



# FROM PENTECOST TO PRISON

CHARLES H. WELCH

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by

Charles H. Welch

*Author of*

*Dispensational Truth*  
*The Apostle of the Reconciliation*  
*The Testimony of the Lord's Prisoner*  
*Parable, Miracle, and Sign*  
*The Form of Sound Words*  
*Just and the Justifier*  
*In Heavenly Places*  
*etc.*

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### Received Text (Textus Receptus)

This is the Greek New Testament from which the Authorized Version of the Bible was prepared. Comments in this work on The Acts of the Apostles are made with this version in mind.

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## FROM PENTECOST TO PRISON

## The Acts of the Apostles

## CHAPTER 1

**The book as a whole**

The very focal point of our witness is Acts 28, for we believe that in that chapter the dispensation of the mystery began. From time to time there have appeared in *The Berean Expositor* studies of this great dispensational boundary, and from time to time the place and purpose of Pentecost and allied themes have been touched upon. We have, however, never found opportunity to give the Acts itself systematic examination before, and as we desire to remember the needs of new readers, and knowing that the book of the Acts is the battleground of the whole position that we take up, the time seems ripe for such an exposition.

In many minds one of the uppermost questions relative to the purpose of the book is: Does the Acts introduce something new, or does it confirm something old? This of course embraces the questions that arise out of Acts 1:6 (where the apostles asked the Lord if He would at that time restore the kingdom to Israel) and the place and purpose of Pentecost. The baptism with the Holy Ghost that took place at Pentecost must certainly be tabulated as a new experience, but the question that needs careful answer is: Did that new experience usher in a new dispensation, or did it confirm something old? There is but one true way to deal with this and all other subjects that come into our study, and that is to see their place in relation to the book as a whole. This can only be done after a patient perusal of the whole book, and the comparison of each part with its corresponding member. To express opinions before this has been done is but to express opinions and nothing more. Patiently to plough through the complete book to lay bare its structure is not the work of a few hours merely. This, however, has been done, and although the results may be glanced at in a few minutes, the bearing of the outline thus discovered abides, and rightly influences the interpretation of every section.

Let us, then, go over the book of the Acts together, and make its outline our own. Commencing our reading, we are at once apprised of the fact that another treatise had been written by the same author, which must have some bearing upon the Acts itself. While we cannot make a digression here to study the connection that may exist between the first and second treatises, we are conscious that the opening verses of the first chapter sound very much like a résumé of something already written. Upon examination we discover that Acts 1:1-14 overlaps Luke 24:36-53, details of which we reserve for later. The recognition of this overlap, however, influences the structure, for, with this fact before us and the truth as our goal, we are compelled to tabulate our findings as follows:

- A 1:1-14. The former treatise. All that Jesus began both to do and teach.

The new record commences with Acts 1:15: 'And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples', and the first *act* of the apostles is to make their number complete again. This was accomplished by the appointment of Matthias, a much debated subject and one which demands our earnest attention, as there are those who teach that *Paul* was the true twelfth apostle and that Matthias was mistakenly appointed. This we do not deal with at the moment, except to say that the Scriptures abundantly prove that the appointment of Matthias was entirely in agreement with the will of God.

As we read on through succeeding chapters we cannot help but notice how Peter dominates every section. But chapter 12 finds Peter in prison, and after his release, he appears only once more, in Acts 15. Meanwhile a new figure has arisen, introduced first as a fanatical persecutor, but who afterwards becomes a zealous, though humble, follower of the Lord. Presently, together with Barnabas, he receives a special commission from the Holy Ghost, and finally he becomes the second dominating character of the book. Our structure therefore must exhibit these divisions, and we put them down thus:

- A<sub>1</sub> 1:14. The former treatise. All that JESUS *began* both to do and teach.

A<sub>2</sub> 1:15 to 28:31. The present treatise. All that JESUS *continued* to do and to teach, through the ministries of PETER and PAUL.

We have observed, in passing, that Barnabas and Saul received a special commission from the Holy Ghost in a manner somewhat parallel with the special equipment of the twelve on the day of Pentecost. This we record as follows:

Equipment of the TWELVE (1:15 to 2:13).

Equipment of BARNABAS and SAUL (13:1-3).

Next we observe that the ministry of Peter, like the ministry of Paul, spreads in widening circles, until, at length, both ministries terminate in prison. Without compelling the reader to piece together every item and to weigh over every comparison, we give the complete outline of Acts as follows, trusting that no reader will be satisfied to accept such an important aid to our study at second hand, but that each will make it his own.

### The Structure of the Acts of the Apostles

A<sub>1</sub> 1-14. The former treatise.

A<sub>2</sub> 1:15 to 28:31. The present treatise.

#### The present treatise

A <sub>2</sub>	B	1:15 to 2:13.	JERUSALEM. - Holy Spirit. Enduement of the twelve.
PETER.	C	2:14 to 8:1.	Ministry of PETER and others to the nation of Israel in Jerusalem and the land.
	D	8:1 to 11:30.	Ministry of PETER and others in the land. Peter ministers once to the Gentiles: Cornelius.
	E	12:1-23.	Jerusalem. Peter's imprisonment. Close of ministry.
PAUL.	B	12:24 to 13:3.	ANTIOCH. - Holy Spirit. Enduement of PAUL and BARNABAS.
	C	13:4 to 15:39*.	Ministry of PAUL and others to the dispersed of Israel, independently of Jerusalem and the twelve.
	D	16:6* to 19:20.	PAUL's ministry in association with the twelve. His seven epistles to the believers. Paul ministers once to the circumcision: The Hebrews.
	E	19:21 to 28:31.	Ephesus to Rome. Paul's imprisonment. Close of one ministry and commencement of the prison ministry, and the 'dispensation the mystery'.

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\* Amended by the author from the layout in the original article, (first published BE Vol 24 p. 3), to include the whole of the early Galatian controversy.



Before we proceed with our examination of this opening section, it will be well to discover its structure. This is simple, and focuses our attention upon what the Lord did until 'He was taken up', at which point both the Gospel according to Luke and the opening section of the Acts terminates. Let us see this:

**Acts 1:1-14**  
**The former treatise**

A <sub>1</sub>	B 1:1.	What the Lord began to do and teach.
	C 1:2.	Until the day.
	D 1:2.	Command to apostles.
	E 1:2.	Taken up <sup>*</sup>
	B 1:3.	What the Lord continued to do and to teach.
	C 1:3.	During forty days.
	D 1:4-9.	Command to apostles.
	E 1:9-14.	Taken up.

CHAPTER 2

**The former treatise**

**The Gentile in the Gospel of Luke**

As the writer of the Acts speaks of a former treatise which he had written, and as the first fourteen verses of the Acts traverse the closing verses of Luke's Gospel, it will be necessary to make some acquaintance with that Gospel, and to examine the portion that is, in measure, repeated in Acts 1:1-14.

It would be too great a digression to attempt an analysis of Luke's Gospel here, but there have been provided for us means whereby its distinctive features can be seen clearly enough to give some idea of the purpose of the writer, and with it some indication of what to expect in the second treatise, the Acts itself. These means consist of the comparison of a series of passages in Luke's Gospel with parallel ones in Matthew's Gospel. The first obvious comparison is the genealogy given by both writers.

(1) *The genealogy of Christ* (Matt. 1. and Luke 3).- It is evidently sufficient for Matthew's purpose if he proves that the Lord Jesus was heir both of David and of Abraham. Matthew knew as well as we do that Abraham was not the first man, but with the object he had in view no good purpose would have been served by taking the Lord's genealogy back further than the Patriarch himself. With Abraham commenced the purpose of God that had Israel as a nation in view, and with David commenced the purpose of God that had the kingdom and the throne in view. When we turn to Luke's account, we find that he, too, traces the Lord's genealogy back to David and to Abraham (Luke 3:31,34), but the purpose for which he wrote necessitated the prosecution of the genealogy back still further, and consequently it does not end until Luke records: 'Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God' (3:38).

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\* The order of this section follows that of the Greek and not of the English translation.

Investigation of the further differences observable between the two genealogies would demand a lengthy article, and as we are dealing with Luke's Gospel merely to get its general trend, such an examination would but distract. Keeping in mind, therefore, the first point of departure observable between the two accounts, let us make another comparison .

(2) *The birth of Christ* (Matt. 2. and Luke 2).- In Matthew's account the birth of the Saviour is heralded by wise men, and in Luke's account by angels. Matthew makes no reference to the angels and the shepherds; Luke takes no notice of the wise men. Is there a reason? There must be. Can we discover it? We can, if we compare the records:

'Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him' (Matt. 2:1,2).

'And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city ... and there were ... shepherds abiding in the field ... And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord ... good will toward men' (Luke 2:1-14).

Quite apart from the fact that here are two distinct events, the moment the reader passes from Matthew's account to that of Luke he is conscious of a different atmosphere and point of view. This essential difference may be expressed in the words of the wise men and of the angel:

'Where is He that is BORN KING OF THE JEWS' (Matthew).

'Unto you is BORN this day in the city of David a SAVIOUR' (Luke).

Everything else, also, in the two narratives is similarly differentiated:

'In the days of HEROD THE KING' is the dating of Matthew.

'A decree from CÆSAR AUGUSTUS' is the dating of Luke.

The first is local, the second is world-wide. The first harmonizes with the way Matthew, in his genealogy, fixes upon Abraham and David, the second with the way Luke, in his, fixes upon Adam. The first insists that the Lord is 'King', the second that He is 'Saviour'. The first speaks of 'King of the Jews', the second speaks of 'men', without distinction.

In the days when Matthew wrote his Gospel the Jewish element was strong, and he had no need unduly to emphasize the fact that Christ came first of all to Israel. Luke, however, takes the opportunity of recording the testimony of another witness soon after the birth of Christ. This was the testimony of aged Simeon, who was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and therefore had no bias toward the Gentile. Yet when he addressed God as he took the young Child up in his arms, he puts the Gentile first: 'A light to lighten the *Gentiles*, and the glory of Thy people *Israel*' (Luke 2:32).

Let us make another comparison.

(3) *The Forerunner* (Matt. 3 and Luke 3):

'In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is He that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight' (Matt. 3:1-3).

'Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled,

and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God' (Luke 3:1-6).

Compare the casual dating of Matthew's account with the precision of Luke's. See also, once again, how Luke views things from the Gentile stand-point. He does not call Herod a King, but simply a Tetrarch, a subordinate ruler. Then observe what is said of John the Baptist: both records tell us that he preached 'repentance', but it is Matthew's account which stresses the 'kingdom', and Luke's which stresses 'remission of sins'. Again, both records quote a passage from Isaiah; Matthew's quotation is brief, Luke's is longer. Why? Surely it is in order to include the words 'all flesh', which had no essential bearing upon Matthew's purpose. Once again, it must be obvious that a definite, selective, process is at work governing the writing of these two accounts.

(4) *The opening of the Lord's ministry* (Matt. 4. and Luke 4):

'Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil ... From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matt. 4:1,17).

'And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil ... He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor ... many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias ... but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian' (Luke 4:1,2,18,25-27).

Look at the extraordinary differences here. We have purposely included the references to the temptation, so that it shall be clear that in both quotations the same period is in view, yet Matthew selects the moment when the Lord stressed the 'kingdom', while Luke passes that by and selects the words that angered the assembly in the synagogue of Nazareth. Again, Luke is seen using every opportunity to announce the news that the Gentile was to have a place in the kingdom ministry.

While but four items have been compared, the searcher will find numerous others, down to the precision of small phrases and even words. For example, let him compare Matthew 24 with Luke 21, and say why Luke alone gives any record of the 'times of the Gentiles' (verse 24). One other most important piece of contributory evidence of the purpose of Luke's Gospel is the parables peculiar to that Gospel. Luke alone speaks of the good Samaritan, at the expense of the Jewish Priest and Levite, who could do nothing. Luke alone gives the pearl of parables, The Prodigal Son, where the prodigal is seen to advantage over against his elder brother. Again, Luke alone gives that anticipation of the epistle to the Romans in the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, introducing, as it does, the doctrine of justification. Once more, Luke alone reveals that Israel were like Unjust Stewards, and, finally, it is Luke alone who recounts the parable that speaks of the Lord's absence under the figure of 'a certain Nobleman (who) went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return' (Luke 19:12), thus checking the idea that 'the kingdom of God should immediately appear' (verse 11).

We have not felt it necessary to set out these parables in detail. The full force of their bearing upon Luke's purpose can only be felt by those who ponder them prayerfully and carefully.

Let us set out what we have seen:

	Matthew	Luke
The Subjects		
King and kingdom, with the Jew prominent, is the theme.	Sin and salvation, with the Gentile in view, is the theme.	
The Genealogies		
Abraham and David.	Adam.	
The witness at the Birth		

Herod the King.	Cæsar Augustus. All the world.
Wise men. King of the Jews.	Angels, Saviour, men. Simeon, Gentiles.

#### **The Forerunner**

Casual dating.	Gentile dating.
Repent, for kingdom is at hand.	Repentance for remission of sins.
Short quotation from Isaiah.	Long quotation from Isaiah in order to include references to 'all flesh'.

#### **The Lord's opening Ministry**

Repent: for the kingdom is at hand.	The emphasis upon the Gentile in the synagogue at Nazareth.
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#### **The Second Coming**

The time of the end.	The reference to the intervening 'times of the Gentiles'.
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#### **The distinctive Parables peculiar to Luke**

-	The Good Samaritan.
-	The Prodigal Son.
-	The Unjust Steward.
-	The Pharisee and the Publican.
-	The Nobleman.

Here is clear evidence that Matthew's Gospel is intended to show that the covenants made with Abraham and David are vested in the Lord Jesus Christ in Whom alone they can be fulfilled. Luke's Gospel, while admitting all that, points out that while Israel were themselves to be blessed, they were to become the destined channel of blessing to the nations, which precluded the idea that only Israel mattered, and revealed the larger purpose of the kingdom of Heaven.

When we remember that Luke, who so emphasized the Gentile aspect, was raised up to accompany the apostle Paul, can we not praise God that Paul had to his hand a record of the earthly life, the death, the resurrection and the ascension of the Lord, that went back to Adam, and which would therefore be of great importance in the controversies over the inclusion of the Gentile that we find in the Acts of the Apostles itself? Of the four Gospels, Luke's is the one that particularly belongs to saved Gentiles. Have we possessed our possessions?

## CHAPTER 3

**Luke 24 and Acts 1:1-14**

We have considered the teaching of 'the former treatise' (Acts 1:1), namely, Luke's Gospel, and have found that its general trend is to stress that aspect of the Gospel connected with the Saviour and the Gentile, as compared with Matthew, which stresses the Kingly and Jewish aspect. Luke states that the former treatise is a record of 'all that Jesus *began* both to do and teach'. Are we justified in this deduction? Mark's Gospel ends with the words:

'And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature ... these signs shall follow ... So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen' (Mark 16:15-20).

These words prove that the Acts is a continuation of the narrative of what the Lord had begun to do and teach in the days of His flesh, and that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were intended to 'confirm' the witness. This may be seen by consulting Hebrews 2:

'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first *began* to be spoken by the Lord, and was *confirmed* unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?' (Heb. 2:3,4).

To the same effect is the teaching of the epistles to the Corinthians:

'Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 1:6,7).

'Now He which stablisheth (confirmeth) us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God' (2 Cor. 1:21).

The 'confirming of *us* with *you*' of 2 Corinthians 1 shows that the same object is in view, which we have already seen in Hebrews 2.

Returning to the opening chapter of the Acts, we note that the writer speaks of several things that had already been recorded by him in the last chapter of the gospel of Luke. The only way to realize this is to compare the two passages. This we will do.

**A comparison of Luke 24:36-53 with Acts 1:1-14****Luke (A.V.)****Acts (A.V.)****Many infallible proofs.**

'And as they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have". And when He had thus spoken, He

' ... the apostles whom He had chosen: to whom also He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days'.

*(It will be seen that what Luke wrote in fuller detail, Acts summarizes under one head. This is exactly what we do when referring to previous correspondence on any subject).*

shewed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, "Have ye here any meat?" And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it and did eat before them'.

*subject).*

### **The Lord's words to His apostles**

'And He said unto them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures"'.

'Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God'.

*(Notice how these two aspects of truth are brought together in the last verse of Acts 'preaching the KINGDOM OF GOD, and teaching those things which concern the LORD JESUS CHRIST' - an unobtrusive connection such as delighted Paley.\* Further, the fact of their opened understanding shows their question in Acts 1:6 to be right and fitting, as also Acts 1:16-26).*

### **The Commission**

'Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things'.

'Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth'.

### **The Enduement**

'Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high'.

'Commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me ... ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost (Spirit) not many days hence ... Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost (Spirit) is come upon

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\*W. Paley was a great Christian philosopher (1743-1805) whose books are still valued today.

you’.

### **The Ascension**

‘And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven’.

