords of the soldiers.

Paul's Outstanding Faith and Courage

Gradually daylight appeared. The outline of land could be seen ahead, against which wild waves were crashing, sending up mountains of spray; the ship rocked with the violence of the ocean, though the anchors held it firm; the passengers and crew looked into the faces of each other, haggard and ghastly with so much privation and so many fears. What would the day bring forth? They all realised that they had come to journey's end as far as the ship was concerned.



Again Paul took the lead. Again he gave a matchless example of faith and courage in the face of most difficult circumstances, reviving their hopes, and stimulating them to action. He urged them to take some food, to fortify themselves for the rigours that were ahead of them. *"For fourteen days now you have been waiting expectantly without taking anything,"* he declared. *"So I implore you to eat something; it is necessary for your safety. For not a hair of your head will perish."*

So saying, he took food, offered thanks to God in the presence of all of them, and began to eat.

They looked with astonishment at the amazing prisoner in their midst, and found relief from their tension as they did so. They recognised how practical was his advice, and how strong was his conviction in his God. His cheerful trust was contagious, and the drenched, miserable throng of two hundred and seventy-six men, took fresh courage, and joined him in a substantial meal.

They instantly felt better for it, and busied themselves in doing what they could. They recognised that the ship and its precious cargo of wheat were doomed, and therefore they dumped the latter in the sea.

Wrecked!

When full daylight spread over the stormy scene, they failed to recognise the coast.

They were, in fact, north-west of the Port of Valetta, on the Island of Malta, and therefore some seven miles (11 kms) from the spot which ships normally visited. They saw before them on the right the island



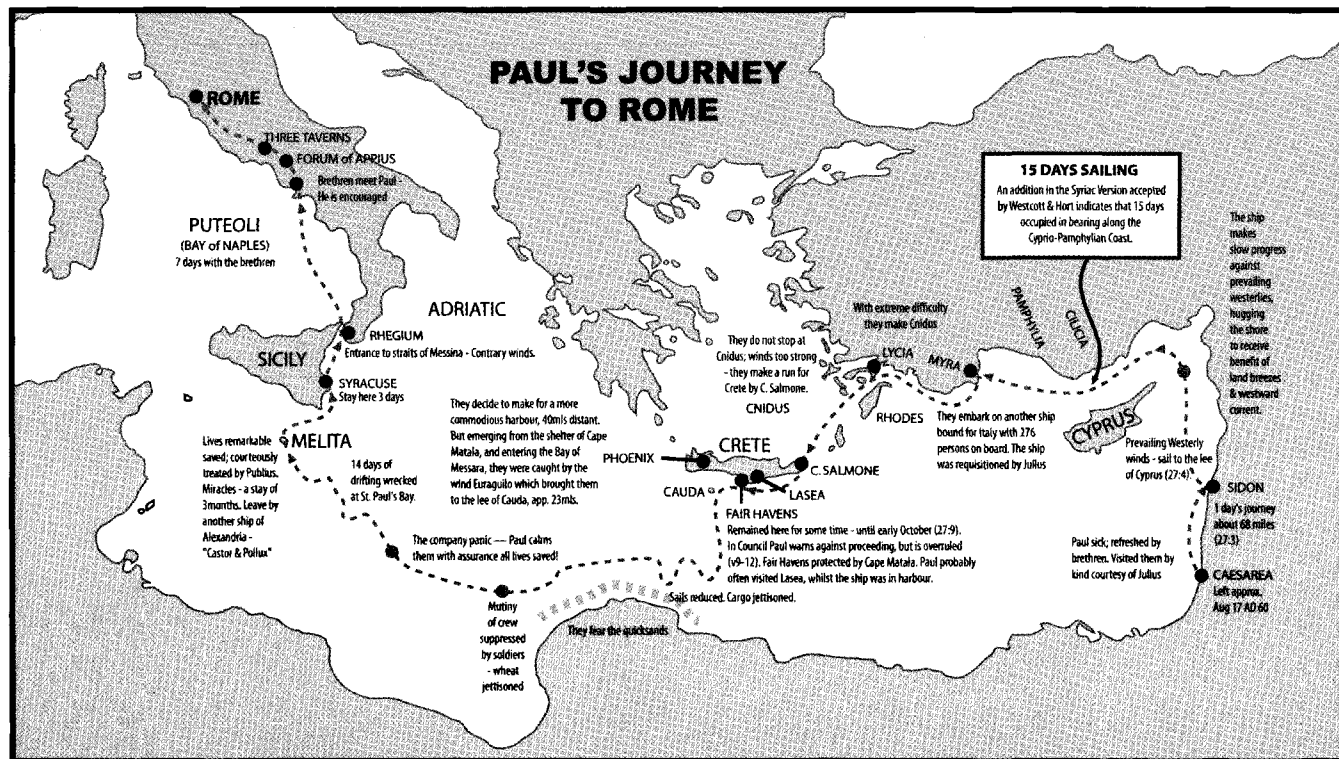
of Salmonetta which they apparently mistook for part of Malta; on their left was Point Koura which, in fact, is part of Malta. Before them was a bay, an inlet with a beach, into which they decided, if at all possible, to run the ship. Accordingly, they cast off the anchors into the sea, loosed the ropes that held the rudders, hoisted the foresail to the wind, and made for the beach.

All went well until they came to the end of the Island of Salmonetta, but there they met a channel through which the waters of the Mediterranean swirled in a crosscurrents described as "a place where two seas met" (Acts 27:41). Here the ship, caught in the crosscurrent, failed to answer to the helm, and hit a shoal. The prow stuck immovably fast, but as the wild waves smashed against the stern with irresistible force, it began to break up.

A further peril then faced the prisoners. The soldiers had to account for them with their lives, and it would be better for them to report that they had all been killed under the necessity of the storm and shipwreck, than have it reported that they had escaped. They urged the idea upon Julius, in order to prevent the prisoners swimming away and escaping. But Julius, anxious to save Paul, prevented them from doing so. Instead he ordered those who could swim to leap overboard and make for shore, and the rest to follow as best they could.

Thus, some on boards, and some on fragments of the ship, floated to shore, which all reached in safety. Paul's prophetic words had been vindicated.





PAUL AND LUKE ON BOARD SHIP

Both men showed amazing qualities under extreme trial. Luke was a physician, not a sailor, yet he has described the circumstances of the storm and shipwreck in such accurate detail, as to illustrate his intense interest and observation in everything that was done. True, he panicked a little with the others, and, at one stage was busily throwing overboard such cargo as could be spared (Acts 27:19 — notice the pronoun “we”) whilst Paul was calmly giving himself to prayer; but on other occasions, he must have been a most interested spectator of all that took place.

The description has been proved true to fact to the very detail, and that with regard to such technical matters as the use of anchors and the depths of the sea. For example, it was not normal for sailing vessels to be anchored by the stern, but the very relationship of the gale to the land demanded this, and it is claimed that Nelson, reading this chapter just before the battle of Copenhagen, ordered his ships to be anchored by the stern.

But would not ships anchored to the sand, drift in the face of such a gale as was then blowing? Under normal conditions, Yes. But the Admiralty chart of the north-east coast of Malta reports that at that spot where this was done, the clay is of such extraordinary tenacity as to hold the anchors. Moreover, a sounding of the bay reveals that the measures of first twenty fathoms and then fifteen fathoms are exactly right.

We can thus picture Luke on that dark night, in the teeth of a gale, and in spite of the sickening pitch and toss of the ship, being an interested spectator in company with the sailors, as the sounding lead was withdrawn and note was taken of the depths; or listening to their discussions next morning, as the crew took counsel as to the best means of running the ship into shore (v. 39 — “they were minded”).

Meanwhile, Paul provides a wonderful example of calm faith under trial. This is illustrated by the very detail Luke supplies of the journey, and the desperate efforts of human prudence and skill that were vainly expended by passengers and crew to secure the ship, when faith and trust in Yahweh were alone efficacious.

Yet Paul was physically ill at the time, and in need of the help of others (Acts 27:3). This fact shows more clearly that Paul was a man who gave practical application to the precepts he preached. It is Paul of the Epistles who is before us, so that Luke’s account supplements the apostle’s appeals.

- His way of life “commended him to those that are without” (cp. vv. 3, 43; See Col. 4:5; Eph. 5:15).
- He was a man of prudence, not tempting Providence (cp.

v.10; See 1Cor. 10:9).

- His faith stood firm in the face of a seemingly hopeless situation (cp. v. 21; See 2Thes. 1:4; Heb. 11:6; 13:7).

- He was a man of prayer (cp. v. 23; See 1Thes. 5:17; 1Tim. 2:8).

- He was a man of optimism and courage (cp. vv. 22, 25; See Phil. 1:18; 2:17; 3:1; 4:4; Col. 1:24; 1Thes. 5:16).

- He was vigilant; recognising that prayer is only efficacious if men use the means to make it so (cp. v. 31; See 1Cor. 16:13; 1Thes. 5:6).

- He was practical (cp. vv. 33-36; see 1Tim. 4:4-8; 5:23).

- He was faithful, recognising the providence of Yahweh in events that could be construed as being fortuitous (cp. vv. 22, 31; See Phil. 1:12; Rom. 8:28).

The Parable

An amazing parable is hidden in the narrative of this chapter that probably influenced Luke to write it up in such detail. Thus:

[1] They commenced their journey in a ship of Adramyttium (meaning *The House of Death*) — All humanity take ship on such a journey!

[2] They embarked on another ship that took them to The Fair Havens — Such refuge is found in Christ.

[3] The accommodation was not pleasing to the flesh; they decided to sail to Phoenix, forty miles distant (65 kms) — Many find fault with the present conditions of Christ.

[4] Their folly brought them into storm and trouble — Such experiences are common in the walk in Christ.

[5] All despaired, except Paul, who showed faith and gave himself to prayer, vigilance and wisdom. Those exercises are valuable in the walk of life.

[6] Through divine Providence their lives were saved at Melita (which signifies *A Safe Refuge*).

We all commence the journey of life along a course that leads to the house of death. However, it is possible for us to change ships, and sail into a fair haven in Christ. But then human folly often brings us into such danger as would threaten to make shipwreck of faith; though even under those circumstances, we can still find a safe refuge if we take Christ (Luke 8:24) and Paul (1Cor. 4:16; 11:1; 2Thes. 3:9) with us. That will enable us to win through in spite of our own indiscretions (Acts 14:22).

Chapter 2

MIRACLES AT MALTA (Acts 28:1-10)

Malta is a small rocky, mountainous island in the Mediterranean, situated about 60 miles (96 kms) from Sicily, 180 miles (290 kms) from the nearest African mainland. It is about seventeen miles (27 kms) long and nine miles (14 kms) wide, and about sixty miles (96 kms) in perimeter. Its main centre is the Port of Valetta. St. Paul's Bay, where the passengers and crew of the doomed ship were cast upon the shore, is situated about seven miles (11 kms) north-west of this spot. The Phoenicians colonised Malta; the Greeks conquered it in BC528; and the Romans took it from them in BC242. The Maltese are generally a cheerful, friendly people, as we found when we visited the island some years ago; and that is how Paul also found them in his day. Like Paul, we found them rather superstitious; today dominated by Roman Catholicism. In this way they do not differ much from their ancestors who were noted for the pagan superstitions current among them nineteen hundred years ago.

Miserable and tired, the shipwrecked mariners and their passengers stood on the sands of Melita (or Malta) at the spot today known as St. Paul's Bay. They were soon surrounded by a crowd of the inhabitants whose discordant tongue sounded harsh and barbaric to Luke and his companions.

But those natives made up in kindness what they lacked in sophisticated manners.

The Friendly Barbarians

Seeing the shipwrecked men shivering in the pelting rain and bitter cold of that wintry day, they kindled a huge fire at which they could gather around and warm themselves. Paul assisted this work, gathering fuel that he might feed the fire. He placed a bundle of sticks on the fire, when a viper, which had been lying torpid, being suddenly revived by the heat, darted out and "fastened on his hand."

Seeing the venomous beast hanging from his hand, and observing, from the chain about his wrist, that the man was a prisoner, the Maltese drew back from him, convinced that they had observed divine justice meted out to him. They murmured among themselves:

"Unquestionably this man is a murderer whom, though saved from the sea, Justice will not allow to live!"

They personified *Justice* (rendered "vengeance" in the A.V.) as a

goddess, and confidently expected Paul to drop down dead as the result of divine punishment.

Instead, Paul shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. The power of the Holy Spirit had neutralized the poison of the viper, as Christ had promised (Mark 16:18).

The natives continued to watch him, looking for him to swell up or fall over, but when this did not happen, and Paul continued as though he had not been bitten, they changed their minds, like the superstitious people of Lystra, and in admiration declared: "*He is a god.*"

The Kindness Of Publius Rewarded (Acts 28:7-10)

For three months, until early February, the shipwrecked men lived in Malta, and during that time, owing once more to the influence of Paul, they were treated with the greatest consideration. The governor of the Island, a man by name of Publius, had his residence not far from the scene of the shipwreck. He offered to Julius the hospitality of his home, and doubtless due to the insistence of Julius who now seemed to have the interests of Paul at heart (cp. ch. 27:43), this was extended to Paul and his companions.

For three days they received the greatest consideration, and were able to recover somewhat from the rigors of their adventures. Then occurred an incident that forever placed Publius in the debt of Julius' distinguished prisoner, and showed that kindness done to a servant of Christ will not lack reward (Mat. 25:35-40).

It happened that at the time the father of Publius was lying sick with a high temperature, in the throes of an extreme attack of dysentery. Luke was a physician, but evidently, despite his professional skill, he was unable to assist the sick man. Paul, however, possessed greater healing powers than Luke, and entering into the chamber of the sick man, he prayed unto God that He might reward the kindness shown them by healing the one before him. Then he laid his hands upon the father of Publius, and instantly he was healed.

The kindness of Publius was thus rewarded in a way he had never thought possible. News of the remarkable cure spread right throughout the island, and many presented themselves before the apostle that they, too, might experience the healing power of Yahweh Ropheka (Exo. 15:26). This produced a deep and most favourable impression, and many honours were heaped upon Paul and his companions. The islanders could not do enough for the shipwrecked men, and loaded them with all kinds of things such as they had need; for due to the disaster they had lost all their possessions. It was with great sadness, that three months after the wreck, the people had to say farewell to their strange visitors. But the Truth had been planted in the little island, and an ecclesia developed there to the glory of Yahweh.

Chapter 3

THE JOURNEY TO ROME

"And so we came to Rome," commented Luke at the end of the journey (Acts 28:14-16; R.V.). There is, in the form of speech used by him, a sense of accomplishment. In spite of all difficulties they arrived! The conspiracies of the Jews to kill Paul; the riot and imprisonment in Jerusalem; the delay in Caesarea; the weary repetition of defences; the terrible storm; the counsel of the soldiers to kill the prisoners; the wreck; the bite of the viper. In spite of all these adventures, God's words proved true (Acts 23:11), and Paul's earnest desire was realised (Rom. 15:23-28). He was then able to fellowship with his beloved brethren in that city, and with them be refreshed by their mutual faith (Rom. 1:10-12).

Another Alexandrian corn-ship, the *Castor and Pollux* had wintered at Malta, and with the opening of the season of navigation, in early February, Julius and his company embarked upon her for the journey to Italy. Castor and Pollux were two legendary figures in Grecian mythology, being the twin sons of Jupiter and Leda, whose special office was to assist sailors in danger of shipwreck. There were probably images of these two semi-gods on the prow of the ship, and at the conclusion of a successful voyage, they would be crowned with garlands in a ceremony reminiscent of the papal "blessing of the fleet!" Their Greek name is *Dioscouri* signifying the "two brothers" as the expression is rendered in the Revised Version.

By Ship To The Bay Of Naples (Acts 28:11-13)

From the harbour of Valetta in Malta, the ship made direct progress to Syracuse on the eastern coast of Sicily, about eighty miles (129 kms) from Malta. This was a normal day's sailing, but having arrived there, they were subjected to a three days' delay. The cause of this is not recorded; it may have been due to the need to unload cargo, or perhaps through contrary winds.

Leaving Syracuse, they took a circuitous route to Rhegium, for the winds were contrary. Rhegium signifies *Broken Off*. It was a town on the southwest coast of Italy, at the southern entrance of the straits of Messina, where Sicily is "broken off" from Italy. A further sixty miles (96 kms) toward their destination had been covered.

But here, again, there was a delay of a day, as the captain awaited the arrival of a southerly breeze. At last it came, and they made off.

Scudding along before the breeze, they made excellent progress up the coast of Italy, and the following day arrived at Puteoli, some 180 miles (289 kms) distant.

Puteoli signifies *Little Wells*. It was a famous watering place of the Romans, situated in the wide and beautiful Bay of Naples not far from Pompeii. This was the most convenient port



for Rome, and here Julius disembarked with his company.

Special Effort At Puteoli

There was an established ecclesia at Puteoli, and contact was made with it. The brethren were overjoyed to meet Luke, Aristarchus, and the famous apostle, and entreated them to stay with them for a few days. But Paul was a prisoner in the charge of Julius, and already there had been long delays. Would he grant permission to remain at Puteoli for a few days?

Julius did. It was obvious that he had been deeply impressed by the amazing prisoner in his care; he had come to admire Paul for his calm assurance in the most trying conditions; his undoubted faith; the miracles he wrought which demonstrated that he had access to divine power.

Who was this man, Paul? Why did these Christians of Puteoli extend to him, a mere stranger to them, such loving care and hospitality? Such treatment as that was not normally extended by pagans to their fellow-worshippers! Obviously this Christianity had something in it greater than the current worship of the day.

Julius may well have reasoned like that.

Be that as it may, permission was given to remain at Puteoli, and for seven wonderful days, the brethren there had the great advantage of entertaining the apostle. How they would treasure that time, and what a wealth of information in exposition he would have conveyed unto them! It was the first time that they had met him, and they would have sat at his feet to learn of the things that he had to impart unto them, as, previously, Paul had sat at the feet of Gamaliel.

And Paul and his companions likewise enjoyed the fraternal fellowship. For six months they had been separated from such contact, and had been thrust mainly into the company of heathen sailors and other companions of uncongenial habits.

It was warming and encouraging to again be among those with a common outlook and worship. It was a token that their great desire to

visit the ecclesia in Rome, and complete the work of witnessing to the Jews in that city, was about to be accomplished.

Luke felt so, anyway, and in his narrative wrote an anticipatory note: "And so we came to Rome" (Acts 28:14 — R.V.).

**Encouraged By
Loving Hospitality
(Acts 28:15)**

The delay at Puteoli gave opportunity for a messenger to be despatched to Rome, to advise the brethren of that city that Paul was on his way. With what joy the news would have been received. We can imagine how that such as Aquila and Priscilla would thrill with anticipation, and make preparation to receive with every manifestation of love and joy their friend and brother in the faith.

The ecclesia was surprised that Paul had landed in Italy, and made ready to give a royal welcome to this outstanding ambassador of Christ. Members vied with each other in their efforts to make preparations worthy of such an occasion. In the upsurge of enthusiasm, some decided to go and meet the apostle, and personally conduct him back to Rome.

A number of them set off by foot from Rome for this purpose.



Some, however, found the going a little difficult, and were forced by age or infirmity, to stop at a village, about thirty-three miles (52 kms) from Rome, entitled *The Three Taverns*; others continued on to the *Appii Forum*, a city about forty-three miles (69 kms) from Rome.

Meanwhile, Paul and his companions, in the charge of Julius and his soldiers, were moving north from Puteoli toward Rome. They reached Appii Forum, and there Paul had evidence of the warmth of the welcome awaiting him, and the love of an ecclesia he had not met before! Julius knew that, and again must have been amazed at the affection shown to a mere stranger, as he would consider Paul in relation to those who now met him. Again he had evidence of the amazing influence of the Truth, and its binding power in love and affection. It was an exhibition of the words of the Lord Jesus: "By this

shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another" (John 13:35).

Paul was deeply moved by this action of his brethren. Luke records that when he saw them with their smiles of welcome, and their loving concern, *"he thanked God and took courage."* In the



public market place, before Julius and the rough soldiers, he embraced his brethren, and then turned to God with a prayer of devout thanks for His goodness in prospering his journey.

The loving welcome Paul received from the brethren of Rome, endorsed all that he had heard and believed of them. Their record of faith was well known (Rom. 1:8; 15:14; 16:19). His communications with them in the past had created a deep love for them, even though he had never met many of them personally (Rom. 1:9-15; 15:23). He sympathised with the problem of their evil environment in the wicked city of Rome, and desired to strengthen them against it (Rom. 1:26-32). He had long looked forward to the experience of being "comforted together" with them (Rom. 1:12), to be mutually refreshed (Rom. 15:32), and "filled with their company" (v. 24).

He had asked them to pray for him, that he might be delivered from Jewish persecution in order to visit them (vv. 30-31), and now the sight of these brethren from Rome fulfilled his desires, whilst their self-sacrificing love in walking upwards of forty-three miles (69 kms) in order to welcome him testified to the warmth of affection for him whom they had never seen, but of whom they had undoubtedly heard. Paul was deeply moved by their gesture, and greatly encouraged to thus meet them. And Julius must have wondered again at the amazing influence of his strange prisoner who had conversed with God, performed miracles of healing, and now drew forth such actions of love from strangers. Did this move him to embrace Christ? The future will reveal, but perhaps there is a hint that he did in the words of Paul to the brethren in Philippi: "I would you should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace (R.V. — Praetorian Guard), and all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident in my bonds, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear" (Phil. 1:12-14).)

Chapter 4

WITH THE JEWS IN ROME (Acts 28:16-29)

The final incident in the drama of the Acts of the Apostles was now about to be enacted, in that the mercy of the Father would be extended to the Jews of the Diaspora, in the capital city of the world. A last opportunity would be given them to repent. That was in answer to the prayer of the Lord. Jesus died pleading for the forgiveness of the people, on the basis of their ignorance of the great crime that they had committed (Luke 23:34). Subsequently, the apostles had been sent forth that by miracle and preaching the Truth might be fully made known to them (Acts 1:8; 3:17). For that reason, the Truth was preached to the Jews first, and only afterwards to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; Rom. 1:16); and the former were shown that they had crucified their Messiah "through ignorance" (Acts 3:17; 13:27). The plan of Gospel preaching, therefore, was first in Jerusalem, then successively in Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. Paul preached in all parts of the Roman world where Jews were to be found, returned to Jerusalem, and finally went to Rome. Thus the Jews at home and abroad heard the message, and were without excuse when they persisted in rejecting it. Consequently the principle of preaching first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles was discontinued (Acts 28:28). Jewry had officially rejected the message; the Gospel had been preached in all the Jewish world for a witness, and in AD70 the end came as far as guilty Judea was concerned (Mat. 24:14). The Gentile times then officially commenced, so that today it is no longer necessary to preach first to the Jews. Paul completed the message and witness to Jewry on his arrival at Rome, and when it was rejected, he turned to the Gentiles.

On arrival at Rome, Paul lost no time in getting down to work. Pending his hearing before Nero, the emperor, the apostle rented a house in the capital, which became the centre for the Truth. He hired it at his own cost, doubtless obtaining the means of payment through his own labour (Acts 20:34).

Paul's Conference With The Jews

At the earliest opportunity, he met with the ecclesia, that he might be refreshed by the company of the brethren, and that he might also renew acquaintance with such as Aquila and Priscilla (Rom.

16:3), and Rufus (Rom. 16:13) whom he had met in other parts. This occupied three days, at the conclusion of which, he made arrangements to confer with the chief of the Jews.

In due time they assembled in Paul's house, and he addressed them: "*Brethren,*" he said reminding them of his relationship to them through birth, "*although I have committed nothing whatever against our people or against our fathers' customs, yet I was delivered to the Romans, a prisoner from Jerusalem. Upon examination they wanted to set me free, because I am innocent of any act that deserves death; but when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar — although I had no charge to bring against my nation. For this reason I begged to see you and to talk to you: because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.*"

Paul's address was most conciliatory. Though he had been delivered by the Jews into the hands of the Romans (which was quite contrary to Judaistic principles), he reassured them that as far as the Romans were concerned, they need have no fear that he would bring before Nero any accusation against the Jews. They might well have feared that; for they had been banished from the city by Claudius (Acts 18:2), and had only recently been permitted to return.

The Jewish leaders replied to Paul: "*Neither have we received letters from Judea about you, nor have any of the brethren arrived with a bad report of any gossip about you. But we desire to hear from you what you have in mind: for concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against.*"

A time was set, and at the due date, large numbers of the Jews presented themselves at Paul's house. They saw him chained to a Roman soldier: a prisoner delivered into the hands of their hated enemies by their own countrymen. They listened to a most careful exposition of the Law and the Prophets, in which the apostle outlined the very matters that had been revealed to him as he had sat blinded in the home of Judas in Damascus. He gave opportunity for them to question or dispute, patiently going over matters, anxious to convince them of the Truth.

A whole day, from morning to evening, was devoted to that end, and at the conclusion of it, some were convinced by the things that he said, but others did not believe. That led to altercations among them, and in the heated argument, they apparently hesitated to act on their belief, for Luke does not record that any accepted Christ in baptism.

Divided among themselves, refusing to accept the evidence of Scripture, Reason or Miracle, and with even those who believed, hesitating to seek for baptism, Paul uttered a concluding word of warning and rebuke: "*The Holy Spirit spoke rightly to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: 'Go to this people and say, You will hear with your ears but will not catch the meaning. You will look with your*

eyes but will not see. For this people's heart is calloused and their ears are dull of hearing, and they have closed their eyes, so they may not see with their eyes, and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn about that I should heal them.' Let it be clearly understood, then, that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles and they will listen."

It was the last appeal of Yahweh through His servants to His people. They had rejected the message and the warning, and but one thing remained: the outpouring of divine judgment in the overthrow of Jerusalem as predicted by the prophets.

The very prophecy of Isaiah, quoted by the apostle Paul (Isa. 6), warned of this coming judgment. It proclaimed that the "cities would be wasted without an inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly destroyed" (v. 11). It predicted that Yahweh would "remove men far away, and there shall be a great forsaking in the midst of the land." That came to pass shortly after Paul had spoken this message to the people, when, in AD68, the Romans marched against the Jews, and the great war was instituted that resulted in the overthrow of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple and the removing of the people from the land, in AD70.

In quoting this particular Scripture, Paul reiterated a prophecy several times used by Christ. The Lord quoted it to explain why he spoke in parables to the leaders of the people (Mat. 13:14-15), and why judgment would be poured out upon the nation (John 9:39). Significantly, he concluded his public ministry against the Jews by again reciting the same passage of Scripture in the court of the temple (John 12:40).

The frequent use that is thus made of Isa. 6:10 makes it appear highly probable that it was widely used by the early ecclesias as a key prophecy predicting the repudiation of the Gospel message by the Jewish nation, and the ultimate overthrow of Jerusalem and scattering of the people. It provided documentary evidence from the Old Testament Scriptures that the Mosaic times would be terminated, and those "of the Gentiles" commence.

It is significant that Paul should outline this theme in his *Epistle To The Romans*, for that city was to provide the power to overthrow Jerusalem. Therein he declared, that "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11:25).

Now, with the apostle in Rome, and the local Jewish community officially refusing the Gospel, members of the ecclesia had clear evidence of the significance of his epistle to them.

Paul concluded his discourse to the Jews by stating that henceforth the salvation of God would be "sent unto the Gentiles." That meant that it would no longer be necessary for him to preach first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles, for the official rejection of that

message by those of Jerusalem and now those of Rome (the two capitals of the world at that time), left it to be proclaimed equally to all, whether Jews or Gentiles.

On that note the *Acts of the Apostles* closes. Many have found fault with Luke's narrative for, reading it only as a biography of Paul, they have felt that it is incomplete. But Luke did not concern himself with writing a biography of the apostle, but something of far greater importance: **the record of mercy that Yahweh extended toward His people at the intercession of His Son.** His appeal through the apostle having been rejected by them, all that remained was for His judgment to be poured out upon them.



South-west of the Forum and Capitol, Rome's oldest bridge connects the city with the Isle of Tiberina in the middle of Tiber's turbid stream. Build in bc62, and now known as the Ponte Fabricio, the bridge derived its name from a Roman curator of roads, L. Fabricius.

Chapter 5

PAUL'S IMPRISONMENT IN ROME

In order to complete our story of the great apostle, we must search the records of his epistles. From them we gain some understanding of how he occupied his time for two years in Rome whilst awaiting the hearing of his appeal before Nero. The delay was probably occasioned by the failure of the Jews to go to Rome to officially present their case against the apostle. Meanwhile, he did not mope over his imprisonment, but with typical dedication and cheerfulness, set about doing what he could for the extension and support of the Truth. By such activity he was able to rise above his problems, and occupy his enforced idleness profitably.

Though Paul was constantly chained to a Roman guard (Eph. 6:20; Phil. 1:7), and consequently endured much privation and suffering (Col. 1:24; Eph. 3:13), and though the extreme persecution and tribulation he had experienced throughout his life in Christ had taken a physical toll on him, he did not wilt under the circumstances, but gave himself completely to the work in hand.

Preaching In Rome He had the freedom to converse with whosoever might visit him. Many took the opportunity of doing so, and to them the Truth was proclaimed. He received "all that came in unto him" whether Jews or Gentiles, and set before them the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, with complete freedom and boldness, no man forbidding him.

