

## THE ARREST OF ST. PAUL

– SEPTEMBER 10. – ACTS 21:27-40. –

RETURNING FROM THE APOSTLE'S THIRD MISSIONARY TOUR – THE MISSIONARIES CORDIALLY RECEIVED BY THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM – "THE FEAR OF MAN BRINGETH A SNARE" – CONCESSION TO PREJUDICE UNSUCCESSFUL – ST. PAUL IN DANGER FROM MOB VIOLENCE – THE ROMAN GARRISON FROM FORTRESS ANTONIA CALLED OUT – CHRIST'S AMBASSADOR MADE A PRISONER – GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO WITNESS TO THE TRUTH – SUFFERING FOR CHRIST.

**"Thou shalt be a witness for Him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard." – Acts 22:15.**

WHEN St. Paul and his companions arrived at Jerusalem, he was returning from his third missionary tour amongst the Gentiles. He had been absent for seven years. On his way to Jerusalem the Lord had permitted forewarnings to reach him, informing him that he might expect trouble – bonds and imprisonment – in the Holy City. Undeterred, however, this noble ambassador for Christ and his associates had arrived there. They had brought with them money collections from the Churches in Asia Minor and Greece for the Church at Jerusalem, which apparently was in a measure of financial distress.

Their reception on their arrival was of a private and personal character, and they had further manifestations of the same loving brotherhood especially noted in our Study for August 27. On the following day, which probably was Pentecost (Acts 20:16), the Church was called together to receive the Apostle and his

companions in a more formal manner. St. James the Less was apparently the recognized leader in the Jerusalem Church. St. Paul recounted his experiences during his third missionary tour and the Lord's blessing upon his ministrations of the Truth, notwithstanding the tribulations permitted. We may presume also that at the same time he turned over the collections from the Gentile brethren.

### **A DISADVANTAGEOUS COMPROMISE**

The brief record indicates that the brethren at Jerusalem were considerably perturbed by St. Paul's presence with them. Not merely did they fear for his personal safety, but they were also alarmed lest his coming might stir up persecution against them all; for the Apostle's activity and persistency made him well known to the Jews in the influential part of the world in which he had been laboring. The Jewish custom that the zealously religious come frequently to Jerusalem to keep the feasts (Deuteronomy 16:16) brought the Jews in the Holy City into touch with the religious interests of the whole world.

St. James and his associates realized that in all probability there might be present at the Pentecostal feast Jews from Ephesus, Athens, Corinth, Thessalonica, etc. They knew that St. Paul's activities had already been reported; and that some, even of the Hebrew Christians, were troubled at his reported teachings that the Law was dead and that no one was obligated to pay any further attention to it. The brethren urged St. Paul to contradict these partial misconceptions by going into the Temple and associating with some brethren who had taken the Nazarite Vow. (Numbers 6:1-21.) They did not suggest that he take this vow; but that he be present with these brethren, as a recognition of what they did; and that he bear their expenses, which included not only the shaving of their heads, and the burning of the hair, but also the cost of sacrificing for them four animals each.

Evidently St. James and the leaders of the Church understood St. Paul's position properly enough, although apparently their minds did not grasp so clearly as did his the complete breaking down of "the middle wall of partition" which previously had separated Jews from Gentiles, nor did they appreciate so fully as he the fact that the Law was merely a servant, designed to lead to the School of Christ, prepared for the sons of God.

St. Paul taught the Gentiles that it was not necessary for them to become Jews or to obey the Jewish ritual; but that instead of looking for Divine favor through the types and shadows, they should look to Christ and His antitypical fulfilments of the requirements of the Law. He taught that the Law could save neither Jew nor Gentile, but that only faith in Christ could bring the soul into relationship to God. He taught that while certain blessings of God yet remained for the Jews (Romans 11:25-29), **page 250** yet during this Gospel Age God is selecting a Spiritual Seed of Abraham from both Jews and Gentiles. He taught that if any one – either Jew or Gentile – attempted to keep the Law with a view to thus merit eternal life, such would surely fail; for "by the deeds of the Law, shall no flesh be justified in God's sight." – Romans 3:20-31; Ephesians 3:1-7; Galatians 3:8,16,29.

### **ST. PAUL'S COURSE NOT WRONG**

Nothing in all this, however, really interfered with St. Paul's doing just what the Elders at Jerusalem urged him to do for the four men under the Nazarite Vow. The shaving of their heads and the offering of the sacrifices demanded by the law which governed their vow interfered in no sense of the word with the merit of Christ's sacrifice nor attempted to add to it. Nevertheless in our judgment a more courageous course might have been pursued. Apparently the very method taken to ward off public opposition merely served to arouse it.