‘And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight’.

*(Notice how each supplements the other. The Gospel tells us, ‘He was parted from them’, but does not say how. Acts adds the information concerning ‘the cloud’; Acts also adds statements regarding the angels and the second coming of the Lord).*

### **The Apostles’ return**

‘And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God’.

‘Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day’s journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room .... These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication’.

Each separate item that we see repeated in this introduction is worthy of study, but for our present purpose we must pass over everything else, and concentrate our attention upon the question of the apostles given in Acts 1:6.

The fact that Luke inserts the word ‘therefore’ in this verse, shows that the apostles’ question arose out of that marvellous opening up of the Old Testament Scriptures mentioned in Luke 24:44 and Acts 1:3:

‘When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’ (Acts 1:6).

It is beyond the powers of any man to attempt what the Lord alone could do, but we are permitted to turn to the same Scriptures that He used and see some of the references to the restoration of Israel and their kingdom, which will enable us to appreciate the force of the apostles’ question.

To cover the whole ground we, too, must begin at ‘Moses’, but for the present let us be satisfied with a few references from those prophets who wrote during or after Israel’s captivity. To Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel said:

‘Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all’ (Dan. 2:37,38).

At the end of Gentile dominion 'shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed'. Daniel saw in the night visions, and beheld:

'One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed'.

'The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High' (Dan. 7:13,14,27).

In Daniel 9 we find the prophet, having read the promise of restoration from the desolations of Jerusalem, earnestly praying for its fulfilment. He is then instructed that within a specified time the whole purpose comprising Israel's restoration shall be accomplished. We do not embark here upon a consideration of Daniel 9, but, later, some more pointed references must be made to the chapter.

Daniel is followed in the A. V. by the Minor Prophets, and these are particularly rich in their testimony concerning Israel's restoration. Hosea takes a wife at the command of God, and the children which are born are given the following symbolic names:

JEZREEL (Hos. 1:4) - The word has two meanings:

(1) 'May God scatter' (Jer. 31:10,11).

(2) 'May God sow' (Zech. 10:9).

LO-RUHAMAH (Hos. 1:6) - 'Not having obtained mercy'.

LO-AMMI (Hos. 1:9) - 'Not My people'.

Yet immediately following these figures of woe come the words of restoration:

'Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel' (the day of sowing, i.e., the restoration) (Hos. 1:10,11).

'I will sow her unto Me (*Jezreith*) in the earth; and I will have mercy (*ruhamah*) upon her that had not obtained mercy (*lo-ruhamah*); and I will say to them which were not My people (*lo-ammi*), Thou art My people (*ammi*); and they shall say, Thou art my God' (Hos. 2:23)

Joel, too, is full of the same blessed promise. First we have utter desolation:

'That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten' (Joel 1:4).

The Jews refer this to Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome, and Jeremiah confirms this application:

'... call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz; appoint a captain against her; cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars. Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes' (Jer. 51:27,28).

But in Joel 2:25-28 this utter desolation is reversed:

'I WILL RESTORE to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, My great army which I sent among you ... and it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh ...'.

Is it any wonder the apostles asked, 'Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?'



Amos, with all his denunciations, does not finish without the promise of restoration:

‘And I will bring again the captivity of My people of Israel ... and I will plant them upon their land’ (Amos 9:14,15).

Micah 2:12 reads: ‘I will surely gather the remnant of Israel’, and although one more strong denunciation is made against Israel’s sin, yet Micah concludes with the pardoning love of God, and says:

‘He will turn again ... Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old’ (Micah 7:19,20).

Zephaniah says:

‘I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD’ (Zeph. 3:20).

Haggai must be read through to catch the spirit of the closing verses.

Zechariah simply burns with the spirit of restoration; so complete will be the redemption of the people, so holy will that kingdom be, that he can say:

‘In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD ... yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts’ (Zech. 14:20,21).

Malachi concludes with the promise of the sending of Elijah before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Speaking of John the Baptist, the Lord said to His disciples, ‘If ye will receive (it), this is Elias (Elijah) which was for to come’ (Matt. 11:14).

Do we still wonder that the apostles, remembering with divinely opened understanding all the Lord’s teaching, and all the teaching of the Old Testament, should say, ‘Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’

It is impossible here to pursue the theme. He who would know something of the full import and bearing of the matter must search the whole of the Prophets and Psalms, together with much of the Law. So far as our present study is concerned we must be satisfied to awaken the already interested reader to further enquiry. Those who already know the subject will agree as to the fulness of the Scriptures on the theme.

Let us now pass on from the Old Testament to the additional evidence which the words of the Lord Jesus (spoken during His ministry in the hearing of the apostles, and intended for their instruction) constitute.

## CHAPTER 4

### **The Lord’s own teaching concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel**

The genealogy with which the Gospel according to Matthew opens establishes the fact that Christ is the Son of David and Heir to his throne. The annunciation of Gabriel to Mary is occupied mainly with the kingly aspect of the incarnation:

‘He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the THRONE of His father DAVID: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever (the ages); and of His kingdom there shall be no end’ (Luke 1:32,33).

The prophecy of Zacharias at the birth of John the Baptist, speaks of deliverance from the hand of enemies, and the fulfilment of covenant and oath sworn to Abraham and the fathers (Luke 1:68-79).

The birthplace, Bethlehem, is chiefly associated with kingship:

‘Where is He that is born King of the Jews? ... In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel’ (Matt. 2:2-6).

The opening words of the Lord’s ministry announce the kingdom:

‘Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD, and saying,

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|--|---|
| (1) The time is fulfilled              | (hence the kingdom is that of O.T. prophecy), |
| (2) and the kingdom of God is at hand  | (has come nigh - the King being present):     |
| (3) repent ye, and believe the gospel’ | (believe the good tidings - the condition)    |

(Mark 1:14,15).

John the Baptist opened his ministry to Israel with the call to repent (Matt. 3). The Lord opened His ministry to Israel with the call to repent (Matt. 4:17). Peter reopened the ministry to Israel with the call to repent (Acts 2:38; 3:19).

The miracles which the Lord wrought immediately following His opening words were with the confessed object of bringing Israel to repentance, and thereby instituting the kingdom:

‘Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not ... Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes’ (Matt. 11:20,21).

The parables which immediately follow the Lord’s rejection introduce the theme of the restoration. Matthew 12 records the rejection of Christ by Israel; Matthew 13 records the first parables. These parables were uttered because:

‘They seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias’ (Isa. 6:9,10; Matt. 13:10-15).

The seed that is sown by the sower is ‘the word of the *kingdom*’; and although the earlier sowings were marred, yet in God’s good time that seed of the kingdom shall fall into good ground, and the harvest shall be abundant.

The Transfiguration testified to the fulfilment of prophecy concerning the kingdom of which both Law and Prophets speak. This is made perfectly clear by Peter’s inspired testimony:

‘We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty ... We have also a more sure word of prophecy’ (2 Pet. 1:16-19).

The promise of the Lord to those who had forsaken all and followed Him is directed to the restoration of the kingdom:

‘Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel’ (Matt. 19:28).

The accomplishment of the final great prophecy of Matthew 24 and 25 necessitates the restoration of the kingdom:

‘When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all NATIONS ... Then shall the King say ... inherit the KINGDOM’ (Matt. 25:31-34).

In the last solemn verses, of trial, suffering, and crucifixion, the KING and the KINGDOM are prominent. The High Priest said:

'I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven' (Matt. 26:63,64).

The Roman Governor said:

'Art Thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest' (Matt. 27:11).

The actions and words of the Roman soldiers gave evidence that the Lord's claim to kingship was widely known and steadily maintained:

'And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!' (Matt. 27:29).

The accusation set over the Lord's head on the cross was: '*This is Jesus the King of the Jews*' (Matt. 27:37).

The chief priests mocked Him with taunting words:

'If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him' (Matt. 27:42).

The dying malefactor said unto Jesus:

'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into THY KINGDOM' (Luke 23:42).

When the Lord answered the apostle's question it is surely significant that He said no word to reprove them for their slowness of heart: neither did He say that they were fools. All that He did was to take up that part of their question which related to the 'time', saying: 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power' (Acts 1:7). Yet in Luke 24, *before* His exposition of Moses and all the Prophets, they had merited these rebukes.

The kingdom shall be restored to Israel, and upon the fulfilment of conditions already laid down, but it was impossible to reveal to the apostles the foreknown failure of Israel to repent, and the consequent postponement of the hope of Israel. That is understandable and true, but it does not in any way invalidate their question as to the restoration of the kingdom. It gives no warrant for substituting the church in the place of Israel.

If, while Israel were still a people, and while prophetic times were still running their course (Dan. 9:24), the apostles were not permitted to know 'times and seasons', how much less, during this period of Israel's blindness - this parenthetical period during which the clock of prophecy has been stopped - how much less warrant is there for attempting to fix dates concerning the end of the age or the coming of the Lord. We have not a list of names of all those who from time to time have turned prophets and announced the date of the second coming, nor do we wish to be cumbered with such sad evidences of error, but the reader should be warned against all such attempts, by whatever method - all are un-scriptural and doomed to failure. *Captain Crossby* announced that in 1925 this dispensation would close, and that the most conspicuous figure in Europe at that date would be Antichrist. We neither saw Antichrist in 1925, nor did the age end seven years later, namely, 1932, with Israel restored to their land. *Baxter* toured the country lecturing upon the forty coming wonders that should be seen during 1896-1908: Not one came to pass. *Dimbleby* computed by astronomical reckoning that the end would come in 1898. During the year in which we write these words claims have been made to divine illumination, that, if resisted, would mean resistance of the Holy Ghost. These claims were that the teaching of the Scriptures had been made plain, and that about the 12th of June 1933, the coming of the Lord, according to 1 Thessalonians 4, would be fulfilled. Newspapers ridiculed the prophet in advance: unstable believers were moved to all sorts of extravagancies by it - and nothing happened. Nothing, we say; yet, is it nothing, that the Word of God should be thus held up to scorn? Is it nothing that the faith of many has been so rudely shaken? What difference should it make, if we positively knew the date of the Lord's return? He said, 'occupy' till I come, and if, did we know the exact date of His appearing, we would give up our business, change our mode of life, alter our address, or make any other change, does not that indicate that we should make these changes *now*, out of love of His appearing, without knowing the times or the seasons?

The next matter of great importance to all students of the Acts is the question of the apostles concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, and to this we shall address ourselves in the next section, sufficient preparation having now been made.

### **The question of Acts 1:6. Was it right?**

Were the apostles right when they asked the Lord about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel? Were they actuated by Jewish prejudice? Should they have asked concerning the church instead? An affirmative answer has been given by different students to each of these questions.

But what are the facts? The Lord had spoken to the apostles about the baptism of the Spirit that they should receive 'not many days hence' (Acts 1:5), and the next verse records their question which we are considering:

'When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' (Acts 1:6).

It is essential to keep in mind that during a period of forty days, the apostles had received instruction as to the Old Testament passages that spoke of Christ and His kingdom. Among these the following from Isaiah would make plain the connection between the outpouring of the spirit, and the restoration of Israel:

'Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest ... My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places' (Isa. 32:15-18).

A number of like passages would occur to any well-taught reader of the Old Testament, such as the apostles were, and until the reader is in possession of at least some of these passages, he cannot be competent to judge the matter of the rightness of the question in Acts 1:6. Coupled with this let us remember that He Who opened up the Scriptures during those 40 days, at the same time 'opened He their understanding' (Luke 24:45). In the face of such a comprehensive statement is it possible to maintain that prejudice and ignorance prompted the question of Acts 1:6?

### **The Old Testament teaching concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel**

Isaiah's prophecy divides into two great sections; the first, chapters 1 to 39, deals mainly with Israel's rejection; the second, chapters 40 to 46, deals mainly with Israel's restoration. This second section opens with the words:

'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her APPOINTED TIME (see margin) is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned' (Isa. 40:1,2).

The word rendered 'warfare' in the A.V. occurs in Daniel 10:1, where it is rendered 'the time appointed'. This prophecy of restoration makes immediate reference to 'the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness'. The apostles would know the close connection between John the Baptist and this prophecy, hence their pertinent question in Acts 1:6. Isaiah 43 contains the promise:

'I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth' (Isa. 43:5,6).

Jeremiah, too, is a prophet of rejection and restoration. First, the Lord declares that He will:

watch over His word to perform it (1:12) (which word, here, was a word of judgment and wrath).

In chapter 31:28 the Lord says:

'And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD'.

These words refer to Israel as a nation, and not to 'a church', as verses 35, 36 bear testimony:

‘... If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being A NATION before Me for ever’ (Jer. 31:36).

‘Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah ... David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel ... If I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; then will I cast away the seed of JACOB, and DAVID My servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of ABRAHAM, ISAAC, and JACOB: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them’ (Jer 33:14-26).

Small wonder that the apostles said: ‘Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’

Jeremiah’s prophecy concludes with the transference of sovereignty from Israel to Nebuchadnezzar. As to this transference and its outcome, Daniel is one of the chief spokesmen:

‘In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand’ (Dan. 1:1,2).

Nebuchadnezzar was the divinely-appointed head of gold. What Israel’s sovereignty covered and what the restoration of that sovereignty will involve is shown by the words of Daniel in describing the extent of the authority which had been transferred to Nebuchadnezzar:

‘Thou, O king, art a king of kings’ (Dan. 2:37).

When Israel’s kingdom is restored, and great David’s greater Son is King, His title will be:

‘King of kings, and Lord of lords ... Prince of the kings of the earth’ (Rev. 19:16; 1:5).

That such vast sway and majesty was included in the covenant with David, Psalm 89:27 testifies:

‘Also I will make Him My Firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth’.

Daniel continued:

‘For the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory’ (Dan. 2:37).

The God of heaven gives this kingdom, and it can as well be called the kingdom of heaven as the kingdom of God. When the Lord taught the disciples to pray, it was for the restoration of the kingdom and its ultimate blessing:

‘Thy kingdom come ... in earth ... for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory’ (Matt. 6:10-13).

Compare these words with Daniel’s to Nebuchadnezzar when he said ‘a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory’. The words are echoed in the ascription of praise recorded in Revelation 4:11; 5:12,13. Nebuchadnezzar’s dominion extended beyond mere territory or human subjects.

But we must return to the examination of Acts 1, and take up the teaching of the whole of the book and period in connection with the hope that was then before the believer.

## CHAPTER 5

### **The hope of Acts and the Epistles of the Period**

The question of the apostles in Acts 1:6 regarding the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, engenders other questions, as, What is the hope dominating the Acts of the Apostles? or, Does the hope change at Pentecost, or subsequently? and, most important for us who read, Is the hope of the Acts period the same as the hope of the church as expressed in the epistles of Paul written during the same period? In other words, Can there be one hope in Acts and another, different, hope in the epistles of the same period? The answer to this question is vital to our understanding of the relation of the earlier epistles of Paul to his later epistles of the mystery. If the hope of Israel persists throughout the Acts, and if it embraces all the churches that were called into existence during the Acts, then 1 Thessalonians 4 cannot express the hope of the church of the mystery, for that would bring the hope of that church

down to the hope of Israel, whether that hope be heavenly or earthly. The matter is of such importance that no apology is needed for thoroughness of investigation.

Let us proceed at once to the end of the Acts to discover whether a hope is there expressed, and if so what hope it is. Undoubtedly, in Acts 28:1-10 we have in full force the signs of Mark 16:17,18. Among these are the taking up of serpents with immunity from danger, and the laying on of hands for the recovery of the sick. As we have said, these signs are found in operation in Acts 28:1-10, where a viper, called a 'venomous beast', fastened on the apostle's hand. The experience of the islanders who watched is a plain testimony to the miraculous nature of Paul's escape:

'They looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god' (Acts 28:6).

Subsequently the same apostle healed a man of a 'fever and dysentery', and other sufferers in the island of diseases not specified.

The fact that Mark 16 penetrates so far, reveals an unbroken connection of the Acts with the Gospels. Presently we find the apostle at Rome, and, standing before the chief of the Jews, he said:

'For the HOPE OF ISRAEL I am bound with this chain' (Acts 28:20).

This statement was followed by an all-day exposition, to the chief of the Jews, of Moses and the Prophets concerning the kingdom of God and 'Jesus'. It is impossible in the face of such testimony to think that up to that date, the hope of Israel had been set aside, cancelled, or changed. Should any be found who would spiritualize this reference to the hope of Israel, it will be sufficient to turn to Acts 26:6,7 to prove its literality:

'And now I stand and am judged (I am bound with this chain) for the HOPE OF THE PROMISE made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise our *twelve tribes*, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come'.

During the course of our exposition we shall show many other references to the hope of Israel, but if we find one, unchanged, hope in chapter 1, chapter 26, and chapter 28, it is difficult to deny that the same hope obtains in chapters 2 to 25.