His hired house became a centre for the proclamation of the Truth (Acts 28:30), so that the Roman soldiers, who were set to act as prison guards, were compelled to listen to many an exposition of the Word, and to, perhaps unwillingly, associate with many an ecclesial meeting.

Paul gave himself to the defence and confirmation of the Gospel (Phil. 1:7), and the result was that he could report many conversions (vv. 12-13). In fact, some of the Praetorian Guard, the soldiers forced to keep him in charge, were converted and took on Christ (Phil. 1:13 — R.V.), so that the influence of the Truth spread even to Nero's household (Phil. 4:22).

Nevertheless, such restrictions must have been galling to a sensitive mind such as Paul's, and must have entailed great mental suffering (Col. 1:24; Eph. 3:13). But he never wilted under his lot. He

rejoiced in that he was permitted to suffer for Christ (Phil. 4). The very circumstances in which he preached the Truth demonstrated that he was moved by a power greater than flesh. He thus influenced others by the power of example, and gave point to such exhortations as are contained in Philippians 3:8, *"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ."*

Paul's great faith enabled him to see beyond his present trouble to the glory set before him. He kept his eyes firmly fixed on that future. He saw the Kingdom afar off, and never permitted his spiritual vision to be deflected by present troubles. Consequently, he derived a sense of satisfaction even in his afflictions, for they enabled him to "fellowship the sufferings of Christ," and to "glory in tribulation" (Rom. 5:3). In spite of prison and pain, he manifested faith and joy (Phil. 1:19, 25-30; 3:20-21).

Nevertheless, work and worry left their mark upon the apostle. Like the Lord Jesus before him (see Isa. 52:14), they prematurely aged him. Thus he wrote of himself as "Paul the aged" (Philemon 8-9), even though he was only about 55-57 years of age at the time of his imprisonment.

Ecclesial Problems The ecclesia in Rome must have greatly benefited by the presence of the apostle in the city. It comprised a mixed community of Jews and Gentiles who were, by and large, faithful to their calling, in spite of the vile environment in which they lived. They were comparatively few in number, and thus hidden in the vast mass of a heathen population; unknown, or contemptuously ignored, by even the Jewish community (Acts 28:22).

However, there were some in the ecclesia in Rome who caused dissension as time went on. They became jealous of the apostle, and set out to rival his influence (Phil. 1:15-16). He ignored their attacks, and continued to labour; happy that Christ was preached, even in contention.

To his hired house there arrived messengers from ecclesias he had founded in other parts. Paul's concern grew as he learned of the problems that beset them, and he tried to the best of his ability, to guide them from afar (Col. 2:1; Phil. 2:16; 1:8).

His anxiety grew as he learned of the inroads of false teaching (Col. 2:8, 16-18). The Judaisers were busy (Phil. 1:15-17; 2:1-3, 18-19; Col. 2:16-17), whilst, at the same time, a new Gentile heresy (Gnosticism; worldly wisdom) was rearing its ugly head (Rom. 1:18-23). There was need to warn against false doctrine (Eph. 4:14-15).

Then there were personal problems to which he gave attention. He

saw need to warn against the gross immorality of the age (Eph. 5:3-7; 4:17-19; Col. 3:5-8), whilst urging the need to consolidate ecclesial unity and co-operation (Eph. 4:1-6, 11-32; Phil. 1:27; Col. 3:12-14).

Expounding The Word

There was the constant need to feed the ecclesias, and this had to be done from far.

And because Paul was imprisoned, it had to be done by letter-writing. In this is seen a divine providence. How many have profited from Paul's epistles! How much poorer we would be if we lacked those words of inspired wisdom.

So "the care of the ecclesias was on his shoulders" still (2Cor. 11:28)! Questions had to be answered, Scriptures expounded, the brethren warned and encouraged, problems listened to, solutions suggested. The work was endless.

Among the most important of the labours of the apostle during this period was an explanation that he provided of the relationship of the Law to the Gospel. Primarily this was designed to try and hold Jewish believers to the faith as persecution mounted against them, and the end of the Jewish State drew ever nearer; but the benefits of this continue to the present time. For this inspired his writing of *The Epistle To The Hebrews*: a masterly exposition of the Law in the light of Christ's person, teaching, and status.

Paul thus gave much to the brethren, but he also asked something of them. He called for their co-operation in his efforts. He sought their fervent prayers in support of his labours for the effective proclamation of the Truth (Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3); he desired their interest and assistance in the work undertaken, and from this derived great encouragement.

Added to his precepts were his earnest prayers. He prayed on behalf of individual ecclesias (Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:9), he prayed on behalf of individual brethren (Philemon 4), he prayed on behalf of himself (Phil. 1:6), in all his afflictions he rejoiced (Phil. 4:4). He prayed that he might be released from his imprisonment, and sought the prayers of others to that end (Philemon 22; Heb. 13:18-19).

Thus, what to most men would have been a cause for lament and languishing, was converted by Paul into a period of intense activity and productiveness, the benefits of which are still derived today.

Paul's Fellow-helpers Great prophets like Elijah and Elisha presided over companies of lesser prophets, whom they taught and equipped to take forth their message to Israel at large (cp. 1Sam. 10:10-11). The Lord Jesus, as the greatest of the prophets, likewise had his company of lesser prophets (cp. Mat. 23:34; Lk. 10:1), the apostles, whom he sent forth with the Gospel.

And Paul likewise had his helpers, whom he carefully trained to that end.

There was **Tychicus**, who was sent forth with various epistles to the ecclesias, and who was equipped to speak to the brethren in distant parts concerning the apostle, providing them with personal details that would have been unbecoming in an ecclesial epistle (Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7).

There was **Onesimus**, a runaway slave whom Paul had converted to the Truth, and who provided the apostle with willing service (Philemon 12; Col. 4:9).

There was **Timothy**, who hastened to the side of his beloved parent in the Truth as soon as he heard of his state, and whose presence gave Paul so much encouragement (Phil. 1:1; 2:19-20; Col. 1:1; Philemon 1:1). He was later sent to Philippi on a ministry of love (Phil. 2:19-23), and on returning to Rome was imprisoned by the authorities whose attitude toward Christians was hardened. However, he was subsequently released (Heb. 13:23-24).

There was **Aristarchus**, who also was imprisoned for the faith (Col. 4:10; Philemon 24).

There was **John Mark** who had deserted on the first missionary journey, but who now rushed to the side of his friend when he was imprisoned, to render to him outstanding service in the cause of the Truth, and to vindicate himself for all time in the eyes of the apostle (Col. 4:10).

There was **Epaphras** of Colosse, who sought the aid of the apostle to counter dangerous heresies troubling the ecclesia of that city (Col. 4:12; Philemon 23).

There was also **Jesus the Just** (Col. 4:11), **Luke** the beloved (Col. 4:14; Philemon 24), **Demas** (Col. 4:14; Philemon 24), and others.

Some of these we will have cause to refer to later on.

A Visitor From Philippi

Among the visitors who made their way to Paul in Rome was Epaphroditus. He came from Philippi with a gift of money for the apostle. With characteristic generosity, the warm-hearted brethren of that enthusiastic ecclesia had learned of Paul's imprisonment, and immediately had made arrangements to assist him in his time of need.

Not that they were wealthy; on the contrary they lacked a superabundance of material resources (2Cor. 8:2). But what they had they desired to share with the apostle, that they might identify themselves with his labours (Phil. 1:7). They would have sent the gift earlier than they did, but circumstances were against them doing so (Phil. 4:10).

Paul had a great affection for the brethren at Philippi. His relationship with them had never been hurt by distrusts and defaults such as he experienced in his relationship with some other ecclesias. From the first day until now their fellowship with him in his mighty enterprise had been unchanging and co-operatively sympathetic (Phil.

1:3-9). They had made his labours and afflictions their own, sending sustenance to him at different places. They were among the first to seize the privilege of supporting Paul in his labours, not waiting to see what others would do, but setting the example; they gave what they could and that at once.

Twice at least they had sent support to him at Thessalonica (Phil. 4:16). When he had left Macedonia on further journeys they had sent again (Phil. 4:15). Another gift had come from them when he was at Corinth, and Paul had gratefully received it when he would accept nothing at all from the different-natured Corinthians (2Cor. 11:9). The Philippians had "abounded in their liberality" toward the poor brethren at Jerusalem, though, at the time, they themselves were suffering "deep poverty" (2Cor. 8:1-5). And now, once more, as they learned that Paul was imprisoned in Rome, their affectionate consideration had "flourished" toward the apostle Paul (Phil. 4:10), and they sent to him in his imprisonment a further bounty (vv. 14, 18).

Epaphroditus Falls Sick

Epaphroditus had made his way to the hired home of the apostle to present the gift of the ecclesia to him. Paul was overwhelmed at this further evidence of the deep love that the brethren had for him, and his heart went out to them. Epaphroditus told him that the brethren were anxious to help him in his valued labours, and had intended to send earlier but had "lacked opportunity" through prevailing poverty and persecution in Philippi (chs. 4:10; 1:29).

The thought behind the gift greatly cheered Paul, but he was deeply worried as he discerned that Epaphroditus was far from well. He had fallen sick on his journey to Rome (Phil. 2:27), and his illness was such that it gave grave concern to the brethren. The skill of Luke was tried in vain; nor was the Holy Spirit available to help, for no indication had come that it should be used in his case.

A messenger was despatched to Philippi to advise the brethren of that city of the grave illness of their brother and companion. This, in turn, added to the depression of Epaphroditus, for, warm-hearted himself, he knew how the brethren of Philippi would respond to such news, and how deeply they would be emotionally affected.

Paul was seriously concerned. Epaphroditus' illness was of such nature as to cause him to despair of recovery. There was but one thing to do: beseech the mercy of Yahweh that He might restore his friend and brother to health if it be the divine will.

The prayer was granted. Epaphroditus recovered, to the great relief of Paul. His recovery gave opportunity for the two brethren to discuss the affairs of the ecclesia in Philippi. All was going well, reported Epaphroditus, except for one or two minor matters. As he

spoke of them, Paul recognised that though they were not very serious, they should be corrected before they got out of hand. Therefore, as Epaphroditus made ready to return home, Paul dictated a letter of thanks, instruction and exhortation to the brethren of that city which he took back with him. This lovely epistle was Paul's gift in return for the present the ecclesia had sent him.



Writing from Rome to the Philippians, Paul states that even his imprisonment had led to "the progress of the gospel." Though he lived in his own hired home, soldiers, changed from time to time, were responsible for him. He thus spread the gospel message "throughout the whole praetorian guard" (Phil. 1:12-13, RV). Veterans of this corps are shown in the pictured sculpture. During Imperial times the term Praetorian Guard denoted the household troops encamped just outside Rome.

Analysis

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Written from Rome following the visit of Epaphroditus with a gift to the apostle from the ecclesia.

The Ecclesia

Philippi derived its name from Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. The name signifies *Warrior*,

which was appropriate for the ecclesia in that city, for it comprised a warm-hearted, generous company of warriors for the Faith.

In BC42, Caesar Augustus granted the status and privileges of a Roman colony to Philippi (cp. Acts 16:12) so that the inhabitants enjoyed the rights of Roman citizenship (Acts 16:21). Thus Philippi had its own senate and magistrates.

Philippi was a military colony, the settlers being "mainly Italians, discharged Antonian soldiers." There were but few Jews there, and no synagogue; only a *proseuche* or legal "prayer place" (Acts 16:13).

The first convert of Philippi was a woman: Lydia, the seller of purple. The preaching of the Truth commenced peacefully enough, with her baptism, but developed into the most stormy experiences, culminating in the imprisonment of Paul and Silas, and the subsequent conversion of the jailor (Acts 16:12-40). Typically warm-hearted, the brethren of this ecclesia always showed a keen interest in Paul's labours, and frequently assisted him materially to extend them.

The Epistle

The epistle is a letter of grateful thanks to the brethren of Philippi for their loving concern of the apostle in his imprisonment. They had sent to him, by the hand of Epaphroditus, a gift of money to assist him in his work. In course of conversation, Epaphroditus had outlined to Paul the conditions in the ecclesia, and the apostle set himself the task of gently correcting some minor faults that had begun to manifest themselves. As yet they were only incipient and not actual, but there was need for the members to be on their guard. Paul refers to such matters as strife, vainglory, wrong self-esteem, disunity, murmurings, disputings — all of which are very human besetments.



There was nothing very specific in this, only the vague foreshadowings of trouble that could come. For example, there were two sisters, Euodias and Syntyche, who, both in their own way, were excellent workers in the ecclesia, yet could not see eye to eye in certain matters. Epaphroditus was urged to try and heal that breach to prevent it from deepening (ch. 4:2-3).

The ecclesia did not need instruction on doctrine, but an ideal at which to aim. The apostle gave them such in setting before them Christ: *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus..."* He presented the example of Christ from four aspects, set forth in the four chapters of the Epistle:

Christ our Life (ch. 1) — *"For me to live is Christ"* (v. 21).

Christ our Mind (ch. 2) — *"Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus"* (v. 5).

Christ our Goal (ch. 3) — *"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection"* (v. 10).

Christ our Strength (ch. 4) — *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (v. 13).

The sequence is clear. If Christ be truly our life, as in ch. 1, his life will express itself through our mental activity, as in ch. 2. He will then become our goal, as ch. 3 suggests he should be; but to attain unto that we must use his strength, as ch. 4 emphasises. Thus the epistle sets forth a clear progression toward ultimate glorification.

As there was no doctrinal problem in the ecclesia, Paul was able to embrace all of the members in his comments, as seen in the constant repetition of the important word "all" in the expressions he uses:

"To **all** the saints at Philippi" (ch. 1:1).

"Making request for you **all**" (ch. 1:4).

"Think this of you **all**" (ch. 1:7).

"Ye **all** are partakers of my grace" (ch. 1:7).

"I long after you **all**" (ch. 1:8).

Notice that the words "joy" or "rejoice" and "mind" are used throughout the epistle. They are found in every chapter. For "joy" or "rejoice" see chs. 1:4, 18, 25; 2:2, 16, 18; 3:1, 3; 4:1, 4, 10; for "mind" see chs. 1:27; 2:3, 5; 3:15, 19; 4:2, 7.

Theme:

CHRIST: THE SUFFICIENCY OF GOD TO US (EXULTATION)

Key Passages: *"But what things were gain to me, those I counted*

loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (ch. 3:7-8). "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded" (ch. 3:13-15).

[1] CHRIST OUR LIFE — Chapter 1. cp. v. 21

- (a) Salutation vv. 1-2
- (b) Thanksgiving for their loving co-operation vv. 3-8
- (c) Prayer for their spiritual development vv. 9-11
- (d) Assurances regarding his preaching.....vv. 12-19
- (e) The joy of living for Christ vv. 20-26
- (f) Exhortation to unity vv. 27-30

[2] CHRIST OUR MIND — Chapter 2; cp. vv. 5, 20

- (a) Exhortation to mutual submission vv. 1-4
- (b) Exposition: Christ the pattern vv. 5-11
- (c) Amplification: Encouragement to imitate vv. 12-18
- (d) Example: Exhibited by Timothy
and Epaphroditus vv. 19-30

[3] CHRIST OUR GOAL — Chapter 3; cp. vv. 10-14

- (a) A warning against Judaism.....vv. 1-7
- (b) Making Christ our Goal vv. 8-11
- (c) Paul's great ambition vv. 12-17
- (d) An Example to avoid vv. 18-19
- (e) Our great hope and goal vv. 20-4:1

[4] CHRIST OUR STRENGTH — Chapter 4; cp. v. 13

- (a) An appeal to unity vv. 2-3
- (b) How unity is to be achieved vv. 4-9
- (c) Paul's example of contentedness vv. 10-14
- (d) Appreciation for their loving liberality vv. 15-18
- (e) God's liberality to them vv. 19-20
- (f) Closing salutation and benediction.....vv. 21-23

Chapter 6

THE CONVERSION OF ONESIMUS (Epistle to Philemon)

The Truth levels all class distinctions. It liberates the slave and enslaves the free. It breaks down the distinction between rich and poor by setting forth new standards of wealth (Rev. 2:9; 3:17). It overlaps the barrier between Jew and Greek. This is revealed, with great emphasis, in Paul's dealings with one of his converts: a man named Onesimus. The apostle is shown as he was seen in private life, expressing the delicacy of his feelings, and revealing the graciousness of his kindly relations with his friends.

Among those drawn to the Truth in Rome, was a man by the name of Onesimus. He seemed a most unlikely character for such a call. He was a slave who had run away from his master taking some of his goods (Philemon v. 18), and, fearful of his fate, had fled to Rome to hide himself in the milling crowds of the Metropolis.

Onesimus: The Thief It was not that Onesimus had any real grounds for complaint, for Philemon, his master, was very considerate of him; but the slave was noted for his rebellious, stubborn attitude (Philemon v.11), and had deserved some rebuke. He was not prepared to accept it, however, and taking some of his master's valuables, he absconded, to slink around the streets of Rome, as a runaway robber.

**Onesimus:
The Christian** In the inscrutable ways of a loving Providence, however, this man was attracted to the Truth. The means by which this was done are not revealed. Perhaps he came into contact with some of the believers in that city, and was drawn by their influence to investigate the strange doctrines he heard.

Whatever the cause, the call of Christ interested him.

By some means he was introduced to Paul. In the apostle's hired house, the runaway slave learned of forgiveness of sin in Christ. He had come to realise that though he had run away from Philemon, he was still a slave to the lusts of the flesh, and he desired a true liberty.

As he spoke with Paul, he saw a man of indomitable faith, who was cheerful in spite of his sufferings, and who though a freeborn Roman citizen, preferred servitude to Christ.

Paul won the confidence of Onesimus, and the stubborn slave who

refused to work under an earthly master, sought a voluntary servitude to Christ. He accepted this in the waters of baptism.

And then he threw himself willingly into the work of the Truth. He desired to repay Paul and Christ for all the mercy and goodness he had received, and gave himself without stint in acts of service that the great apostle requested of him.

The name Onesimus means *Profitable*, and the apostle found him such, though he had proved most unprofitable to his master (Phm. 11-13).

**Onesimus:
The Profitable**

At first, of course, Paul knew nothing of the background of the life of the new convert. He realised, however, that Onesimus had a problem, and on one occasion the slave voiced it. He was troubled by conscience. He confessed to Paul his failings: that he was a runaway slave who had absconded with some of his master's goods. What should he do under the circumstances?

**Philemon:
The Slave-Owner**

Onesimus disclosed that his master was a man of Colosse named Philemon (cp. Phm. v. 2 with Col. 4:17; Phm. v. 10 with Col. 4:9). Now, Paul knew Philemon very well. In fact, he had converted him (Phm. v. 19). This had evidently occurred during Paul's stay at Ephesus some 120 miles (193 kms) west of Colosse, for, apparently, the apostle had never visited Colosse (Col. 2:1).

Philemon's family had likewise embraced the Truth, and his wife, the beloved Apphia, and his son, the valiant Archippus, were united with him in their service to the cause. Their home in Colosse was open house to the ecclesia (Phm. v. 2), testifying to the zeal, faith and loving manifestations of Philemon (v. 5).



The Problem

The problem was to reinstate Onesimus in such a way as to retain his self-confidence and to encourage him in the work to which he had willingly given his hand. In giving himself to the task, Paul had peculiar difficulties to overcome. He was the common friend of the parties at variance. He must conciliate a man who had good reason to be offended; he must commend the offender without denying or aggravating the acknow-

ledged fault. He must assert the principles of equality in Christ in the face of social conditions that sometimes hardly recognised the humanity of slaves.

As an apostle with authority vested in him from Yahweh, he could have instructed and ordered what should be done, but he sought higher ground than that: he wanted Onesimus and Philemon to do what should be done spontaneously. He wanted love to triumph even over justice.

Paul prayerfully pondered the problem and came to a decision. He knew the man to whom he would write as one who was sincerely touched by the spirit of Christ. He would ask of him nothing more than to plead for forgiveness of the wrong, whilst suggesting that Philemon receive Onesimus again as a slave treating him with the consideration and affection due to a brother in Christ (a slave treated in that way would be better off than a servant, being accounted as a member of his family). He would couch his words in a way as to leave scope for the manifestation of such generous, loving and brotherly spirit as the principles of Christ should prompt in one toward such as Onesimus whose condition admitted of so much alleviation. He would tell Philemon how that he, the prisoner (v. 1), the prematurely aged apostle (v. 9), had derived such help from Onesimus who had voluntarily placed himself in servitude to the Truth and to Paul; that he would have delighted to have retained his services as personal assistant, but would not presume to do so as he had learned that Philemon had prior right to his slave (v. 13). He would explain how that the slave had been elevated to a brother beloved in hope of life eternal (vv. 15-16); so that in the service he would now render both to the Truth and to his master, he who had been so unprofitable to Philemon, would prove most profitable (v. 11), and so live up to his name. Finally, if Philemon was at any financial loss through the past indiscretions of Onesimus, Paul promised to make it good by an I.O.U (v.18), whilst, at the same time gently reminding Philemon of all he owed to Paul in Christ — his U-O-Me! (vv. 19-20).

Carefully Paul thought out how he would write that important letter, and then commenced to dictate the epistle:

"Paul, a prisoner of Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, and to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier ..."

The Epistle

The letter reveals the delicacy of Paul's feeling and the graciousness of his relations



with his friends. He does not demand and command as his position could warrant, but appeals as a shepherd and a friend, drawing out the love of Philemon and the devotion of Onesimus by so doing.

Paul knew the characters before him, and by his tact and confidence in them brought out their finest qualities. Onesimus must seek forgiveness and submit to his previous servitudes; Philemon must willingly grant forgiveness and receive his slave as a brother. Paul, by his humility and condescension, made it possible for both to do so without either losing face.

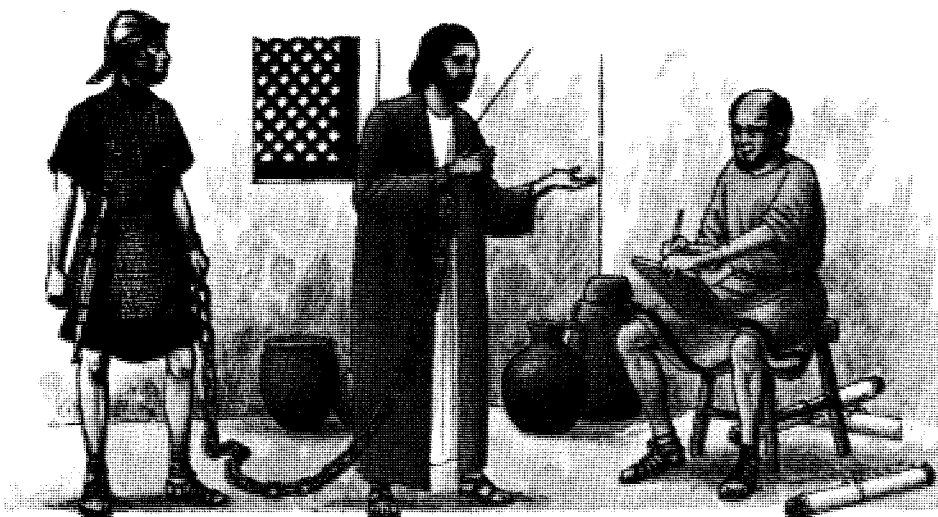
This lovely little incident and epistle reveals three powerful and profound lessons.

Philemon had *right* on his side, but was taught that this must be exercised in *love*.

Paul had *authority* but knew that such must be exercised with *tact*.

Onesimus had become a brother in Christ, but had to learn that he must acknowledge his *obligations*, and not presume on *liberties*, that he might feel that he had a right to take.

These are lessons we must learn today. Thus, in the minor, insignificant drama enacted in the hired house in Rome which drew these three lives together, there is manifested a wonderful exhortation of relationships in Christ. Paul saw that tremendous issues were involved in this domestic drama, and recognising that they were far from trivial to those personally concerned, penned an epistle of eternal value stressing the need for all to exercise faith, love, tact and obedience in Christ.



Chapter 7

VISIT OF EPAPHRAS

We have only the briefest hints of the tremendous amount of work accomplished by Paul from his "hired house" in Rome. It is obvious, from such allusions as Col. 4:10 that there are epistles which he wrote, and problems that he considered, that the Spirit had not seen fit to preserve in the Bible. Prior to the visit of Epaphras, Paul had already written to the brethren of Colosse, commanding them to observe certain things. But conditions had worsened, and Epaphras had made the journey to Rome to seek the help of the great apostle.

The founder of the ecclesia in Colosse, was Epaphras, an inhabitant of the city (Col. 1:7; 4:12). He was a keen Gospel proclamation worker who apparently carried the message to Laodicea and Hierapolis as well (Col. 4:13). Presumably he had been converted while visiting Ephesus, for he seems to have known Paul personally. Thereafter he had carried on his testimony under the great apostle's guidance, and had proved "faithful" ever since, in his message and ministering (Col. 1:7). The passing of the years found his zeal increased rather than abated (Col. 4:12-13).

Probably the new ecclesia at Colosse met in the house of Philemon, for it was to Colosse that Paul returned Philemon's runaway slave Onesimus (Col. 4:9), and the little epistle to Philemon sends greeting to "the ecclesia in thy house" (v. 2). Paul has only commendation for the teaching and labours of Epaphras (Col. 1:5-7, 23; 2:6-7; 4:12-13).

However, the ecclesia was challenged by the inroads of false doctrine, and Epaphras, unable to stem the trouble himself, hastened off to Rome to visit Paul in his imprisonment, and to enlist his help in his trouble. He presented the apostle with a report on the condition of the ecclesia. In general, he was able to present a good account, speaking of their love for the Truth (Col. 1:8).

But in other matters, the report was not so good.

He confessed to Paul his deep anxiety for the future of the ecclesia in view of the action of certain heretics who, with influence and eloquence, were propagating attractive but false doctrines (Col. 2:8-23).

**The Error Of
The Colossians**

The heresy that plagued the ecclesia was a combination of Judaism and Grecian

“philosophy” (Col. 2:8). It therefore had “a show of wisdom” (v. 23), appealing to the higher intellectual tastes. It paid homage to the “traditions of men” (Col. 2:8), whether Jew or Greek. It also urged a form of asceticism and a false humility (v. 23). It stressed reverence for angelic powers (v. 18), and contempt for the body (vv. 20-23). All this was set forth in such high-sounding phrases, and with such an appearance of superiority, as to influence the brethren, sweep aside the protests of Epaphras, and establish the new ideas firmly in the ecclesia.

This theory of Judaistic-Greek-Philosophy, called Gnosticism, had the effect of setting aside the need for Christ. The Judaistic view suggested that justification could be by the works of the Law; whilst the Greek gnostic philosophy, set forth the teaching that all matter is evil, and therefore God is not interested in the redemption of the body, leading to the immortality of the spirit. Christ was thus set at naught, so that, in effect, the ecclesia at Colosse, had beheaded itself from Christ; it was found “not holding the Head, from which all the body” is nourished (Col. 2:19).



Epaphras outlined these problems to Paul, and the apostle promised to give his attention to them. He would write a letter to the ecclesia, and by the weight of his authority, would attempt to set things right.

Meanwhile, Epaphras gave himself to the preaching of the Word at Rome with such zeal as to come under the censure of the authorities. He was flung into prison, and therefore could not return to Colosse (Philemon 23). He did what he could. He urged upon Paul to send the epistle, and he gave himself daily to prayer, agonising on behalf of the ecclesia back home. Accordingly, Paul wrote the epistle, and sent it back to Colosse by the hands of Tychicus and Onesimus, who were about to return to the home of Philemon.

Paul Writes A Further Epistle

The epistle was written, but before despatching it, Paul decided to add to it another epistle of general use to all ecclesias in that area, known to us as “Ephesians,” and forward it to various ecclesias by the same messengers. Therefore, once again, he carefully and prayerfully thought the matter out, and calling for his amanuensis, commenced...

Analysis of the Epistles

PAUL'S LETTER TO PHILEMON

Written from Rome to Philemon of Colosse on behalf of Onesimus, a runaway slave. This epistle reveals the apostle in private life. It is an entirely different style of writing from most of the other epistles of Paul. There is nothing of the harsh denunciation of Galatians, the careful reasoning of Hebrews, the stern rebuking of Corinthians. It shows how a thief, a runaway slave, can find forgiveness and elevation in Christ; how the appeal of love can draw others to grant unto their fellows what they have already received from Christ. We thus see Paul in private life.

Theme

RESPONSIBILITIES IN CHRIST

Salutation	vv. 1-3
Paul's Praise of Philemon	vv. 4-7
Paul's Plea for Onesimus	vv. 8-17
Paul's Pledge of Repayment	vv. 18-22
Final greetings	vv. 23-25

Analysis of the Epistles

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

The City And Ecclesia Of Colosse

Colosse was a city of Phrygia, from which district some Jews journeyed to be present in Jerusalem, when the Truth was preached by the apostles on the Day of Pentecost. Later, Paul passed through the region on his second and third journeys (Acts 16:6; 18:23).

The pioneer of the ecclesia, however, appears to have been a man by name of Epaphras (Col. 1:7). He was a Gentile, a one-time pagan, for his name signifies *Devoted to Aphrodite*, the Venus of the Greeks. Having accepted Christ, he gave himself without stint to the proclamation of the Truth, finding his inspiration to do so from the apostle himself.