Let us not forget, however, that the Lord could have overruled the matter differently, had He chosen to do so. Let us remember that He foreknew that tribulations would assail the Apostle Paul, and had foretold them. Those who are in close relationship to the Lord have His assurance that all their steps are ordered of Him, and that all things shall work together for good to them that love God and that have been called according to His Purpose. (Psalm 37:23; Romans 8:28.) What a consolation these assurances are to all of the Lord's people! It is no wonder that such may have quiet, rest and peace, even in times of storm and trouble.

Some one may inquire, "Would it not be a sin for the Apostle or other Christians to participate in any measure in sacrifice in the Temple? Were not all the Jewish sacrifices done away in Christ?"

We answer, Not at all. The sacrifices which pointed to Christ, and which He fulfilled, were no longer proper. But the sacrifices which the Nazarites offered in connection with their vows did not typify Christ's sacrifices, but rather the consecration and devotion of the people, the antitypes of which will prevail during the Millennium. It was therefore not a sin for the Apostle to join in this procedure; and yet we doubt the wisdom of his course. We incline to think that it was rather a temporizing acknowledgment of the dignity of the Jewish Temple and its services; whereas by this time the real Temple and the real service had been inaugurated. The Church itself is the antitypical Temple, in which God has been present by His Holy Spirit ever since Pentecost.

### **HIS CONDUCT MISUNDERSTOOD**

For several days the scheme to have St. Paul appear as partially endorsing the law seemed to be successful; but when the seven days were nearly expired, the Apostle was recognized by Jews who had come from Asia. They had seen him with Trophimus, a Greek from Ephesus, and jumped to the conclusion that the latter was one of the four men whose heads were shaved. From the Jewish standpoint this

would have been a grievous offense; for only Jews were permitted to come within the sacred precincts of the Temple, outside of which were the Court of the Women and also the Court of the Gentiles. These two courts were separated by a stone fence, which constituted what the Apostle elsewhere alluded to as "the middle wall of partition." – Ephesians 2:14.

This wall was four and one-half feet high, with small obelisks at regular intervals, bearing inscriptions which read, "No man of alien race is to enter within the balustrade and fence that goes around the Temple. If any one is taken in the act, let him know that he has himself to blame for the penalty of death that follows." St. Paul was charged with this offense, and not the Greek who was supposed to have been misled by the Apostle. It was on this score that St. Paul's life was in danger from the mob which speedily gathered at the cry of the Asiatic Jews that the Temple was being profaned.

While the mob was beating the Apostle, seeking to kill him, Claudius Lysias, the chief captain, or colonel, of the Roman cohort which formed the garrison in the Castle Antonia, close by the Temple, became aware of the tumult and hurried to the scene with a company of soldiers. Immediately the beating ceased; for although the Jews had not learned to respect the majesty of the Roman law, they had become amenable to its military forces.

The Apostle was chained by each arm to a soldier. The colonel endeavored to ascertain the cause of the tumult, but was unable to understand the conflicting testimonies. Therefore he remanded the prisoner to the castle. But the mob, disappointed because they had lost the opportunity of taking St. Paul's life, made a mad rush to get him from the soldiers or to kill him outright. The oncoming of the mob led the soldiers to press against one another in order not to lose their prisoner. As a result the Apostle was lifted off his feet and carried by the soldiers up the stairway.

## **PERMISSION TO PREACH GRANTED HIM**

The courage of this ambassador of Christ and his readiness to take advantage of every opportunity to tell the Message of his Master were here wonderfully exemplified. We might have supposed that the beating which he had received from the mob, together with the more or less rough treatment which he had undergone in getting to the castle door, would have cowed him with fear and excitement. But on the contrary he was cool and collected. Calmly he asked the commandant to grant him the privilege of speaking to the people. Doubtless he intimated that they had misunderstood what he was doing, and that a few words from him might pacify them.

The Roman officer was astonished; for the Apostle spoke Greek fluently. He had thought that St. Paul was "that Egyptian," mentioned by the historian Josephus, who had a short time before gathered a large body of discontented Jews, to whom he had represented himself as Messiah and who, as his followers, had given the Roman authorities considerable trouble. St. Paul answered that he was a Jew of an honorable city, and again asked the privilege of addressing the people, which was granted.

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### **THE MESSIANIC REIGN**

"Lo! in the clouds of Heaven appears  
God's well-beloved Son.  
He brings a train of brighter years,  
His Kingdom is begun.  
He comes a guilty world to bless  
With mercy, truth and righteousness.

"O Father! haste the promised hour

When at His feet shall lie  
All rule, authority and power  
Beneath the ample sky;  
When He shall reign from pole to pole,  
The Lord of every ransomed soul;

"When all shall heed the words He said,  
Amid their daily cares,  
And by the loving life He led,  
Shall strive to pattern theirs.  
When He who conquered death shall win  
The mightier conquest over Sin."