Let us now come to the epistles of the period. It matters not whether we agree as to the exact order in which they were written, so long as we distinguish between those epistles of Paul written before his Roman imprisonment, recorded in Acts 28, and those written during that imprisonment. During the Acts the apostle wrote seven epistles, six to the churches, and one to the Hebrews. They are associated together thus: Galatians, Hebrews, and Romans are single epistles, and Thessalonians and Corinthians are in pairs.

The truth we here seek to set forth is that the hope of the church during the Acts was millennial in character, and that a millennial hope is the hope of Israel. To teach that the hope of the Acts was one thing and the hope of the churches during the selfsame period was different, cannot be justified either by sound argument or from the epistles themselves. There is but one hope running through both the Acts and the epistles of the period.

Every reader will agree, that of all the epistles written by Paul during this period, the most fundamental is the last, viz. that to the Romans. Again, if any change is to be sought in the teaching of the epistles, we would expect to find it in the last of the series rather than in the first or the second. Most certain it is that the hope of the church to which the epistle to the Romans is addressed would not be *more Jewish* than the hope entertained by the church addressed in the epistles to the Thessalonians. On all counts then, whatever we find in Romans is conclusive evidence as to the whole period. Turning therefore to Romans 15:12,13, we read:

'And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles trust. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost'.

There are a number of things that we must note in examining the testimony of this passage.

First, the word ‘trust’, being the Greek verb *elpizo* should be translated ‘hope’ so that the connection with the word ‘hope’ (*elpis*) in the next verse shall be made clear. This correction has been made in the R.V., yet some so-called literal Versions still veil the truth by variant renderings. The article is used with the word, and a due recognition of the usage of the article here justifies the translation of the Emphatic Diaglott Version, which reads: ‘And may the God of *that* hope’, specifically referring back to the hope already mentioned in verse 12. This hope was something very personal to the saints addressed, for they were to be filled ‘with all joy and peace in believing’, and were to ‘abound’ in this hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. No words are more explicit in any epistle. Now what was this hope entertained by the church of the Acts? (1) It had to do with a prophecy of Isaiah; (2) It is associated with Christ as a root of Jesse; (3) It is related to His reign over the Gentiles. Any of these three characteristics is enough to indicate that this hope could not be connected with the ‘one hope’ of Ephesians 1:18, but all three together make it impossible of application except to a company intimately connected with the hope of Israel.

We ‘open the book’ at the passage quoted in Romans 15, and there we find ourselves in millennial surroundings:

‘And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots ... The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb ... and a little child shall lead them ... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and His rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people’ (Isa. 11:1,6,9-11).

Words cannot make more plain the fact that this hope of Romans 15 is intimately associated with the restoration and the hope of Israel. Nor can words more plainly forbid any attempt to make the hope of this church the same as the hope of the church of the mystery. To do so is misleading. To the same effect is the association in Romans 8:19-25 of the hope of the church there addressed, with the day when creation’s groan shall cease. To the same effect also are the words of Romans 16:20: ‘And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly’.

We have already examined the references to the second coming of the Lord in a series of articles in *The Berean Expositor*, Vols. 19 to 22, where every passage is given consideration, and the conclusion is justified that there is not a reference to the second coming of the Lord, outside the revelation of the mystery, that is not either a fulfilment of some Old Testament prophecy, or allied to one by the context. While therefore there is much doctrine in Romans that is fundamental both to the church of the Acts, and to the new company called after Israel were set aside in Acts 28, it nevertheless stands to reason that while Israel are set aside their hope would remain in abeyance. Ephesians speaks of ‘one hope of His calling’, and ‘one hope of your calling’, and seeing that each calling has its associated hope, it follows that it is a vital principle of interpretation that different callings with their appropriate hopes be kept separate and distinct from each other.

### **Further teaching concerning the hope of Israel in Acts 1:6-14**

In our last section we considered the fact that the hope that runs throughout the Acts, and the hope that the epistles of the same period entertain, is the hope of Israel. It is true that this hope has its heavenly, as well as its earthly sphere, but that is no justification for making that heavenly sphere of Israel’s hope the same as the ‘one hope’ of the mystery. Further light upon the hope of this Acts period is found in the verses that follow Acts 1:6, and to the consideration of this testimony we now address ourselves:

‘And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father appointed by His own Authority’ (Acts 1:7 Author’s translation).

One of the most natural things to do, whenever the second coming of Christ is before the mind, is to conjecture whether it is possible to forecast the date of its advent. While this may be natural, it is unscriptural, and consequently wrong. The servant who concluded that the Lord’s coming was delayed, began to smite his fellow-servant and to drink with the drunken. The salutary attitude in view of the Lord’s return is, surely, to carry

out His injunction and 'occupy' till He comes, remembering that 'Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing' (Matt. 24:46).

Every now and again someone will arise who forecasts the date of the Lord's return, and some will always be found who will, as a consequence, dispose of their business, and wait the expected day. It strikes the outside observer as strange that in such circumstances a business should be sold: why should it not be given away? Of what use would the proceeds be in that day? Again, if the nature of one's business is such that, being assured of the nearness of the Lord's return, one would leave it, surely that is sufficient reason for leaving it now, irrespective of 'times and seasons'. The Lord's own instruction to His servants in view of His coming is not: 'Give up your work', but 'Carry on', 'Occupy'.

There are a number of passages that warn the believer against attempting the computation of the date of the second coming:

'But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only' (Matt. 24:36).

'Ye know not what hour your Lord doth come' (Matt. 24:42).

'In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh' (Matt. 24:44).

'Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh' (Matt. 25:13).

'But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night' (1 Thess. 5:1,2).

The fact is that since the setting aside of Israel in Acts 28, prophetic times are in abeyance and we are living in a parenthetical period during which the prophetic clock has been stopped.

The basis of all prophetic computation is found in Daniel 9, and it is evident that the present interval of well-nigh 2,000 years has no place in Daniel's 70 weeks. If, then, the computation of times was clearly wrong during the periods of the Gospels and the Acts when the hope of Israel was still before the believer, how much more should it be discountenanced during the present dispensation of the mystery? Instead of being left to speculate about 'times and seasons' the apostles were instructed how they were to 'occupy', with the hope of Israel's restoration in view:

'But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come (having come) upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part (end) of the earth' (Acts 1:8).

The expression, the 'end of the earth' is of great importance, because by its use the Lord associated with His command a passage from Isaiah which has a bearing upon the apostles' question of Acts 1:6. The passage of Isaiah, to which we refer, is one that is difficult to translate with certainty. We will compare it as it appears in the A.V. and R.V., when the difference will at once be manifest:

'And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, *Though Israel be not gathered*, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength' (Isa. 49:5 A.V.).

'And now saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, and *that Israel be gathered unto Him*: (for I am honourable in the eyes of the LORD, and my God is become my strength)' (Isa. 49:5 R.V.).

The difference between the two renderings depends upon whether we read the Hebrew word *lo* as meaning 'to Him', or 'not'. The Lord, Who knew the end from the beginning, and Who knew that the same Hebrew word could be read as it appears in either the A.V. or the R.V., so caused Isaiah to write that the prophecy sets forth the facts without providing Israel with excuse. It was the Saviour's mission to gather Israel to the Lord, and this gathering shall yet be accomplished. But it was known that Israel would not repent at the Lord's first coming, and that the salvation of the Lord would extend to the Gentiles; consequently, Isaiah. 49:6 continues:



‘And He said, It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto *the end of the earth*’ (Isa. 49:6).

In the structure of the Acts as a whole, we have already shown that Acts 13 constitutes a parallel with the equipment of the twelve on the day of Pentecost, and accordingly we find Paul traversing much the same ground in his early ministry.

When the Jews refused his testimony at Antioch, the apostle refers to this identical passage in Isaiah, when he says:

‘Seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto *the ends of the earth*’ (Acts 13:46,47).

There are some who would make this the point where Israel is set aside and the mystery begins, but seeing that the apostle is fulfilling a passage in the prophet Isaiah, such cannot be the case, for the mystery was, at the time of his fulfilling utterance, unknown and unrevealed in any part of Scripture, and was disclosed only by revelation to him as the Lord’s prisoner. This ground has been covered in many articles in the *Berean Expositor*, in many booklets, and in the three larger volumes published by us. While it is beside our purpose to go over the ground again here, the matter is nevertheless of supreme importance, and the reader, who is unaware of the unique character of the dispensation of the mystery, is earnestly urged to consider the claims of the apostle in Ephesians 3:1-13 as a matter of prime importance, if studies of such as these in which we are engaged are to be effectively pursued.

The spiritual equipment of the apostles, received at Pentecost and promised in Acts 1:8, had in view the gathering of Israel (a feature that will receive fuller exposition as we proceed to the study of Acts 2 and 3), and also the gathering of a company from among the Gentiles, during the period in which opportunity of repentance was permitted to Israel. This we shall find is referred to by the apostle Paul in such passages as Romans 11:7-24 and 1 Corinthians 14:21, where the extension of spiritual gifts to the Gentiles had for its object the provocation of Israel. When, however, Israel refused to be provoked to emulation, and as a nation were set aside in Acts 28, a new dispensation, with new characteristics, was introduced, and among the new characteristics is the very evident change in connection with supernatural gifts of the Spirit.

The last recorded utterance of Christ on earth is in Acts 1:7 and 8, where His words give assurance that, whatever the answer may be to their question concerning the time of Israel’s restoration, all was well, for all was in the Father’s hands. Their part was to witness faithfully, even though ‘Israel be not gathered’. Their enduement included a witness to ‘the end of the earth’. What the Lord did not say to the disciples in so many words is very vividly brought before the mind by the event that immediately followed:

‘And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, 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’ (Acts 1:9-11).

Further questioning concerning the hope of Israel is thus referred to the second coming. The words ‘shall so come in like manner’, would make the apostles realize not only that the restoration of the kingdom to Israel would be fulfilled when Daniel 7 was fulfilled:

‘I saw ... the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven ... and there was given him dominion’ (Dan. 7:13,14).  
but that the angel’s statement also had Zechariah 14:4 in view:

‘And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east’ (Zech. 14:4).

‘Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day’s journey’ (Acts 1:12).

There is a close parallel in Acts 3 with the outstanding teaching of Acts 1.

(1) In both, the ‘restoration’ is in view:

‘Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’ (Acts 1:6).

‘The times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began’ (Acts 3:21).

(2) In both, there is the possibility that Israel would not be restored immediately:

‘It is not for you to know the times or the seasons’ (Acts 1:7).

‘Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out’ (Acts 3:19).

(3) In both, the second coming of the Lord is prominent:

‘This same Jesus ... shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven’ (Acts 1:11).

‘He shall send Jesus Christ ... Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution’ (Acts 3:20, 21).

(4) In both, there is the hint that the Gentile may be blessed as a result of Israel’s attitude:

‘Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem ... and unto the uttermost part (ends) of the earth’ (Acts 1:8).

‘Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities’ (Acts 3:26).

That the Gentile, if not specifically mentioned here, is nevertheless in mind, may be seen by reference to Acts 13:

‘It was necessary that the word of God should FIRST have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles ... unto the ends of the earth’ (Acts 13:46,47).

The more the opening chapters of the Acts are scrutinized, the less is warrant found for the introduction there of ‘the church’. All is intimately bound up with the hope of Israel’s restoration. When we say ‘all’, we mean every item that is brought forward, such as the forty days’ exposition of the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 1:3), the association of the baptism of John with Pentecost (Acts 1:4, 5), the extension of the witness to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8), and the coming of Christ to the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:11,12). All these have a bearing upon the restoration of Israel: not one can be made to speak of ‘the church’, without dislocation. With the return of the disciples to Jerusalem and their meeting together in prayer with the women, and Mary, and the Lord’s brethren, the introduction to the Acts finishes, leaving the way open for the examination of the new story of Acts itself, which commences at 1:15.

In view of its prominence in the opening chapters of the Acts and its close bearing upon many points of doctrine and practice found both in the Acts and in the epistles of the period, it will be of service if we give the matter of Israel’s restoration further consideration before commencing the study of the Acts proper, that is Acts 1:15 to the end of the book. The very use of the word ‘restore’ presupposes ‘loss’, ‘forfeiture’, ‘cessation’, or ‘lapse’, and the history of Israel clearly shows that the covenants and promises that were made with them and the fathers were withdrawn, or postponed, because of the faithlessness of the people.

Three great causes of Israel’s rejection are indicated in the Word, viz. (1) Idolatry; (2) Rejection of Christ; (3) Antagonism to the preaching of the Gospel. Other intermediate causes will be found, but these are the most prominent.

Before Israel entered the land of promise, and before a king sat upon the throne, Moses warned the people of the consequences of departure from the covenant of God:

‘Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt: For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and who had not given to them (see margin) any portion ... and the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger ...’ (Deut. 29:24-28).

Before proceeding, the whole of Leviticus 26 should be read. The chapter is full of teaching on the subject of Israel’s rejection.

The second great cause of Israel’s rejection was their blindness and hardness of heart at the coming of Christ:

‘And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes’ (Luke 19:41,42).

‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate’ (Matt. 23:37,38).

The third cause of the rejection of Israel is seen in their bitter opposition to the spread of the gospel. Such passages as Acts 17:1-7 and 22:1-22 should be read. Space for the citation of many of these passages cannot be afforded, but we give one of them from the epistle to the Thessalonians:

‘Ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: who 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 alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost’ (1 Thess. 2:14-16).

## CHAPTER 6

### Jerusalem ... Antioch ... Rome

#### The geography of the Acts and its witness

In the opening chapter of this book, in which the book of Acts as a whole was considered, we found that the first fourteen verses formed a preface to the book, in which was gathered up in brief what had been said more fully in the last chapter of Luke, and, therefore, that Acts proper commenced with verse 15. We also discovered that the structure of the book placed Peter and Paul in correspondence, each having his own spiritual equipment (chapters 2 and 13), and ministry (3 to 11 and 13 to 19), and both finally suffering imprisonment (12 and 28). The opening member of the structure was given on page 4 as:

A<sub>2</sub> B 1:15 to 2:13. JERUSALEM. - Holy Spirit. Enduement of the twelve.

The geography of the Acts is like an index finger pointing out the road which the teaching must inevitably follow. In broadest terms it is Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome; but the intervening movements are important, as showing the manner in which the teaching spread in ever widening circles. Let us make a note of the geography of this important book.

The whole movement is anticipated in 1:8 where we read:

‘Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth’.

There is ambiguity that is evidently intentional in the use of the word translated ‘earth’. That this Greek word, *ge*, is rightly translated ‘earth’, receives confirmation from Acts 4:24, 7:49, 14:15 and 17:26. But that it is also rightly translated ‘land’ is shown by Acts 7:3,4,36; 13:19 and 27:44. It is therefore a matter for careful thought that the Lord used a word which might have meant either a world-wide commission, or one embracing only the uttermost parts of the land of Israel, the alternatives depending respectively upon Israel’s repentance and entrance into their

true ministry among the nations, or their failure, involving the passing on of their work to others. This view is confirmed when we learn that the only other occurrence in the Acts of the phrase 'the uttermost parts of the earth' is in chapter 13. The reader who has acquainted himself with the structure of the book as a whole will realize that its occurrence there, at the commencement of the second great ministry of the Acts, is, of itself, suggestive. And the passage gains in suggestiveness when read in its context. Paul had preached in the synagogue at Antioch, following much the same line as that of Peter in Acts 2, but with the distinctiveness peculiar to his ministry, to be noted in due course: the Jews had turned away from his teaching, and he warned them that if they persisted in their gainsaying and unrepentance a judgment would fall upon them which would turn out to be the greater blessing of the Gentile:

'Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you ... It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, *lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us*, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth' (Acts 13:40-47).

Here then is a passage that must be kept in mind as we read Acts 1:8. There the Lord gave one commandment, here He gives another; not because of any changeableness on His part, but because of the failure of the people of Israel.

In Acts 1:12 we have mentioned together, the mount called Olivet, and Jerusalem. We have already seen that the ascension from the mount of Olives is intentionally associated with the second coming, as prophesied in Zechariah 14:4. Jerusalem now becomes the centre, and all that takes place in Acts chapters 2 to 5 takes place there. And although in the opening verse of chapter 6 we hear a new note, 'the Grecians', Jerusalem is still the centre as 6:7 shows:

'And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith'.

The geography of the Acts is so important a matter that we must refrain from speaking of the nationalities involved, and the sects and philosophies represented, until we are able to give the subject something of the attention it deserves.

Samaria comes into notice in Acts 8, and first in connection with the persecution associated with Saul, which follows the same order as given in 1:8:

'And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at *Jerusalem*; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of *Judaea* and *Samaria*, except the apostles' (Acts 8:1).

As the Lord had said in 1:8, this scattering resulted in the spread of the witness. Nor have we to trust human inference for this information, for in 11:19 we read:

'Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only'.