Paul had not visited the ecclesia (Col. 2:1), and therefore only knew the brethren by repute.

The Epistle

Paul designed it for public reading (Col. 4:16). It was the

second time that he had written to the ecclesia (ch. 4:10), but the first epistle, being of lesser importance than this one, did not find place in the canon of Scripture. Epaphras, a member of the ecclesia (ch. 4:12), had arrived in Rome, where Paul was imprisoned (AD61-63) with news of the ecclesia (ch. 1:7), including information concerning a dangerous heresy that was making inroads. This was a form of "higher thought" philosophy (Col. 2:8), being an admixture of Greek and Jewish thought, putting forth high-sounding phrases of assumed superiority, the worship of angels as intermediaries between God and man (ch. 2:18), and demanding strict adherence of certain Jewish forms to the point of asceticism (Col. 2:16, 21). Meanwhile Epaphras was imprisoned (Philemon 23), and this letter ("Colossians"), with that circular letter entitled "To the Ephesians," was written and sent by Tychicus and Onesimus (Col. 4:7-9; Eph. 6:21).

The apostle answered the problems by showing the fallacy of the new theories and warning against the pernicious influence of false doctrine (ch. 1:23). Whereas Judaism set forth the works of the Law as sufficient for justification, and Gnosticism advanced the concept that all matter is evil, the apostle drew attention to the person of Christ, as the head of the Ecclesia whom it should follow, the "image of the invisible God" "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." This would not be true if all matter were evil, as the Gnostics taught. Moreover, by his offering, Christ has delivered believers from the curse of the Law, "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, nailing it to his cross." This answered the concept of the Judaisers.

Being risen with Christ through baptism, it is necessary for believers to seek the things above where he is at God's right hand. Their lives are hid with him. He is their life, and they will ultimately be manifested with him in glory (Col. 3:1-4). National distinctions are done away in him, and he is "all in all" (Col. 3:11). He is the giver of peace through the influence of his Word abiding within us (Col. 3:15-17). Therefore, he is to govern all natural relationships of believers, and everything is to be done heartily as unto him.

Thus the teachings of Judaism and Gnosticism were set aside and Christ elevated as the way of life to accept and follow.

Notice how the whole epistle is summed up in Paul's prayer on the behalf of the brethren of Colosse that they might be "filled with knowledge" and "walk worthily" (Col. 1:9-14). This provides an epitome of his exposition.

Theme

CHRIST: THE FULNESS OF GOD TO US (COMPLETION)

Key Passages: *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead"* (Col. 2:8-12).

[1] INTRODUCTION — ch. 1:1-14

- (a) Salutation vv. 1-2
- (b) Thanksgiving for their faith and love vv. 3-8
- (c) Prayer that they may have fulness of
knowledge and manifest a worthy walk vv. 9-14

[2] DOCTRINAL: *"That you may be filled"* — chs. 1:15 to 2:23

- (a) Christ the fulness of God in the New Creation 1:15-18
- (b) Christ the fulness of God in Redemption 1:19-23
- (c) Christ the fulness of God in the Ecclesia 1:24 to 2:7
- (d) Christ the fulness of God versus heresy 2:8-23

[3] PRACTICAL: *"Seek those things above"* — chs. 3:1 to 4:6

- (a) The new life as manifested Individually 3:1-11
- (b) The new life as manifested Ecclesially 3:12-17
- (c) The new life as manifested Domestically 3:18-21
- (d) The new life as manifested Professionally 3:22 to 4:1
- (e) The new life as manifested Prayerfully 4:2-4
- (f) The new life as manifested Socially 4:5-6

[4] PERSONAL: *"That ye may know our estate"* — ch. 4:7-18

- (a) Commendation of Tychicus and Onesimus 4:7-9
- (b) Salutations from various brethren 4:10-14
- (c) Instructions for the use of the Epistles 4:15-16
- (d) Encouragement for Archippus 4:17
- (e) Final greeting 4:18



Through the Arch of Titus is seen Rome's Colosseum. Neither arch nor edifice existed when Paul was in Rome, but they are historically linked with the Apostolic Age. Standing on raised ground overlooking the Forum, this Arch of Victory was erected by the emperor Domitian (AD81-96) in honour of his brother Titus' conquest of Jerusalem in AD70. The sculptures adorning the Arch depict scenes from the triumphal procession of the conqueror on his return to Rome. One of these, in which Titus appears in his chariot, is partly visible in this view. The Colosseum, largest of the Roman amphitheatres, was inaugurated by Titus in AD80. There Christians were martyred to make sport for the Roman mob.

Analysis of the Epistles

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

To Whom Written?

Though the first verse of this epistle, as we have it, is addressed to "*the saints which are at Ephesus*," there is considerable doubt as to the authenticity of the words. If, in fact, it was addressed to the brethren at Ephesus, it is unlike any epistle Paul ever wrote, for, quite contrary to his normal custom, it does not contain a single greeting, even though he laboured hard and long among the brethren of that city. Contrast this with his *Epistle To The Romans*, which ecclesia Paul had never visited at the time he wrote the letter; yet the last chapter is filled with greetings. His omission in the epistle before us is so unlike Paul as to be inexplicable if it was written exclusively for the brethren at Ephesus.

Paul's first visit to Ephesus was very brief, as he desired to be in Jerusalem at a certain date to complete a vow (Acts 18:19-21); but later he spent three years there (ch. 19:8-10; 20:31), and on his last journey particularly asked that the elders of the ecclesia come to meet him (ch. 20:17). Surely if the epistle before us was addressed specifically to that ecclesia, in view of his close association with it, the apostle would have made some reference to persons or incidents familiar to him.

Therefore we do not believe that this epistle was written specifically for the Ephesians, but that it is the one referred to in Col. 4:16 as that sent to the ecclesia in Laodicea, and that it was only sent incidentally to the ecclesia in Ephesus.

According to *The Companion Bible*, Origen (a Greek theologian, AD230) and Basil (Greek bishop of Caesarea, AD350) imply the words "at Ephesus" were not found in their copies. Basil asserts that "the early writers whom he had consulted declared that the manuscripts of this epistle in their time did not contain the name of Ephesus, but left out altogether the name of the church to which the epistle was addressed" (*Conybeare and Howston*). Basil's assertion is confirmed by Jerome, Epiphanius, and Tertullian. It is also claimed that the most ancient manuscript (the Sinaitic Mss.) in the Vatican Library does not contain the words "in Ephesus," except in the margin where they have been added by a much later hand. Marcion (an early writer tinged with Gnosticism) claimed that his copy had appended "to the Laodiceans." Though Marcion is notoriously unreliable in doctrinal matters, there seems to be no reason why he should allege this if it were not a fact.

Paul wrote a letter to the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16), and this could well be it. Why, then, do most of the ancient Mss have the words "at Ephesus" in the first verse? Probably because a copy of it was also sent to Ephesus and was preserved as such. The epistle could have been a circular letter written for the ecclesia at Laodicea, but also designed for general use. Perhaps Tychicus had several copies with the salutation blank to which could be appended the name of the particular ecclesia to which he might decide to send it; and though designed particularly for Laodicea, and similar ecclesias, it also found its way to Ephesus. Perhaps Paul felt that by the means of this circular letter, other ecclesias, adjacent to Colosse, having things in common, would benefit by the same instruction and exhortation.

The epistle is a general one, expressing the ideal in Christ, whereas other epistles (to the Philipppians, the Colossians and so on) treat with personal problems which reveal that the particular ecclesia had slipped from the ideal. It was desirable, therefore, that in conjunction with the epistle specifically dictated by Paul to an individual ecclesia, there should be a general one, sent specifically to Laodicea, but intended for general use (see Col. 4:16).

It is attractive to think that this epistle was written primarily for the ecclesia in Laodicea, for its opening theme: "The riches in Christ" provides a contrast to the material wealth of that city, as well as an appropriate link with Christ's indictment of the ecclesia in Laodicea because of its materialism (cp. Rev. 3:17).

Why Not To The Ephesians?

As suggested above, the character of the epistle does not accord with the circumstances of Paul's knowledge of the Ephesian Ecclesia. He had a great love and concern for the brethren there, and he knew their circumstances personally; but none of this comes through the epistle. Not only is there not a single personal greeting, but Paul describes the ecclesia to whom he is writing as one whose conversion he only knew by repute (ch. 1:15), and he to them as an apostle only known by hearsay (ch. 3:2) so as to need credentials to accredit him with them (ch. 3:4). He refers to them as exclusively Gentiles (ch. 2:11; 4:17), whereas the ecclesia in Ephesus was partly Jewish at least (Acts 19:8), and he implies that they were only recently converted (ch. 1:13; 2:13; 5:8).

Moreover, in view of Paul's long association with the ecclesia in Ephesus, the warmth of his earnest last appeal to its elders, and the intimacy with which he had associated with them whilst dwelling in their midst, it appears incredible that he would not

include some personal comment or greetings if the epistle was designed specifically for the Ephesians. There is not even a reference to Timothy in the whole of the epistle, though he laboured long in Ephesus.

It seems that the ancient suggestion is correct, and that this epistle was sent primarily to Laodicea, though also used as a circular letter to other ecclesias in Asia, among which was that at Ephesus.

Tychicus: Bearer Of Three Letters

Tychicus was sent from Rome to Colosse bearing three letters. In company with Onesimus, he carried the apostle's personal letter to Philemon; but he also carried the ecclesial letter with Paul's instructions and exhortations relating to the problems affecting believers in that city; and he also carried a general epistle designed primarily for the ecclesia in Laodicea, but of value for all related ecclesias whose attention was directed to it. Therefore, what we know as *The Epistle To The Ephesians* may well have been "to the Laodiceans" referred to in Col. 4:16, but also delivered to the Ephesians. It is significant, that in this epistle, Paul states in general terms: "But that you also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things" (Eph. 6:21; see also Col. 4:7).

Tychicus, therefore, was the bearer of *The Epistle To The Ephesians*, or, as we believe, to the Laodiceans.

Why The Epistle Should Be Read By All

The epistle is a general letter, setting forth the high ideal in Christ. As *The Epistle To The Romans* provides that ideal, whilst those to the Corinthians and Galatians reveal that ideal under test; so also with *The Epistle To The Ephesians* in relation to those that follow it. It provides the ideal, whilst those to the Philippians and Colossians relate that ideal under test. It was appropriate, therefore, for the brethren of Colosse to read the epistle sent them in conjunction with the one sent to Laodicea, and vice versa; for both communities evidently were afflicted with identical problems, and could profit by the reading of the joint epistles.

Therefore, the epistle before us, is one for every age and every ecclesia. It has a vital message for the present when Laodicean tendencies are so prevalent.

The Epistle

The epistle is divided into two parts, separated by the apostle himself with a doxology and the exclamation: "Amen" (ch. 3:21).

The first section outlines our *Wealth in Christ*; the second section sets forth our *Walk in Christ*. If believers comprehend their *Wealth* in Christ, they will have the incentive to *Walk* as he would have them do. Notice, therefore, the twofold division of the epistle and the emphasis on *Wealth* and *Walk*.

The first three chapters are dominated by the thought of "riches" or wealth:

- "The riches of his grace" (ch. 1:7);
- "The riches of his glory" (ch. 1:18);
- "God who is rich in mercy" (ch. 2:4);
- "The exceeding riches of His grace" (ch. 2:7);
- "The unsearchable riches of Christ" (ch. 3:8);
- "The riches of His glory" (ch. 3:16).

Now notice how abruptly the apostle changes the emphasis from *Wealth* to *Walk* in the second section of the epistle:

- "Walk worthy of the vocation" (ch. 4:1);
- "Walk not as other Gentiles" (ch. 4:17);
- "Walk in love" (ch. 5:2);
- "Walk as children of light" (ch. 5:8);
- "Walk circumspectly" (ch. 5:15).

Another feature worthy of close study is the description given of the ecclesia. Three figures are used for that purpose:

- [1] The Temple (ch. 2:21-22), or divine indwelling;
- [2] The Body (ch. 1:22-23; 4:15), or mutual co-operation;
- [3] The Bride (ch. 5:25-32), or submissive loyalty.

The first section of the epistle sets forth the principle of *Predestination*, or the origin of the ecclesia (ch. 1); the need of *Edification*, or the construction of the ecclesia (ch. 2); and the *Present Vocation*, or the function of the ecclesia (ch. 3).

The first of these divisions sets forth the divine origin of the ecclesia chosen from the beginning, but since manifested in Christ; the second division outlines the construction of the ecclesia from materials selected by God and re-fashioned according to His will, and through His grace and mercy; the third division reveals the responsibility of the ecclesia to make known the privilege it enjoys to the people about.

The second section of the epistle expounds on *Ecclesial Responsibilities* (ch. 4:1-16); *Individual Conduct* (ch. 4:17 to 6:9); and *Faith's Warfare* (ch. 6:10-18).

The first of these divisions emphasises the need to preserve the unity of the faith in the bonds of Truth; the second division outlines the transformation that takes place in Christ as the Word takes hold of the heart; the third division lists the weapons of offence and defence that are at the disposal of all who are Christ's.

Theme

CHRIST: THE RICHES OF GOD TO US (EXALTATION)

Key Passages: *“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead, and set him at His own right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:18-20).*

[1] OUR WEALTH IN CHRIST — chs. 1:1 to 3:21

- (a) Salutation vv.1-2
- (b) Predestination Or The Origin Of The Ecclesia — ch. 1:3-23
 - 1. Praise for God’s heavenly calling.....vv. 3-14
 - 2. Prayer for spiritual perception of it.....vv. 15-23
- (c) Edification Or The Construction Of The Ecclesia — ch. 2:1-22
 - 1. Our new condition in Christ vv. 1-10
 - 2. Our new relationship in Christ vv. 11-22
- (d) Vocation, Or The Function Of The Ecclesia — ch. 3:1-19.
 - 1. The purpose of preaching to Gentiles.....vv. 1-13
 - 2. The need to receive the divine Fulness.....vv. 14-19
 - 3. Doxology vv. 20-21

[2] OUR WALK IN CHRIST — chs. 4:1 to 6:20

- (a) Ecclesial Responsibilities — Ch. 4:1-16
 - 1. Seek the unity of faith.....vv. 1-6
 - 2. Develop in knowledge vv. 7-16
- (b) Individual Conduct — Ch. 4:17 to 6:9)
 - 1. Replace the old man with the new vv.17-24
 - 2. Fill the vacuum created by the Truth’s requirements vv. 25-32
 - 3. The Christian’s Relations with the world ch. 5:1-21
 - 4. Husband and Wife relationships.....vv. 22-33
 - 5. Parents and Children relationships ch. 6:1-4
 - 6. Servants and Masters relationships.....vv. 5-9
- (c) Faith’s Warfare — Ch. 6:10-20
 - 1. The weapons of victory vv. 10-20
- (d) Personal Matters.....vv. 21-22
- (e) Final Benediction vv. 23-24

Chapter 8

PAUL IN ROME

Luke records that Paul dwelt two years in Rome (Acts 28:30). They were years of great productivity during which he consolidated the work of preaching by the instructions and exhortations that filled the epistles he now wrote and sent into the ecclesial world. These letters comprise an important part of the New Testament as we now have it, so that the work of the apostle lives on.

Paul was imprisoned because of faithful service to King Jesus. But the royal status of the Lord was not recognised by Rome, and therefore Paul became an ambassador in bonds whose credentials were repudiated by the government (Eph. 6:20).

An Ambassador In Bonds

At the side of the apostle there was a Roman soldier on constant guard, to whom Paul was chained, and from whom, perhaps, he heard information from the outside world. From his brethren, also, he would receive news of political happenings, as well as of ecclesial, and from this information, would be able to assess the signs of the times.

These indicated that the end of the Jewish age was at hand, and that soon events would be ushered in that would bring divine judgment upon guilty Judea. Already nearly forty years had passed since the prophecy of the Lord Jesus concerning the downfall of Jerusalem, when he declared: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Mat. 24:34).

Nero had ascended the throne in Rome in AD58, and already there were foreshadowings of trouble to come. The official attitude was hardening against the Christians, and Timothy had been flung into prison, though shortly afterwards he secured his release (Heb. 13:23).

Evil Tidings From Judea

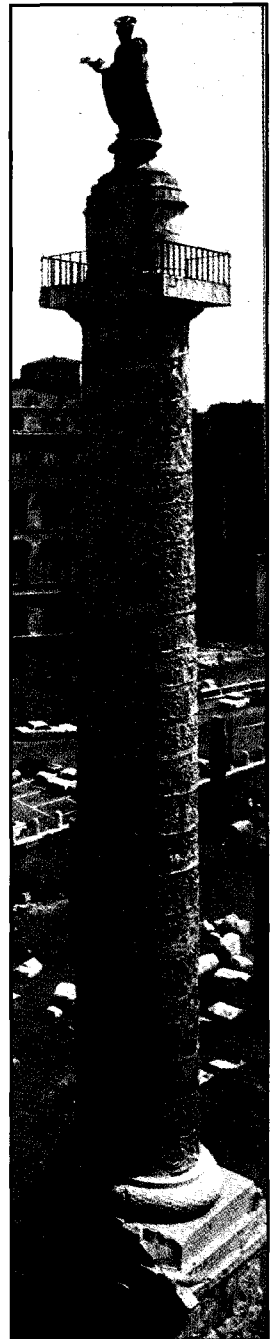
Meanwhile, Paul heard news from Judea that worried him considerably. Pressure was being brought to bear upon the Christians of that country, with the result that some were apostatising to Judaism and forsaking Christ for the formalism of temple worship. The Judaisers failed to comprehend that, apart from Christ, the Law was but a shadow; and apart from the Glory, the temple but an empty shell. Christ was both the substance of the Law and the Glory of the temple, and if they forsook him, they forsook all.

Paul felt the need to counter the Judaistic influence in Judea. But he also knew how he was hated by many in that country. He would have to exercise the greatest care if he were to render any permanent service. Even his name was held in abhorrence by many, and would have to be kept in the background.

Paul pondered the problem, and planned an exposition of the Law which would reveal its imperfection without Christ, who alone could complete that which was intended in it.

Another matter exercised his mind at that time. For two years he had languished in imprisonment because his accusers failed to appear to press their case against him; and now he made application to be heard in their absence. He was convinced that shortly he would be set at liberty (Heb. 13:3, 23).

In those circumstances, Paul commenced to dictate his letter to the Hebrews. It is disputed by some that he did write this epistle, but we believe that the internal evidence of the letter, particularly the comments relating to imprisonment and the release of Timothy, strongly indicate that Paul was the author. Peter, who wrote for the Jewish believers, declared that Paul had written an epistle to Hebrews (2Pet. 3:15), and we believe that this is it.



Trajan's column was erected in the emperor's new forum in AD113, to commemorate his conquest of Dacia.

Analysis of the Epistles

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

For Whom Written

The epistle was written for Jewish believers, and particularly, it would seem, for those of Judea. It was written about AD63, when the temple was still standing, and about two years after Paul had arrived at Rome in the Spring of AD61. It was obvious to the apostle that the time of Judah's judgment, as predicted by the Lord in his Olivet prophecy, was about to be poured out, and that shortly the temple and city of Jerusalem would be overwhelmed by Rome.

Up to the time of Paul's imprisonment, the apostolic preaching of the Gospel had been first to the Jews and afterwards to the Gentiles (Acts 17:2; Rom. 1:16; 2:9-10). The result had been a large influx of Jewish believers into the Ecclesia of Christ. Three thousand were added on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41-42), and the Truth among them flourished. Many of the priests accepted Christ (ch. 6:7), numbers of the Pharisees believed (ch. 15:5), and these, together with Jewish believers generally, were zealous of the Law (ch. 21:20). They attended the temple regularly, observed many of the feasts and customs of the Law with a new understanding, recognising that they typified the substance of Christ.

But many Jewish believers still failed to comprehend the limitations of the Law. It was unthinkable to them that the ordinances, the offerings, the priesthood, and the temple were to be done away. From the discussions at the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15), and from arguments advanced in such epistles as that to the Galatians, it is obvious that some influential Jewish Christians were trying to superimpose Judaism upon Christianity as essential to justification. In some quarters, strict observance of the letter of the Law was beginning to submerge the Truth. Christ was being overshadowed by Moses, and the ardour of such believers for the Law had to be restrained.

Judaism within the ecclesias was fiercely countered by the apostle Paul. So much so, that there was a danger that the very vigour by which he stressed liberty in Christ could have the effect of turning some to licence, and adopt an extreme attitude against the Law. Already some believers were claiming, on the authority of Paul (the "we are of Paul" class, as found in the Corinthian Ecclesia), that the restrictions of the Law no longer were necessary, and they could please themselves what they did. There was a need for a balanced approach to the Law; a need to show

that it still has value and a place in a believer's life, leading him to comprehend the Truth in Jesus more completely. This epistle does that. It shows the superiority of Christ over Moses, of the New Covenant over the Old, of faith over formalism; but it does so without detracting in the least from the Law. It reveals the Law as typical, a schoolmaster leading to Christ, and shows how its foreshadowings found perfection and finality in Christ who fulfilled it.

Theme Words Of The Epistle

No book lends itself so readily to topical study as this epistle. Notice the encouraging appeal in the oft-used phrase: "*Let us...*" (chs. 4:1, 11, 14, 16; 6:1; 10:22, 23, 24; 12:1, 28; 13:13, 15).

Consider how the word "*better*" is constantly used to show the superiority of Christ over the Law. He has a better name than the angels (Heb. 1:4); a better priesthood (ch. 7:7); a better hope (ch. 7:19); a better covenant (ch. 7:22; 8:6); better promises (ch. 8:6); better sacrifices (ch. 9:23); a better reward (ch. 10:34); a better country (ch. 11:16); a better resurrection (ch. 11:35); a better thing for us (ch. 11:40); better blood-sprinkling (ch. 12:24); and hence a better response on the part of the believers (ch. 6:9).

There is a finality in the Truth in Christ that this epistle likewise stresses. It does so by the use of the word "*once*" signifying "once for all." Thus there is a finality about enlightenment in Christ (ch. 6:4), in the offering of Christ (ch. 7:27-28); in the typical entrance of the high priest into the Most Holy (ch. 9:7); in Christ's presence in heaven for redemption (ch. 9:12); in his atoning sacrifice (ch. 9:26); in the purging of sins through him (ch. 10:2); in the sanctification obtained in him (ch. 10:10); in the shaking of the Jewish heavens and earth (ch. 12:26-27).

The completeness of that accomplished by Christ is emphasised by the use of the word *teleios* (and related words) rendered "*perfect*," but signifying completeness; maturity. Thus, the Captain of our salvation is perfect (ch. 2:10) through suffering (ch. 5:8-9), and so ought his followers be mature (ch. 5:14), striving to attain it (ch. 6:1). Such perfection did not come through the Levitical priesthood (ch. 7:11), nor by the Law (ch. 7:19), but through Christ (ch. 7:28). The gifts and sacrifices of the Law made nothing perfect (ch. 9:9), whereas Christ manifested the perfect Tabernacle (ch. 9:11). The sacrifices of the Law made nothing perfect (ch. 10:1), but his offering did (ch. 10:14). Thus perfection is possible for us (ch. 11:40), for he is the finisher of faith (ch. 12:2), and to his perfection believers are called (ch. 12:23).

Many other important key words are scattered through the epistle. For example, we are told to “lay hold onto the hope *set before us*” (ch. 6:18); to “run with patience the race *set before us*” (ch. 12:1); to follow the example of Christ who took heed to the “joy *set before him*” (ch. 12:2).

Who Wrote The Epistle?

The author is not specifically stated, although every indication points to Paul. In view of the hatred he generated among Jews (even among some believing Jews), we can appreciate that he would feel it judicious not to include his name. The writer was a prisoner (ch. 10:34), an associate with Timothy, who expected to be shortly released from his imprisonment (ch. 13:23). Certainly all this reads like Paul. Further, Peter, writing to Jewish believers, reminded them of Paul’s epistle to them (2Pet. 3:15-16), and seems to be referring to the one before us.

In AD150, Pantaenus, a leading Stoic philosopher and teacher of Alexandria, referred to it as a generally accepted Epistle of Paul. Origen (3rd century) wrote that “men of old handed it down as Paul’s” and though he casts doubts upon the Pauline authority, he admits that “the thoughts are the apostle’s.” On the other hand, Tertullian (3rd century) claimed that it was written by Barnabas, and its authorship has been generally disputed.

It has been objected that the style is different from that of Paul’s other epistles, but, then, so is the theme, and usually writers adjust themselves to different subjects. The subject of the epistle is unique. Thus a difference in style might well be expected. Most of Paul’s epistles are debating points of doctrine, or are expounding upon personal issues; but in the *Epistle To The Hebrews* there is exposition to a degree nowhere else met with in the New Testament outside of the Apocalypse.

Theme

CHRIST: THE NEW AND LIVING WAY

(See John 14:6; Acts 9:2; 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22;
Rom. 3:17)

Key Passage: “*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us*

consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:19-25).

[1] CHRIST THE SON: BETTER THAN HIS PREDECESSORS — chs. 1 to 7

- (a) A Better Voice than the Prophets.....ch. 1:1-3
- (b) A Better Name than the Angels — chs. 1:4 to 2:18
 - 1. His work and mission is greater vv. 4-6
 - 2. His authority is more enduring vv. 7-12
 - 3. His dignity is higher vv. 13-14
 - 4. His example is more compelling ch. 2:1-4
 - 5. His work on earth more lasting.....vv. 5-10
 - 6. His ministry more satisfying.....vv. 11-18
- (c) A Better Apostle than Moses — ch. 3:1-19
 - 1. A higher status than Moses ch. 3:1-6
 - 2. A higher destiny for his followers.....vv. 7-19
- (d) A Better Leader Than Joshua — ch. 4:1-13
 - 1. He can provide rest ch. 4:1-10
 - 2. His followers should seek that rest.....vv. 11-13
- (e) A Better Priest Than Aaron — chs. 4:14 to 6:20
 - 1. Touched with the feeling of our infirmities ..vv. 14-16
 - 2. Called of God to show compassion.....ch. 5:1-5
 - 3. Of the order of Melchisedec vv. 6-10
 - 4. Exhortation and warning v. 11 to ch. 6:12
 - 5. Abraham’s example a precedent.....vv. 13-20
- (f) A Better Priestly Order than the Levitical — ch. 7:1-28
 - 1. Melchisedec, a type of Christ vv. 1-3
 - 2. Greater than Abraham.....vv. 4-10
 - 3. A change from Levitical Priesthood necessary.....vv. 11-17
 - 4. The enduring virtues of Christ’s Priesthood ..vv. 18-28

[2] CHRIST THE SACRIFICE: CONFIRMING THE BETTER COVENANT (chs. 8:1 to 10:18)

- (a) Christ the antitype of the Mosaic Order ch. 8:1-5
- (b) Christ the mediator of a better covenant vv. 6-13
 - 1. The Mosaic tabernacle.....ch. 9:1-5
 - 2. The lessons it taught vv. 6-10
 - 3. Christ provides a better sanctuary.....vv. 11-14
 - 4. Christ provides a better sacrifice vv. 15-28
 - 5. The limitations of animal sacrifices ch. 10:1-4
 - 6. The efficacy of Christ’s offering.....vv. 5-10
 - 7. The completeness of his offering vv. 11-18

[3] CHRIST AND FAITH: THE TRUE AND BETTER WAY — chs. 10:19 to 13:25

(a) Faith: The True Response — ch. 10:19-39

1. The requirements of faith vv. 19-25
2. The responsibilities of faith vv. 26-35
3. The reward of faith vv. 36-39

(b) Faith: The Moving Power of the Ages — ch. 11

1. Faith defined ch. 11:1-3
2. Abel offered in faith v. 4
3. Enoch walked in faith v. 5
4. God pleased by faith v. 6
5. Noah prepared in faith v. 7
6. Abraham went out in faith vv. 8-10
7. Sarah conceived in faith v. 11
8. A progeny born of faith.....vv. 12-16
9. Isaac offered in faith vv. 17-19
10. Blessings granted in faith vv. 20-21
11. Joseph prophesied in faith v. 22
12. Moses hidden in faith.....v. 23
13. The world's honours rejected in faith vv. 24-26
14. Egypt forsaken through faith v. 27
15. The passover kept through faith.....v. 28
16. A nation saved through faith v. 29
17. Difficulties overcome through faith.....v. 30
18. Gentiles saved through faith v. 31
19. Victories won through faith vv. 32-38
20. The ultimate reward of faith vv. 39-40

(c) Faith leads unto Christ — ch. 12:1-13

1. Let men of faith inspire us.....ch. 12:1-3
2. Submit to God's discipline vv. 4-13

(d) Faith Expresses Itself In Practical

Morality — chs. 12:14 to 13:21

1. In care for others.....vv. 14-17
2. In recognition of spiritual privileges vv. 18-24
3. In reverential fear of God vv. 25-29
4. In manifestation of true love ch. 13:1-3
5. In strict morality.....v. 4
6. In contentedness vv. 5-6
7. In respect to the Word.....vv. 7-8
8. In repudiation of false doctrine v. 9
9. In complete identification with Christ vv. 10-15
10. In identification with Christ's workers vv. 16-17
11. In prayer vv. 18-21

[4] FINAL WORDS — Ch. 13:22-25

Aposymbiotic Activities



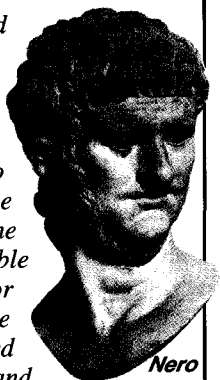
The Way out of Rome! Now almost deserted as a thoroughfare, the world-famed Appian Way was a crowded high road when traversed by Paul on the last stage of his adventurous journey to Rome, and when he later left the city. The Way was already old. Begun in bc312 by the censor Appius Claudius, it connected Rome with Brundisium, modern Brindisi. Tombs and shrines, of which there are numerous remains, lined the Roman end of the road. Among them no monument was erected to its most renowned traveller. But the fitting memorial to his association with the Way is Luke's record of the welcome in it from the believers in Rome: "They came to meet us as far as Appii forum and The three taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage" (Acts 28:15).