We must return however to chapter 8, for there we read of another witness, Philip, who went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto them (8:5). Jerusalem however remains the centre, for the apostles which were at Jerusalem sent Peter and John down to them that they might receive the Holy Ghost (8:14,15). With this agrees the account of the Ethiopian eunuch who was brought to a saving knowledge of Christ by Philip's ministry after he had been to Jerusalem to worship (8:27). The chapter closes with the statement that Philip preached in all cities, till he came to Cæsarea, a seaport some 70 miles north-west of Jerusalem.

With the opening of chapter 9, Damascus comes into the book. This was a city of Syria. Cæsarea again comes into the record in connection with Cornelius (Acts 10). That Jerusalem maintains its central place in the ministry, however, Acts 11 shows by the necessity that Peter was under to justify, to the leaders of the church there, his visit to Cornelius.

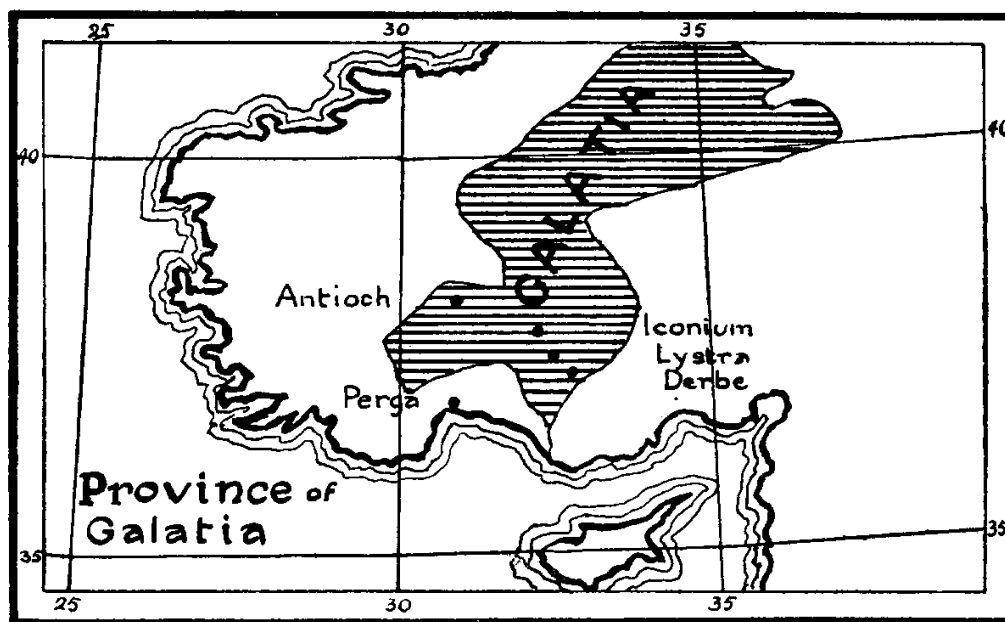
Towards the end of Acts 11 Antioch comes into view, with Barnabas travelling as far as Tarsus to seek Saul (Acts 11:20,25). Nevertheless, Jerusalem remains the centre, for:

‘... tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch’ (Acts 11:22).

This section of the Acts closes with the return of Barnabas and Saul from Jerusalem (Acts 12:25). But with the opening of chapter 13 commences the second part of the Acts, and here the interest centres in Antioch. In this city Saul and Barnabas were commissioned by the Holy Spirit. From Antioch they travelled on their first missionary journey, and to Antioch - not Jerusalem - they returned when the work was done (Acts 13:4; 14:26). This commission at Antioch was a remarkable foreshadowing of Paul’s independent ministry, as we hope to show in its own place: for the present we continue to follow the geographical indication of the book.

Paul’s journey took him to Asia Minor *via* Cyprus. It has been shown by *Sir William Ramsay* that Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, were all cities of the Roman Province of Galatia, although they were not part of the original kingdom of Galatia, for that kingdom did not extend so far south. Consequently, we no longer have to introduce into the history of the Acts imaginary cities which the apostle might have visited when he founded the Galatian church. Instead of this makeshift we realise that in Acts 13 and 14 we have mentioned the actual cities of Galatia to which the epistle to the Galatians was subsequently written. Moreover, this discovery removes the difficulty which otherwise exists of placing the epistle, and gives us every reason to believe that the epistle to the Galatians is the first written by Paul.

The accompanying map shows the position of Galatia as it was in the days of Paul.



Details and authorities for the revision of the ancient map will be found in *The Apostle of the Reconciliation* chapter 8.

For the sake of any who may be puzzled by the references to Antioch in the text of page 44 and the name Antioch on the map above, we would explain that there was one city named Antioch in Syria, and another of the same name in Pisidia.

We must now press forward. Chapter 15 finds the apostle at Jerusalem. The moment had not yet come for his independent ministry, and for some time he works in fellowship with the Twelve, without however relinquishing his independence or the peculiar character of his message (Gal. 2, where Jerusalem and Antioch are the two storm centres, *see* verses 1 and 7-11).

Toward the close of Acts 15 Paul proposed a second visit to the churches in Asia Minor, though not then realising that the Lord was leading on to wider fields of witness. Asia and Bithynia being closed to the apostle by the Spirit of God (Acts 16:6,7), Paul pressed on to the coast town of Troas. There he had a vision which diverted his course to the mainland, and at Philippi he preached the gospel for the first time in *Europe*, surely an epoch fraught with tremendous issues for us all! From Philippi he travelled to Thessalonica and Berea, and thence on to Athens. When these chapters are before us we shall delight in following out their message, but we cannot here stay to do so. From Corinth the apostle visited Cenchrea, thence on to Ephesus, and so to Jerusalem. The apostle purposed that, after he had once again visited Macedonia and Jerusalem, he must see Rome (Acts 19:21).

The journey to Jerusalem occupies chapters 19 to 21, many important incidents occurring on the way. His arrival at Jerusalem ends in his imprisonment at Caesarea (Acts 23:33-35), and after two years of weary waiting, the apostle is taken by ship to Rome, where he arrives after an eventful voyage, including shipwreck (Acts 28).

While it is easy to overstress this aspect of our study, the geography of the book has its due place, and we trust that our readers are now in possession of the essential movement of the record:

Jerusalem - Antioch - Rome.

## CHAPTER 7

### The three R's Restoration Reconciliation Rejection

In our last chapter we traced the story of the Acts in relation to its geography. Before proceeding to the detailed study of its several parts we must look at the three outstanding landmarks; Jerusalem ... Antioch ... Rome, in their association with the corresponding three distinctive phases of Acts. We have devoted the first chapters of this book to the demonstration of the fact that *restoration* is the dominating aspect of the opening section. Noticeably associated with that is the insistence in the narrative on the place of importance which the people of Israel still held. The question, 'Wilt Thou at this time *RESTORE* again the kingdom to *ISRAEL*?' (Acts 1:6) indicates an expectation that is maintained throughout the bulk of the Acts. 'Ye men of *Israel*'; 'Let all the house of *Israel* know'; 'Be it known unto all, and unto all the people of *Israel*'; 'To give repentance to *Israel*'; 'Men of *Israel*', and similar expressions are found throughout the Book, but particularly in the opening section (1:15 to chapter 12).

So is it with the title '*Jew*'. 'There were dwelling at Jerusalem *Jews*'. 'It is unlawful for a man that is a *Jew*' (said Peter); 'The word to none but *Jews* only' (Acts chapter 2 to chapter 12).

But with chapter 13 comes a change. The Jew is still present, and for a period covered by many chapters the apostle maintains the practice of going to the synagogues of the Jews before he speaks to the Gentiles: but no longer can it be said '*Jews* only': we now read '*Jews* and Greeks' (18:4; 19:10; 20:21).

While Greeks are Gentiles, the Scripture suggests a difference between the two. Mention is made of '*Jews* and Greeks' in a manner which suggests that they were united in some way which could not equally be said of all Gentiles. The apostle differentiates between Greeks and Barbarians, just as he does between wise and unwise (Rom. 1:14). In 1 Corinthians 1. he associates the Greek with the search for wisdom (1 Cor. 1:22), and just as righteousness is exhibited in Israel side by side with human failure, so wisdom is exhibited in the Greeks side by side with human failure, and both find a meeting-place in Christ. Consequently, if the key word of the opening section of Acts be restoration, in association with Jerusalem, the Jew, and the ministry of Peter, so, as surely, the keynote of the next division is *reconciliation*, associated with Antioch, the Jew and the Greek together, and the ministry of Paul.

The possibility of the salvation of the Gentiles does not seem to have been entertained by the apostles at Jerusalem. This is evidenced by the surprise with which the news of the salvation of Cornelius was received:

‘When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, *Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life*’ (Acts 11:18).

Peter, by his own mouth, himself confesses that Gentile salvation was never in his thoughts either at Pentecost or after. To the seeking Cornelius he said:

‘You know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or to come near to a foreigner, but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean’ (Acts 10:28 Author’s translation).

The word ‘reconciliation’, which it has been suggested is the keynote of this new section of Acts is one of intense significance, and is found only in the epistles of Paul. It is never used by Peter, James or John. It signified that the exclusiveness of Israel’s position among the nations was passing, and that the far-off Gentiles were being brought back again into favour.

This is not the place to make the large digression necessary for an examination of the subject of reconciliation, but two passages will suffice to suggest its importance in the Acts. The first is Acts 17:16-30, where the apostle speaks of the long centuries of Gentile darkness during the period of Israel’s ascendancy, but where he also indicates that the time had arrived when the Gentile would come back into favour. Here are his words:

‘God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands ... hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation ... the times of this ignorance God winked at (looked over); BUT NOW commandeth *all men every where* to repent’ (Acts 17:24-30).

The second passage is Romans 11:

‘I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? For I speak to you Gentiles, in as much as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?’ (Rom. 11:11-15).

Here it is explicitly stated that salvation came to the Gentile through the fall of Israel. Further, it is taught that the fall of Israel enriched the world, the diminishing of Israel enriched the Gentiles, and the casting away of Israel brought about the reconciling of the world. In addition, Paul here claims to be the apostle of the Gentiles, and shows that the Gentile was being enriched at that time to provoke Israel to jealousy. But not until we reach Acts 28 do we know for certain that Israel would not repent. There, in the very last chapter, we find Paul sending for the chief of the Jews and telling them that ‘for the hope of Israel’ he was bound with a chain (28:17-20). Not until the chief of the Jews there had refused his all-day testimony did Paul pronounce the judgment of which he had warned them in Acts 13:40, quoting Isaiah 6:10, and declaring that the salvation of God was *sent* to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28).

The last few verses of Acts 28 are associated with Rome. The keyword is *rejection*, for Israel now pass off the scene; they become *Lo-ammi*, and salvation is sent to the Gentile, without reference to the Jew. This brings the book to a close.

We can now visualize the Book of the Acts under three R’s thus:

RESTORATION.	<i>Jerusalem.</i>	Jews only. Peter.
RECONCILIATION.	<i>Antioch.</i>	Jews and Gentiles. Paul and others.
REJECTION.	<i>Rome.</i>	Gentiles only. Paul.

With the preparation afforded by this survey we can take up the opening section, and learn its lessons without its being spoiled by the intrusion of matters that had no place during the period of this first section, but belong to subsequent times and commissions.

## CHAPTER 8

**The Twelve (Acts 1:15 to 2:13)**

The first section of the Acts proper, viz., 1:15 to 2:13, is indicated in the structure given on page 4. This section must now be given consideration. The construction of the first verse is unusual. The flow of the narrative is abruptly broken by the insertion of the statement: 'the number of names together were about one hundred and twenty'. Why should it have been necessary thus to break into the sentence? The answer must be, because in some way the number of those gathered had special significance, and that the very manner of the introduction of the information is intended to arrest attention. When we put one hundred and twenty into figures, 120, we become conscious of the presence of the factor 12. We also notice that the remainder of chapter 1 is occupied with the bringing of the number of the apostles, once more, up to twelve, Matthias being added to the eleven (Acts 1:26), and Peter 'standing up with the eleven' (Acts 2:14). Our attention is also drawn to the enumeration of the countries from which the assembled Jews had come (Acts 2:9-11).

(1) Parthians, (2) and Medes, (3) and Elamites, (4) and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, (5) and in Judæa, (6) and Cappadocia, (7) in Pontus, (8) and Asia, (9) Phrygia, (10) and Pamphylia, (11) in Egypt, and (12) in the parts of Libya about Cyrene.

Here are twelve countries, and those that came from them summed up in the words that follow as being 'strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians'. The terms 'strangers' and 'proselytes' show that we are no longer reading a list of countries represented, but a summary of the characteristics of the crowd of persons assembled.

The recurrence of Israel's number, twelve, is not accidental. Accordingly we take note of the recurring feature as follows:

The number assembled (Acts 1:15)	. . . . .	120
The number of the apostles made up (Acts 1:26).	. . .	12
The number of nations represented (Acts 2:9-11)	. . .	12

At first sight, there appears to be little in common with the narrative of the appointment of Matthias and the coming of the spirit on the day of Pentecost; nevertheless a patient study reveals one or two connections. For example, in Acts 1:16 we read: 'The Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake', and in Acts 2:4: 'They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance'. Here is an evident parallel, the inspiration of the Psalmist in the past being comparable with the enduement of the apostles at Pentecost. Still closer to Acts 2:4 is the statement of David himself in 2 Samuel 23:2: 'The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and His Word was in my tongue'. It is moreover important to notice the way in which the Psalms are brought forward as proof, or warrant, or as being fulfilled in the early Acts. For instance:

- Psalm 41 is quoted as of Judas in Acts 1:16.
- Psalms 69 and 109 are quoted of Judas in Acts 1:20.
- Psalm 16 is quoted of the resurrection in Acts 2:25-28.
- Psalm 132 is quoted of the true King in Acts 2:30.

In Acts 13, where a new section commences, Paul is following the same plan:

- Psalm 89 is quoted of David himself in Acts 13:22.
- Psalm 132 is quoted of David's seed in Acts 13:23.
- Psalm 2 quoted as of the resurrection in Acts 13:33.
- Psalm 16 is quoted as of the resurrection in Acts 13:35.

We shall accordingly be wise if we add to the notes already made, the two references Acts 1:16 and Acts 2:4. At first sight there appears to be no connection between the fate of Judas, as recorded in Acts 1:18,19, and the record



of the gathering at Jerusalem in Acts 2:5,6. Yet in spite of the dissimilarity of subject, upon comparison two parallels are discovered. The fate of Judas, we learn, was known to ‘all the dwellers at Jerusalem’, the Greek word used being *katoikousin* (Acts 1:19). The same word is used in Acts 2:5, ‘There were dwelling at Jerusalem’ (*katoikountes*). Moreover Peter says that the field that Judas purchased was called *Aceldama* ‘in their proper tongue’, which in the Greek reads *te idia dialekto*. Exactly the same words are used by the dwellers at Jerusalem in Acts 2:6 when they said, ‘Every man heard them speak in his own language’ (*te idia dialekto*). Further, we note that where chapter 1:15 says that the gathering was ‘together’, and in chapter 2:1 ‘in one place’, the identical Greek phrase (*epi to auto*) is used ‘upon the same thing’. We have therefore before us enough material fully to justify the oneness of the section before us. Let us put the pieces together.

### Acts 1:15 to 2:13.

- A 1:15,16.   **a** In those days.
  - b** The 120.
    - c** Together (*epi to auto*).
    - d** The Holy Ghost  
(*To pneuma To hagion*).
    - e** Spake by the mouth of David.
- B 1:17-19.   **f** Dwellers at Jerusalem (*katoikeo*).
  - g** In their proper tongue  
(*Te idia dialekto auton*).
- C 1:20-26. The appointment of Matthias. The 12 Apostles.
- A 2:1-4.   **a** The day of Pentecost.
  - b** All (i.e., the twelve).
    - c** In one place (*epi to auto*).
    - d** Holy Ghost (*pneuma hagion*).
    - e** Began to speak.
- B 2:5-8   **f** Dwellers at Jerusalem (*katoikeo*)
  - g** In his own language  
(*Te idia dialekto auton*).
- C 2:9-13. The representative nations.
  - The twelve Countries.

While we may give assent to the evidence of our eyes and agree that there is a verbal connection between the passages, it may not be very evident wherein the deeper connection thus indicated consists. Let us therefore look further. It is very evident that the apostle Peter and those who gathered with him realized that the gap in the number of the apostles occasioned by the fall of Judas was a matter for immediate concern. Of all things that it might have been expected would claim consideration and prayer consequent upon the Ascension of the Lord, the last to enter our unassisted minds would have been the matter of Judas and his successor. Not so the apostles. They were to tarry at Jerusalem and once more preach the kingdom. Should Israel repent and the kingdom be set up, the Lord would fulfil His promise that the twelve apostles should sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. While, however, the number of the apostles was incomplete it could not be said, ‘all things are ready’ (Matt. 22:4), therefore we can appreciate the fact that the apostles were rightly concerned about this matter.

The Jews gathered at Jerusalem to keep the feast were not, so far as is revealed, representative of the complete twelve tribes: all that is said is that they were gathered from the surrounding nations, and an examination reveals that the number of the nations was twelve. That is sufficient for the purpose: the link between Acts 1 and 2 is made evident, and the theme of this section, the restoration of Israel is advanced. Whether Israel would repent and the kingdom be set up at that time, none of the apostles knew. It was not for them to know times and seasons. They were witnesses, and fully equipped for their work.

But in spite of the evident fitness of these two sections, there are those who maintain that Matthias was not appointed by God but by man, and that Peter and the rest were prompted by a zeal that was not according to knowledge. The matter is of great importance and must therefore be considered. Let us give heed to the word as we examine the matter. First of all, can we be certain that Peter was right when he said that the Psalms he quoted referred to Judas? We believe we can. But a few days before the Lord Himself had said:

‘I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against Me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He’ (John 13:18,19).

Here the Lord not only quoted the Psalm as of Judas, but emphasized the point that He was informing them before it came to pass in order that their faith might be strengthened at the accomplishment of the event. Now it had come to pass, and they believed.

In addition to this we have recorded in Luke 24:44-48 the fact that the Lord not only passed in review the Old Testament Scriptures, including the Psalms, and dealt with those passages that spoke of Himself, but that He also ‘opened their understanding, that they might *understand* the Scriptures’. When therefore Peter said, ‘This Scripture must needs have been fulfilled’, he was but repeating the lesson of Luke 24:26 and 46, for the self-same words there, ‘ought’, and ‘behoved’, are translated ‘must needs be’ in Acts 1:16.

Even though it may be agreed that Peter’s quotation of the Psalm was appropriate, it is possible that some may entertain the suspicion that in selecting but two men the apostles were limiting the Lord. We shall however find, upon examination, that there was an important reason for this limitation. Referring once more to our Lord’s own instructions, we read:

‘But when the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father ... He shall testify (bear witness) of Me: and ye also shall bear witness, because YE HAVE BEEN WITH ME FROM THE BEGINNING’ (John 15:26,27).

The apostles were evidently acting with this qualification in mind, for Acts 1:21,22 reads:

‘Wherefore of these men which have companied with us ALL THE TIME that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, BEGINNING FROM THE BAPTISM OF JOHN, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection’.

It was therefore not a matter of piety, learning, or fitness of character: what was essential was capacity to bear personal testimony.

It is generally taught that the words ‘that he might go to his own place’ (Acts 1:25), mean that Judas had been consigned to hell or perdition, but the passage bears another sense and should read:

‘... shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship (from which Judas by transgression fell), that he might go to his own place ... and he was numbered with the eleven’.

The fact that the Holy Spirit made no difference between Matthias and the rest of the apostles should silence all objection. That Paul himself speaks of ‘The twelve’ as separate from himself is eloquent testimony to the accuracy of the inclusion of Matthias among the twelve (1 Cor. 15:5). In the face of these facts we believe that the appointment of Matthias was in complete harmony with the will of God, and that of necessity, therefore, Paul was an apostle of an entirely distinct and independent order.

## CHAPTER 9

### **Pentecost and Power (Acts 2:1-13)**

In our last chapter we found that the company of apostles had been made up to the complete number, twelve, and that there was a purposed connection between this number and the representative gathering of Jews at Jerusalem. All was now ready for the great initiatory work of Pentecost. Something of this thought seems to be in mind in Acts

2:1 where we read that the day of Pentecost had '*fully* come'. This is a word used only by Luke, and occurs but twice in his Gospel: in the first occurrence it has the ordinary meaning of filling, in that case the filling of a boat with water (Luke 8:23), and in the second it has the meaning of fulfilling, as of a prophecy (Luke 9:51). Thus we see that in the choice of this word the writer had in view the thought that everything was ready for the fulfilment of all that Pentecost stands for in the Old Testament type. The endowment with power from on high, for which the apostles were instructed to wait, came upon them as cloven tongues of fire:

'And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance' (Acts 2:4).

Here we must pause to observe an important distinction. As the passage stands in the A.V. 'The Holy Ghost' and 'The Spirit' are indistinguishable from one another. The subject is of importance and must be treated accordingly.

Upon examination of the original we discover that there appears to be a reason why we sometimes read *pneuma hagion*, 'holy spirit', without the article, and sometimes *To pneuma to hagion*, 'The Holy Spirit'. The passage before us is a case in point. The first reference to the Holy Ghost is written without the article: it is simply *pneuma hagion*, 'holy spirit', whereas the second reference, 'the Spirit', is written with the article and refers to 'the Spirit' Himself. In other words '*The Spirit*' is the Giver, whereas '*spirit*' is His gift. In Luke 24:49 the Lord bade the disciples wait at Jerusalem until they should be 'endued with power from on high'. The same writer, Luke, when he summarizes his own words in Acts 1:4,5, refers to this promise of the Father when he speaks of their being 'baptised with *pneuma hagion* (holy spirit) not many days hence'. On the day of Pentecost, the Giver, the Holy Spirit, endued the apostles with power from on high, *pneuma hagion*, 'holy spirit', which consisted of the gifts of the Spirit. It will be very necessary, therefore, to distinguish between the Giver and His gifts. The Holy Spirit Himself is seen in Acts 1:16:

'This Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost (Spirit) (*To pneuma to hagion*) by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas'.

One or two references will sufficiently illustrate the difference intended in these two expressions:

Acts 2:38: 'The gift of *pneuma hagion*' (The gift, not the Giver).

Acts 4:8: 'Then Peter, filled with *pneuma hagion*' (Again the gift).

Acts 5:3: 'Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to *To pneuma to hagion*' (The Holy Spirit personally).

There is however need for caution here, lest it be surmised that it is possible, by rule of thumb, thus to classify all occurrences under the two heads and so settle every reading. It is not so possible, because the article, 'the', must sometimes be used by reason of what is 'second mention', which is an indication that the reference concerned looks back to a previous one. The application of a rule of thumb method to determine the point at issue would thus be futile. What can safely be said is that *pneuma hagion* without the article is never used of the Holy Spirit Himself, and that, apart from grammatical necessity, the article is not used when the reference is to the gift. Most readers know that Dr. E. W. Bullinger has given an illuminating amount of material in his book *The Giver and His gifts*. The contents of this work are given in Appendix 101 of the Companion Bible, and should be consulted by every interested reader.

The power from on high with which the apostles were endued, took the form of 'tongues', and was immediately made manifest by the fact that they actually spoke in the peculiar dialects that belonged to the assembled multitude 'out of every nation under heaven'. This was a 'gift of tongues' indeed, and not one of the apostles who received such a gift would have any hesitation regarding his future sphere of witness. It is important also to notice that the power of the *word* is here given before every other manifestation of power. Behind all the miracles that were subsequently wrought by the apostles was the mighty *word*. Peter *spoke* to the lame man *words* of power when he said: 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk' (Acts 3:6).

The close association between the inspiration of David (Acts 1:16) and the inspiration of the apostles (Acts 2:4) forced into prominence by the structure, is further emphasized by Peter himself when he wrote his second epistle, the 'rushing' wind of Acts 2:2 finding its echo in 2 Peter 1:21, where he says:

'For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by *pneuma hagion* (holy spirit)'.

Here the word 'moved' is the same as is translated 'rushing' in Acts 2:2.

There are many today who feel that the absence of the gift of tongues is a serious handicap to witness, but when the facts are faced we find it is not so. During the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles the church possessed no other Scriptures than the Old Testament. The New Testament, as we know it, did not exist. Slowly, as years went by, an Epistle here and a 'Gospel' there would be written, and when the church finally possessed the prophetic writings now known to us as the New Testament, the need for the gift of tongues and other supernatural endowments ceased. Consequently, today he who faithfully uses the inspired Word of God in its fulness is on the same level of equipment as those of the early church. The fact that physical healing and other phenomena are not now associated with the preaching of the word is explainable on the ground of the absence of Israel, as a nation, a feature that is of the utmost dispensational importance.

Those who are acquainted with the Jewish mind and Jewish history know that it was the ambition of many Jews who had been born in foreign lands, to spend their last days in Jerusalem. These are described as 'dwellers' at Jerusalem. That there were those who had come to keep the feast, other than 'dwellers', is clear from Acts 2:10, where some are called 'strangers of Rome', and where, in the same verse, the whole company is summed up as 'Jews and proselytes'.

At first sight the enumeration of the countries from which the assembled Jews came strikes the reader as somewhat odd, but when we stand with Peter and think of the dispersion of Israel, we shall see definite order and intention. There had been three great dispersions of the Jews and these are indicated in the list of countries given in Acts 2:9-11.

The first was of the ten tribes into Media and Assyria, and the two tribes to Babylon. At the time of the apostles, the Parthians ruled over a district that extended from the Euphrates to the Jordan and the Oxus to the Persian Gulf. The second took the Jews to Asia Minor, Cappadocia, etc., and was an offshoot of the Assyrian dispersion. The third, or Egyptian dispersion, took place under Ptolemy Lagus. There is also in this list of countries an evident allusion to the prophecy of restoration found in Isaiah 11:11:

'It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea'.

Fuller details of these dispersions are given in *Conybeare and Howson*, Vol. I. 20, 22, and in *Medes' Essays*. We do not further pursue the matter here, but would remark in passing that Peter seems to have kept in touch with the dispersion during his lifetime. He went to Babylon (1 Peter 5:13). He also wrote his two epistles to the dispersion in Asia Minor, and, if Jerome is to be trusted, he provided for the spiritual needs of the Egyptian dispersion by sending John Mark to them.

Returning to the narrative, we find there was a division of opinion among the hearers. Some were amazed and in doubt, saying to one another, 'What is the meaning of this?' In this question there is rather unusual use made of *thelo*, to wish, or to will, as though they said to one another: 'What is the *intention* of all this?' 'What *purpose* does it express?' We have already demonstrated the fact that the Acts of the Apostles places the ministry of Peter and Paul in correspondence. This correspondence is set forth not merely in large parallel sections, but in actual repetition of words, phrases and actions, and the peculiar usage of *thelo*, just noticed, is an example of this minute correspondence. The gathered multitude at Jerusalem say, *Ti an theloi touto einai* (Acts 2:12). So, also, another assembly, at the great city of wisdom, Athens, say, *Ti an theloi tauta einai*, 'What these things mean' (Acts 17:20). It is possible that the word *theloi* is used in a similar sense in 2 Peter 3:5 where the phrase: 'For this they willingly are ignorant of', may mean that the scoffers missed the true meaning or intention that is to be discovered in the

record of creation, where, over and over again, it is implied that there has been an interference with the so-called 'laws of nature'. Incidentally, this rules out as untenable the objection that the second coming of Christ is 'unscientific'.

Many who heard the words of Peter on the day of Pentecost would afterwards read his letter to the dispersion and realize the connection between his spoken and written word. Not all however desired to know the purport of the miracle of Pentecost, for 'Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine'. There were mockers also at Athens (Acts 17:32) and there will be mockers in the last days (2 Pet. 3:3,4), who will ascribe the mighty acts of God to mere natural causes.

Let us draw a practical lesson from the attitude of these scoffers. If even the Saviour's gracious miracles were attributed by His enemies to power derived from fellowship with Beelzebub, is it not a small thing if His followers, filled with spirit, are alleged to be full of new wine? In our own sphere we can say that there is scarcely an issue of *The Berean Expositor* which does not call forth derision and criticism - and possibly with good cause. What then? Realizing that the highest and the best have been subjected to brutal misunderstanding, let us not fall into the weakness of turning our mole hills into mountains.

The association in the minds of the witnesses of these happenings, of wine with the filling of the spirit (Eph. 5:18) indicates something of the nature of enthusiasm in the deportment of the subjects of this outpouring, of 'being beside oneself' (2 Cor. 5:13). Is this a matter for wonder, when mortal man, the earthen vessel (2 Cor. 4:7) is filled with power from on high?

We are now ready for Peter's inspired explanation of the meaning of the day of Pentecost, and may grace be given us to pay heed to what the Scriptures teach that we may be delivered and kept from the error of 'Pentecostalism', which is a system of teaching utterly at variance with the inspired explanation found in Acts 2:14-36.

## CHAPTER 10

### The typical place of Pentecost (Acts 2:14 to 8:1)

With Peter's address (Acts 2:14) we commence a new section of the Acts, which is shown in the structure on page 4 as:

C 2:14 to 8:1. Ministry of PETER and others to the nation of Israel in Jerusalem and the land.

As one studies the Word of God, and the wonder of its every part opens out before one's apprehension: as all its intricate beauty of design is revealed, the creature stands impotent. Not space, nor time, nor ability, suffices to set forth more than the barest skeleton of the beauteous whole. The Lord alone can make the dry bones of our presentation live. But we must not refrain from doing what we can, because we cannot do what we would, and so, in the following structure, we draw attention to the inter-relation of the parts that compose the section and indicate the movement of its teaching, without following out its ramifications or pointing out a tithe of the correspondence of its design.

#### C Acts 2:14 to 8:1. The ministry of Peter and others.

A <sub>1</sub> 2:14-47.	PENTECOST EXPLAINED.	Wonders and signs in heaven and earth. David's testimony. Christ the King. All things common. Possessions sold. The Lord added to the church.
B <sub>1</sub> 3:1 to 4:22.	PENTECOST SYMBOLIZED.	The miracle of healing. The gate called 'Beautiful'.

		Moses a type of Christ. Prison for Peter. We cannot but speak. Threatened: Let go.
A <sub>2</sub> 4:23 to 5:11.	PENTECOST REPEATED.	Signs and wonders. David's testimony. The kings of the earth rebel. Place shaken. Filled with holy spirit. All things common. Possessions sold (part of price kept back). Great fear on the church.
B <sub>2</sub> 5:12-42.	PENTECOST WITHSTOOD.	Miracles of healing. Solomon's Porch. Prison for Peter. We ought to obey God rather than man. Beaten: Let go.
A <sub>3</sub> 6:1-7.	PENTECOST EXTENDED.	The ministry of the deacons; 'Full of holy spirit'.
B <sub>3</sub> 6:8 to 8:1.	PENTECOST REJECTED.	Moses a type of Christ. Stephen stoned. The introduction of Saul strikes the first note in Israel's rejection.

To attempt a literary structure of these chapters would occupy about one half of the present chapter, and is uncalled for, but with the foregoing hints the reader will be able to dig for himself and find more and more treasure.

Let us now return to Peter's explanation of what the happenings on the day of Pentecost really meant. And here we are at a disadvantage. Most of us who know anything at all about Pentecost have received that knowledge through tradition. We were sure that it was a feast of the church; we were convinced that on the day of Pentecost the church was brought into being; we were positive that there were gathered together on that day a multitude of both Jews and Gentiles who, by having all things in common, gave expression to the truth of the One Body and its fellowship. Yet all these fondly held views vanish in the light of actual truth, for Acts 2 knows nothing of a feast of the church; it knows nothing of that unity in which there is neither Greek nor Jew; it gives no countenance to the idea that a single Gentile, other than a proselyte, listened to Peter on that momentous day:

'But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said ... ' (Acts 2:14).

We have drawn attention elsewhere to the peculiar word used here for 'said' (*apophtheggomai*), which also occurs in Acts 2:4 in the phrase 'as the Spirit gave them *utterance*'. We are to understand by this that Peter's explanation of the meaning of Pentecost was an exercise of that recently conferred power from on high. We have already referred to the fact that nearly every important act and word both of Peter and of Paul is echoed later in the Acts. The word *apophtheggomai* occurs but once more, namely in Acts 26:25, this time in the record of Paul's defence before Agrippa. Others will be noted as we proceed.

The multitude charged the apostles with being drunk with new or sweet wine. 'He is sweetened' was a way of saying that a person was drunk. The Rabbins speak of a demon, *Cordicus*, who possessed those who were drunk with new wine (Gittin Cap 7). 'And Rabba saith a man is bound to make himself so mellow (or sweet) on the feast of Purim, that he shall not be able to distinguish between "Cursed be Haman" and "Blessed be Mordecai"' (Lightfoot *Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations*). Peter's remark, 'It is but the third hour', has little meaning to us, but it was the teaching of the Rabbins that a man should abstain from eating and drinking on Sabbath days and feasts

until after morning prayers, the third hour being equivalent to 9 a.m. with us. Commenting on this charge against the apostles, *Severian* says, 'Behold their folly, convicted by the season itself! How could there be new wine at Pentecost? But calumny is blind'. Pentecost was a season of rejoicing:

'Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn. And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the LORD thy God, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place His name there' (Deut. 16:9-11).