Chapter 1

PAUL REGAINS HIS LIBERTY

In several of his epistles Paul expressed confidence that he would shortly be at liberty (Phil. 2:24; Philemon 22; Heb. 13:23). He had arrived in Rome about the year AD61, and spent two years in his own hired house (Acts 28:30). Shortly afterwards, in the year 64, the brutal Nero launched his vicious persecution against the Christians in Rome. Nero came to the throne in the year 54, and died in June 68. He was responsible for both the persecution of the Christians, and for the initial attack by the Romans against the Jewish State, that, in the following reign, resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the scattering of the people into all parts of the earth.

There were signs of the imminence of this predicted overthrow of the Jewish State in Paul's day (Luke 21:24), and his letters together with the epistles of the other writers of the New Testament contain many references and warnings regarding the end of the Mosaic era.



There is no specific statement in Scripture that Paul was ever set at liberty, and this has caused some to doubt that he ever was. Such believe that at the conclusion of his two years' imprisonment in Rome, he was executed by order of Nero.

But it is obvious that Paul was confident that he would shortly be released, for he makes reference to his hopes in at least three of his epistles. The traditions of the early ecclesias are strongly in support of such a release. For example, Clement, writing toward the close of the first century, declares: "Paul... having taught righteousness to the whole world, and having gone to the limits of the West, and having given testimony before the rulers, thus passed from the world..."

Eusebius wrote: "Luke, also, who handed down the Acts of the Apostles in writing, brought his narrative to a close by the statement that Paul spent two whole years in Rome in freedom, and preached the Word of God without hindrance. Tradition has it that the apostle, having defended himself, was again sent upon the ministry of preaching, and coming the second time to the same city, suffered martyrdom under Nero."

Muratori's Canon (AD170) states: "Luke relates to Theophilus

events of which he was an eye-witness, as also in a separate place (Luke 22:31-33) he evidently declares the martyrdom of Peter, but (omits) the journey of Paul from Rome to Spain."

Chrysostom (Greek church father, and patriarch of Constantinople): *"Paul was dismissed by Nero, that he might preach Christ's gospel in the West."*

The historian, J. Paterson-Syth wrote in his book *The Story of Paul's Life and Letters* (p. 236): *"There is some evidence that he sailed by the Marseilles shipping line and founded Christian churches as far west as Spain."* Marseilles would be the nearest shipping port to Spanish Barcelona.

That Paul desired to go to Spain is obvious from his statement in Rom. 15:24, *"Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you."* He would hardly have written in that way unless he had a keen desire to visit the country, and once released from his imprisonment, he was in a position to fulfil it.

We believe that he did, and that the Scriptures provide evidence of his defence before Nero, his release, and a hurried journey back to Rome at a period of acute persecution in which he met his martyrdom.

Paul's Defence Before Nero

Paul had appealed to be judged by Caesar, and "before Caesar he had to go." However, on arrival at Rome, his Jewish accusers were not there to press their charges against him. Therefore, he was permitted his own hired house, where he could receive visitors, but under the supervision of a Roman guard.

Two years passed in that way, and still his Jewish accusers had not appeared. Perhaps they were reluctant to press charges against a Roman citizen on evidence so trivial as they had previously done in Jerusalem and Caesarea. Roman patience with Jewish turbulence was becoming very short indeed, and international relationships were strained to the utmost.

So Paul was allowed to languish in his "own hired house."

What of the local Jews?

Paul had promised them that he would not press charges against his nation (Acts 28:19). Moreover, he had spoken to them concerning the Truth in Christ so effectively that some had believed, though they were hesitant to act (vv. 24-25). Among the Jews of Rome, therefore, Paul had received a more sympathetic hearing than in other parts. Certainly, they did not want to press charges against him.

Would they acknowledge that when he made his defence?

Apparently they agreed to do so. It was to their advantage to get rid of Paul, for his presence in Rome in partial imprisonment reflected against the integrity of the leaders of their nation who failed to show

up to testify against him. So they agreed to testify that they had nothing against Paul so that the case against him should be dropped.*

A day was set, and Paul stood on trial before Nero: the "ambassador in bonds" before the bloated criminal who assumed dictatorial power over men: the Christian and the Criminal.

Paul set forth his defence, but where was the supporting evidence? The Jews had failed to turn up; they doubtless feared the results of doing so. Paul describes his experience thus: "*At my first defence (see Diaglott) no man stood with me, but all forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion*" (2Tim. 4:16-17).

Paul wrote those words on the eve of his death, and thus during his second imprisonment. He explained to Timothy why he had obtained release from his first imprisonment, but would not do so from the second. On the first occasion, though those who had promised to do so failed to stand up in his defence, he experienced the comforting and strengthening presence of the Lord as he stood before Nero's judgment seat, and was delivered to continue his ministry to "all the Gentiles," including those of Spain.

Who were those who "forsook" him? Hardly the brethren of Rome who had been so kind and warmhearted toward him, who had travelled the long distance from Rome to Appii Forum to meet and greet him. Who else? We suggest the Jews of Rome who had everything to gain and nothing to lose by Paul's decease; and who, probably agreed to support his defence, but failed to do so. Notice how Paul imitated Stephen's closing prayer under such conditions of stress: "...*I pray God that it be not laid to their charge.*" That was also the prayer of Christ on the stake, so that the apostle fellowshiped the sufferings of his Lord.

Though bereft of the support of his fellows, Paul felt the influence of Christ in the Roman courtroom. The Lord, with that authority vested in him (Mat. 28:18), guided the decision of the Emperor, so that, to the joy of the brethren in Rome and elsewhere, Paul was released.

Paul Visits His Friends

Having obtained his freedom, Paul found much to do. Firstly, he desired to consolidate the Truth in various centres. He had despatched Timothy to Philippi, and now he left Rome to visit the beloved ecclesia in that city, the members of which had been so

* *It should be clearly noted that this is our construction of the passage in 2Tim. 4:16-17, and that we have no direct evidence settling forward these inferences. However, we do feel that the passage in question justifies them.*

considerate to him during his imprisonment (Phil. 2:19-24). Then he moved on to Colosse, to lodge at the home of Philemon (v. 2), and to rejoice in the fellowship of the brethren of that ecclesia, and particularly Onesimus. How the converted slave would have rejoiced in seeing his friend again! How Paul's heart would have been made glad to see the loving fellowship existing between master and servant, Philemon and Onesimus, to the glory of Yahweh. The Truth bridges differences and brings all down to one common level, whatever their standing in the sight of men.

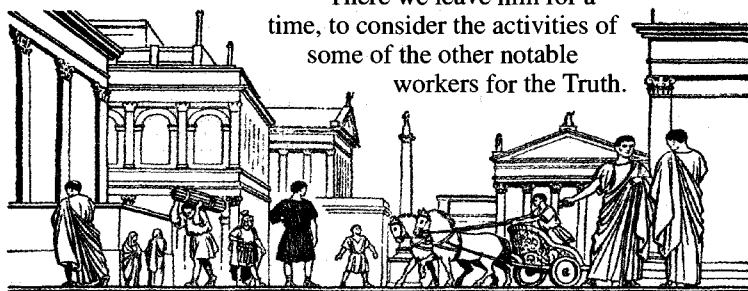
What of the ecclesias in Judea? How did they fare? Did the brethren really understand that events were moving on to a crisis, and that the beloved city and its glorious temple would shortly be overthrown? Had they comprehended the principles he so carefully outlined in *The Epistle To The Hebrews* he had despatched to them? Paul was anxious to visit and meet with them. The last time he had visited Jerusalem, it had been with a generous gift for the poor brethren of Judea from Gentile believers. Since then he had been imprisoned and taken to Rome. Surely this was evidence enough for even Judaising Christians to appreciate that he was no bitter opponent to the Truth as it was revealed in the teaching of the Law, but one prepared to sacrifice his life in the defence of the Faith.

His *Epistle To The Hebrews* had shown that rather than repudiate the Mosaic Covenant, he interpreted it, and found its substance and purpose revealed in the divine revelation manifested in Christ.

Paul had been a prisoner "in bonds" when he had written that epistle (Heb. 10:34; 13:3), but had anticipated that shortly he would be set at liberty (v. 23). He had made request of the brethren that they join their prayers with his in beseeching the Father that He might guide the hearts of the authorities to grant him liberty, and he had promised that when he secured this (and he had no doubts of doing so), he would visit the brethren in Judea in company with Timothy (Heb. 13:23).

Thus having met up with Timothy in Philippi (see Phil. 2:19), Paul would have moved to Judea doubtless strengthening the brethren in city after city as he did so.

There we leave him for a time, to consider the activities of some of the other notable workers for the Truth.



Analysis of the Epistles

PAUL'S LETTER TO TITUS

For Whom Written

Titus signifies *Honorable*. He was a loyal supporter of the apostle, and his companion in several of his journeys. He provides a marked contrast to Timothy in demeanour. Timothy seems to have had an inborn timidity and shyness against which he had to struggle (2Tim. 1:7), and "oft infirmities" which he had to face (1Tim. 5:23). Titus seemed to have something of Paul's own aggressiveness. He was a man of resourcefulness and initiative, able not only to take orders, but also to go ahead of his own account (2Cor. 8:16-17), and a man of contagious enthusiasm (2Cor. 7:13).

Though Titus is not mentioned in Acts, he is mentioned thirteen times in the Epistles: twice in Galatians (2:1, 3), once in 2Timothy (4:10), once in Titus (1:4), and nine times in 2Corinthians (2:13; 7:6, 13, 14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18). There is no doubt that he was with Paul during some of his travels mentioned in the Acts, and he is probably included in such generalisations as "some of the others" (Acts 15:2).

Titus was a Greek (Gal. 2:3), and was taken by Paul to Jerusalem as a test case against the Judaisers (Gal. 2:1, 3). After that incident, nothing further is recorded of Titus until the Third Journey, when he was sent by the apostle at least twice to Corinth. He was sent to supplement, by his dynamic personality, the written instructions, advice and rebukes of Paul, and, on a second occasion, to revive interest in the Jerusalem collection (2Cor. 8:6). On his part, true to his character, Titus was eager to go on the mission (2Cor. 8:16-17). In him there was no hesitancy; though Paul saw the need to follow up his labours by the spiritual, more gentle, perhaps more compelling and lasting, instruction of Timothy (1Cor. 4:17; 16:10).

Titus was perhaps an older man than Timothy, for Paul makes no reference to his youthfulness in the epistle to Titus as he does to Timothy (1Tim. 4:12; 2Tim. 2:22). On the other hand, it may have been that Timothy was more conscious of his comparative youthfulness than was Titus. In any case, Titus was well calculated to "rebuke them sharply" as requested by Paul (Tit. 1:13).

Circumstances Under Which The Epistle Was Written

Paul was at liberty, wintering in Nicopolis, and expected shortly to meet Titus whom he had left in Crete (Tit. 1:5; 3:12).

There are no circumstances recorded in Acts that could apply to this time, so that it seems evident that Paul was ultimately released from imprisonment (Acts 28:30), at which time the epistle was written. This may well have been during his journey to Spain. Conybeare and Howston quote Misratori's Canon (AD170) as stating: "*Luke relates to Theophilus events of which he was an eye-witness as also in a separate place (Luke 22:31-33) he evidently declares the martyrdom of Peter, but (omits) the journey of Paul from Rome to Spain.*"

Chrysostom wrote: "*Paul after his residence in Rome departed to Spain.*"

The Epistle In Relation To The Epistles To Timothy

Earlier (see *The Story of the Bible*, p. 276-280) we have given reasons to believe that the *First Epistle To Timothy* was written during Paul's sojourn in Ephesus (Acts 19), and therefore before the apostle's first imprisonment. *The Epistle To Titus* was written after his release, and *The Second Epistle To Timothy* was written during Paul's second imprisonment, and on the eve of his martyrdom.

The three epistles, therefore, are not set out in the Bible in their chronological order, but they are with regard to their various themes. A study of the three will find many things in common, presenting a continuous message. In 1Timothy, Paul presents *The Charge*; in 2Timothy, he sets forth *The Challenge*; and in Titus, he sounds *A Caution*.

Theme

THE CAUTION: WHAT AN ECCLESIA MUST AIM FOR

Key Passages: "*That thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting*" (ch. 1:5).

[1] AN ORDERLY ECCLESIA — ch. 1 (cp. v. 5)

- (a) Paul's affectionate salutation vv. 1-4
- (b) Titus's work in Crete v. 5
- (c) Qualifications of Eldership.....vv. 6-9
- (d) The Unruly Character of Cretians vv. 10-16

[2] A SOUND ECCLESIA — ch. 2 (cp. vv. 1, 2, 8, 10).

- (a) Requirements of Older Members vv. 1-3
- (b) Requirements of Younger Members.....vv. 4-8
- (c) Requirements of Servants.....vv. 9-10
- (d) An Epitome of the Gospel: Past, Present, Future vv. 11-15

[3] A PRACTICAL ECCLESIA — ch. 3 (cp. vv. 1, 8, 14)

- (a) In subjection to Authority v. 1
- (b) In Character v. 2
- (c) In Manifesting the Transforming Influence of Truth ..vv. 3-7
- (d) A Truth to Stress v. 8
- (e) A Teaching to Avoid vv. 9-11
- (g) Final Words vv. 12-15

Note that this epistle contains two of the most comprehensive epitomies of the Gospel found in the New Testament— chs. 2:11-14; 3:4-7.



*Traditional
sketch of
James the
apostle*

Chapter 2

JAMES: SERVANT OF GOD AND CHRIST

There were three persons by name of James in the New Testament: [1] The son of Zebedee and cousin of the Lord; [2] The son of Alphaeus; [3] The Lord's brother. It is generally thought that the writer of the "Epistle of James" was the Lord's half-brother, and he is identified (but not conclusively so) with James of Acts 15, the author of the tolerant letter to the Gentiles.

James, the Lord's brother, together with the other members of Mary's family (John 7:3) had opposed Jesus during his earthly ministry, and though, doubtless, the cruel execution of his brother had deeply grieved him, he possibly believed that Jesus had brought the disgrace upon his head through his injudicious, foolish and forthright denunciation of the leaders of the nation, as he would consider the Lord's words.

The Conversion Of James

However, after he had been raised from the dead, Jesus had personally appeared unto James (1Cor. 15:7), and this austere, godly man had proof beyond all doubt of the status and the mission of his half-brother. No longer could he dispute that Jesus was the Messiah!

Humbled by the realisation of his own past blindness, he now sought to vindicate himself by complete self-dedication to the cause he had previously opposed. He manifested a commendable humility, for he did not presume upon his relationship to Jesus, but preferred to be known as "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1). He thus honoured Jesus as being "both Lord and Christ."

Together with other members of Mary's family, he associated with the ecclesia from the beginning (Acts 1:14), and soon rose to prominence therein (Gal. 1:19; 2:12). Thus Peter reported to James on his release from prison (Acts 12:17), the brethren appointed him as chairman at the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15), and Paul acted on his advice (Acts 21:18).

James strictly kept the Law himself (Gal. 2:12), though with new meaning. He recognised that it pointed forward to, and illustrated the work of God in Christ. Therefore, in Christ, he understood the true purpose and meaning of the Law, and applied it correctly. His experience in first opposing and then endorsing Christ caused him to be tolerant toward Gentile believers. Whilst advising them to observe certain restrictions in order to avoid giving offence to the Jews, he set before them true liberty in Christ (Acts 15:13-23).

It is generally conceded that he wrote the epistle that bears his name, and forwarded it to Jewish believers in all parts of the world. In it he warned of the impending judgment about to fall upon the guilty nation, a judgment that would overthrow the State, the city of Jerusalem, and the temple (James 5).

The Martyrdom Of James

The prominence to which James rose in the Jerusalem Ecclesia brought him under the censure of the Jewish authorities, and finally he became a victim of that very persecution against which he warned the brethren (James 5:10-11).

Josephus the historian, records that Ananus the high priest, in about AD62, taking advantage of the delay between the death of Festus and the arrival of Albinus the new Roman Governor, assembled the Sanhedrin, and arrested James, taking him before the judges. Ananus was a Sadducee, so that once again that sect was found in bitter opposition to Jesus and his teaching. Josephus declares: *"He assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others (or some of his companions); and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned"* (Ant. 20:9:1).

Hegesippus, a converted Jew who lived about AD160, and whose story Eusebius accepts, claims that James was hurled from the temple pinnacle by scribes and Pharisees, and then clubbed to death. It is alleged that he was required to publicly denounce Christ; but, instead, boldly proclaimed that he was the Saviour, and that: *"He is now sitting in the heavens, on the right hand of great Power, and is about to come on the clouds of heaven."*

Enraged at his bold and courageous defiance, his enemies rushed upon him, and flinging him down from the upper gallery, commenced to stone him to death, until a charitable fellow ended his sufferings with a club. James died amid shouts of hatred, and with the cruel, painful stones beating out his life. He will be raised from the dead to glorious eternal life; and to see the half-brother, whom he once doubted but later served with true devotion, acknowledged on all sides as King and Saviour. He imitated his half-brother in his death, for it is reported that he died crying: *"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!"*

James died about AD62, and it is thought that he wrote his epistle shortly before his death.

The name James is the Greek form of Jacob, and signifies *Supplanter*. His life demonstrates how completely the Truth can take possession of a man when it supplants the emotions of the flesh.

Analysis of the Epistles

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

To Whom Written

James wrote "to the twelve tribes scattered abroad" (ch. 1:1), or, more correctly, to those among them, who had embraced Christ. They had done so without ceasing to be Jews. Many present at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost returned home, bearing the knowledge of the Messiahship of Jesus, whilst, at the same time, retaining their adherence to the Law. At that stage, the Truth was preached "to none but Jews only," and most of these continued their association with the temple or synagogue; though, of course, recognising in the Lord Jesus Christ the fulfilment of the types and shadows of the Law.

Thus communities of believers were established within Jewish quarters in most large cities; though later circumstances forced them to separate from their unbelieving associates.

James wrote to such communities; to synagogues that had embraced Christ, but were still tinged with Judaism, urging upon them to avoid mere formalism, and develop the full fruits of Truth.

He declared that the Truth is more than mere theory, and that faith must be manifest in action, revealing its fruit in works. In that regard, it is thought by some that the teaching of James is at variance with that of Paul, who emphasised justification by faith,

But there is no confliction in the teaching of these two great men who were both inspired of God to write as they did.

True, Paul wrote of faith and James of works; but the faith to which Paul made reference is faith brought to perfection by works; whilst the works that James desired to see in his brethren were those brought into existence by faith.

Both showed the need to demonstrate faith by action, without which it is dead.

Thus Paul taught: "*For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified*" (Rom. 2:13).

James taught: "*Seest thou how faith wrought with [or "energised" — Gr.] his [Abraham's] works, and by works was faith made perfect [brought to completion]*" (ch. 2:22).

"*Ye see then how by works a man is justified and not by faith only*" (v. 24).

Unless faith is manifested in action (see Heb. 11), of what value is it? It is dead, wrote James, being alone. A true faith will invariably reveal itself in action, and the purpose of James' epistle was to develop such a faith in his brethren who had embraced Christ.

When Written?

James' epistle is thought by many to be the earliest of all the New Testament writings, written between AD45 and 53. The internal evidence of the epistle supports this. It was certainly written at a time when Jewish believers were still associating with the worship of the temple or synagogue, though they were under pressure. Later, with more and more Gentiles accepting the Truth, Jewish believers began to abandon the temple and synagogues.

State Of The Jews To Whom He Wrote

James wrote to Jewish believers at a time when they were suffering persecution at the hands of Jewish non-believers. At that time, Judaism was a State-sponsored religion, and as such was tolerated by Rome.

On the other hand, Christianity had no such protection, and though, for a time, Rome tolerated it, confusing it with Judaism, ultimately the attitude of the authorities hardened against it. James wrote at the earlier period.

Sometimes, even in foreign cities, Jewry had sufficient support of the local government to oppress believers among their number; an example being the Jewish community of Damascus which had sufficient authority to assist Saul of Tarsus in his persecution of Christians. In view of this opposition and persecution, James wrote to exhort and encourage his brethren. He did the first by providing them with guidelines of conduct; he did the second by predicting that but a short time remained before the Jewish State would be overthrown, and persecuting Judaism would lack the power and authority to afflict.

Meanwhile, believers had to bear with trial and persecution (James 1:2,12), and must expect it, particularly from wealthy fellow Jews (James 2:6-7; 5:2-4). It was necessary, therefore, to manifest a vigorous faith, to consolidate one another in the Truth so as to reveal a united witness to the world. There was too much backbiting among believers (James 1:19, 26; 3:2-12; 4:11, 17); too many quarrels and too much contention (James 3:13 to 4:8); evidence of gross class distinctions of a fleshly nature (James 1:9-10; 2:1-4); of selfish materialism which weakened faith and worship (James 4:1-5, 13-17); of envy and pompousness (James 4:5-6).

There was also a carry-over of formalism from the Judaism from which they had been called, and which robbed the Truth of its power, demonstrating that the real purpose of the Law was not appreciated (James 1:26-27; 2:14-26).

The epistle was designed to correct these faults, and point the way by which they could be overcome. It reveals the folly of

placing too much confidence in Jewry seeing that it was the source of persecution, and destined shortly to be overwhelmed by divine judgment which would bring its national existence to an end.

The Parousia Of Christ

James urged his readers not to be unduly cast down by the opposition they experienced from their fellow-Jews, for it would be shortlived. He wrote: "*Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord*" (James 5:7).

"*Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*" (James 5:8).

"*Behold, the judge standeth before the door*" (v. 9).

Those who interpret these terms in relation to the future coming of the Lord, are compelled to acknowledge that James was wrong as far as timing was concerned; and as he wrote by inspiration, they must admit that inspiration is fallible!

But James was not wrong, and inspiration does not make mistakes! There is a sense in which the Lord "came" in the destruction of the city of Jerusalem in AD70. The word "coming" in the reference above is *parousias* in the Greek, and signifies "presence," and not necessarily movement from one point to another. James was anticipating the early manifestation of the Lord Jesus as Judge in punishing guilty Judea. That was accomplished through the Roman invasion of Palestine in AD70.

The Lord Jesus, in one of his parables, described the Roman legions as "his armies" by which Jerusalem would be overthrown and the murderers of the Lord punished (Mat. 22:7). Thus, although not in visible manifestation, the Lord Jesus was "present" at the overthrow of AD70, directing the judgment poured out (1Pet. 3:22).

Moreover, this was the very sign given by him to his apostles indicative of his *parousia* (see Mat. 24:27-28).

What is meant by his *parousia*?

In *The Vocabulary Of The New Testament* Moulton and Milligan point out that the word had a semi-technical meaning, to describe the visit of a king, or a man in authority, in his official capacity. They declared that archaeological discoveries in the Greek papyri reveal that the early Christians understood and used the term in that way.

A different word (*eleusetai*, "shall come") is used to describe movement from one point to another (e.g. Acts 1:11).

The word *parousia*, therefore, signifies the presence of the Lord in power. The sign of that to believers and the Jewish world, was the overthrow of the Jewish State in AD70, by which they recognised the exercise of his authority and power. It was this

about which the apostles enquired when they asked: "What shall be the sign of thy coming [*parousias*]?" (Mat. 24:3). They wanted to know what sign he would give of his manifestation in authority, his presence in power.

They certainly did not have in mind his second advent for which we are looking today, for they did not then believe that he would ascend into heaven. They believed that "the kingdom of God would immediately appear" (Luke 19), and even forty days after his resurrection, they enquired: "Wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

Therefore, when they enquired as to what would be the "sign" of his coming, his *parousia*, it is obvious that they did not have in mind his return from heaven, but the sign of his presence among them as king in authority.

The "sign" that he gave them was the outpouring of judgment on guilty Judea. This not only constituted the "sign of his *parousia*" but also the "end of the age" (Mat. 24:3). That is why James referred to both "the coming of the Lord," and "the end of the age" in such a way as to indicate that both these events were then near at hand, as indeed they were.

Theme

FAITH IN ACTION

Key Passages: "*Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only deceiving your own selves*" (James 1:22). "*Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone*" (James 2:17). "*Ye see then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*" (James 2:24). "*Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*" (James 5:8).

[1] HOW FAITH CAN TRIUMPH OVER TRIALS — ch. 1.

- (a) Never Lose Sight Of The Joy Set Before You vv. 1-4
- (b) Seek to Co-operate with God.....vv. 5-8
- (c) Recognise and Rejoice in Privileges
 Received From Him vv. 9-12
- (d) Do Not Blame God For Failures vv. 13-17
- (e) God has Begotten us by the Word vv. 18-21
- (f) We Must Reveal it in Action vv. 22-25
- (g) Otherwise Religion is Vain vv. 26-27

[2] HOW FAITH WILL CONQUER PARTIALITY AND SNOBBERY — ch. 2.

- (a) The Failure — vv. 1-7
 1. The Evil of Partiality vv. 1-4

2. The Evil of Despising those whom God has
chosen vv. 5-7
- (b) The Contrast — vv. 8-11
 1. Right Versus Wrong vv. 8-11
- (c) The Corrective — vv. 12-26
 1. Beware of Coming Judgment vv. 12-13
 2. Faith, Profitless without Works vv. 14-20
 3. Two Examples of Faith made Perfect
by Works vv. 21-26

[3] HOW FAITH SHOULD GOVERN TONGUES — ch. 3.

- (a) The Problem — vv. 1-12
 1. A Warning against Seeking to be Vocal vv. 1-2
 2. The Tongue's Power for Evil vv. 3-6
 3. The Untameable Tongue.....vv. 7-8
 4. The Tongue's Inconsistency vv. 9-12
- (b) The Solution — vv. 13-18
 1. The Virtues of Silence vv. 13-16
 2. The Value of True Wisdom.....vv. 17-18

[4] HOW FAITH CAN PURIFY CHARACTER — ch. 4.

- (a) The Failure — vv. 1-4.
 1. Wars and Fightings v. 1
 2. Unbridled Lust v. 2
 3. Selfish Prayer v. 3
 4. Worldly Associations v. 4
- (b) The Warnings — v. 5.

The Scriptures warn not in vain v. 5
- (c) The Corrective — vv. 6-10.

Submission to Discipline vv. 6-10
- (d) The Principle — vv. 11-16.
 1. Respect for others vv. 11-12
 2. Acknowledgement of God vv. 13-16
- (e) Summary v.17

[5] HOW FAITH DEVELOPS PATIENCE IN ADVERSITY — ch. 5.

- (a) Retribution is at Hand — vv. 1-20.
 1. Warning to Oppressors vv. 1-6
 2. Encouragement to the Oppressed.....vv. 7-12
 3. Final Advice for the Present Distress vv. 13-20

The above analysis emphasises the works which faith will develop in the believer.

Chapter 3

PETER IN BABYLON

As Peter viewed the signs of the times, and saw indications of the approaching end of the age, and the judgment that Christ had predicted in his Olivet Prophecy against the city of Jerusalem, he took up his pen to exhort, warn and guide the brethren. He wrote of an impending fire of persecution which would test the brethren to the uttermost (1Pet. 4:12). Peter wrote two epistles, and they seem to answer to the two symbolic keys which Christ delivered into his hands to open up to men and women the vision of the Kingdom to come (Mat. 16:16-19). Those keys opened the door of glory through suffering; and that is the theme of his two epistles. The first brings vividly before the reader the sufferings of Christ (1Pet. 1:11; 2:21; 3:17-18; 4:1, 13); and the other outlines the glory (2Pet. 1:4, 17; 3:9-13).

Peter, like Paul, viewed the ecclesial scene with concern. He realised, as Christ had warned in his Olivet prophecy, that there would be a growing crescendo of trouble until the Jewish State would be overwhelmed by a fiery judgment at the hands of Rome.

Christ had also warned of increasing pressure from within the Brotherhood, setting brother against brother, and developing bitterness and hatred where should have existed love and concern.

Thus persecution could be expected from without, whilst problems would arise from within.

Peter's Concern

As Peter pondered these issues, the Spirit moved him to take up his pen to warn and instruct his brethren throughout the then-known world.

He was at Babylon at the time (1Pet. 5:13), and had as his associate, his young friend and companion in the Truth: John Mark. He exercised considerable influence over this ardent young man.