The reader may remember that the first epistle to the Corinthians keeps count of several of Israel's feasts:

- PASSOVER.- 'For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us' (1 Cor. 5:7)  
 'The cup of blessing' (1 Cor. 10:16).  
 UNLEAVENED BREAD.- 'Therefore let us keep holyday, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (1 Cor. 5:8).  
 FIRST FRUITS.- 'Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept' (1 Cor. 15:20).  
 PENTECOST.- 'I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost' (1 Cor. 16:8).

But there is one more reference to the feasts of Israel that is not so obvious. In 1 Corinthians 16:2 we read:

'Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come'.

It will be observed that there is no word for 'day' in the original, although it may be implied by the feminine *mia* (one). Literally the passage reads, 'On the first of Sabbaths', as in John 20:1, with the difference that the latter passage has 'the Sabbaths', and refers to the first day of the feast of weeks. Reference to Leviticus 23:15-17 shows that this first day is the day from which the seven weeks leading to Pentecost was reckoned, the day of the firstfruits and of the Lord's resurrection. On this day - not on every Sunday - the Corinthians were enjoined to lay by 'as God hath prospered', just as Israel were told to do - 'according as the LORD Thy God hath blessed thee'.

The passage in the Law that best sets out the feasts of the Lord and the place of Pentecost is Leviticus 23. The passage is too long for quotation here, but the following outline will help to keep the whole festal year before the reader. While the length of Israel's year was the same as our own, there are only seven months noted in the calendar of their feasts. These feasts are prophetic, and set forth in type and shadow the whole course of Israel's history from the day that they became a nation (Exod. 12:2) until the great future day of ingathering at the time of the end. The fact that the Lord has used seven months only in which to show this typical unfolding is but further evidence that the number seven is intimately associated with the purpose of the ages. The fact that creation occupied six days, followed by a Sabbath of rest, indicates that at the very beginning, God had this 'rest' in view (Heb. 4:9).

To save space we will, without comment or detail, briefly indicate this close association of seven with Israel's typical history:

- Seven DAYS.- 'The seventh day is a Sabbath of rest' (Lev. 23:3).  
 Seven WEEKS.- 'Seven Sabbaths shall be complete' (Lev. 23:15).  
 Seven MONTHS.- 'In the seventh month' (Lev. 23:24).  
 Seven YEARS.- 'The seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest' (Lev. 25:4).  
 Seven times seven YEARS.- 'It shall be a Jubilee unto you' (Lev. 25:8-13).

Seventy times seven YEARS.- 'Seventy weeks are determined'  
(Dan. 9:24).

At once we realize that Pentecost cannot be understood if it be taken out of its place in this series of typical periods. To attempt to fit Pentecost into the 'church', destroys both the typical character of the feast, and the distinctive character of the 'church'.

The feasts of the Lord, then, of Leviticus 23 are as follows:

- |   |                      |   |        |   |
|---|----------------------|---|--------|---|
| A | REDEMPTION BY BLOOD. | a | 5.     | PASSOVER.                               |
|   |                      | b | 6-8.   | UNLEAVENED BREAD.<br>Seven Days. Egypt. |
| B | REAPING              | c | 9-14   | FIRSTFRUITS.                            |
|   |                      | d | 15-21  | PENTECOST.                              |
|   |                      | c | 22     | HARVEST.                                |
|   |                      | d | 24,25  | TRUMPETS.                               |
| A | ATONEMENT BY BLOOD.  | a | 27-32. | DAY OF ATONEMENT.                       |
|   |                      | b | 34-44  | TABERNACLES.<br>Seven Days. Egypt.      |

The Lord knew that Israel would not repent and be gathered the first time, and that the purpose of the ages would reach out to the trumpets of the Apocalypse and the harvest at the end of the age. Nevertheless the feast of Pentecost was an anticipation of harvest, just as firstfruits was, and the gathering of Israel to Jerusalem at this period was an anticipation of that great gathering at the time of the end.

A peculiar feature of Pentecost is that a new meal offering was commanded:

'Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD' (Lev. 23:17).

It had already been commanded that 'no meat (meal) offering, which ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the LORD made by fire' (Lev. 2:11). The two leavened loaves of Pentecost cannot therefore typify Christ: they are a firstfruits, and typify His people. The reason why two loaves were specified appears to be that the Lord knew that the kingdom would be divided, and that at the restoration the ten tribes and the two tribes (commonly spoken of as Israel and Judah) would come together again as one before Him. Ezekiel 37:15-28 sees this forth under the figure of the two sticks: 'I will make them one nation ... they shall be no more two' (Ezek. 37:22).

The appointment of Matthias to complete the number of the twelve, and the gathering of Jews from twelve of the nations round about, are therefore features that are living and harmonious when Pentecost is seen in the light of God's purpose to gather Israel again and restore the kingdom. But their import is lost when Pentecost is misinterpreted as of the inception of the 'church', and, indeed, those who most strongly advocate the doctrine that the 'church' began at Pentecost have among them those who do not hesitate to call the appointment of Matthias an 'apostolic mistake'.

What digressions have been necessary before reaching Peter's explanation of Pentecost! Had every reader as much knowledge of the teaching of the Old Testament as Peter and the gathered multitudes, we could have gone straight on to his inspired explanation, but, as it is, we should not have appreciated his reference to Joel if we were not in possession of facts which to that assembled multitude were a matter of everyday knowledge. These we have now considered and have therefore done what we could to bring back the atmosphere of the original Pentecost. This accomplished we will proceed in our exposition.



### Pentecost explained; 'This is that' (Acts 2:14-40)

Peter, when he stood up to explain the meaning of Pentecost to the assembled multitude, lifted up his voice and said:

'Ye men of *Judaea*, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem' (Acts 2:14).

'Ye men of *Israel* ... among you ... in the midst of you' (Acts 2:22).

'Therefore let all the house of *Israel* know assuredly' (Acts 2:36).

'The promise is unto *you*, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call' (Acts 2:39).

'Men of *Judaea*', 'the Jews who dwelt at Jerusalem' (Acts 2:5), 'Israel', and then, together, 'the whole house of Israel', are those to whom Peter addressed his words. Peter's own recorded act and word given in Acts 10:28, and the attitude of the apostles and brethren that were in *Judaea* (Acts 11:18), together with the exclusiveness of Acts 11:19, are sufficient to prove that the presence of a Gentile at this feast of Israel would have been intolerable, while the attitude of the Jews as recorded in Acts 21:26-36 shows what is likely to have happened had Gentiles been present at this feast of Pentecost. The nations of the earth shall, one day, go up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles as Zechariah 14:16-19 reveals, but that event awaits the time when the Lord descends and his feet once more touch the Mount of Olive. This feast took place after He had ascended from the Mount of Olives, and the difference is great and far reaching.

We have already observed that when Peter opened his mouth to speak he was actually 'uttering' as power from on high enabled him; the word 'said,' of verse 14 being the peculiar word 'utterance' of verse 4. Yet, in spite of this practical inspiration, Peter's first words of instruction are a reference to the Scriptures, showing that, much as we may feel the absence of 'gifts' today, we have equally with Peter the authority of the Scriptures; and we have, too, what he had not, the complete New Testament containing all necessary instruction as to doctrine and practice till the day of glory dawn.

There can hardly be found in human language more explicit words than Peter's 'This is that'. Such specific language makes it imperative that we understand, at least in measure, the teaching of the prophecy of Joel, and found our idea of Pentecost upon his teaching. If, as most will admit, the 'church' cannot be imported into Joel, then that alone should, if we still hold it, shake our faith in the tradition that the church began at Pentecost. We trust the reader will honour the Holy Spirit at this point, and, leaving the comments of men, turn to the short prophecy of Joel and read it through. Seven minutes is all the time it will occupy. Upon reading the book through two verses stand out, namely, Joel 1:4 and 2:25:

'That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten'.

'I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you'.

'I will restore' are words that find their echo in the question of the apostles: 'Wilt Thou restore?' (Acts 1:6), and in the testimony of Peter as to 'the times of restitution' (Acts 3:21). Repentance is premised\*. 'Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God' (Joel 2:13), and the resulting blessing is not only likened to the restoration of the land from plague and famine, but to the restoring of Israel's access and acceptable worship under the figure of new wine, and drink offering (Joel 1:13; 2:14; 3:18). Prominent also is the 'great and terrible day of the Lord', a prophetic period of no uncertain value, the object of much Old Testament prophecy, and certainly having no connection with the 'Church'. The following outline may help the reader:

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\* Premise = to come before.

## Joel

- A **a** 1:5. New wine cut off.  
**b** 1:8-13. Israel's harvest spoiled.  
 B 1:14 to 2:14. Israel a desolation.  
 C 2:15-20. The gathering of Israel.  
 D 2:21 to 3:1. I will restore.  
 C 3:2. The gathering of nations.  
 D 3:2-8. I will plead.  
 A **b** 3:9-17. Gentile harvest.  
**a** 3:18. New wine restored.  
 B 3:19-21. Egypt and Edom a desolation.

The whole prophecy deals with *the* nation, and the nations. It looks to the Day of the Lord, and has no room for, or reference to, a church in which there is neither Greek nor Jew.

Peter's specific reference is to Joel 2:28-32. Where Joel reads 'Afterward' Peter says 'in the last days': the words come to the same thing, and *Kimchi* makes the same observation when dealing with Joel 2:28. The quotation made by Peter is divided into two parts. The first was actually fulfilled on the day of Pentecost: the second would have followed had Israel repented. They did not repent, and consequently the signs in heaven await the day of the Lord, with which the book of the Revelation is prophetically concerned. What should intervene between the two parts of Joel's prophecy it was no part of Peter's ministry to explain. He confessed later, when writing to the same dispersion, that they would find help regarding this interval in the writings of Paul (2 Pet. 3:15,16).

We must now indicate the relation of the two parts of Joel's prophecy, quoted by Peter, showing the present interval. This of course was not mentioned by Peter, for the times and the seasons which the Father had put in His own power had not been revealed to him. We, too, only know that a new dispensation fills the gap, because Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, has made known the fact.

### Joel 2:28-31.

- A I will POUR out of My Spirit.
- |                     |   |                                     |
|---------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| (1) Upon all flesh. | } |                                     |
| (2) Sons.           |   |                                     |
| (3) Daughters.      |   | The last days. Seven-fold beginning |
| (4) Old Men.        | } | at Pentecost.                       |
| (5) Young Men.      |   | 'The powers of the age to come'.    |
| (6) Servants.       |   |                                     |
| (7) Handmaids.      | } |                                     |
- B Present Interval - Israel not repentant.
- B Future Day - Israel repent and look upon Him  
whom they pierced.

- A I will SHOW wonders.
- |                       |   |                                 |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| (1) Heavens.          | } |                                 |
| (2) Earth.            |   |                                 |
| (3) Blood.            |   | Seven-fold conclusion.          |
| (4) Fire.             | } | Wonders, as spoken of in the    |
| (5) Pillars of smoke. |   | Apocalypse, and Isaiah 13:9,10. |
| (6) Sun.              |   |                                 |

(7) Moon.                    ]

Referring to the structure of Acts 2:14 to 8:1 given on page 63, we discover that Peter's explanation of Pentecost occupies Acts 2:14-47. We now observe that this passage falls into two parts, Acts 2:14-40 being Peter's address, and Acts 2:41-47 recording the effect it had upon his hearers. For the moment we must confine ourselves to the address itself. We find that it is a threefold appeal, punctuated by references to Scripture.

#### Acts 2:14-40.

A<sub>1</sub> 14,15. Ye men of JUDÆA and all JERUSALEM.

B <sub>1</sub> 16-21	JOEL'S.	Baptism of the spirit.	} The Lord.
	WITNESS.	Whosoever call.	
		Shall be saved.	

A<sub>2</sub> 22. Ye MEN of ISRAEL.

B <sub>2</sub> 22-35.	DAVID'S.	David speaks of Him	} Jesus of Nazareth. This Jesus.
	WITNESS.	(Psa 16). David dead and buried, but a prophet and spake of Him.	
		(Psa. 132).	
		David not ascended but spake of Him (Psa. 110).	

A<sub>3</sub> 36. All the HOUSE of ISRAEL.

B <sub>3</sub> 37-40.	GOD'S	Baptism	} That same Jesus both Lord & Christ.
	WITNESS.	and gift of holy spirit.	
		The called.	
		Save yourselves.	

We have spent a considerable time in the endeavour rightly to place Pentecost, and feel that there is no call unduly to lengthen our exposition by analysing the Psalms quoted, profitable as that would be. The Book of the Acts itself is our theme, and its bulk prohibits excursions that will not directly carry forward the theme.

It is essential to the theme that we notice the statement of verse 30:

‘Therefore 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’ (Acts 2:30).

Although to stay here breaks the statement of the apostle, we pause to draw attention to the pertinent fact that Pentecost, instead of speaking of Christ as the Head of the Church, focuses attention upon His right to the throne of David. What possible meaning, other than a literal one, can be given to this passage or to the Psalm that is quoted. If Pentecost sets forth Christ as King in connection with the throne of David, in what way can it be connected with the Church?

Continuing our quotation at verse 33 we read:

‘Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost (Spirit), He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear’.

‘*He hath shed forth THIS*’: ‘*THIS is that*’.- Peter is still maintaining his theme. He is still explaining Pentecost: it is the evidence that Christ is King and that the kingdom will one day be restored. Further proof is given by quoting from Psalm 110. David's son is David's Lord (Matt. 22:41-46). The Lord is now there at the right hand of God ‘from henceforth expecting’ (Heb. 10:13). The heaven must receive Him until the times of restitution (Acts 3:21). The first thing that Peter commanded his awakened hearers to do was to ‘repent’. In this he was continuing the

ministry of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2) and of the Lord (Matt. 4:17). As shown above the interval between the two prophecies of Joel is a consequence of Israel's non-repentance. Baptism for the remission of sins is not church truth. Not a single passage in any one of Paul's epistles can be found to countenance such teaching. How can we therefore speak of continuing 'steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine' when the very first principles of that doctrine are by us set aside?

'Save thyself' is *Soson seauton*, as in Luke 23:37, but in Acts 2:40 the Greek reads *Sothete*, 'Be ye saved'. The 'untoward generation' is but another description given to 'that wicked and adulterous generation' to which no sign, but the sign of the prophet Jonah, was to be given. Here that sign is evident. The apostles were witnesses of His resurrection: the signs and wonders were witnesses of His resurrection: Pentecost was a witness that 'Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God', 'This Jesus', 'That same Jesus', This Son, yet Lord, of David, was 'Lord and Christ'. The day of the Lord was His day. The name of the Lord, upon which they called, was His name, the miracle of the next chapter enforcing that 'there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved' (Acts 4:12).

The second half of this section, 2:41-47, now awaits our attention.

We are conscious, that in spite of the rather heavy material introduced, we have passed by in silence many an interesting feature. But what can we do with such wealth of truth? We must be content if we can point out its main import, leaving our readers the delightful task of exploring its many ramifications, reference to which must, alas, be omitted from this book.

### Millennial foreshadowings (Acts 2:41-47)

What were the immediate results of Peter's ministry on that day of Pentecost? Three thousand souls were added to the company of believers, and they that believed were together and had all things in common. Gladness and singleness of heart characterized this favoured company, who were not only pleasing to God, but in 'favour with all the people'. It will not do to pass over this section without examination, for in it, in germ, is the goal of Pentecost, and here we shall find a forecast of that future day when not 3,000 only, but all Israel shall be saved.

#### Acts 2:41-47

- A 41.    **a** Glad reception of word; baptism.  
          **b** 3,000 souls added.
- B 42.    **c** Steadfast continuance in apostles' doctrine.  
          **d** Fellowship, breaking of bread, prayers.
- C 43.    **e** Fear, wonders, signs.
- C 44,45. **e** All things common.
- B 46.    **c** Continuing daily in the temple.  
          **d** Breaking bread from house to house.
- A 46,47. **a** Gladness, singleness, praise.  
          **b** Saved ones added.

What was the apostles' doctrine in which the believers continued steadfastly? It could not have been that marvellous system of truth with which we associate the epistle to the Romans written by the, as yet, unconverted Saul. Justification by faith is unknown in the testimony of Peter. Reconciliation finds no place in the ministry of the circumcision. When we reflect that Peter and the other apostles had but now received power from on high, it is foolish to imagine that there existed some great system of doctrine that could be subscribed to, as though it were a creed. All that could be meant by the 'apostles' doctrine', or teaching, is the witness that had been given concerning the resurrection of Christ, His lordship, His kingship, His coming, and the need on the part of the believer to be ready. The breaking of bread has been interpreted as of the Lord's supper, but this is pure assumption:

‘Breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness’ (Acts 2:46)

shows that the term simply meant taking a meal. The same expression is used in the following passage relating to the shipwreck, where Paul exhorts those on board to take food for their ‘health’:

‘And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat’ (Acts 27:35).