Some believe that the reference to Babylon (1Pet. 5:13) is a synonym for Rome, and is thus used symbolically as "Babylon the Great" in Rev. 17. But "Babylon the Great" does not relate to the pagan city of Rome; it refers to the papal system that developed from that centre and spread all over Europe. However Rome, as Babylon the Great, the papal system, did not exist in the days of Peter. Rome was a pagan city ruled over by the Caesars.

Moreover, the ancient city of Babylon still existed in the first century, though sadly in decline from its previous strength and glory, and there was a considerable Jewish community there. That being so, and Peter's ministry being "to the circumcision" (Gal. 2:8), a good cause for visiting that city.

On the other hand, there does not seem any particular reason why he should use the name Babylon as a synonym for pagan Rome. Paul had no hesitation in mentioning Rome, nor in referring to his condition there and the influence of his teaching even to "Caesar's household" (Phil. 4:22). Surely, if Peter had been in the city of Rome when he wrote his epistles, Paul would have known of it, and would have made reference to the fact; but his complete silence with regard to any reference to Peter surely argues that the apostle was absent elsewhere.

From Babylon (whichever way it is interpreted), Peter dictated the two short epistles that bear his name, and sent them forth into the ecclesial world.

PETER'S MINISTRY

In a previous volume of *The Story Of The Bible* we traced the early life and ministry of Peter, and little remains to be added, except his later work and death.

His ardour, earnestness, courage, vigour, and impulsiveness of disposition caused him to make mistakes, but also brought him to the forefront of the disciples (Mat. 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13 — he is always mentioned first). His life's record reveals him as naturally impulsive (Mat. 14:28-29; 17:4; John 21:7), tenderhearted and affectionate (Mat. 26:75; John 13:9; 21:15-17), possessing spiritual insight (John 6:68), and yet sometimes being slow to grasp deeper truths (Mat. 15:15-16). He was thus courageous and though, at one time, guilty of denying his Lord, once his mind was made up, he was immovable in his convictions (Acts 4:19-20; 5:28-29, 40-42).

The Bible records three stages of spiritual development in the life of Peter.

Training as a Disciple. This included his call and his association with the Lord in his public ministry, and concluded with Christ's testimony of confidence in him (John 21:18-19).

Leadership as an Apostle. He revealed firm, bold leadership in the early ecclesia, initiating the appointment of Matthias to take the place of Judas (Acts 1:15); proclaiming the Gospel publicly at Pentecost (Acts 2:14); healing, preaching and defending the faith (Acts 3:4, 12; 4:8); rebuking and judging Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3, 8); preaching the Truth to Cornelius and baptising Gentiles (Acts 10); and openly advocating the work of doing so at the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15). But despite this bold and forthright leadership,

which was what the ecclesia then required, the character of Peter was not yet perfected. Paul found it necessary to oppose and rebuke Peter at Antioch, "because he was to be blamed" (Gal. 2:11-14).

His Guidance as a Shepherd. After the foundations of the ecclesia had been laid, Peter gradually withdrew himself from his former prominence, taking a more humble and subordinate position. James dominated in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 2:9, 12), and Paul did so among the Gentiles. Peter became known as the apostle to the circumcision (Gal. 2:8), and seemed to limit his activities to those Jewish believers outside Jerusalem; in Antioch (Gal. 2:11); Corinth (1Cor. 1:12); Babylon (1Pet. 5:13) where, with his sister-wife, he became a familiar figure (1Cor. 9:5). In obedience to the command of Christ, he set himself to guiding and feeding the flock (1Pet. 5:1-4). He was no longer self-assertive as before (cp. 2Pet. 3:15-16 with Gal. 2:11-14), and so appears finally in the Bible record as a completely changed man, far more powerful in his humility than he ever had been in his self-assertiveness. Each development in his life gave testimony to the transforming influence of Christ's example (see Acts 4:13).

Peter's Increasing Concern

As events moved on toward the AD70's, Peter clearly read the signs of the times, and realised that the end of the age was approaching. He recalled the warning of the Lord Jesus: how that the last days of Judah's Commonwealth would be noted for growing evil, and difficult pressures both within and without the Body of Christ. He saw the need to warn and instruct concerning these matters, and again took up his pen to that end. He thus composed what is known as *The Second Epistle Of Peter*.

PETER'S MARTYRDOM

The martyrdom of Peter was predicted by the Lord Jesus in the following terms: "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God*" (John 21:18-19).

Tradition has it that Peter was crucified in Rome during the persecution initiated by Nero. Crucifixion was a Roman form of execution, and therefore the tradition could be true. Paul left Rome after receiving his liberty about the year AD62, and the Roman persecution of Christians commenced in the year AD64, following the burning of Rome by the mad Caesar.

Paul was absent from the city at the time, and it could have been that Peter hastened to the help of the persecuted ecclesia, and became the victim of the brutal violence of Nero. Appearing among the

ecclesia as its champion, he was apprehended by the authorities and given a criminal's execution.

Tradition says that feeling unworthy of dying as did his Master, he requested that he be crucified upside down, which was accordingly done. However, there seems little point in making such a request, and most likely the tradition is incorrect.

Analysis

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

Background

Peter wrote to "strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1Pet. 1:1), and therefore to Jewish believers, for the verb, "scattered" can hardly apply to Gentiles. Nevertheless, his words of advice included Gentile believers (ch. 4:3), or Jewish believers who once had acted as Gentiles; and therefore were of help to both.

The epistle warned of impending persecution, which was fulfilled when Nero moved against the Christians, following the burning of Rome. He reigned from AD54-68, and the burning of Rome occurred in AD64. Nero (who was himself responsible for the tragedy) blamed it on the Christians, and commenced one of the most brutal persecutions of all time.

This epistle, written from Babylon (ch. 5:13), was probably penned about the year AD60, or a little afterwards, and provided sound, practical advice on how believers should live in view of the trials that were about to involve them.

Theme

TRIUMPH IN TRIBULATION

Key Passage: *"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations [trials]; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1Pet. 1:6-7).*

[1] INTRODUCTION — ch. 1:1-2.

(a) The Definition of a Christian ch. 1:1-2

[2] THE CALL AND WHAT IT INVOLVES — chs. 1:3 to 2:10.

(a) The Living Hope vv. 3-12

(b) The Living Way	vv. 13-16
(c) The Living Sacrifice	vv. 17-21
(d) The Living Word	vv. 22-25
(e) The Living Power	ch. 2:1-3
(f) The Living Stones	vv. 4-8
(g) The Living Priesthood	vv. 9-10

[4] THE PILGRIM LIFE AND HOW TO LIVE IT — ch. 2:11 to 4:11.

(a) Toward the World	vv. 11-17
(b) Toward Masters	vv. 18-25
(c) Toward Husbands	ch. 3:1-6
(d) Toward Wives	v. 7
(e) Toward Brethren	vv. 8-9
(f) Toward Outsiders	vv. 10-13
(g) Toward Persecution	vv. 14-17
(h) Toward Christ the Pattern	vv. 18-22
(i) The Weapons of Victory	ch. 4:1-11

[4] THE FIERY TRIAL AND HOW TO BEAR IT — ch. 4:12 to 5:11.

(a) As Partakers of Christ's Sufferings	vv. 12-19
(b) As Elders Providing an Example	ch. 5:1-4
(c) As the Flock Submitting in Humility	vv. 5-11

[5] FINAL WORDS — Ch. 5:12-14.

Greetings from Babylon	vv. 12-14

Analysis

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER

The purpose of this epistle is to emphasise the need for believers to be thoroughly grounded in *epignosis* or "full-knowledge" such as is found only in the teaching of Christ Jesus. This is expressed in such statements as: "*Be established in the present truth*" (ch. 1:12); "*Be mindful of the words spoken by the holy prophets*" (ch. 3:2); "*Beware of the error of the wicked*" (v. 17); "*Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord*" (v. 18).

Peter exhorted that true knowledge will have its fruit in right actions, but false teaching will be followed by moral declension. Truth brings salvation; error brings condemnation. There is a need to preserve the Truth in its purity, for belief itself is a form of

righteousness. Peter set aside the concept that “good actions” in themselves are sufficient, and showed the need for good doctrine as well.

The “full-knowledge” in Christ Jesus, provides the antidote to moral, doctrinal, and political corruption, such as believers were warned would be manifested at the “time of the end.” Such knowledge sanctifies Yahweh’s saints, for by it they are changed “from glory to glory” reflecting the attributes of Yahweh and His Son (John 17:17; 2Cor. 3:18) as a basis for the bestowal of eternal life in the age to come.

Theme

THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND THE SURE HOPE A FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE GLORY

Key Passages: *“His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2Pet. 1:3-4).*

[1] DIVINE REVELATION: THE ANTIDOTE TO MORAL CORRUPTION — ch. 1.

- (a) The Purpose of the Revelation vv. 1-4
- (b) The Application of the Revelation vv. 5-11
- (c) The Availability of the Revelation vv. 12-15
- (d) The Authenticity of the Revelation vv. 16-21

[2] DIVINE REVELATION: THE ANTIDOTE OF DOCTRINAL CORRUPTION — ch. 2.

- (a) The Certainty of Apostasy vv. 1-3
- (b) The Certainty of Judgment.....vv. 4-9
- (c) The Nature of the Apostasy vv. 10-16
- (d) The Pollution of Apostasy vv. 17-22

[3] DIVINE REVELATION: THE ANTIDOTE TO POLITICAL CORRUPTION — ch. 3.

- (a) The Scoffers’ Challenge vv. 1-4
- (b) The Scoffers’ Ignorance vv. 5-7
- (c) The Scoffers’ Judgment vv. 8-12
- (d) The Assurance of Hope vv. 13-16
- (e) The Need for Spiritual Growth.....vv. 17-18

Chapter 4

PAUL'S FINAL JOURNEY

The route of Paul's final journey can only be established by inferences drawn from his various epistles, and based upon the belief that he was released from his imprisonment in Rome, to be again imprisoned when he later visited that city. The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Hebrews indicate that Timothy was also imprisoned for a time, but securing his liberty (Heb. 13:23), was sent to Philippi where Paul followed him shortly afterwards (Phil. 2:19-24). Earlier, to the Romans, Paul had declared his intention of visiting Spain if possible (Rom. 15:24), and having obtained his liberty, he was free to fulfil his desire to do so. Though it is not recorded in the Bible that he did visit that country, many early writers state that he did so, and there seems no reason to doubt their testimony.

Leaving Judea, Paul, in company with Timothy, made his way to the Island of Crete, en route to Spain. He found that though the Truth had been established in the island, and ecclesias set up in many of its cities, it had not made sufficient impact upon the local brethren as to cause them to properly respond to its influence.

A shepherd was needed to guide the flock: a brother of determination and courage, able to handle the rather rough, crude character of the Cretians. Generally speaking, those Cretians, untouched by the power of the Word, were unreliable, savage, brutal, treacherous ("evil beasts"), and noted for their gluttonous slothfulness ("slow bellies"). Paul saw evidence of this throughout the island, and, indeed, recalled that it was so characteristic of the Cretians as to cause one of their own number, a teacher among them, to remark upon it (Titus 1:12-13).

The Truth had to be bluntly proclaimed by a brother with sufficient vigour to stand against the opposition he was sure to receive; and the forthright Titus was the right man for the task. Paul called upon him to remain in Crete whilst he continued the journey toward Spain (Titus 1:5). Already the delay he had experienced in Crete had interfered with his plans, and it was rapidly passing the time for sailing.

**To Nicopolis
(Titus 3:12)**

From Crete, Paul sailed in a northerly direction to Nicopolis on the western coast of Achaia. Circumstances forced him to delay

his journey at this point and “to winter” there. This certainly reveals that he was on a sea voyage, as otherwise he could have continued his journey by land.

From Nicopolis Paul wrote to Titus, urging him to come to him, doubtless to discuss with him the work that the apostle desired him to do in Crete (Titus 3:12). His epistle epitomised the objectives at which Titus was to aim.

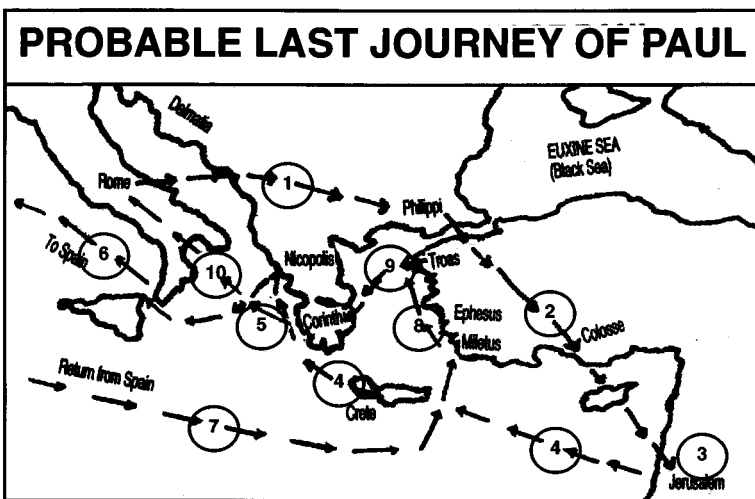
Paul Returns To Rome

If, in fact, Paul travelled to Spain to preach the Truth there, he remained but a short time.

He was soon on his way back to Rome, and the few indications we have of this journey in Scripture indicate a hurried trip on the part of a man who was preoccupied by some problem.

He made his way to Miletus on the coast of Asia (2Tim. 4:20), and there his companion, Trophimus, fell sick. Normally, Paul would have remained at the side of his companions under such conditions, but not on this occasion: there was an urgent need for him to make Rome as soon as possible.

Leaving Trophimus sick at Miletus, he moved north to Troas, and



(1) Released from imprisonment — Sent Timothy to Philippi — followed shortly afterwards, Phil. 2:19-24. (2) Visits Colosse, Phm. 22. (3) Then Jerusalem, Heb. 13:23-24, with Timothy. (4) Leaves Titus at Crete, Acts 2:11; Tit. 1:5. (5) Winters at Nicopolis, Tit. 3:12. (6) To Spain, Rom. 15:24. (7) Returns to Asia hastily, leaving Trophimus sick at Miletus, 2Tim. 4:20. (8) At Troas, visits Carpus, 2Tim. 4:13. (9) Down to Corinth, 2Tim. 4:20. (10) To Rome, where he is imprisoned, 2Tim. 4:6; 1:16-17; 2:9. Having been condemned, 2Tim. 4:6, he was (according to tradition) beheaded on the Ostian Way about 3 miles (4.8 kms) outside the Capital.

was accommodated by Carpus. The mind of Paul was concentrating on the problem before him; and when he left the home of Carpus he forgot to take with him some of his belongings: his cloak and some parchments (2Tim. 4:13). He later wrote and asked Timothy to bring these with him when he visited Rome.

From Troas he moved southwest to Corinth with Erastus, whom he requested to remain there to help consolidate the ecclesia (2Tim. 4:20), and moved on to Rome with Titus, whom he subsequently sent to Dalmatia (2Tim. 4:10). Where Timothy was during this time is not revealed. He was last in Jerusalem, and may have been sent to Ephesus to fortify that ecclesia against problems that the apostle knew would erupt throughout the ecclesial world.

In Rome

And so Paul came to Rome. On the previous occasion when he arrived, there was reason for joy. He met brethren of the ecclesia who had walked a considerable distance to welcome him, and he had been greatly stimulated by the fraternal love bestowed upon him (Acts 28:15).

There was no such welcome for him this time. In fact, brethren were conspicuous by their absence. He entered a city completely given over to the vilest debauchery and immorality. As evil as Rome had been in the past, it had worsened. The criminal Caesar set the standard for his subjects, and encouraged them in every form of carnal indulgence. Anybody practising virtue of any kind was suspect, and nobody dared to confess to being a Christian.

The one ambition of Nero was to be applauded as an artist. He delighted to receive approbation as a musician and a singer. He suffered from an inferiority complex and sought ways and means of drawing attention to himself. History has it that he set fire to Rome, and in order to parade before his courtiers as a tragedian, struck a pose, and began to play on a lyre a dirge over the burning city.

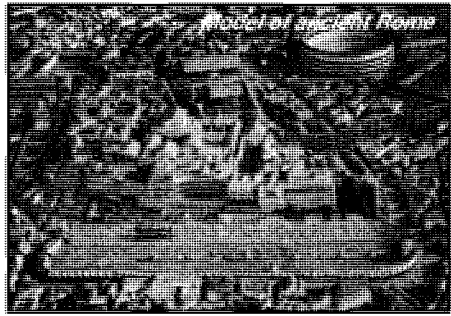
But on this occasion, public opinion rose like an angry flood against the mad ruler, and in the face of widespread censure, he sought a scapegoat, and blamed the fire on to the Christians, instituting the most brutal persecution against them. Tacitus reports that, as an entertainment, the emperor dealt with the Christians in three ways:

1. *He ordered them to be dressed in the skins of wild animals and thrown in the arena to wild dogs which tore them to pieces;*
2. *He crucified them;*
3. *He had them dipped in boiling pitch, and, after dark, used them as human torches.*

As a refinement of this last method, he had his garden specifically equipped for the human flares. Then, dressed as a charioteer, the emperor amid the plaudits of a specially-arranged crowd, raced round

the arena in his chariot, illuminated by the light of the burning Christians.

Those faithful martyrs suffered the fiery trial of which Peter had warned. Their only crime was their determination to live a life of devotion and virtue to Christ. But that life and attitude reflected upon the evil sensuality of the mad emperor and he rejoiced in their death.



No one knows how many Christians were martyred in the butchery ordered by Nero in AD64, but it was a large number, indicating how effective had been the preaching of Paul and others. Although the mass-murders waned after a time, persecution continued, as the emperor endeavored to stamp out the remnant of the hated sect.

Nero was a sadistic brute governed by an insatiable blood-lust, and many others, besides Christians, were destroyed by him. He gratified every sensual and fleshly evil, and his actions became so coarse and abandoned as to occasion even the censure of the hardened Roman people. Uprisings against his régime became frequent, and he retaliated by torture, murder and execution. Ultimately, the whole empire seethed with revolt, and this flared into open mutiny in Gaul. The revolutionary general called upon others to join with him, issuing a proclamation accusing Nero of being "Murderer, Matricide, Poisoner, but worst of all a dreadful singer who did not even know the rules of art!"

It is said that this last accusation incensed Nero more than anything else, and with great cruelty the revolt was suppressed. But eventually his own bodyguard, the Praetorian Guard, the soldiers in Rome, had had enough. They turned on Nero, and he was forced to flee. But he found no place of refuge. He was compelled to watch his grave being dug, and commanded to kill himself. Terror-stricken, he tried to avoid the inevitable; but finally, urged by his companions, he plunged a dagger into his heart, and so died.

Meanwhile, Judah had revolted against Rome, and Vespasian had taken the field against the Jews. The death of Nero was followed by the elevation of Vespasian to the position of emperor. Commanding his son, Titus, to assume command of the army, Vespasian hurried back to Rome to continue his rulership of the purple. Thus, no sooner had the scourge of Nero ceased, than the terror and bloodshed of the siege of Jerusalem commenced. The Christians of Jerusalem, recalling the warning of the Lord (see Mat. 24:15-20) fled to Pella, the Jewish State was overthrown, and the times of the Gentiles commenced in earnest.

Paul Imprisoned

When Paul arrived in Rome sometime between AD64 and 68, the brutal persecution of the Christians was at the height of its fury. Known Christians were being dragged before the authorities, and executed out of hand. The ecclesia had to go into hiding and the strictest secrecy had to be maintained as to where its meetings were held, lest the whole community be arrested.

Paul found that his Roman citizenship no longer stood him in good stead; the fact that he was a Christian nullified any protection that it previously afforded him.

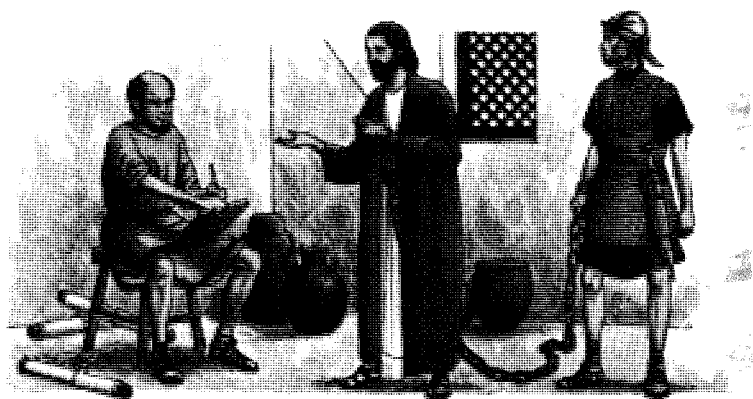
He had arrived with other stalwarts of the Faith, or had met them on arrival at Rome. There was Demas who had travelled with him to other parts, Crescens, Luke, Tychicus and others. They were appalled at the brutality of the persecution. It was too much for Demas: he left Paul in the lurch and returned to Thessalonica. Others were sent by Paul to various parts, probably to report on conditions in Rome, and to fortify local ecclesias in view of the virulence of the persecution that could involve these ecclesias as well. But Paul kept Luke with him, perhaps sensing that he might need the services of the "beloved Physician" (2Tim. 4:10-11).

He then set about making contact with the ecclesia that had gone into hiding. But in doing so, he was arrested by the authorities and placed on trial for his life. The authorities recognised in Paul the leader of the Christian community, and determined to make an example of him. Paul, on his part, carefully prepared his defence. He felt that much depended upon it. Perhaps he might be able to bring about an alleviation of the brutal persecution.

He obtained little help from the brethren. They spoke in shuddering fear of the terror that had struck at them so suddenly and unexpectedly. Brethren from Asia who were in Rome at the time, and to whom Paul turned for help, led by Phygellus and Hermogenes, turned aside from him, and would have nothing to do with him or his defence.

The Trial

Thus, when Paul stood up in court to testify to the Faith, he stood up on his own. He set about presenting his defence but found that he had not only the Roman authorities to contend with, but also Alexander the coppersmith — a worker in brass, which represents the flesh! He was most likely Alexander, the heretic of Ephesus, whom earlier Paul had excommunicated (1Tim. 1:20; 2Tim. 4:14). He "did" Paul much evil. The verb is *endeixato*, signifying to show, point out, make a declaration against. Alexander testified against Paul, and so performed the part of a Judas. Paul experienced "the suffering of Christ," in having one of "like precious faith" treacherously betray



him by falsely accusing him before his enemies. To Timothy he wrote: *"Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works; of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words"* (2Tim. 4:14-15).

Revenge was sweet for Alexander, who probably never forgave Paul for excommunicating him. Perhaps to save his own skin, it seems that he testified against Paul, and his evidence contributed to judgment being given against the apostle.

Accordingly, Paul warned Timothy (who was about to visit Rome) to beware of this man whose power for evil was so great.

Paul was condemned as a criminal and imprisoned awaiting execution. There was to be no release this time as he had experienced on the first occasion. He wrote to Timothy: *"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing"* (2Tim. 4:6-8).

Encouragement for Paul

Despite the depths of depression into which Paul was now thrust by the defection of once trusted workers like Demas, and the cruel treachery of bitter opponents within the ecclesia like Alexander, the great apostle received tremendous encouragement from brethren who risked their own lives to assist him.

Among these was *Onesiphorus*, a brother who had often gone out of his way to assist Paul (2Tim. 1:16). He visited Rome about this time, and enquired as to the whereabouts of the apostle. He was told that the apostle was imprisoned, and that as it was dangerous to be identified with him, it would be best not to make contact with him.

But Onesiphorus contemptuously rejected such advice. Though Paul was shunned at that time by many (2Tim. 4:11), Onesiphorus searched very diligently for him, and discovered where he was

imprisoned. He visited Paul, but this led to his undoing. He was seized as a Christian, imprisoned and put to death.

In writing to Timothy, Paul made mention of the courageous, helpful and faithful service of Onesiphorus, and called upon his "son in the faith" to see that the "house of Onesiphorus" was suitably cared for (2Tim. 1:16; 4:19)*

But generally the ecclesia had either dispersed or had gone into hiding. Paul could have no direct contact with the brethren, and it seems that Luke, who faithfully kept at his side, acted as "go-between" between the apostle and the ecclesia. By that means, he was able to send greetings from such as Eubulus, Pudens, Linus and Claudia (2Tim. 4:21) when writing to Timothy to make haste to visit him as "the time of his departure was at hand."

Tradition has it that Linus rose to pre-eminence in the ecclesia in Rome.

Meanwhile, Paul penned his last epistle, this time to Timothy his "beloved son in the faith."

The Death of Paul We do not know whether Timothy ever reached Paul before his death. Most likely he did. We can be confident that he would have made every attempt to do so, and that Yahweh would bless his efforts to that end.

That being so, Paul's faithful companions, Luke and Timothy, were with him to the end. As a Roman citizen, Paul would be executed by beheading with the sword. Tradition has it that the execution took place on the Ostian Way, about three miles (4.8 kms) outside the capital early in the year AD68. Paul would then have been about 62 years of age.

Timothy and Luke, doubtless, would have sorrowfully witnessed this noble man being led forth to a death decreed by one of the worst tyrants to sit upon a throne. The execution of Paul terminated a life of complete dedication to Yahweh and the Lord Jesus Christ, which had commenced on that dramatic day when the light blinded him just outside Damascus, and he heard the voice of the Lord and saw the Saviour.

Nero's record is finished, and his execution (perhaps in the same year as that of Paul's) brought to an eternal end, the infamous life of viciousness, crime, immorality and violence that made his name an execration to so many.

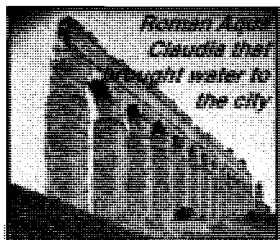
But many whom he caused to be put to death will rise to greater glory in the Age to come. Paul will be among the number. He will be re-united with his friends; he will see the fruits of his labours down to

* The fact that Paul writes of "the house of Onesiphorus" and not of Onesiphorus himself, strongly suggests that he had lost his life in seeking for Paul.

our own day. What a privilege, if we are permitted to personally meet this great man in the Age to come, and to be able to tell him that his labours and his words were an inspiration to us, nearly two thousand years after his death! What an inspiration he must have been to Timothy, Titus, Luke and others who carried the torch that he lit for them, and held it high for others to accept the Truth it proclaimed. The weeping Timothy and the thoughtful Luke, would have been fortified by the death of their friend and brother to dry their tears, and go forth in courage and faith to continue the work. Among the last words that Paul wrote to Timothy were these: *"Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured; but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them..."* (2Tim. 3:10-14).

Timothy knew the character of the man who had brought him to the Truth! He had shuddered, as many years earlier at Lystra he had seen the apostle cruelly stoned until it seemed that life itself had been beaten out of his body (Acts 14:19-21); but the apostle had staggered to his feet and returned into the very city that had persecuted him! Now Timothy saw him being led away to be beheaded; and, with the flash of the soldier's sword, the great life was brought to its end.

Timothy and Luke took up the mighty charge that Paul had delivered to them. They, likewise, dedicated their lives to the work of the Truth, stimulated by the example of Paul. With the passing of time, that charge has been delivered to us, and we, in turn, must hold aloft the torch of Truth, without faltering.



Analysis

PAUL'S SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

Background

This epistle comprises the last words of Paul and was written on the eve of his death. The apostle sets out to extend personal encouragement to one who was naturally timid and retiring in disposition, but who had a most important and difficult task ahead of him, in the performance of which all his resources would be taxed (ch. 1:4-8).

Thus Paul the father addresses Timothy his son in the faith, and directs him to the care and keeping of the Father in the heavens. The apostle calls upon Timothy to visit him in Rome, that he might give him some personal instructions prior to his execution at the order of Nero (ch. 4:6, 21).

The First and Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus, though not in chronological order, and, in fact, separated one from the other by considerable periods form a trio linked by a common theme. In the *First Epistle Of Paul To Timothy* the apostle sets forth the charge which he commands his "son in the faith" to carry out; in the *Second Epistle* he outlines a warning, whilst in *The Epistle To Titus* he issues a caution. The three epistles, therefore, set out in order the Charge, the Challenge, and the Caution. The three Epistles should be studied in that order, and not in their chronological sequence.

Theme

THE CHALLENGE: STIR UP THE GIFT OF GOD

Key Passages: "*Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee*" (ch. 1:6). "*The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*" (ch. 2:2). "*Perilous times shall come*" (ch. 3:1). "*The time of my departure is at hand*" (ch. 4:6).

[1] HOLD ON TO THE CHARGE — ch. 1.

- (a) Salutation: The Father Speaks to His Son vv. 1-2
- (b) Exhortation: Paul's Confidence in Timothy vv. 3-5
- (c) Injunction: Be Courageous vv. 6-8
- (d) Incentive: The Gospel Hope vv. 9-11
- (e) Example: Paul — Not Ashamed of the Gospel vv. 12-15
- Onesiphorus — Not Ashamed of Paul vv. 16-18

[2] ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO TAKE UP THE CHARGE — ch. 2.

- (a) Seek Out Co-Helpers vv. 1-2
- (b) Provide a Personal Example vv. 3-4
- (c) Set The Objectives Clearly Before You vv. 5-13
- (d) Develop Skill in Exposition.....vv. 14-15
- (e) Shun Unprofitable Discord vv. 16-21
- (f) Exercise Careful Discretion vv. 22-26

[3] GUARD THE CHARGE IN FACE OF APATHY — ch. 3.