Without their contexts, we might readily believe that Acts 20:7, and Luke 24:35 related to the partaking of the Lord’s supper, yet the contexts preclude such a belief. The development known later as ‘the breaking of bread’ is but one of the traditions of the elders.

‘And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need’ (Acts 2:43-45).

In these few lines we have compressed that which is expanded in Acts 3, 4, and 5. In those chapters we have recorded the prophetically significant miracle of healing, and the equally significant miracle of judgment that caused ‘great fear’ to come upon all the church. There is also a fuller statement concerning the having of things in common in Acts 4:32-37, which compels us to ask whether the selling of possessions and community of goods was not a real part of the meaning and purpose of Pentecost. There have been companies of believers who, taking Pentecost as their basis, have sought consistently to follow out its practice, but the having of all things in common does not seem to have captured their mind in the same way as has the gift of tongues. Yet how can one speak of continuing ‘in the apostles’ doctrine *and* fellowship’ without realizing that this *koinonia* (fellowship) refers to and is expressed by the having of all things in common (*eichon hapanta koina*)?

Turning to Acts 4:32-37, we observe that there is a restatement of this ‘fellowship’, and as in Acts 2:24-46, so here, the account of this new state of affairs is punctuated by reference to the witness of the apostles to the resurrection of the Lord. The reader will see that verse 33 of Acts 4 is, as it were, slipped in and breaks the flow of the narrative. This however is as intentional as the equally strange insertion found in Acts 1:13. The resurrection of the Lord, as testified by the apostles, was intimately associated with the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel, and to the time of the restitution of all things which had been spoken by the prophets. No Jew would need to be told, that just as the feast of Pentecost with its emphasis upon the word ‘fifty’ was a recurring annual reminder of the day of Jubilee, so the final prophetic fulfilment of all that Pentecost stood for would be the real, great Jubilee toward which all prophecy pointed. Believing therefore the ‘apostles’ doctrine’, these believers put their faith into practice. If the Jubilee was near, all would receive their own inheritance, all forfeitures would be cancelled, all buying and selling of land and possessions would come to nought; consequently, although no one could sell or buy his inheritance, he could sell whatever else he had purchased, and use the proceeds for the common good, while awaiting the Lord from heaven. The case of Barnabas is specially mentioned. He was a Levite, and ‘having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet’ (Acts 4:37). In Jeremiah 32:6-14 we have the case of Jeremiah (who, like Barnabas, was of the priestly tribe). He bought land to demonstrate his faith in the Lord’s promised restoration (Jer. 32:15), and Barnabas sold land to demonstrate the same conviction. The law that governed the sale of land is found in Leviticus 25. The voluntary act of Barnabas in selling his acquired land and placing the proceeds at the apostles’ feet is in direct contrast with the action of Ananias. He, too, sold a possession; he, too, laid the proceeds at the apostles’ feet, but with the difference that he kept back part of the price, while pretending that he had given all. The apostle makes it quite clear that there was no compulsion about the selling of the land when he says, ‘While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?’ Ananias sinned in that he lied to the Holy Spirit. The sin of Ananias was the sin of Achan. The reader will find that the very words of Achan in Joshua 7:1 are used of Ananias. The LXX reads *enosphisanto apo tou anathematos*, ‘appropriated for themselves a part of that which was devoted’. Acts 5:2,3, twice applies this peculiar expression to Ananias and Sapphira: ‘*kai enosphisato apo tes times*’ ‘and kept back part of the price’. This is no place to discuss the passage in Joshua, but the interested reader is urged to weigh over the arguments contained in the article on *Achan, the troubler of Israel* in *The Berean Expositor*, Vol. 26, pages 37-41, which show that the word ‘accursed thing’ should be understood as ‘a

devoted thing' i.e., devoted to the Lord. Peter and the apostles stood somewhat in the same position as did Joshua, and wielded the same awful discipline.

Pentecost anticipates the Millennium: the gifts are called 'the powers of the world to come' (Heb, 6:5), and so the summary judgment of the day of the Lord is seen to be in operation during the early days of the Acts:

'He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within My house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in My sight. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD' (Psa, 101:7,8).

Millennial characteristics are also seen in Acts 4:23-26, where the opposition of the rulers to the ministry of the apostles is regarded as a partial fulfilment of the last times:

'And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, Thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the 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 the Lord, and against His Christ' (Acts 4:23-26).

The language of the passage clearly shows the minds of the apostles fully occupied with millennial expectation.

#### **A dispensational miracle (Acts 3:1 to 4:22)**

Perhaps it is not quite right to single out the healing of the lame man and call it a 'dispensational miracle', for the miracles performed by the Lord and His apostles in almost every case foreshadow spiritual truths. The miracle of the death of Ananias and Sapphira for instance, was a dispensational anticipation; and also the judgment of blindness that fell upon Elymas. Nevertheless, while all miracles are called 'the powers of the age to come' (Heb. 6:5), this initial miracle of the Acts in a special way follows on the day of Pentecost and illuminates its prophetic character.

We must first discover the general disposition of subject-matter, so that we may realise what are the salient features of the narrative, and not omit any step that is essential to the carrying forward of the theme.

#### **Peter's miracle of healing (Acts 3:1 to 4:22)**

##### **The miracle of restoration**

- A 3:1-11. The miracle. Its performance.
- B a 3:12-16. Explanation. 'The Name'.
- b 3:17-24. Prophetic application.
- B a 3:25 to 4:10. Explanation. 'The Name'.
- b 4:11,12. Prophetic application.
- A 4:13-22. The miracle. Its acknowledgment.

While each of these members has its own structure, we will not set out the opening and closing sections in detail, as they are fairly obvious, and the explanatory teaching is developed in the central members. If we will but pay attention to the way in which this explanation has been written, a number of items will fall naturally into place, and we shall be able to concentrate on the dispensational foreshadowing which this miracle represents.

##### **The miracle of restoration**

##### **Explanation and prophetic application**

- B 3:12-24. a D 13. The God of our fathers. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.
- E 13. Glorified His Son Jesus.
- F 14,15. Denial, detention and death of Christ.
- G 15. Witnesses to resurrection.

- H 16. The power of the Name.  
 I 16. Perfect soundness before all.  
**b** J<sub>1</sub> 17,18. Fulfilment. Mouth of prophets. Suffering.  
       K<sub>1</sub> 19-21. Repent; refreshing; restitution.  
       J<sub>2</sub> 21. Fulfilment. Mouth of prophets. Glory.  
       K<sub>2</sub> 22-24. Hear ... if not ... destroyed.
- B* 3:25 to 4:12. **a** *D* 25. The God of our fathers. Abraham.  
       *E* 26. Raised up His Son Jesus.  
       *F* 4:3-7. Detention and opposition to apostles.  
       *G* 2. Witness to resurrection.  
       *H* 8-10. The power of the Name.  
       *I* 10. Whole before all.
- b** J<sub>1</sub> 11. The rejected Stone becomes Head.  
       K<sub>1</sub> 12. Neither THE HEALING in any other.  
       J<sub>2</sub> 12. None other name under heaven.  
       K<sub>2</sub> 12. Whereby saved (healing of nation).

There is an insistence in this record on the fact that the Lord's name, in the power of which the lame man was healed, is 'Jesus Christ of Nazareth'. The choice of this name out of the many borne by our Lord is as inspired as any other part of Scripture, and has a definite bearing on the teaching of the passage. Most readers will know that the title never occurs in the epistles written to the Church. Five times in the Acts we meet the title 'Jesus of Nazareth', but on the two occasions when it is used by Peter in connection with this miracle, it is 'Jesus Christ of Nazareth'. This is important, because it stresses the Messiahship of the rejected One, the acknowledgment of which is closely connected with the prophetic interpretation of the miracle. John, who was with Peter in the working of this miracle, has told us that Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross:

'And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS' (John 19:19).

And he is careful to remind us, before the story of the crucifixion is ended, of the prophecy: 'They shall look on Him Whom they pierced' (John 19:37). When this takes place, Zechariah tells us that Israel's restoration will follow; and this same Jesus of Nazareth, so long despised, shall once more stand upon the Mount of Olives and accomplish all the purposes of grace that are awaiting Israel's repentance (Zech. 12 to 14).

The changed attitude towards 'Jesus of Nazareth' which brings about the healing of the nation is seen in Isaiah 53:

'He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and He hid as it were His face from us (margin); He was despised, and we esteemed Him not' (Isa. 53:3).

This is the Jewish estimate of 'Jesus of Nazareth'; but immediately following, the prophet reveals to us the surprise which will be expressed by Israel when they look upon Him Whom they pierced:

'Surely HE hath borne OUR griefs, and carried OUR sorrows: yet we did esteem HIM stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But (and here note the dawning revelation of truth) HE was wounded for OUR transgressions, HE was bruised for OUR iniquities: the chastisement of OUR peace was upon HIM; and with HIS stripes WE are healed' (Isa. 53:4,5).

This passage must be read aloud to be appreciated. The stress must be put upon the pronouns 'HE' and 'OUR'. Israel rejected Jesus of Nazareth and esteemed Him stricken and smitten of God. But when at last they repent and believe, they will acknowledge that it was for *their* sins, not His own, that He died, and they will then gladly give Him the title which Peter uses in Acts 3 and 4.- 'Jesus the Messiah of Nazareth' (Acts 3:6 and 4:10).

Peter's words in Acts 3:19-26 are a direct prophetic exposition of the meaning of this miracle. He urges repentance, with a view to the times of refreshing and of restitution that will be brought in by the return of the Lord

from heaven. This coming of Christ, and the blessings that will flow from it, are in perfect harmony with the testimony of Moses and all the prophets (Acts 3:22-24), and with the covenant made with Abraham and his seed (Acts 3:25,26). It is impossible to read 'the church' into this passage, especially when we read the concluding words:

'Ye are the children of the prophets ... Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities' (Acts 3:25,26).

The point of Peter's explanation lies in the word translated 'salvation' (Acts 4:12). We read that the lame man had been more than forty years a cripple, which makes us think at once of Israel in their unbelief. The words 'perfect soundness' (Acts 3:16) refer back to Israel's condition as described in Isaiah 1:6, where the LXX. uses the same word, 'no *soundness*'. The word 'whole' in Acts 4:9: 'By what means he is made *whole*', is *sesostai*, from *sozo*, 'to save'. The word 'salvation' in Acts 4:12 is *he soteria*, literally 'the healing': 'Neither is there *salvation* in any other'.

This, then, is Peter's explanation. The lame man who had been healed, and who was seen walking and leaping and praising God (Acts 3:8) was a picture of the millennial day when the lame man shall 'leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing' (Isa. 35:6). Bringing the healed man forward, Peter says, in effect:

'Look at this man. He has been healed by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and stands before you as a prophetic anticipation of Israel's restoration; neither is there THE HEALING (that is, the healing and restoration of Israel) in any other. None but this despised and rejected Messiah can ever avail'.

Alas, Israel did not repent. The next outstanding typical miracle is that of a Jew stricken with blindness, while a Gentile believes (Acts 13). The type is fulfilled in Acts 28, when blindness falls upon the whole nation and 'the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles;' (Acts 28:28).

We believe that the reader will now be able to interpret the details of this great section of the Acts without need of further exposition. We trust that we have made the dispensational character of the healing of the lame man clear, and this must suffice. With a book like the Acts, which is so full of incident and detail, we can only deal with the main outlines, and must leave the reader to fill in the details for himself.

### **The culminating opposition at Jerusalem (Acts 4:23 to 6:15)**

The witness that began at Jerusalem in Acts 2 does not expand until after the death of Stephen:

'At that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles' (Acts 8:1).

The record from Pentecost up to the time of Acts 8:1 comprises one main section of the Acts, and is characterised by a repeated alternation of witness among believers and among the outside nation.

We have already considered the prophetic explanation of the healing of the lame man as representing the nation (Acts 3:1 to 4:22), and now the record returns to the witness among the brethren (Acts 4:23 to 5:11).

This section falls into two main parts:

- (1) 4:23-31. The return of the apostles to their own company, and their report of all that the chief priests had said. The prayer that immediately followed, the answer that was given, and the resulting boldness with which the disciples spoke the word of God.
- (2) 4:32 to 5:11. The oneness of heart and soul that characterised the assembly, not only in prayer and doctrine, but in having all things in common. Two examples are given of this community of goods, that of Barnabas, which was acceptable to the Lord, and that of Ananias, which was visited by death.



We do not purpose going over these passages in detail: the fact that they were anticipations of the millennial kingdom has already been demonstrated. This is further illustrated by the passage of Scripture quoted in the prayer of Acts 4:25, and by the summary judgment that fell upon Ananias and Sapphira.

It may be as well to draw attention to the order in which the truth is presented in Acts 4:32: first, unity of heart and soul, and then community of possessions. The appeal of the Communist to the second part of verse 32 is a case of wrong division of the Word of Truth.

The next section of the Acts deals with the testimony once more among the people, and occupies Acts 5:12-42. The signs and wonders which were wrought by the apostles multiplied, with the result that the opposition of the chief priests became more violent, and the apostles were put into prison. An angel liberates them, saying: 'Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life' (Acts 5:20).

Brought once more before the rulers, they are warned that they had been straitly commanded not to teach any more in the name of Jesus. To which the apostles answer:

'We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 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 also the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him' (Acts 5:29-32).

The result of this testimony is that the rulers were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them (Acts 5:33). This enables us to see that the account of the next great witness, that of Stephen, which produced the same effect 'They were cut to the heart', (Acts 7:54) must be read together with Acts 5. As Stephen's speech is recorded with much more fulness, and its results are seen to be so much more critical, we turn our attention to the section chapter 7 to 8:1 which closes the purely Jerusalem testimony.

The appointment of Stephen arose out of the fact that the Greek-speaking Jews ('Grecians') felt that their widows were not receiving the same treatment as was meted out to the widows of the Hebrew-speaking section. We must remember that there was a considerable difference in point of view between the Jerusalem Jew and the Jew of the dispersion. The dispersion were more Greek in thought and sympathy, and used the Septuagint version exclusively. The Jerusalem Jew was much narrower in outlook. It is doubtful whether he would have quoted heathen poets, or referred to heathen sports without a shudder, whereas Saul of Tarsus, when he became Paul the apostle, felt no such reserve.

The reader must distinguish between *Hellen*, 'Greek', and *Hellenistes*, 'Grecian'. The title 'Greek' is used in contradistinction to either 'Jew' or 'Barbarian'. The 'Grecians', on the other hand, were Jews although distinguished from the 'Hebrews'. The trouble that arose in the church at this point was not between Greeks and Jews, but between Jews of extremely narrow views ('the Hebrews') and Jews who, by reason of birth and language, were more liberal in outlook. The Hebrews had a saying, 'Cursed be he who teacheth his son the learning of the Greeks'.

Farrar has a suggestive note as to the various classes of believers that come before us in the Acts, which may be helpful here.

Christians.				
Z-----A-----?				
Circumcised.		Uncircumcised.		
Z--A----	?	Z-----B---A----	?	
Hebraists.	Hellenists.	Proselytes of	Proselytes of	Heathen
3	3	righteousness,	the Gate,	converts, e.g.
3	3	e.g. Nicolas	e.g. Cornelius	Trophimus
3	3	(Acts 6:5).	(Acts 10:2).	(Acts 21:29).
Z-A-----?	@-----B-----?			
3	3	3	3	
Strict,	Liberal,	Judaic	Liberal	

e.g. certain from James (Gal. 2:12).      e.g. Peter (Acts 11:3)      (Halachists), (Acts 9:29).      (Hagadists), e.g. Paul.

Whatever real grounds there may have been for this murmuring, the apostles met it at once and mediated between the two sections, for the welfare of the church. Summoning the multitudes, they said:

‘It is not reason (*arestos*, fit, proper, or pleasing) that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables’ (Acts 6:2).

Whenever the financial affairs of the church are in view, we shall discover a great reluctance on the part of the apostles to give even the appearance of using their authority to turn the scale either one way or the other.

‘*Look ye out* from among you seven men of honest report, full of the holy ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business’ (Acts 6:3).

The apostle Paul acted in the same spirit in connection with the ‘collection for the saints’:

‘When I come, *whomsoever ye shall approve* by your letters, *them* will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem’ (1 Cor. 16:3).

When we examine the qualifications deemed necessary for this new work, we are surprised and enlightened as we observe that ‘honest report’, comes before ‘full of the holy ghost and wisdom’. While ‘the holy ghost and wisdom’ indicate spiritual gifts, an ‘honest report’ has to do with manner of life and contact with others; and even to this day where financial matters are concerned, no amount of ‘spirituality’ will justify the appointment of one who has not ‘a good report of them which are without’ (1 Tim. 3:7).

Seven men are chosen, of whom Stephen stands out prominently both at the beginning and in his subsequent witness.

‘And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the holy ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch’ (Acts 6:5).