- (a) The Inevitability of Trial in the Last Days.....vv. 1-9
- (b) Paul's Example in Trial vv. 10-13
- (c) The Power of the Word in Trial vv. 14-17

[4] PREACH THE CHARGE IN ALL SEASONS — ch. 4:1-8

- (a) The Truth will be Challenged by Error vv. 1-5
- (b) Paul's Personal Help will shortly be Withdrawn vv. 6-8

[5] PAUL'S FINAL WORDS — ch. 4:9-22

- (a) Regarding his Associates vv. 9-13
- (b) Regarding his Enemies vv. 14-18
- (c) His Closing Salutation vv. 19-22



The Abbey of Three Fountains stands on the traditional site of Paul's martyrdom. He is said to have been led from Rome to the third milestone on the Via Ostiensis. There, by a place of three springs known as the "Aquae Salvine" he was beheaded.

Chapter 5

JUDE: THE RELUCTANT LETTER-WRITER

According to tradition, the apostles generally suffered martyrdom of one kind or another; but the Scriptures are silent of this. They carried the Truth forth far and wide, and laid the foundation of a widespread ecclesia that ultimately conquered the pagan Roman world. It is not our intention to launch into the history of those matters, but to limit our task to "The Story Of The Bible." This brings us to the Epistle of Jude. Jude tells us that he did not want to write the epistle as he did, but preferred to have written one of general encouragement. However, circumstances were such that he found it necessary to "earnestly contend for the faith," with the result that we have this fiery little epistle that bears his name. Though he did not want to write as he was compelled to do, and though his epistle is so short, it is full of instruction for us in these days.

Very little is known of Jude, for, in the Scriptures, he stands in the shadow cast by James and by Peter. He is merely known as the brother of the former (Jude 1), whilst his epistle is obviously built upon that of the latter. His name means *Praise*, and the epistle that came from his pen teaches that there is need to contend against error to the praise of Yahweh.

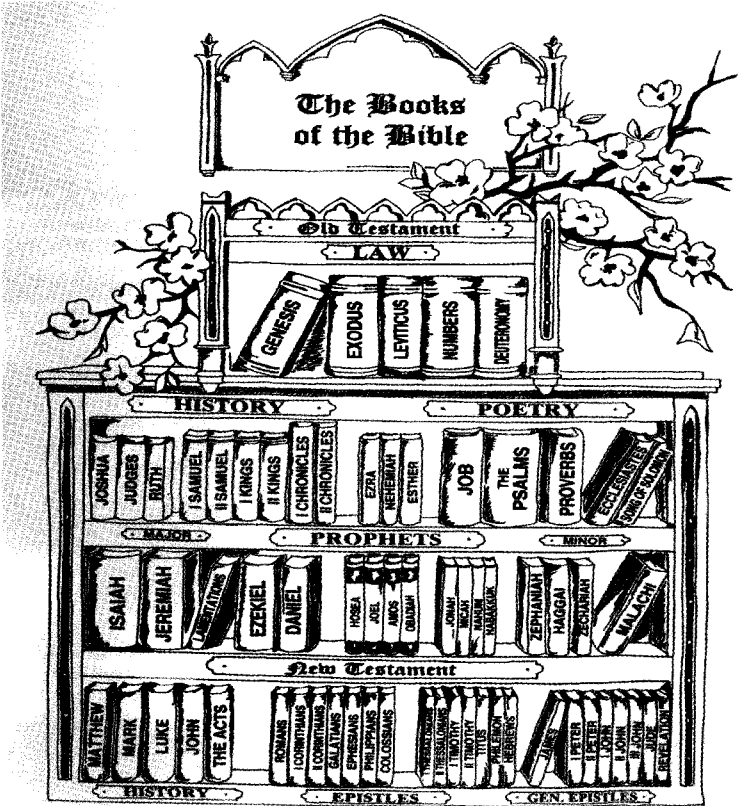
As the brother of James, he was the half-brother of Jesus (Mat. 13:55). He was probably among those who, as the Lord's ministry gathered momentum, gradually became ashamed of Jesus. The Lord's devotion and burning zeal with regard to divine things was misunderstood by his own brethren (Psa. 69:8-9); so much so, that they tried to put him under restraint (Mark 3:21; mg.). Possibly, the very familiarity of their domestic relationships bred in them a contempt for the methods he used, and from this stemmed a misunderstanding of his ministry.

Be that as it may, at the time when the enthusiasm of the people for Jesus was greatest, his own brethren attempted an unwarranted interference in his work, only to receive a well-merited rebuke from their elder half-brother (Mat. 12:46-50). At that stage they had apparently prevailed upon his mother to join with them in restraining him. Mary, of course, could never forget who her firstborn son was and what he was to become (and in spite of the attitude of her other children she kept with him until the last — John 19:25); but their representations to her, together with the accusations of the Scribes and

Pharisees, evidently caused her to doubt the wisdom of the methods he was using, and so, at that stage, she joined with them in an attempt to reason with him to be more pliable to the suggestions of the nation's leaders. The rest of the family, however, was hardened in their rejection of Jesus: John declares that "his brethren did not believe in him" (John 7:5), which shows a decline on their part since his public ministry began (John 2:11-12).

The resurrection of Jesus, therefore, humbled and convinced his unbelieving brethren. He specifically revealed himself to James (1Cor. 15:7), and no doubt from him, the rest of the family learned that the half-brother they had despised, was the risen Christ! Their conversion was complete and wholehearted, and from then onward they associated with the apostles, evidently occupying positions of eminence in the ecclesias (Acts 1:14; 1Cor. 9:5).

What part Jude personally played in the opposition the Lord received from his family we know not. He is known because of the epistle he wrote.



THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

Background

The *Epistle of Jude* reminds us that there is a “time of peace and a time of war,” and that we must not confuse the times.

He had been engaged in writing a treatise on the common faith (v. 3), but was interrupted in that labour of love and pleasure by the evidence of rapid spiritual decline that was becoming increasingly apparent in the ecclesias. Moved by the Spirit, he laid aside the pen of exposition, and took up that of warning and rebuke.

The result is this fiery little epistle: a clarion call for ecclesial contention when the occasion requires it.

That Jude was a warm-hearted, lovable brother is obvious, for in this short letter, he constantly addresses his readers as “beloved” (vv. 3, 17, 20). But the warmth of his love generated the heat of his indignation, causing him to write as he did.

Peter, in his epistles, had predicted that a state of moral and doctrinal corruption would develop within the ecclesias. Since then, those circumstances had developed, and Jude’s epistle reveals that fact. He takes the very terms used by Peter, and applies them to the false teachers of his day. He makes direct reference to the prophetic warnings of Peter (cp. Jude 17 with 2Pet. 3:3), and calls upon his readers to heed the voice of the dead apostle.

He attacked the false teachers in no uncertain manner. A viper might look pretty, but it is very dangerous; and that is how Jude treats the issues before him. The danger was real; the Truth was being challenged from within; false brethren were destroying the foundations laid by the apostles, most of whom were dead; and Jude stood in the breach. His love for his brethren shows in the very language that he uses, for the very warmth of his expressions was called forth by his deep concern for their spiritual wellbeing.

When Written

Peter had foretold the trial would develop at “the time of the end” (2Pet. 3:3); and Jude writes to show that the prophecy had been fulfilled. The “time of the end” had relation to the overthrow of the Jewish State in AD70, so that Jude must have written on the very eve of that tragic event. Peter, Paul and other leaders had been martyred. The Roman-Jewish war commenced toward the end of Nero’s reign in AD68, and it must have been thereabouts that Jude took up his pen to write.

In treating with the apostates, Jude shows that a forsaking of the faith will lead to deterioration of character revealed in loose morals (v. 4), corrupt thoughts (v. 8), evil speaking (vv. 8-10), religious sham and hypocritical pretence (vv. 12-13), murmuring against the righteous (v. 16), boasting (v. 16), and gratification of self (v. 16).

On the other hand, those who “keep themselves in the love of God” will build on faith (v. 20), rely on prayer (v. 20), seek divine guidance (v. 21), look to the future (v. 21), exercise pity toward errorists (v. 22), seek to save the amenable (v. 23), hate evil (v. 23), and repose in divine help (v. 24).

Theme

A CLARION CALL FOR ECCLESIAL CONTENTION

Key Passages: *“It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”* (v. 3).

This epistle reveals the need to contend to the praise of Yahweh. It fittingly summarises the importance of preserving the principles already laid down by those who have gone before, and therefore is very properly placed at the conclusion of all the other epistles.

[1] INTRODUCTION — vv. 1-2.

What Constitutes a True Believer vv. 1-2

[2] THE NEED TO CONTEND — APOSTATE TEACHERS

— vv. 3-16.

- (a) Their Evil Perversions: Three Basic Denials vv. 3-4
- (b) Their Certain Doom: Three Historic Examples vv. 5-7
- (c) Their Impious Ways: Three Historic Examples vv. 8-11
- (d) Their Utter Depravity: Six Terrible Metaphors vv. 12-13
- (e) Their Final Destruction: Enoch’s Testimony vv. 14-16

[3] THE WAY TO CONTEND — AVAILABLE RESOURCES

— vv. 17-25.

- (a) Recognise that Apostasy has been Foretold vv. 17-18
- (b) Analyse Actions and Fruits v. 19
- (c) Draw Upon Divine Resources vv. 20-21
- (d) Seek to Reclaim Where Possible vv. 22-23
- (e) Rest upon the Help of Yahweh vv. 24-25

Chapter 6

THE VISION OF JOHN

John "the beloved apostle" outlived all his other companions, and according to Eusebius, continued to minister to the ecclesias until his death in his ninety-eighth year. He thus lived to see divine judgment poured out upon guilty Judea described in the New Testament as a "coming" or "parousia" of the Lord. The Lord had declared of John to Peter: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me" (John 21:22). The word used is not "parousia" but "erchomai" (the action of approaching) yet it is significant that John did outlive the other apostles, and witnessed the manifestation of Christ's power in the overthrow of the Jewish State. His writings completed the work of Inspiration as far as the Scriptures were concerned (Rev. 22:19).

Tradition records that after the ascension of the Lord, when the apostles made a division of the areas for preaching among themselves, Asia fell to the share of John. It is also alleged that he did not immediately enter upon his charge, but continued at Jerusalem until the death of Mary, who had been placed into his care by the Lord (John 19:26-27).

He then travelled to Asia and applied himself to the propagation of the Truth, preaching it where it had not been known, and confirming it where it had already been planted.

The Labours Of John He was involved in the persecution instituted by Domitian (AD96), and tradition says that he was taken bound to Rome, and there condemned to be baptised in a cauldron of boiling oil (see *Eureka*, vol. 1, p. 156). Tradition also alleges that he was drawn out alive, but the emperor, by no means impressed with the miracle, banished him to the island of Patmos.

The allegations of tradition must be treated with considerable reserve, but there is no doubt that he suffered persecution, and was banished to Patmos. There, it is claimed, he preached to the inhabitants, and, without doubt, received the wonderful vision of the future contained in the Revelation. Though Domitian may have thought that by thus



banishing this notable Christian he would rid the pagan world of his influence; in fact, his influence was increased. In the Revelation, he describes himself as: *"Your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, being in the isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the Testimony of Jesus Christ"* (Rev. 1:9).

It is said that upon the death of Domitian, and the succession of Nerva, John was released, and returned to Asia, establishing his headquarters at Ephesus, because the people of that city had recently martyred Timothy. John was the sole remaining apostle, and laboured to complete the work that had been set him and his fellow-labourers by the Lord Jesus. According to Eusebius, he died at the beginning of Trajan's reign (AD98), in his ninety-eighth year, and was buried near Ephesus.

But the labours of John, like those of the other apostles, have not yet been completed. In the Revelation, he was given the assurance that he must yet, in the future, "prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (Rev. 10:11). He will yet rise from the dead, with those of like precious faith, to personally play a part in the final consummation of the great prophecy that was given through him.

The Writings Of John John wrote his Epistles and Gospel partly to correct serious error that was developing among the ecclesias, and which ultimately became manifested in the widespread apostasy of the Roman Catholic Church. When John wrote, he was the only surviving apostle, and was of great age. The tone of his writings is in keeping with this, for it is paternal in the endearing expressions with which it is sprinkled, as well as by the authority that it reveals.

He combined a simple, direct style of language, with great profundity of thought. There is no doubt as to the meaning of his words, yet the ideas presented thereby are susceptible to deep analysis. He was not afraid of repetition. To emphasise his points he sometimes repeated them in almost the same words. He thereby revealed that he recognised that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1Cor. 2:14).

It is significant that the Bible closes with the Apocalypse, the revelation of the visions given to John on the Isle of Patmos, combined with a prayer and a benediction from this man whom Jesus loved so much: *"Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."*

To John's gracious words and prayer, let us also add our *"Amen"* — *so be it!*

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

The Hand of Inspiration is not only apparent in the words of Scripture, but also in the very setting in which the various books of the Bible are placed. The epistles of Paul, for example, are in proper sequence of thought, though not in chronological order (Thessalonians, for example, was written before Romans). It is significant that the Old Testament ends with the words, "...a curse," and the New Testament records the birth of him who was to bear the curse away.

There is also design in the three epistles of John; they set forth the following principles:

1 John — The Truth and the Ecclesia.

2 John — The Truth and the Home.

3 John — The Truth and the Individual.

The first epistle calls upon the ecclesia to oppose error in its midst; the second shows that the home should be closed to errorists; the third sets out how individuals should resist those who oppose apostolic authority.

Notice the series of four "sevens" outlined in the first epistle:

[1] The seven tests of true discipleship, prefaced by: "If we say..."

- 1. False fellowship** — not honest with others ch. 1:6
- 2. False Sanctity** — not honest with oneself.....ch. 1:8
- 3. False righteousness** — not honest with Christ ch. 1:10
- 4. False allegiance** — not honest with God ch. 2:4
- 5. False association** — not honest with the world ch. 2:6
- 6. False understanding** — not honest with one's
brethren ch. 2:9
- 7. False love** — not honest with anybody ch. 4:20

[2] The seven reasons for his writing to be prefaced by "*These things I write...*"

- 1. To declare things that he has seen**.....ch. 1:3
- 2. To increase their joy** ch. 1:4
- 3. To assist them to avoid sin** ch. 2:1
- 4. To remind them of their privileges** ch. 2:12-14
- 5. To warn against false doctrine** ch. 2:21-24
- 6. To warn them against false teachers**.....ch. 2:26
- 7. To show their true relationship to life**.....ch. 5:13

[3] The seven characteristics of a true believer revealed as "*Born [begotten] of God.*"

1. He practises righteousness.....ch. 2:29
2. He avoids sin ch. 3:9
3. He manifests love ch. 4:7
4. He believes on Christ ch. 5:1
5. He loves God ch. 5:1
6. He overcomes the world.....ch. 5:4
7. He remains consistent ch. 5:18

[4] The seven great contrasts:

1. Light versus Darkness ch. 1:5-2:11
2. The Father versus the World ch. 2:12-17
3. Christ versus Antichrist ch. 2:18-28
4. Right versus Wrong ch. 2:29 to 3:24
5. Truth versus Error ch. 4:1-6
6. Love versus Hypocrisy ch. 4:7-21
7. The God-begotten versus the Fleshly ch. 5:1-21

1st Epistle of John

THE TRUTH AND THE ECCLESIA

Key Passages: *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ”*
(ch. 1:3).

[1] INTRODUCTION: WHY THE EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN — ch. 1:1-4.

- (a) The Truth Has Been Plainly Revealed vv. 1-2
- (b) Joy Is Fulfilled In Complete Fellowship Therewith ..vv. 3-4

[2] GOD IS LIGHT — ch. 1:5 to 2:29.

- (a) Fellowship Is Predicated Upon Walking In Light vv. 5-7
- (b) Light Reveals Sin And Leads To Confession.....vv. 8-10
- (c) This Emphasises The Need To Imitate Christ.....ch. 2:1-6
- (d) Love Is The Test Of An Enlightened Walk vv. 7-11
- (e) Why Love Should Be Manifested vv. 12-14
- (f) A Love That Must Be Avoided vv. 15-17
- (g) Warning Against The Antichrist Of Darkness vv. 18-23
- (h) An Exhortation To Abide In Truth vv. 24-29

[3] GOD IS LOVE — chs. 3, 4.

- (a) God’s Love Has Drawn Us To Sonship ch. 3:1-3
- (b) Divine Sonship Is Incompatible With Sin vv. 4-9

- (c) True Sonship Is Demonstrated by Action.....vv. 10-15
- (d) Love Defined vv.16-17
- (e) How Love Begets Confidence vv. 18-24
- (f) Love Necessitates The Repudiation Of Error ch. 4:1-6
- (g) True Love Originates Only From God.....vv. 7-10
- (h) Love Should Be Manifested Toward Others vv. 11-16
- (i) Love Will Reap Its Reward At The Judgment vv. 17-21

[4] GOD IS LIFE — ch. 5.

- (a) The New Life Is Begotten Of God ch. 5:1-5
- (b) The New Life Is Revealed Through Christ vv. 6-12
- (c) The New Life Will Be Crowned With Eternal Life vv. 13-15
- (d) The New Life Can Be Strengthened
Through Prayer.....vv. 16-17
- (e) The Confidence Of Proper Living vv. 18-21

2nd Epistle of John

THE TRUTH AND THE HOME

Key Passage: *“This is love, that we walk after his commandments” (v. 6).*

[1] INTRODUCTION — vv.1-4.

- (a) To Whom Written.....vv. 1-2
- (b) Greetings v. 3
- (c) The Faithful Home Applauded v. 4

[2] EXPOSITION — vv. 5-6.

- Love Defined vv. 5-6

[3] EXHORTATION — vv. 7-9.

- (a) Beware of Deceivers vv. 7-8
- (b) Their Evil Influence v. 9

[4] APPLICATION — vv. 10-11.

- False Love.....vv. 10-11

[5] INFORMATION — vv. 12-13.

- (a) Many Things To Explain v. 12
- (b) Final Greetings v. 13

3rd Epistle of John

THE TRUTH AND THE INDIVIDUAL

CONTRARY EXAMPLES SET BY THREE INDIVIDUALS

Key Passage: *"Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God"* (v. 11).

[1] GAIUS: THE SINCERE, DEDICATED, LOVABLE

— vv. 1-8

- (a) Introduction v. 1
- (b) Supplication.....v. 2
- (c) Reputation v. 3
- (d) Consolation v. 4
- (e) Commendation v. 5
- (f) Exhortation.....v. 6
- (g) Explanation v. 7
- (h) Reciprocation v. 8

[2] DIOTREPHES: DOMINEERING, SELF-ASSERTIVE, ARROGANT — vv. 9-11.

- (a) Usurper of Christ's Position v. 9
- (b) Domineering and Arrogant v. 10
- (c) An Example To Avoid v. 11

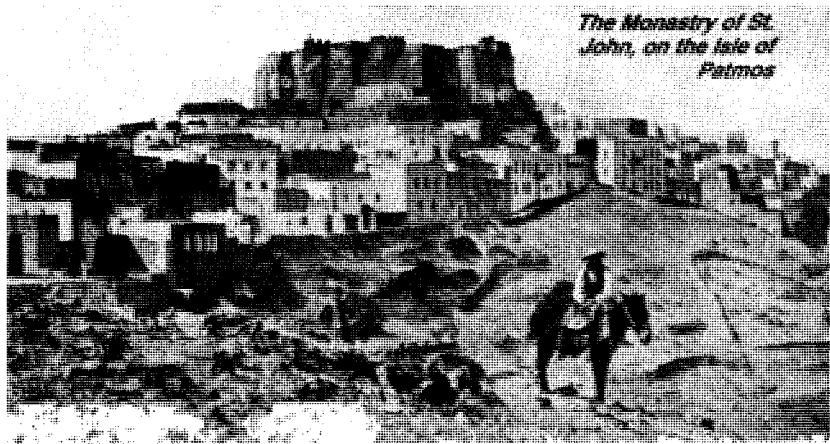
[3] DEMETRIUS: OF GOOD REPUTE — v. 12.

- Apostolic Approval v. 12

[4] LAST WORDS FROM JOHN — vv. 13-14.

- Concluding Greetings vv. 13-14

*The Monastery of St.
John, on the Isle of
Patmos*



Analysis

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

The revelation was received and recorded by John when on the Isle of Patmos, and comprises a series of visions of Jesus Christ, symbolising things to come (Rev. 1:1). It reveals the present work of the Lord now that "all authority" in heaven and earth has been delegated to him (1Pet. 3:22). He is revealed therein as supervising events to their predetermined conclusion. He is shown as "in the midst of the ecclesias" — observing and judging; in national events — observing and judging; in ecclesial developments — observing and judging; and finally, in the consummation of all things: the establishment of his reign on earth, the purging of the world of sin, death and every curse, and the handing over of a perfected world unto Yahweh that He might be "all and in all."

A Link With Genesis

There is a close link between Genesis and Revelation; the first and last books of the Bible. The former records how it all happened; the latter, how it all will end. These two books are like two pylons supporting the bridge of Divine Grace from Creation to Consummation.

Genesis records how the first Paradise was closed (Gen. 3:23); Revelation, how it will be opened (Rev. 21:25); Genesis shows how the curse was imposed (Gen. 3:17); Revelation, how it will be removed (Rev. 22:3); Genesis reveals how access to the Tree of Life was denied (Gen. 3:24); Revelation, how it will be opened (Rev. 2:7); Genesis tells how sorrow and death made their appearance; Revelation, how they will be removed (Rev. 21:4). In Genesis the Serpent speaks and in Revelation it is restrained (Rev. 20); Genesis speaks of a natural creation; Revelation, of a new, divinely-organised creation (Rev. 3:14).

Other parallels will be found. It is claimed that whereas the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew contains 92 quotations from the Old Testament, and the Epistle to the Hebrews about 102; the Book of Revelation has 285. Thus its character is Hebrew and it is rooted in the Old Testament.

It is a book of vivid contrasts. The Virgin Bride versus the drunken Harlot (Rev. 19:6-7; 17:6-7); The Lamb versus the wild Beast (Rev. 13:1; 14:1); Mount Zion versus the City of the Seven Hills (Rev. 14:1; 17:9); the New Jerusalem versus Babylon the Great (Rev. 21:2; 18:2); the Holy City versus Sodom and Egypt (Rev. 11:2, 8); the God of Heaven versus the God of the Earth (Rev. 4; ch. 13).

THE SEVEN BLESSINGS PRONOUNCED IN THE PROPHECY

1. On those who study and apply it — *“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein”* (Rev. 1:3).
2. On those who remain faithful to the end — *“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth, saith the Spirit, Yea, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them”* (Rev. 14:13; mg.).
3. On those who are vigilant — *“Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments”* (Rev. 16:15).
4. On those called to the marriage supper — *“Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb”* (Rev. 19:9).
5. On those who attain to the glory of the future — *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years”* (Rev. 20:6).
6. On those who comprehend and apply the vision — *“Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book”* (Rev. 22:7).
7. On those who obey the commands of the Revelator — *“Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life”* (Rev. 22:14).

A Perfected World

The final picture is of this world of sin, sorrow and death completely transformed and reflecting the glory of Yahweh with no more death, and with sin and sorrow completely eradicated. It proclaims the ultimate purpose of God in the following words: *“There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve him; and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever”* (Rev. 22:3-5).

These are the conditions that shall exist then:

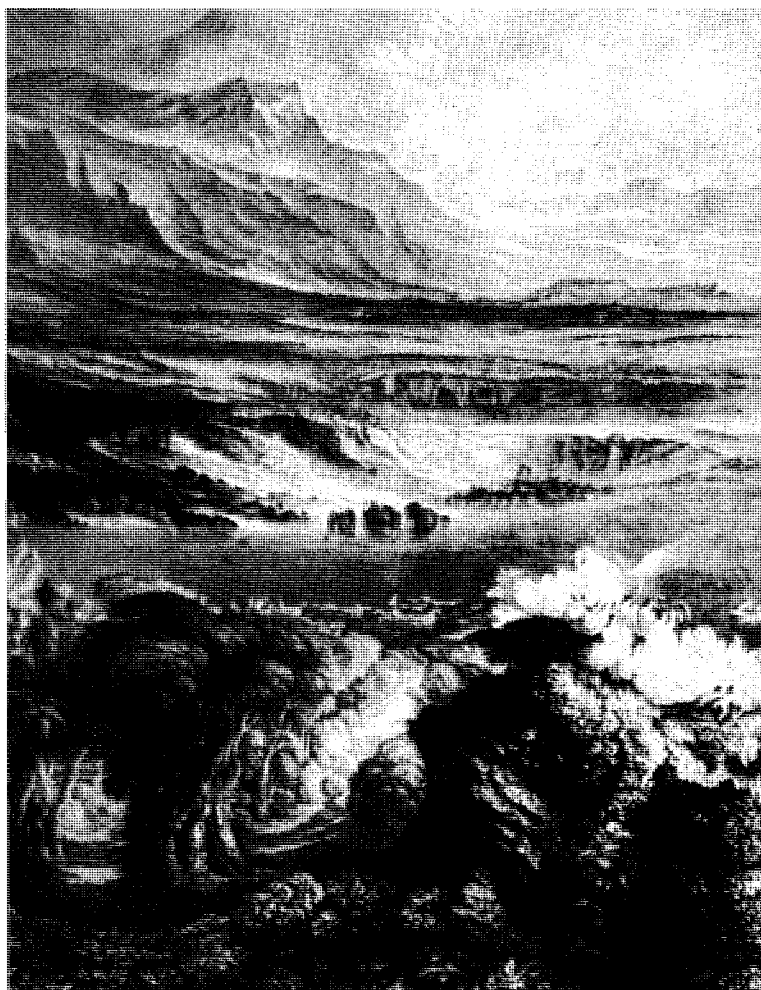
“There shall be no more curse” perfect conditions
“The Throne of God and of the Lamb” perfect government
“His servants shall serve Him” perfect service
“They shall see His face” perfect vision
“His name in their foreheads” perfect intelligence
“The Lord God giveth them light” perfect understanding

"They reign for ever and ever" perfect authority and life

With our minds thus centred upon this glorious prospect of the future, to one day replace the present world of frustration, wickedness and evil, we close our *Story Of The Bible*, adding the heartfelt prayer of John himself:

EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS!

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
be with you all, Amen!**



THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE APOCALYPSE

"BLESSED ARE THEY WHO READ, HEAR AND KEEP THESE WORDS" —Apoc. 1:1-3

No.	Introductory Vision	Chap.	Septiform Unfolding of Things "To Come To Pass"		Chap.
1	Apocalyptic Son of Man	1	Seven Letters: Commendations and Promises to Ecclesias	1 — Ephesus 2 — Smyrna 3 — Pergamos 4 — Thyatira 5 — Sardis 6 — Philadelphia 7 — Laodicea	2 and 3
2	God's Kingdom Established: Throne in Heaven	4 and 5	Seven Seals: Pagan Roman Empire Overthrown	1 — White Horse: World peace, Christianity progresses (96-183) 2 — Red Horse: Bloodshed, Peace taken from the earth (183-211) 3 — Black Horse: Famine devastates the Empire (212-235) 4 — Pale Horse: Widespread violence and death (235-303) 5 — Souls Under Altar: Saints in tribulation (303-311) 6 — Earthquake and Eclipse: Empire "Christianised" (312-324) 7 — Seven Trumpets (ch. 8:1): Preparation for sounding (325-395)	6
3	Sealed of God Gathered before the Throne	7	Seven Trumpets: Summon the Enemies of Rome and divide it in the West and East	1 — Hail and Fire on Earth: Alaric and Goths (395-410) 2 — Burning Mountain in Sea: Genseric and Vandals (429-477) 3 — Falling Star on Rivers and Fountains: Attila and Huns (433-453) 4 — 1/3rd Sun, Moon and Stars Darkened: Gothic Kingdom in Italy 5 — Sun and Air Darkened by Locusts: Mahommed and Saracens (622) 6 — Four Euphratean Angels Loosed: Turkish Empire (1453) 7 — Seven Vials (ch. 11:15, ch. 16)	WEST 8 and 9 EAST
4	Rainbowed Angel Conquers the World	10	Seven Phases of Ecclesiasticism	1 — Measured Temple and Remnant Woman's Seed: Saints 2 — Two Witnesses: Political and Religious Protestantism 3 — Woman: Apostate Church 4 — Dragon: Militant authority of Roman Empire 5 — Beast of Sea: "Christianised" Roman Empire 6 — Beast of Earth: Holy Roman Empire 7 — Image of Beast: The Papacy	11 12 13
5	Lamb on Mount Zion 144 Thousand in Triumph	14 and 15	Seven Vials of Wrath on Western and Eastern Rome	1 — Earth Ulcer: French Revolution (1790) 2 — Sea as Blood of Corpse: Britain dominates the sea (1793) 3 — Rivers and Fountains as Blood: Napoleon's Alpine Campaign (1796) 4 — Men Scorched by Sun's Heat: Napoleon's Alpine Campaign (1805) 5 — Kingdom of Beast Darkened: Napoleon's Italian campaign (1809) 6 — Euphrates Dried Up: Decline of Turkey (World War I); Voice of "frogs" heard — Communism develops (World War II) 7 — Air Filled with Voices, Thunders: Armageddon and its aftermath	16
6	"It is Done"	16:17	Seven Thunders — Christ conquers the world		10, 3, 4
7	Judgment on Babylon leading to perfected world. Introduction 1-6	17	Zion v. Rome	1 — Judgment on Whore 2 — Marriage of Lamb 3 — King as Warrior 4 — "Sin" Imperial, Bound 1000 years 5 — Final Revolt 6 — New Heavens and Earth 7 — Bride as Municipality	17 18 19 20 21 22
FINAL ADMONITION					22:6-21

A Dictionary Of Personalities In The New Testament

DORCAS: THE BEAUTIFUL

Two names are given this believer, who lived at Joppa: Dorcas and Tabitha. But actually they signify the same: the former being the Greek form of the Aramaic (Tabitha), and meaning *Gazelle*. The gazelle is noted for its beauty and grace; and so also was Dorcas. By this we do not mean that she was necessarily beautiful in external appearance, but she was beautiful within. The record states that she was "full of good works and almsdeeds which she did" (Acts 9:36). Thus she manifested in a practical way the Truth she had espoused, and her kindly deeds endeared her to many. She was a woman who was busy with the needle, but not only on her own account: she made coats and garments for the needy.

On her death, Dorcas was missed and mourned. So greatly was she held in esteem by the brethren and sisters of Joppa, that on her death they laid her in an upper chamber and reported the tragedy to Peter. When he arrived at Joppa, he found those who had benefited from the kindness of Dorcas, weeping at her death. But, recalling the action of his Lord (see Luke 8:54), Peter put them out, kneeled down and prayed, and then said: "Tabitha arise!" The miracle was performed, and to the joy of her friends she was restored to them. Knowledge of the miracle was reported throughout Joppa and led to many accepting the Truth. In consequence of this, Peter had to obtain accommodation in Joppa which he did with Simon the tanner. It was there that the messengers of Cornelius found him.

DRUSILLA: THE UNFAITHFUL

Drusilla was a Jewess, the wife of Felix, the Roman governor (Acts 24:24). Her influence probably aroused the interest of Felix in Judaism, his knowledge of which enabled him to comprehend Paul's discourse with greater understanding (v. 22). Her influence in that direction was good, but in other ways it was evil.

She was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I, the persecutor of the ecclesia (Acts 12:1); her two sisters being Marianne and Bernice (Acts 25:23). These three sisters were nieces of Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist, and therefore were brought up in an atmosphere of evil. Drusilla was only about six years old when her father died in AD44. At about the age of 15, she married King Aziz of Emesa on his becoming a Jew. However, she was no advertisement for Judaism, for she proved unfaithful to her husband, whom she left. She then illegitimately married the Roman governor, Felix, who was infatuated with her because of her singular beauty. It is said that he employed a certain

magician, a Jew named Simon, to entice her away from her husband, and to persuade her to marry him.

Drusilla was about 21 when Paul was brought before Felix. She was strikingly beautiful, more so than her jealous sisters, and no love was lost between them. But there was little beauty in her character. She also was jealous, and the most bitter hatred was manifested by Drusilla and Bernice toward each other. Her general influence was not one of good but of evil.

When Paul reasoned with Felix of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," the governor trembled but prevaricated. Why? Evidently there was some influence turning him from the eloquent appeal of Paul in support of the Truth. The influence could have been Drusilla. Certainly, the demands of the Truth cut across the way of life followed by Felix and Drusilla, and she would see in Paul only an enemy of all for which she wanted and lived.

Drusilla was the third wife of Felix, and the second one by the same name. According to Josephus, she perished in the disaster of Pompeii and Herculaneum, when the volcano Vesuvius erupted and buried those cities. Many fled to escape the catastrophe, but Drusilla, endeavoring to do so with her child, Agrippa, was too late to evade the disaster and was buried beneath the lava that overwhelmed the cities.

ELYMAS: THE SORCERER

Elymas means *Magician* or *Sorcerer*. This was really his title. He was a Jewish impostor bearing the name also of Bar-Jesus, which means *Son of Joshua*. The full measure of his apostasy was revealed when he bitterly opposed the teaching of Paul "seeking to turn away the deputy [Sergius Paulus] from the faith" (Acts 13:8). Until Paul came upon the scene he had exercised considerable influence on the proconsul who evidently was searching for Truth; so much so that Bar-Jesus was domiciled with him. The blatant and insulting attack of Elymas aroused the fiery indignation of Paul whose name signifies *Little*, but who proved himself of great stature in the contest. Elymas had evidently traduced or falsely accused Paul, and therefore earned the rebuke: "O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" The judgment of blindness rested upon Elymas who had to seek somebody to lead him by the hand; but the deputy, deeply impressed with the words and actions of Paul, accepted Christ.

EPAENETUS: THE WELL-BELOVED

His name means *Praiseworthy*. He was the first of the house of Stephanas to accept the Truth when Paul preached in Achaia (Rom. 16:5; 1Cor. 16:15). He removed to Rome and joined the ecclesia of that city. In sending greetings to him, Paul described him as "my wellbeloved," a term that implies that the one so described was ready to sacrifice his own inclinations to serve the Truth.

EPAPHRAS: FOUNDER OF THE ECCLESIA IN COLOSSE

Epaphras is a pagan name signifying *Devoted to Aphrodite* (Venus) and thus implying that which is lovely. He visited Paul in Rome to seek his assistance to correct some serious doctrinal faults manifested in the ecclesia in Colosse. Paul had never visited that ecclesia (Col. 2:1), but his reputation was high, and his apostolic authority accepted. Whilst in Rome, however, Epaphras was imprisoned (Philemon 23), and therefore could not return to Colosse. Accordingly, Paul wrote the *Epistle to the Colossians* and despatched it by the hands of Tychicus.

He describes Epaphras as a dear "fellow-servant," a "fellow prisoner," a "faithful minister," which indicates the devoted service that this disciple of the Lord rendered to the ecclesias in Colosse, Laodicea and in Hierapolis (Col. 4:13). Paul refers to his "zeal" for the brethren (ch. 4:13), and the manner in which he "agonised" in prayer on their account (v. 12). Epaphras, therefore, was a disciple who both prayed and performed; he was prayerful and practical; and proved a great help to Paul as well as to the ecclesias in which he personally ministered. He has also proved of help to us, for, but for the imprisonment of Epaphras, we would be denied the instruction contained in the *Epistle to the Colossians*.

EPAPHRODITUS: MESSENGER FOR THE PHILIPPIANS

This is a lengthened form of the name Epaphras, and means the same: *Devoted to Aphrodite*. He acted as messenger of the ecclesia in Philippi in conveying a gift of help to the apostle (Phil. 4:18). The Philippian brethren were warmhearted in their devotion to the Truth and to Paul, and Epaphroditus was a worthy representative of the ecclesia. He is described by Paul as: "my brother, companion in labour, fellowsoldier, and your messenger" (Phil. 2:25). Each of these expressions is eloquent.

My brother: implying a spiritual relationship closer than blood.

Companion in labour: their hearts beat as one in the cause they

both loved. He had toiled diligently in Philippi (v. 26), and was doing so in Rome.

My fellowsoldier: he disciplined himself to the demands of the Truth, and braved the daring and suffering that attacking the enemy involves (2Tim. 3:11-14). He felt for Paul, worked with Paul, shared the difficulties of conflict with Paul.

Your messenger: the word means “angel,” one sent. So he was a worthy representative of the warmhearted Philippians.

Epaphroditus was extremely considerate of others. He fell sick in Rome, and was “nigh unto death,” but his thoughts were ever for his brethren. He knew how concerned they would be when they heard of his illness, and this worried him. Nevertheless, through the mercy of Yahweh, he recovered and conveyed Paul’s epistle back to his home ecclesia. The brethren had sent a gift to the apostle to relieve his needs: and this wonderful epistle was his gift to them in return.

ERASTUS: PAUL’S ASSISTANT

He was a companion of Paul, and was sent by the apostle into Macedonia in company with Timothy (Acts 19:22). He was a high official of the city of Corinth (Rom. 16:23), but he probably gave up this position to follow Paul. Later, toward the end of Paul’s life, he returned to Corinth to live, and probably to minister unto the ecclesia (2Tim. 4:20). His name means *Beloved*.

EUBULUS: OF ROME

His name means *Good Counsellor*. He was a disciple of Rome who was with Paul toward the end of the apostle’s life, and sent greetings to Timothy (2Tim. 4:21).

EUNICE: AN HONOURED MOTHER

Eunice was the mother of Timothy (2Tim. 1:5). Her name means *Blessed With Victory*, and her life reveals her victory in the Truth. She was the daughter of Lois, and accepted the Truth when Paul preached at Lystra (Acts 16:1). The Truth made a great impact upon this Jewess, and influenced her to give her complete devotion unto Yahweh. Prior to that she had been half-hearted in her allegiance. Both Lois and Eunice are Grecian names, and Eunice had married a Greek (Acts 16:1) which suggests that she was not, at that time, particularly constant in her acceptance of the Scriptures, nor the principles of Judaism. Yet she realised, like so many other people, that “religion is good for children.” Though she had been given a Gentile name, and though she had married out of the Truth, she did see that her son Timothy was brought up

to respect God's Word (2Tim. 3:15). And this was reflected in his attitude when he came under the influence of Paul. Her attention to this, and its influence in the subsequent attitude of Timothy, illustrates the value of spiritual education and training in the home.

In spite of her marriage out of the Faith, and her Greek name, Eunice had a mind that responded to spiritual influences (see 2Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15).

EUODIAS: THE CONTENTIOUS

This sister's name is given in the A.V. as Euodias, but in the R.V. as Euodia. Euodias is masculine; but Euodia is feminine, meaning *Fragrance*. Reference to her is found in Philippians 4:2 where Paul urges Euodias and Syntyche to cease their contention and learn to work together. The R.V. alters the words of v. 3 to indicate that both of them worked willingly for him, but could not see eye to eye with each other! This is a human failing, and unfortunately represented a trend in the ecclesia in Philippi which warmly and enthusiastically co-operated with Paul but had a need to develop unity among its members (Phil. 2:2). It has been suggested, that because of the strife between Euodias and Syntyche, these two sisters' names should be pronounced *Odious* and *Soon-touchy*! Such personal details as the relationship between these two sisters are recorded in the Inspired record as an exhortation to unity on the behalf of all others who may be devoted workers, but are at variance with others who are equally devoted.

EUTYCHUS: THE SLEEPY

Paul spoke for many hours to the ecclesia at Troas. It was night-time, and the building in which the meeting was held was crowded. Lights were burning, and they, too, drained the room of oxygen. Eutychus, whose name means *Happy* or *Fortunate*, had taken his place at the window where he could get whatever fresh air was available. But he fell asleep during the long discourse of Paul — as many have done since during long discourses — and falling from the window in the upper room, broke his neck and was taken up as dead. The tragedy dampened the joy of Paul's presence, but through the power of God, life was restored to Eutychus, and when Paul left early next day, he came to bid him farewell. He had experienced the good fortune of coming under the influence of the Truth and the apostle Paul.

FELIX: THE MOST EXCELLENT GOVERNOR

This was the official title of Felix which Claudius Lysias used when he wrote to him concerning Paul (Acts 23:26). Paul

presented his defence before Felix. The governor was forced to recognise that the Jews had no legitimate case to present against the apostle, but nevertheless either in order to please the Jewish leaders refused to let him go; or to secure a bribe from the apostle (Acts 24:25). He failed to receive either.

Felix means *Happy*. He was originally a slave who was liberated by Claudius Caesar for some unknown service, and was subsequently appointed as procurator of Judea on the banishment of Ventidius Cumanus, about AD53. Suetonius refers to the military honours conferred on him, and states that he was the husband of three queens or royal ladies, including Drusilla. He was noted for extreme ruthlessness and cruelty. Tacitus declares that during his governorship of Judea, he indulged in all kinds of cruelty and lust, exercising regal power with the disposition of a slave, and considered himself as licensed to commit any crime. Having a grudge against Jonathan the high priest, who had expostulated with him on his misrule, he made use of Doras, an intimate friend of Jonathan, in order to get him assassinated by a gang of villains who joined the crowds that were going up to the temple worship, a crime which led to countless evils by the encouragement which it gave to the Sicarii, the leagued assassins of the day. It is to their excesses that Josephus ascribes, under Providence, the overthrow of the Jewish State.

Whilst in office, Felix became enamoured of Drusilla, a daughter of King Herod, who was married to Aziz, King of Emesa, and through the influence of Simon, the magician, prevailed upon her to consent to a union with him. Felix was seated with this adulteress when Paul reasoned with him of "righteousness, temperance and judgment to come" (Acts 24:25), and from a knowledge of the characters of the two before the apostle, we gain some idea of the courage and forthright determination of Paul.

During Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea, disturbances took place in the streets of the city, Felix was recalled to Rome, and the Jews made ready to present their accusations against him. He thus left Paul bound "to show the Jews a pleasure" (Acts 24:27). But the Jews pressed their charges, and in Rome he was saved only by the influence of his brother Pallas.

FESTUS: THE GOVERNOR

Porcius Festus was appointed proconsul in the Autumn of AD60, and died two years later. He was a far worthier, and more honourable ruler than Felix, and had he lived longer, he may have been able to correct some of the evils then dominating Jewish

politics. He inherited the government of a country in which anarchy triumphed, and internal quarrels were conducted in the most violent spirit of revenge. Conditions erupted in the Jewish-Roman war, and the consequent destruction of the Jewish State and the city of Jerusalem in AD70.

When Paul was first brought before Festus to defend his faith, the governor asked him whether he would consent to return to Jerusalem for the conduct of the trial. Paul refused to do so, recognising that he would not receive justice in that city, but rather an attempt would be made to destroy him. He demanded that he stand at Caesar's judgment seat where, as a Roman citizen, he would be judged. Festus, not knowing much about Jewish matters, brought the question of Paul's imprisonment before Agrippa, who was conversant with many aspects of the Jewish religion. It perplexed Festus why Paul, a Jew, with the utmost reverence for the Law and the worship of the temple, should be so hated by his compatriots.

In company with Agrippa and Bernice, Festus hearkened to the defence of Paul. He could not understand the attitude of the apostle, who was prepared to sacrifice everything for the things in which he believed. It seemed to him foolish that a man should give away so much of this world to give allegiance to a criminal who had been crucified, and of whom it was alleged, he had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven. Therefore, in the midst of the trial, Festus interjected, and with a loud voice declared: "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." With characteristic calmness, Paul replied: "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth words of truth and of soberness."

Thus Festus has come down to us as the man who called Paul mad! The interjection did not unduly concern Paul. He had already taught the Corinthians that a true disciple is considered a fool by the world of culture in which he lives (1Cor. 3:18; 4:10; 2Cor. 11:23). We, today, live in a similar environment and are considered mad by a world that does not understand why self-interest should be sacrificed to serve a risen Christ. The world considers it the height of stupidity, but the future will reveal it is the way of wisdom.

FORTUNATUS: THE INQUIRER

His name means *Fortunate*. He was one of a company of messengers sent by the ecclesia in Corinth to the apostle Paul with certain questions of doctrine which formed the basis of the first epistle to the Corinthians. He is referred to in 1Cor. 16:17.

GAIUS: THE GLAD

Gaius was a very common Roman name and signifies to be *Glad*. It is the name given to several men in the New Testament, as follows:

[1] A companion of Paul, and native of Macedonia, who was seized in the riot at Ephesus (Acts 19:29).

[2] Gaius of Derbe (Acts 20:4). He, likewise, was a companion of Paul, and was possibly the disciple who was converted and baptised by Paul whilst he was in Corinth (1Cor. 1:14). This Gaius was a most liberal minded man who acted as Paul's host whilst he remained in the city of Corinth (Rom. 16:23). His liberality did not only extend to the apostle Paul, but to the whole ecclesia, which would imply that he was a man who was comfortably off in this world's goods, but was prepared to share them with his brethren in the Faith.

[3] The disciple to whom John wrote his third epistle. John had a deep affection for this disciple, whom he described as "the beloved" on four occasions. This is an index to his character. He evidently was one who was noted for his manifestation of the divine love. It seems as though John had converted Gaius (3John 4). Certainly he shows great confidence in him, praying for his material, physical and spiritual prosperity (3John 2 and 3). The apostle also commended him for his faithful care of visiting brethren, who ministered to the care of the ecclesia (3John 5-8). In this Gaius, therefore, we have one who has given an example which we can do well to emulate.

GALLIO: THE TOLERANT

Gallio had recently been appointed proconsul of Achaia when the Jews dragged Paul before him and proceeded to falsely accuse him. An inscription, found at Delphi, indicates that he commenced his appointment in the summer of AD51. He was the elder brother of Seneca, who describes him as a man of ability, and of a most amiable temper and disposition. When the Jews "made insurrection," and dragged Paul before him shouting out accusations concerning the law, Gallio refused to hear the evidence and ignominiously dismissed them. He was not going to become involved in questions of religion, but was determined to limit the exercise of his authority to matters of Roman law and public morals. He was tolerant of other matters. When the Greeks saw the way he dismissed the Jews, they took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat; but Gallio ignored that as well, doubtless linking it with the attack on Paul. The tolerance of Gallio permitted the claims of the Truth to be

pressed without concern, and Paul remained in Corinth a "good while" for that purpose (Acts 18:18).

GAMALIEL: THE WISE

Gamaliel was the grandson of the great Hillel, a celebrated rabbi who was and still is held in high repute by the Jews. His name means *The Reward of El [God]*. Gamaliel was also a celebrated teacher of the Law in his own right. His learning was so eminent, and his character so revered, that he was one of seven only who have been, among Jewish doctors, honoured with the title of Rabban. He was called the "*Beauty of the Law*," and it was a saying of the Talmud that "since Rabban Gamaliel died, the glory of the Law has ceased." Though a Pharisee, he was not trammelled by the narrow bigotry of the sect, but rose above the prejudices of his party. Candour and wisdom were revealed by him (Acts 5:34-39; 22:3). He was a dispassionate judge and reasoned upon the case of the apostles with a blend of worldly wisdom and experience that procured their dismissal with a beating. He was a celebrated teacher under whom Paul received his instruction in the Law. Gamaliel's wise council with regard to the apostles can well be followed by us all. He summarised the matter as follows: "If it be of God you cannot overthrow it; lest haply you be found even to fight against God."

This sample of Gamaliel's wisdom is as applicable today as then. Let us be perfectly certain that in our contentions we do not find ourselves fighting against God.

HERMES: THE LIBERATOR

Hermes was a believer resident in Rome, to whom Paul sent greetings (Rom. 16:14). His name is identical with that of Hermes the Greek god corresponding with Mercury the Messenger (see Acts 14:12). It is said that this was a name frequently given to slaves in Rome, from which circumstance it is considered he was a slave. If so, he had been liberated in Christ Jesus.

HERMOGENES: THE DESERTER

His name means *Born of Hermes*. He was a believer of Asia, who was in Rome at the time Paul was on trial, but deserted the apostle in his moment of need (2Tim. 1:15). It must have been heartbreaking to Paul to find his friends and companions in the Truth turning from him under such circumstances.

HERODION: PAUL'S KINSMAN

Herodion means *Hero*. Reference to this disciple is made in

Rom. 16:11 where Paul sends him greetings. He describes him as his kinsman, by which, possibly, he meant that he was a Jew, and probably of Paul's own tribe of Benjamin.

HYMENAÆUS: THE HERETIC

His name means *Pertaining to the God of Marriage*. He was a believer who had embraced the dangerous heresy against which the apostle had to act. Hymenæus, together with Alexander, was disfellowshipped by Paul, delivered unto Satan (the world) that they might learn not to blaspheme (1Tim. 1:20). Later, on the eve of his death, Paul warned against this heretic, pointing out that his teaching would increase ungodliness and destroy the body of Christ as gangrene does a physical body (2Tim. 2:17). Paul was a man who gave his life in self-sacrificing devotion to the Truth, and he was not prepared to see it undermined by such as Hymenæus. He vigorously opposed him for the benefit of others, and in that regard his attitude is an example as to what should be done under similar circumstances.

JASON: THE KIND

Jason was a disciple who was with Paul in Corinth when the apostle wrote to the ecclesia in Rome (Rom. 16:21). He is described by the apostle as his "kinsman," by which he meant, doubtless, a fellow Jew; perhaps of the tribe of Benjamin. He was a resident in Thessalonica, and provided lodging for Paul and Silas when they visited that city. Jason was dragged by his unbelieving fellow-Jews, and their abettors, before the authorities because of the hospitality he was showing to his visitors who were objected to by the citizens. As Paul was a Roman citizen, the authorities could not move against him, but they could against Jason. He was only permitted his liberty by paying bail, and by Paul agreeing to leave the city (Acts 17:5-9). Paul tried several times to get the ban removed without avail (1Thes. 2:18). Jason's name means *Healing*.

JUDE: THE CONTENDER

His name means *Praise*. He wrote the epistle that bears his name, and reference to him will be found in our epitome of that epistle (see page 487).

JULIA: OF ROME

Paul sent greetings to this sister in Rome (Rom. 16:15), and from the fact that her name is coupled with that of Philologus, it is assumed that she was his wife. Her name signifies *Curly-hair*. Perhaps Nereus, his sister, and Olympas were members of the family of Philologus and Julia (see Rom. 16:15).

JULIUS: THE COURTEOUS

Julius was a centurion of Augustus' band, one of the Imperial cohorts stationed at Caesarea employed on special service relating to the emperor. Paul was placed in his charge and conducted by him to Rome. Perhaps he had been impressed by the words and bearing of the apostle in Caesarea, for Julius treated him with the greatest consideration and courtesy, providing him with privileges that lightened the load that Paul carried, and on one occasion, saving the apostle's life (Acts 27:43). He was greatly impressed with the conduct of Paul in the face of danger, with the miracles he performed, and with the reception that he received from the brethren (Acts 28:14-15). Perhaps he embraced the Truth, for, later, Paul was able to write that some, even of Caesar's household, had accepted it (Phil. 1:3; 4:22).

JUNIA: FELLOW-PRISONER OF NOTE

Paul identifies this disciple as a believing Jew ("my kinsman") who had suffered imprisonment for his testimony. He was of note among the apostles, and had embraced Christ before Paul had done so. Since then he had transferred to Rome, and Paul sent greetings to him (Rom. 16:7).

JUSTUS: THE RIGHTEOUS

Justus signifies *Righteous*.

[1] This was the surname of Barsabas, the disciple who was the unsuccessful candidate for apostleship (Acts 1:23).

[2] It was also the name of a godly man of Corinth, whose house was next to the synagogue, and who was evidently a proselyte of the gate like Cornelius, but who accepted Christ. He provided accommodation for Paul during some of the time he was in Corinth (Acts 18:7).

[3] It was also the surname of a Jewish believer called Jesus, who laboured with the apostle, and who sent greetings to the ecclesia in Colosse (Col. 4:11).

LOIS: A GOOD GRANDMOTHER

Lois was the mother of Eunice. She instructed her beloved daughter, and her grandson, Timothy, in the Old Testament Scriptures. The family lived at Lystra, and it is possible that Paul, during his visit there, converted them to the Faith (Acts 14:6-7; 16:1). He wrote of the characteristic "unfeigned faith" that dwelt in all three. Lois signifies *Good*, and certainly her influence was in that direction.

LYDIA: DILIGENT IN BUSINESS

She was the first convert in Europe (Acts 16), and diligent in her application of the Truth. See pages 209-210, for a character sketch.

LINUS: THE LEADER

Linus means *Flaxen-haired*. He was a disciple in Rome during the period of Paul's second imprisonment, and he joined with the apostle in sending greetings to Timothy (2Tim. 4:21). According to tradition he became the leader of the ecclesia in Rome.

LUCIUS: THE LIGHTBEARER

Lucius means *Illuminative*. He was a Jewish believer from Cyrene, who became prominent in the ecclesia in Antioch (Acts 13:1). Later he transferred to Rome, and Paul sent greetings to him (Rom. 16:21).

LYSIAS: THE CHIEF CAPTAIN

Lysias was projected prominently into the records of history when, as chief captain of the Roman garrison at Jerusalem, he rescued Paul from the hostile mob of Jews (Acts 23:26-27). He gave Paul the liberty to speak from the Tower of Antonia, but as the apostle spoke in the Hebrew tongue (Acts 21:40), Lysias could not understand what he was saying. But he saw the people suddenly vent their rage, and commanded that Paul be bound and scourged. This order was reversed, however, when he knew that Paul was a Roman citizen. He interrogated the apostle, claiming that he, too, had received such a privilege by the payment of a great sum of money. Paul retorted: "But I was free born!" Lysias seemed to have been impressed by his strange prisoner, and was very fair to Paul. When writing to Felix about his case, however, he slightly departed from the truth in order to display his zeal and care for a Roman citizen; he claimed that he rescued Paul "having understood that he was a Roman" (Acts 23:27).

MANAEN: HEROD'S ASSOCIATE

His name means *Consoler*. According to the A.V. margin, he was Herod's foster-brother; or, following the text in Acts 13:1, his associate. He accepted Christ and became prominent in the ecclesia in Antioch. The conversion of Manaen indicates that those of all classes of society were drawn to the Truth.

MARK: THE TRAITOR WHO MADE GOOD

Because of the way in which Mark overcame his very natural

shortcomings, he is one of the most encouraging characters of the New Testament. The manner in which he vindicated himself, in spite of the refusal of Paul to tolerate his presence on the second missionary journey, provides an incentive of courage and faith for all who fail in a similar manner as he did on that occasion.

Mark is not directly mentioned in the Gospel narrative, but there is very strong evidence to suggest that the nameless "young man" of Mark 14:51, who followed Jesus when he was led away to the high priest, but who fled 'naked' when the soldiers tried to apprehend him, was Mark. Most likely, the memorial supper was held in the upper room of the house of Mark's mother, which was in Jerusalem and was a meeting-centre for the disciples after the resurrection of the Lord (Acts 12:12). It could have been that when Judas led the band of soldiers to the house, their noisy entrance awakened Mark, who, roused from sleep, hastily followed them as they left to seek Jesus. In his haste he did not stop to dress properly, but merely cast a linen cloth about him.

After the resurrection, the home of Mark's mother became a centre where believers gathered, and the first time Mark is directly mentioned by name is in connection with a remarkable prayer meeting that had been convened in view of Peter's imprisonment. This was held in "the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark" (Acts 12:12).

Mark was his Roman name, whilst John was his Hebrew name. The first signifies *A Large Hammer*; the second, *The Grace of Yah*. Barnabas, the early associate of Paul, was cousin to Mark (Col. 4:10 — R.V.), and in him Mark had a staunch and gifted friend and counsellor (Acts 11:24).

Mark's conversion was through the instrumentality of Peter, for the apostle speaks of him as "Marcus my son" (1Pet. 5:13). He was evidently associated with Peter in the work of the Truth, and this fact shows that the young disciple (as he was when we first meet him) rendered valuable public service to three outstanding men: Paul, Peter and Barnabas.

Mark became an attendant of Paul and Barnabas when they set out on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5), and these two great men, so diverse in character, so united in their desire to serve, must have exercised a formative influence upon the young disciple. But Mark soon lost the taste for travel, and became homesick. Perhaps he heard of the persecution of believers in Jerusalem and feared for his mother. Or else he became overawed and frightened by the driving enthusiasm and determination of Paul, and felt that he could not stand up to the strain imposed upon him. Whatever it was, Mark was guilty of vacillating and turned

back (Acts 13:13).

Paul had no time for weaklings in the service of Christ. Therefore, when a further tour was proposed, he refused the plea of Barnabas that Mark should be included (Acts 15:38). So sharp was the contention that the two friends separated, each to go his own way, and never to associate together as they had done previously.

Under the guidance of Barnabas, however, Mark won his way back into the apostle's esteem, to ultimately become a valued colleague of Paul (Col. 4:10-11; Philemon 24). Among the final words recorded by the apostle in Scripture is an unstinting testimony of praise with regard to Mark's help in the preaching of the Gospel (2Tim. 4:11).

As the ministry of Mark was peculiarly a Gentile one, he is recognised by his Gentile name. Writing specifically for Romans who stood for power, Mark presented, in his Gospel, the life of Christ from the viewpoint of service. It is suggested that he was greatly influenced by Peter in writing this record.

The character of Mark shows the value of a godly mother, of godly associations, and of godly faith and courage. Even though he did wrong in leaving Paul and Barnabas at a time of crisis in the journey, the influences that moulded his character, moved him to rehabilitate himself, and so to vindicate himself in the eyes of Paul. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

We do not read of Mark expounding the Word, or performing a miracle, but always as ministering to others. In this he beckons all young believers to give themselves to humble, dedicated service, realising that such will receive their reward.

MARY: MOTHER OF MARK

Like her son, Mary (whose name means *Bitter*) gave herself to the service of others. Her home was used as a gathering place for believers in Jerusalem (Acts 12:1-19), and was probably the place of the memorial supper, and of the gathering of the apostles (Acts 1). She was probably the aunt of Barnabas, Paul's companion (Col. 4:10), so that Barnabas was naturally drawn to Mark.

It was to Mary's house that Peter made his way after his dramatic angelic release from prison. The disciples were praying for his release, but refused to believe Rhoda when she claimed that Peter was even then at the door.

It is obvious from the narrative, that Mary was devoted to Mark, and he had a deep love for his mother. Yet she was prepared to let him go to serve the Truth, and he was ready to spend and be

spent in its service. As a mother she knew what was best for her son; and as a son he gave her pleasure by the way he rendered service to Christ.

MARY: A SISTER IN ROME

In writing to the ecclesia at Rome, Paul declared: "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour upon us" (Rom. 16:6). We are not told how she did this, but it is recorded in the Inspired Book of Life. Evidently she had only recently transferred to Rome, so that Paul's words of commendation would indicate to the brethren of that city that she was a willing and competent worker in the Truth.

MATTHIAS: THE SELECTED

He was one of two men put up to fill the vacancy caused by the apostasy and death of Judas. Joseph, the other brother nominated, seemingly had greater qualifications inasmuch as his name is given in full, but the divine lot fell on Matthias, whose name means *The Gift Of Yahweh*, and who thus took his position among the other apostles.

MNASON: THE ELDERLY

Mnason (sig. *Reminding*) is described as "an old disciple" (Acts 21:16). He was originally of Cyprus, the birthplace of Barnabas, but eventually made his way to Jerusalem. He was a disciple of long standing, and Paul dwelt with him whilst in Jerusalem before his journey to Rome. The record says: "Certain of the disciples of Caesarea brought with them one Mnason," but the Diaglott renders this: "conducting us to one Mnason." The hoary head of this elderly disciple was respected by the brethren, and he had the great privilege of providing shelter for the apostle.

NEREUS: OF ROME

Paul sent greetings to Nereus and his sister (Rom. 16:15). Their association with Philologus and Julia suggests that they were children of the latter. Nereus is the name of the sea god, indicating that the family were pagans until converted to Christ.

NICANOR: ONE OF THE SEVEN

His name means *Conqueror*. With his companions he was of good report, spirited, wise and faithful, and in consequence became one of the seven disciples chosen by the Jerusalem Ecclesia to minister for the Hellenist-Jewish widows who had accepted the Truth (Acts 6:5).

NICOLAS: OF ANTIOCH

Nicolas, whose name signifies *Conqueror Of The People*, was a proselyte of Antioch who embraced Christ. He was selected among the seven chosen by the ecclesia at Jerusalem to attend to the needs of Greek-speaking widows and the poor (Acts 6:5).

NIGER: THE TEACHER

The Latin name of Simeon, who was one of the “prophets and teachers” in the ecclesia at Antioch (Acts 13:1). Simeon (*Hearing*) was his Jewish name, and Niger (*Black*) his Gentile name.

NYMPHAS: OF LAODICEA

Paul directed loving greetings to this disciple of Laodicea. He was an influential person in the ecclesia, whose house was used as a meeting place (Col. 4:15). His name signifies *Devoted To The Muses* (the goddess of art and culture).

OLYMPAS: OF ROME

He appears to have been the brother of Nereus and younger son of Philologus and Julia. Paul sent greetings to him (Rom. 16:15).

ONESIMUS: THE RUNAWAY SLAVE

Onesimus was the slave of Philemon. His name means *Profitable*, but he proved far from profitable to Philemon, for he absconded, taking with him some of his master’s valuables. He made his way to Rome, where he met up with the apostle Paul, was converted to Christ, and proved most profitable to the apostle. Learning of his past history, Paul sent him back to make restitution to Philemon together with the epistle bearing that name. The character and conversion of Onesimus is set forth on pp. 431-434 of this volume of *The Story Of The Bible*.

ONESIPHORUS: THE COURAGEOUS

His name means *Profit-bearer* and he proved to be a friend indeed to Paul during the last months of the apostle’s life. From the description Paul gives of this man, he must have been a lovely character. Onesiphorus visited Rome when Paul was imprisoned. At that time it was dangerous to be identified with the apostle, or with the Truth. But, undeterred, Onesiphorus sought out Paul, only to be himself imprisoned and executed. This is implied by Paul’s urging to Timothy to see that the “house of Onesiphorus” (2Tim. 1:16; 4:19) was adequately cared for. The character of Onesiphorus was one which we can emulate. He was *kind* and *cheerful*, for Paul reported that “he oft refreshed me;” he was *courageous*, for “he

was not ashamed of my chain;" he was *determined*, for "he sought and found me;" he was *faithful*, for his house was in the Truth; he was *generous*, for "in many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus" (2Tim. 1:16-18). The cheerful presence of the faithful and courageous Onesiphorus must have been stimulating and elevating to Paul languishing in prison in Rome; particularly as the news of defections were being brought to the apostle. Both men were martyred for the Faith, but both will rise to glorious immortal life. What a pleasant occasion that will be when Paul and his cheerful, courageous, kind, determined, faithful and generous friend meet again at the feet of the Lord Jesus, who provided the inspiration for them both.

PARMENAS: ONE OF THE SEVEN

His name means *Faithful*. He was one of the seven disciples elected to care for the poor of the early Jerusalem Ecclesia (Acts 6:5). See note on Nicanor.

PAUL: INSPIRATION OF MANY

We first meet Paul as "Saul the persecutor;" we bid a temporary farewell to him as "Paul the persecuted." Saul means *Appointed*; Paul means *Little*. As the apostle to the Gentiles, he preferred the Gentile name of Paul rather than the Hebrew name of Saul, perhaps because he felt himself unworthy of being called Saul (*Appointed*) for he accounted himself as being as "the least of the apostles, and not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the ecclesia of God" (1Cor. 15:9). Thus for all his vigorous proclamation of the Truth, his forthright opposition of heretics, and his complete dedication to Christ, he was a man humbled by an appreciation of the great privileges bestowed upon him. It is impossible to provide a character sketch of his life in the short space of a few lines, and we draw attention to the brief summary contained on pp. 410-411 of this volume.

PAULUS: THE DEPUTY

Paulus, signifying *Little*, was the surname of Sergius, the Roman deputy at Paphos, who accepted Christ following the preaching of Saul. From thenceforth, Saul became known as Paul. Paulus was a prudent man who thoughtfully weighed the evidence before him (Acts 13:7). He was searching for Truth and had come under the influence of Elymas (*Wise*) the sorcerer, but called for Paul and Barnabas that he might hear them also. The arrogant Elymas represented the scientific thought of the age; whilst Saul presented the wisdom of God. The stubbornness of Elymas to

acknowledge the Truth was punished by him being blinded for a season, so that he had to seek somebody to lead him by the hand. Perhaps Paul saw in his state a reflection of his own condition on the way to Damascus, and preferred to be identified with Paulus the Roman Deputy, who accepted the Truth. Be that as it may, from this time onwards, Saul preferred to be known as Paul. Paulus Sergius was not only a man of discernment, but also of humility; as he sought the aid of others in his search for God.

PERSIS: WHO LABOURED MUCH

Persis was a sister in the ecclesia at Rome. Paul saluted her as one who "laboured much in the Lord" (Rom. 16:12). The apostle describes her as "the beloved," a word in the Greek that speaks of a divine, sacrificial love. Persis signifies Persian, but it is said that this, in turn, signifies *One who takes by Storm*. Her enthusiastic devotion to her duty, her continued labour in the Truth, perhaps took others by storm, with the result that they themselves, rendered better service to Christ.

PHEBE: PAUL'S HELPER

Phebe, a sister of the ecclesia at Cenchrea, was well-known for her labours in the Truth (Rom. 16:1). Her name signifies *Bright, Pure*, being the feminine form of Phoebus, otherwise Apollo, the sun god. Phebe, therefore, was a convert from paganism.

She was probably a widow, or unmarried, who possessed considerable wealth, for if she had a husband, or was destitute, she could not have acted in the independent manner such as is suggested in Paul's reference to her. Travelling to Rome, she was entrusted with the epistle Paul wrote to that ecclesia, in which he commends her to their care. In Rom. 16, Paul mentions quite a number of sisters by name, and commends them for their work in the Truth; surely an encouragement to sisters in every age. Phebe is mentioned as "a sister," "a saint," "a servant," "a succourer" of many as well as of the apostle. Every one of these words conjure up aspects of the character of this godly woman. As a servant (Gr. deaconess) of the ecclesia she doubtless taught the younger sisters their responsibilities in the Truth as Paul advocates such sisters do (see 1Tim. 5:9-15).

PHILEMON: THE SLAVE OWNER

Philemon was a wealthy disciple of Colosse, of high standing in the local ecclesia. His name means *Friendly or Affectionate*, and these were features of his warm and loving nature. Paul makes mention of the prayers, love, generosity and hospitality of

Philemon in his epistle to him (Philemon 1, 5, 7, 21, 22).

Philemon had been converted by Paul (v. 19) though the apostle had never visited Colosse (Col. 2:1). Once converted, Philemon gave himself completely to the work of the Truth, so that he is addressed by the apostle as "our dearly beloved fellow-labourer" (v. 1). He had probably been converted at Ephesus (about 120 miles [193 kms] to the west of Colosse) when visiting that city during Paul's sojourn there.

Philemon was a slave-owner, and among those on his estate was a slave called, Onesimus. This slave absconded from Philemon, robbing him of some valuables (v. 18). He made his way to Rome, doubtless hoping to lose himself in the midst of the busy metropolis, but there he came under the influence of the apostle and the Truth and was baptised. Now he gave himself to assisting Paul, so that he lived up to the meaning of his name: *Profitable*. But learning of his past record, and knowing Philemon personally, Paul instructed Onesimus that he must submit to his master (Col. 3:22).

He was sent back with Tychicus bearing the epistle that Paul wrote to Philemon. This letter reveals the delicacy of Paul's feelings and the graciousness of his relations with his friends. He does not demand or command as his position could warrant him doing, but appeals as a shepherd, drawing out the love of Philemon and the devotion of Onesimus by so doing. He knew the characters of the brethren before him, and tactfully, and with confidence, brought out their finest qualities. He would have retained the services of Onesimus, but does not presume on the good nature of his friend (Philemon, vv. 13-14). Onesimus must seek forgiveness; Philemon must willingly extend it; and Paul made it possible for both to do so and become reconciled in Christ.

The drama surrounding Philemon and Onesimus provides a wonderful exhortation demonstrating the need to exercise faith, love, tact and obedience. In Philemon we learn that it is not enough to have the right, we must exercise love; in Paul we learn it is not sufficient to have authority, we must show tact; in Onesimus we learn that we must not presume on relationships in Christ, but must face up to our obligations.

Apphia (v. 2) was probably the wife of Philemon, whilst Archippus was probably his son.

PHILETUS: THE HERETIC

He taught a dangerous heresy; namely, that the resurrection was past; and this endangered the faith of others (2Tim. 2:17). Paul warned that this teaching would destroy the Body of Christ as

gangrene eats into a physical body, and he urged the brethren to shun such. Yet his name signifies *Worthy Of Love*. How often has a heretic been excused on the grounds that he does much good and is worthy of love! Paul's words reveal the only wise action when faced with such as Philetus.

PHILIP: THE EVANGELIST

Philip's name means *Warrior* from *Lover of Horses*, and he proved to be a skilful soldier for Christ. He was one of the seven appointed to look after those who had been previously neglected in the Jerusalem Ecclesia, and therefore was a man of good report, of spirit and wisdom, and capable in administration. He was also a worker, and throughout the narrative in the *Acts Of The Apostles* the influence of Philip is frequently revealed.

After the death of Stephen, and the persecution initiated by Saul, Philip moved into Samaria and completed the work initiated by the Lord when he visited that district (John 4; Acts 8:25). Philip preached with such skill that many were baptised.

He then was sent to the Ethiopian who was returning from worship in Jerusalem, and preached the Word to him so effectively as to move him to demand baptism (Acts 8:26-39). Then, on his return journey to his home-town of Caesarea (Acts 21:8), Philip, with characteristic energy, preached from city to city (Acts 8:40).

Philip was a married man with four daughters, who had the gift of prophesying, or preaching, so that Gospel proclamation was a family characteristic. His home was permeated with the influence of the Word, and Paul enjoyed staying there when visiting Caesarea (Acts 21:8). Doubtless he found much encouragement from Philip during his two years' imprisonment in that city.

Philip had talents, and willingly used them in the service of Christ, providing an example of energetic activity on the behalf of others. Many will reach the Kingdom through the efforts of Philip.

PHILOLOGUS: THE FAITHFUL

His name means *A Lover Of Words*, and in saluting him, Paul joined the names of "Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them" (Rom. 16:15). It could be, therefore, that Julia was the wife of Philologus, and the others mentioned were their children. They were disciples of Rome, a one-time pagan household that had embraced the Truth. One likes to think of Philologus living up to his name and enthusiastically expounding the Truth in the family circle to the pleasure and profit of the family.

PHLEGON: THE ZEALOUS

A disciple in Rome to whom Paul sent loving greetings. His name means *Burning*, a synonym for zeal. He co-operated in the work of the Truth with a number of other brethren who were like-minded (Rom. 16:14).

PHYGELLUS: THE FUGITIVE

It is amazing how, in so many cases, the names of Bible characters fit their circumstances. Phygellus means *A Fugitive*, and he fled from Paul when persecution was levelled against the apostle. Originally from Asia he had evidently visited Rome, and with Hermogenes, was instrumental in causing others of Asia, then in the metropolis, to desert Paul in time of need. He is referred to in 2Tim. 1:15.

PROCHORUS: ONE OF THE SEVEN

Prochorus was one of the seven selected to look after the poor widows as recorded in Acts 6. His name means *Leader of Singers*. As with the others, he was of good report, full of spirit and wisdom, and able to administer the funds of the ecclesia. See Nicanor.

PUBLIUS: THE COURTEOUS OFFICIAL OF MALTA

Publius (whose name means *Common*) was chief man of the island of Melita (Malta). When Paul was shipwrecked there, he courteously received those so afflicted, including Paul and Luke, and gave them every care. He did not lose by so doing. His father was grievously sick, and through the ministrations of Paul, he was healed.

Others, learning of the miracle, also brought their sick, and many cures were effected. The result was that many accepted the Gospel message, in hope of being cured of the grim disease of mortality. The experience of Publius (Acts 28:7-8) shows that kindness always pays, and particularly toward the servants of the Lord.

PUDENS: THE MODEST

Pudens was a disciple living in Rome, who was with Paul at a time when many others had deserted him (2Tim. 4:21). He joined the apostle in sending greetings to Timothy. His name means *Modest*.

QUARTUS: A BROTHER

This is how this disciple is referred to by Paul (Rom. 16:23). He was with the apostle in Corinth when he wrote the *Epistle to the Romans*, and joined his greetings with those of Paul. Quartus means *Fourth*, and he was evidently "the brother" (see R.V.) of Erastus the treasurer of the city. The New Testament makes reference to Secundus (second), Tertius (third), and Quartus (fourth). As Quartus is here said to be the brother of Erastus, the latter may have been the firstborn, and the others his brothers. The family was evidently high in the social world of Corinth before accepting the Truth.

RHODA: THE GLAD

Rhoda means *Rosebush*. She was a servant to Mary, the mother of Mark, and when Peter, recently released from prison, knocked at the gate of Mary's home, Rhoda came to hearken (Acts 12:12-16). She had to exercise care, because Herod had launched a policy of persecution against the ecclesia, and the gate was carefully locked to prevent any unauthorised person from entering. Rhoda heard Peter's voice and recognised it. Full of joy and excitement, she omitted to open the gate for him, but rushed back into the house to tell the assembled company, who were praying for the release of Peter, that he was at the door. They mocked her, declaring that it was impossible! When she insisted that it was Peter, indeed, they contemptuously declared that it was his angel or messenger. They did not realise that their prayer had been answered, and claimed that Rhoda was mad! Rhoda, however, was not mad, and when, at last, Peter was allowed to enter, the assembled company learned how really effective prayer can be.

SYNTYCHE: THE ARGUMENTATIVE

Her name means *Fortunate* (Phil. 4:2). She was a hard worker in the ecclesia in Philippi, but she fell out with Euodias, and neither sister had the grace to lower the barriers of dislike that each had erected. Paul called upon them to do so, for both were ministering to the unifying Gospel of Christ. It is to be hoped that both Euodias and Syntyche amended their ways and will be united in the Kingdom of God. See our notes on Euodias.

SCEVA: THE JEWISH PRIEST

His name means *Left-handed*. He was a member of one of the twenty-four priestly courses of Jewish priests. His seven sons were exorcists who practised magic, professing to have power over demons by naming over them the name of Jesus (Acts 19:14). This

was embarrassing to the Truth. However, they were taught a lesson. A mad-man over whom some of them named the name of Jesus, retaliated by shouting: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" He leaped on them, and so overthrew them that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. Their experience revealed that men must not trifle with the things of God, and so, many people, accepting the Gospel, burned their books of magic.

SECUNDUS: BROTHER OF QUARTUS?

A disciple of Thessalonica who accompanied Paul from Macedonia to Asia Minor (Acts 20:4). He may have been brother to Quartus. See our notes on Quartus.

SILAS: PAUL'S COMPANION

When Barnabas, refusing to capitulate to Paul's demand that Mark be left home, took his cousin and departed unto Cyprus (Acts 15:39), Paul chose Silas and left for Syria and Cilicia (v. 40). Silas, or Silvanus, signifies *Lover of Words*. He was a distinguished member and prophet of the ecclesia in Jerusalem (Acts 15:32), and was chosen as a delegate of that ecclesia to travel with Paul and Barnabas to report the results of the Jerusalem conference to the ecclesia affected by it.

Although Silas was a Jew, he was also probably a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37). He was a congenial, faithful, cheerful companion, as is indicated by the way he joined Paul in singing hymns in the prison at Philippi (Acts 16:19-25). He was with Paul in the midst of the riots of Thessalonica where the Jews made certain false accusations regarding the Truth to the authorities. The authorities knew they could not move against Paul and Silas because of their status as Roman citizens, and therefore took security of Jason and the other brethren. Paul realised that if he remained in Thessalonica the authorities would move against those members of the ecclesia in their power, and therefore left with Silas for Berea. Here, again, agitation on the part of Jews who came from Thessalonica, forced Paul to leave, though Silas remained with Timothy (Acts 17:1-14). Later, both Silas and Timothy followed Paul to Athens (1Thes. 3:1-2) to report on the condition of the ecclesias to the apostle. Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica, and Silas possibly to Berea, after which they both again met up with Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:5). At Corinth, Silas assisted the apostle in the work of the Truth (2Cor. 1:19). Much later, he joined with Peter, acting as his scribe, or bearer of his epistle (1Pet. 5:12).

Wherever we read of Silas he is active in work, enthusiastic

and cheerful in demeanor. As such he greatly helped Paul, as, indeed, all such characters help the Truth in every age.

SOPATER: COMPANION OF PAUL

His names signifies *Saviour Of A Father*, and in Rom. 16:21 it is given as Sosipater. He was a believer of Berea (Acts 20:4) who travelled with Paul to Jerusalem, assisting to bear the gift that Gentile believers had donated to relieve poverty among the ecclesias of Judea. He was a kinsman, or fellow countryman, of Paul. In the R.V. his father's name is given which suggests that he was of a high status in Berea. He joined with Paul in sending greetings to Rome.

SOSTHENES: ASSOCIATE OF PAUL

There are two men of this name (signifying *Of Safe Strength*) mentioned in the New Testament. Acts 18:17 records how that Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue at Corinth, was beaten by the Greeks before Gallio's judgment seat, who ignored it, however. He had previously dismissed the charge of the Jews against Paul, and the Greeks took the opportunity of venting their antagonism against the Jews. In 1Cor. 1:1, Paul, writing from Ephesus, associates "Sosthenes the brother" (Gr.) with himself in despatching the Epistle. Perhaps the references relate to the same man, and Sosthenes the Jew was converted and became Sosthenes the brother.

STACHYS: MY BELOVED

His name signifies *An Ear Of Corn*. The title Paul gives him in Rom. 16:9 indicates that he was moved by a divine love and was prepared to sacrifice self for the cause of Christ.

STEPHANAS: SYMBOL OF VICTORY

Stephanas signifies *Crowned*, a token of victory. His name was appropriate to the circumstances, for his household formed the firstfruits of Paul's preaching in Achaia. With Fortunatus and Achaicus, Stephanas visited the apostle in Ephesus with a list of questions that form the basis of his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians (1Cor. 1:16; 16:15-17).

STEPHEN: THE VICTOR

What a grand character was Stephen, and how deeply his influence is embedded in the New Testament Scriptures! His impact upon the apostle Paul cannot be over-stressed. Paul ever retained the experience of meeting Stephen, and constantly, to the

end of his life, contemplated with horror his own participation in the tragic death of that faithful disciple. As an indication of this, consider how Paul re-echoed Stephen's dying prayer, when he himself was brought under the shadow of a violent death (Acts 7:60; 2Tim. 4:16).

Stephen became the most prominent of the seven selected disciples appointed to look after the neglected poor in the Jerusalem Ecclesia. Although called to dispense relief to the needy, he did not limit his work to that, but became a powerful preacher of the Word (Acts 6:10). Called in judgment before the Sanhedrin, he easily revealed the weakness of their reasoning so that they were unable to resist the power of his words. With growing irritation at the opposition they were receiving from Christ's followers, they illegally and brutally stoned this righteous man to death. Stephen as a man was:

Full of faith — There was no place for doubt or fear in his heart (Acts 6:5).

Full of grace — His disposition was kindly and considerate toward others (Acts 6:8, R.V.).

Full of power — He had a God-given ability to do things (Acts 6:8).

Full of the Word — His adversaries could not match his exposition of it (Acts 6:10).

Full of wisdom — He used discretion in administration (Acts 6:3).

Full of courage — The fierce opposition of man did not deter him (Acts 7:51-53).

Full of love — He was able to forgive his very murderers (Acts 7:60).

Stephen's death helped to bring to spiritual life the greatest of his opponents: the young man Saul who forever afterwards was haunted by the memory of the despicable part he had played in the death of this great man. Paul, however, inspired by Stephen's example, rose to even greater heights of faith, grace, power, exposition, wisdom, courage and love (Acts 7:58; 22:20; 1Cor. 13). So the steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord, and lead others along the path of righteousness.

TERTIUS: PAUL'S SCRIBE

Tertius (Rom. 16:22) signifies *Third*. Perhaps he was brother to Quartus (*Fourth*) — see note. He was Paul's amanuensis, and wrote the *Epistle To The Romans* at the dictation of the apostle.

TERTULLUS: ADVOCATE FOR THE JEWS

Tertullus was the Roman advocate employed by the Sanhedrin to press its case against Paul before Felix. His name is Latin, and is said to signify *Liar* or *Impostor*; quite appropriate for the part he played in the drama against Paul.

He was hired for his ability to speak with glib eloquence and for his knowledge of Roman law. With these as his weapons, he skilfully set about accusing Paul and urging that action should be taken against the apostle. He first tried the trick of flattery, then, after indulging in fulsome praise, he poured invective on the prisoner, accusing him of crimes he had never committed.

But Paul's defence easily turned aside the sophistications of the orator. He was even more eloquent in his frank, open, manly statement of facts: a contrast to the servile flattery of the orator whose insincerity was easily detected.

Felix was more impressed by Paul than by Tertullus. He was reduced to trembling as the apostle reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come (Acts 24:25).

TIMON: ONE OF THE SEVEN

His name signifies *Honourable*. He was selected to take his place with the seven in the administration of the funds of the Jerusalem Ecclesia (Acts 6:5). See notes on Nicanor.

TIMOTHY: PAUL'S SON IN THE FAITH

Timothy is short for Timotheus, and signifies *A Worshipper of God*. His father was a Greek, but his mother was a Jewess (Acts 16:1; 2Tim. 1:5). Both Timothy's mother and grandmother were spiritually-minded women who taught him the Scriptures at an early age, though the persistent silence of the New Testament concerning his father suggests that the household was divided. Indeed, Timothy had not embraced Judaism, though doubtless his mother would have desired him to do so, and so Paul arranged for him to be circumcised to permit him easier entrance into the synagogues to preach the Truth (Acts 16:3).

Nevertheless, the spiritual attributes of his mother bore fruit in Timothy (Acts 16:2). On his second journey to Lystra, Paul recognised this, and took him as his assistant "circumcising him because of the Jews" (Acts 16:3; cf. Gal. 2:3; 1Cor. 9:20). In all probability he had been converted by Paul on his former visit to the city (Acts 14:6-7), for he describes him as his "dear son" (1Tim. 1:2; 2Tim. 1:2; 1Cor. 4:17). Timothy had personally witnessed the persecutions to which the apostle alludes in such

places as 2Tim. 3:10-12, and thus realised the dangers of missionary work with Paul.

From Lystra, Timothy travelled with Paul to Troas and Macedonia (Acts 16:8-12). He was left behind at Berea (Acts 17:14), joined Paul again at Athens (Acts 17:15), and was sent from thence to Thessalonica (1Thes. 3:1-6), joining Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:5). He was subsequently sent into Macedonia and Achaia before Paul made his second journey from Ephesus into those regions (Acts 19:22; 1Cor. 4:17; 16:10).

When 2Corinthians was written, Timothy was with Paul in Macedonia (2Cor. 1:1). At a later period, when Romans was written at Corinth, Timothy was with the writer (Rom. 16:21). On Paul's return through Macedonia, Timothy went before him into Troas (Acts 20:4-5). Whether he went with him to Jerusalem and Rome, or followed him later is uncertain, but he is mentioned in the epistles written from Rome during the imprisonment. Thus he did not desert his spiritual father and friend in adversity, but even then remained at his side (Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Philemon 1). In Rome he suffered imprisonment, but was quickly released (Heb. 13:23).

On Paul's second imprisonment, Timothy, who had been returned to Ephesus (cp. 2Tim. 1:15-16 with 2Tim. 4:11) was recalled to Rome (2Tim. 4:21). Tradition has it that he suffered martyrdom at Ephesus.

Timothy was of an extremely sensitive nature, deeply moved by personal feelings (2Tim. 1:4), and very timorous (v. 7). He did not enjoy robust health but, on the contrary, was afflicted with frequent infirmities (1Tim. 5:23). He was a contrast to the more vigorous, energetic Titus, lacking the contagious enthusiasm of this worker, but capable of higher spiritual perceptions. Thus Paul warned the Corinthians against despising the gentle spiritual instruction of Timothy should he appear among them (1Cor. 16:10), and encouraged Timothy himself not to be intimidated by others who might attempt to do this (1Tim. 4:12). To the warmhearted Philippians, Paul spoke in the highest terms of Timothy, whom he intended shortly to send to Philippi, setting him above even other faithful servants: "I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state... as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel" (Phil. 2:22).

In Timothy, therefore, we have a young brother of highest spiritual qualification, but plagued with physical infirmities; a man whose faith and courage lifted him above the natural disabilities that were incidental to him, so that he rendered outstanding service to the cause of Truth and to Paul personally.

TITUS: CHAMPION OF THE TRUTH

For his character sketch, see our outline of Paul's epistle to Titus — pages 459-460.

TROPHIMUS: OF EPHESUS

His name means *Nourishing* or *Well Educated*. He travelled with Paul to Jerusalem when the apostle conveyed the gift of the Gentile Ecclesia to the poor brethren of Judea (Acts 20:4). The presence of Trophimus in Jerusalem was the unjustified cause of Paul's seizure by the mob that led to his captivity (Acts 21:29). Later, when Paul returned to Rome toward the end of his life, he was accompanied by Trophimus, who fell sick and was left at Miletus (2Tim. 4:20).

TYCHICUS: THE MESSENGER

Tychicus signifies *Fortunate*. He was a native of Roman Asia who accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey, returning with him to Jerusalem, and continuing with him to Rome. From thence, he carried epistles of Paul to Colosse and elsewhere (Acts 20:4-5; Col. 4:7; Eph. 6:21). He was with Paul when the apostle visited Crete after his liberation (Tit. 3:12), and during his second imprisonment was sent to Ephesus (2Tim. 4:12). Tychicus had an intimate understanding of the apostle's circumstances, and used to supplement the epistles with his own explanations of the state of Paul and the Truth in Rome (Col. 4:7). He was a most useful brother, performing valuable services for the apostle, so that he describes him as "a brother beloved, and faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord," able to "comfort your hearts" (Col. 4:7-8).

TRYPHENA AND TRYPHOSA

These two sisters are so linked together in Rom. 16:12 as to suggest that they co-operated together in the work of the Truth. They were either close friends or relations, and doubtless unmarried. Their names signify *Dainty* and *Delicate*, and whether rightly or wrongly, one imagines two spinsters who found a valuable avenue of labour in the Truth's activities, and who gave themselves completely to it.

URBANE: OUR HELPER

His name means *Polite*. He was resident at Rome when Paul wrote the epistle, and the apostle sends greetings to him (Rom. 16:9), describing him as "our helper." The word in the Greek signifies those who are welded together by common labour. In

some way, not revealed, he had rendered great assistance to Paul.

ZENAS: THE LAWYER

Titus is advised to “bring Zenas the lawyer on his journey” (Tit. 3:13), or, rather, to assist him on his journey. Apparently he was visiting Crete, and Titus is recommended to give him every assistance. He was skilled in Jewish law, and as such would be helpful to counter the influence of those Judaisers who were busy in Crete (Tit. 1:10). His name signifies *The Gift Of Zeus*, which seems a strange name for a Jew, particularly one skilled in Judaism. Evidently his parents were not skilled in the law as was Zenas.