While every one of these men has a Greek name, it does not follow that they were all Hellenists. This would have been a cause of murmuring from the Hebrews. Nevertheless, the presumption is that most of them were Hellenists, and they would have had an influence in the right direction as the gospel spread in ever wider circles.

We know nothing of the subsequent ministry of these men except that of Stephen and Philip. It is Stephen that holds the attention from now on to the end of chapter 7.

‘And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people’ (Acts 6:8).

The administration of the fund to assist the widows of the church did not monopolize the time of these men, and both Stephen and Philip engage in most definite public witness. In the course of his duties, Stephen would often be called upon to explain or defend the faith, and as the synagogue was at that time the home of the infant church, we can well understand the violent character of some of these gatherings.

‘Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen’ (Acts 6:9).

The number of synagogues in Jerusalem at this time was proverbial. The Talmud says that there were 480, and although these figures are to be received only after making a very great discount, the fact remains that Jews out of nearly every nation would find their own meeting-place represented in Jerusalem. It is impossible, from the wording of the text alone, to decide whether Stephen disputed in one synagogue only, that of the Freed Men of many nations; or in three synagogues, those of the Freed Men, and of the African and Asiatic Hellenists; or even in two synagogues, which would include the Hellenites of Cyrene and Alexandria, and the Hellenists of Cilicia and Asia. However this may be, our interest is focussed upon one synagogue - that of Cilicia, for here the young man Saul of Tarsus, a native of Cilicia, would naturally have worshipped, and here he doubtless took part in those disputes that so often ended with the overthrowing of Pharisaic pride and tradition:

‘And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake’ (Acts 6:10).

The Rabbis had laid it down as a rule that the whole of their Scriptures prophesied concerning the days of the Messiah only. One can well understand how they would be staggered as Stephen took them to the prophecies of a suffering Messiah, and, using their own canon of interpretation, completely silenced them in their opposition to the Lord. In the course of his exposition, and in meeting the deep-rooted belief that the Law of Moses was eternal, Stephen would necessarily emphasize the contrast between the glory of the covenant that had passed away and the glory of the covenant that abides. He would draw attention to the prophetic utterance of the Lord that, in spite of all the veneration in which the Temple was held, not one stone would be left upon another; and that He had said that the Father seeks spiritual worshippers, who shall not be limited to the Temple in Jerusalem, or the Mountain in Samaria.

Among the zealots who would most bitterly resist any such argument, we may be sure Saul of Tarsus held a foremost place. Yet he was blameless ‘according to the law’ and would never have stooped to the use of false witness. Others, however, who were less scrupulous, seized upon Stephen’s doctrine and distorted it:

‘Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God ... And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that Jesus of Nazareth (or Jesus the Nazarene) shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us’ (Acts 6:11-14).

It is quite possible that Stephen had sufficient wisdom and ability to have extricated himself, and to have temporized concerning the truth which, in its distorted form, told in such deadly fashion against him. It seems, however, that some conception of the glorious work that was his to do was revealed to him, and though it meant martyrdom, he redeemed the time, and spoke words that produced at least one result, for Saul of Tarsus never rested after hearing them, till he found rest ‘In Christ’:

‘And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel’ (Acts 6:15).

The Council seem to have had some sense of the solemnity of the moment. As Chrysostom suggests, the High Priest and the Sanhedrin seem to have been awed by the face of Stephen, and in mild tone the High Priest asks the simple question, ‘Are these things so?’

We may well suppose that the apostle Paul would remember most vividly this witness of Stephen, and the diligent student will find in this witness the germ and seed which later became blossom and fruit in the early writings of the young man who ‘consented unto his death’. When in ‘that day’ sower and reaper, planter and waterer shall stand together before the Lord of the harvest, Andrew will not be forgotten by Simon Peter or by his Lord, and Stephen will be remembered among those whose loyalty, even unto death, spread the truth of the gospel in all its fulness and freedom.

The actual witness of Stephen as recorded in Acts 7 now awaits our earnest attention, and this present section must be regarded as a preparation for the study of this testimony, given by the Church’s first martyr, the man whose Greek name means ‘a crown’.

### **Stephen’s twofold charge (Acts 7)**

We now come to the speech of Stephen which, though it cost him his life, won for him a crown that ‘fadeth not away’ - and wrought such conviction in the heart of Saul, that to stifle the urgings of conscience, he asked for authority to conduct persecuting campaigns as far as Damascus.

Stephen goes back to the beginning of Israel’s history, and shows that after the call of Abraham, there were two great types of Christ - Joseph and Moses:

‘At the *second time* Joseph was made known to his brethren’ (Acts 7:13).

‘This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush’ (Acts 7:35).

The entry into the land under Joshua (Acts 7:45), which becomes a fresh start corresponding with the call of Abraham, is followed by David and Solomon, two further types of Christ. Although David was rejected at first but ultimately reigned over Israel, this fact is not mentioned, but instead David is used, in conjunction with Solomon, to substantiate Stephen’s teaching concerning the Temple that had so infuriated his hearers. His last words, before the devastating application of his summary of Israel’s history, are concerned with this vexed question of the Temple.

‘Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of My rest? Hath not My hand made all these things?’ (Acts 7:48-50).

The echo of these words in Acts 17 suggests how deep was the impression made upon the heart of at least one of Stephen’s hearers, a fact that will more than compensate Stephen for all his suffering, when Stephen and Paul stand together in that day.

‘God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though He needed any thing’ (Acts 17:24,25).

When Paul was afterwards charged by the Jews with teaching ‘all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place’ (Acts 21:28), he must have remembered with feeling the face of Stephen, who had some years before stood in the same place upon a similar charge.

The two main themes of Stephen’s speech, namely, the typical character of Joseph and Moses in their rejection and subsequent acceptance by Israel, and of David and Solomon in their testimony concerning the Temple, are given an emphatic place in the structure of the section.

#### Acts 6:15 to 8:1

- A 6:15 to 7:1.      STEPHEN before the Council. They looked stedfastly and saw his face like an angel.
- B C 7:2-36.      JOSEPH and MOSES. Rejected by Israel. Accepted THE SECOND TIME.
- D 7:37-45.      Application. Our fathers did these things. Thrust away (39).
- B C 7:45-50.      DAVID and SOLOMON. Build Temple. NOT MADE WITH HANDS.
- D 7:51-53.      Application. As your fathers did resist (51).
- A 7:54 to 8:1.      STEPHEN before the Council. He looked stedfastly and saw the glory of God.

Not one word of Stephen’s speech could be controverted, but its application was devastating. As the history of the past was unrolled before the Council, as they were reminded of the attitude of the fathers, the application cut them to the heart.

‘Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye’ (Acts 7:51).

Here were the representatives of the people, charging Stephen with blasphemy and with teaching that both the law and the temple were to pass away, and they themselves are found guilty of resisting the Holy Ghost. They had ‘received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it’ (Acts 7:53).

It would be out of place in this study to examine the various Old Testament references in Stephen’s speech. In the series entitled *Fundamentals of Dispensational Truth* (*The Berean Expositor* Vol. 12) we have considered both

Joseph and Moses in their typical character. For our present purpose the important point is that both Joseph and Moses were accepted by Israel *at the 'second time'*.

It is easy to see how disturbing it must have been for these rulers of the Jews, to listen to an account of the lapses into idolatry that marked the history of their fathers, and to hear, especially if they remembered the context, the sweeping words of Isaiah 66:1,2.

The section closes with the solemn words: 'And Saul was consenting unto his death' (Acts 8:1). At the feet of a young man named Saul, the witnesses had laid down their clothing while they cast the first stones. How strange it now seems to us, that this is the first mention of Saul of Tarsus in the record of Scripture. For nearly 2,000 years Saul, 'who also is called Paul', has been honoured for his faithful stand for the very truth that Stephen gave in embryo. And within about thirty years, Paul himself was to die for that same faith for which Stephen became the first Christian martyr.

The next section of the Acts leads on to the conversion and the commission of Paul. While all Scripture is profitable, and while Acts 1 to 8 must be known and understood by any who would enter into the truth of Christ and His work of grace, that part of the Acts which contains the ministry of the apostle to the Gentiles, must of necessity hold a high place in the hearts of all who live in this present dispensation of grace to the Gentiles. We therefore conclude this present chapter here, so that we may take up the witness of the Acts concerning Paul, 'the apostle of the Gentiles' in our subsequent chapters.

## CHAPTER 11

### Preparation for the ministry of Paul (Acts 8:1 to 11:30)

The preaching and martyrdom of Stephen brings the first main section of the Acts to a close. The witness has been given at Jerusalem and several thousands have believed, but the majority remain unrepentant. We remember that the Lord had commanded His apostles to tarry at Jerusalem until endued with power from on high, and that they were then to be witnesses for Him 'both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth' (Acts 1:8). Accordingly with the opening of Acts 8 there comes a widening of the circle of witness. From Jerusalem it now expands to the regions of Judæa and to Samaria.

'And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles' (Acts 8:1).

But this persecution, divinely overruled, only served further to extend the witness, and instanced, once again, that even the wrath of man can be made to subserve the purposes of grace. That this 'scattering abroad' is neither an incident nor an accident, the recurrence of the expression proves. Let us notice how *diaspeiro* occurs in this section, Acts 8:1 to 11:30, and let us note its association with the very purpose of the Acts.

- Acts 8:1,2. Church at Jerusalem 'scattered abroad'. Regions of Judæa and Samaria. Reference to Stephen.
- Acts 8:3,4. Church persecuted by Saul. 'Scattered abroad'. 'They went everywhere preaching the Word'.
- Acts 8:5-40. Sequel: Philip preaches to Samaritans and Ethiopians. Peter preaches to Cornelius (Acts 10).
- Acts 11:19. They that were 'scattered abroad'. Reference to Stephen. As far as Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch, 'preaching the Word to none but unto the Jews only'.
- Acts 11:20-26 Sequel: Saul comes to Antioch. 'Christians'.

These events were preparing the way for the ministry of Paul, which commences in Acts 13 with his separation by the Holy Ghost.

We perceive in the ministry of Philip the breaking down of prejudice, for the Samaritans were hated by the Jews, and it is written: 'The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans' (John 4:9). In spite of this the conversion and acceptance of these Samaritan believers was endorsed by the whole church at Jerusalem, for

‘When the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost’ (Acts 8:14,15).

It will be remembered that later, when Peter was called in question by the church at Jerusalem for going to Cornelius, this same feature was mentioned as one of overwhelming importance (Acts 11:15-17).

However complicated this section may appear, and however difficult to perceive the adjustment of every detail, the general trend of the passage is clear. It indicates a further movement away from the exclusively Jewish centre, and prepares the way for the ministry of the chosen vessel to the Gentiles, Paul. We therefore submit the following structure, which, ignoring the mass of detail, focuses attention upon the main movement.

### Acts 8:1 to 11:30

#### The widening of the Circle

A 8:1-40. <i>DIASPEIRO</i> . SCATTERED ABROAD. JUDÆA AND SAMARIA.	STEPHEN. Burial. SAUL. Havoc. PHILIP. Samaria and Ethiopia.
B 9:1 to 11:18. <i>HELLENISTES</i> (9:29). GRECIANS. Gentiles.	SAUL. ‘A chosen vessel’. Gentiles. PETER. ‘A certain vessel’.
A 11:19. <i>DIASPEIRO</i> . SCATTERED ABROAD. PHENICE, CYPRUS, ANTIOCH .	STEPHEN, dead yet speaking.
B 11:20-30. <i>HELLENISTES</i> (11:20). God. GRECIANS.	BARNABAS. The grace of SAUL. Sought and brought (The chosen vessel).

We must now decide whether we shall best serve the interests of our readers by ploughing through the details of these chapters, discussing the question of the laying on of hands, the record of the sorcerer Simon, the place, in the narrative, of the Ethiopian, the doings of Peter at Lydda in connection with Aeneas, and at Joppa with Tabitha; or by keeping directly to the prime object of understanding the place and ministry of Paul as set forth in the Acts, thus regarding the pursuit of that subject as of sufficient importance in this present volume to justify silence as to subsidiary matters. We believe that we shall be fulfilling the object of this witness if we press on to the things that belong to Paul and his mission. Consequently, yet with some reluctance, we pass over much that is of interest in this section, and again take up the thread in Acts 9 where Saul of Tarsus becomes, by grace, the chosen vessel to bear the name of the Lord before Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel. Accordingly the ninth chapter of the Acts will now occupy our attention, and the record that concerns Paul is found in the first thirty-one verses. We observe that the fact that Saul had authority to bind all that called on the name of the Lord, is mentioned in this chapter three times. Once as a statement that introduces the narrative (Acts 9:1,2); once in the objection of Ananias (Acts 9:13,14); and once in the exclamation of surprise of the believers at Damascus (Acts 9:21). The following is an outline of the section that is before us:

- A<sub>1</sub> 9:1,2. Saul threatening. Letters authorizing him to bring bound to Jerusalem any of this way.
- B<sub>1</sub> 9:3-9. The conversion of Saul. Blind and fasting.
- C<sub>1</sub> 9:10-12. The call of Ananias to go to Saul that he might receive his sight.
- A<sub>2</sub> 9:13,14. Ananias’ remonstrance. Reference to Saul’s authority to bind all that call on the Name.
- B<sub>2</sub> 9:15,16. The choice of Saul. His ministry of suffering.

- C<sub>2</sub> 9:17-19. The ministry of Ananias. Sight restored. Fasting ended.
- A<sub>3</sub> 9:20-22. The believers' amazement at Saul's preaching. Reference to his destructive work at Jerusalem, and intention to bind believers.
- B<sub>3</sub> 9:23-25. Persecution of Saul. Escape to Jerusalem.
- C<sub>3</sub> 9:26-28. Ministry of Barnabas.
- B<sub>3</sub> 9:29-30. Persecution of Saul.
- A<sub>3</sub> 9:31. Cessation of persecution in all Judæa, Galilee and Samaria.

Again, we remark that the above is not intended to be a complete literary structure. When dealing with the epistles, where every word is of doctrinal importance, such an analysis would be insufficient, but in the narrative books of the Bible, where the endeavour is to obtain a general idea of the contents of a passage, we may be permitted to be a little less severe both on ourselves and our readers.

It is evident that just as the 'persecution and scattering' of the whole section contributed to the purpose of the Lord, so the thrice-mentioned persecution of the saints at Damascus plays a similar part. So far as Paul himself is concerned, we believe that the excess of energy evidenced by this thrust out as far as Damascus was but the endeavour to stifle an awakening conscience:

'If his own blameless scrupulosity in all that affected legal righteousness was beginning to be secretly tainted with heretical uncertainties, he would feel it all the more incumbent on him to wash out those doubts in blood. Like Cardinal Pole, when Paul IV. began to impugn his orthodoxy, he must have felt himself half driven to persecution, in order to prove his soundness in the faith' (*Farrar*).

We shall not adequately appreciate Paul's state of mind at this time if we underestimate the intensity of his animosity to the new faith. No less than eight times do we find pointed allusion to his persecuting zeal. He 'made havock' of the church, or more literally, he 'ravaged' it (Acts 8:3). When we learn that the apostle here uses a word found in the LXX. to describe the uprooting by wild boars of a vineyard (Psa. 80:13) we may perceive something of the horrid intensity of Paul's hatred. In Acts 9:21 Paul is described as: 'He that *destroyed* (or *devastated*) them which called on this name in Jerusalem'. Here Luke uses a word suitable for describing the sacking of a city. The apostle himself refers to his persecuting zeal, in four of his epistles:

'Ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and *wasted* it' (Gal. 1:13).

'I ... am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God' (1 Cor. 15:9).

'As touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church' (Phil. 3:5,6).

'He counted me faithful ... who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious' (1 Tim. 1:12,13).

In his speeches, recorded in the Acts, we find him confessing to deeds of blood and savagery, and his epistles make evident how bitter were the memories of those early days:

'I persecuted this way *unto the death*, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women' (Acts 22:4).

'Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities' (Acts 26:10,11).

With this record before us we can perhaps understand the reference to 'suffering' that accompanied his commission (Acts 9:16). He, as well as those whom he made to suffer, was beaten with stripes in the synagogues; he, too, was stoned, was imprisoned, and many times devoted to death:

'But I doubt whether any one of these sufferings, or all of them put together, ever wrung his soul with the same degree of anguish as that which lay in the thought that he had used all the force of his character and all the

tyranny of his intolerance to break the bruised reed and to quench the smoking flax - that he had endeavoured, by the infamous power of terror and anguish, to compel some gentle heart to blaspheme its Lord' (*Farrar*).

The impatient journey to Damascus was suddenly interrupted by a blinding light accompanied by a voice from heaven, and there followed for the apostle three days' darkness and prayer. From heaven the awe-stricken Pharisee heard the words: 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?' (Acts 9:4).

Saul's first question is 'Who art Thou, Lord?', for he had no conception that he was persecuting One Who held that awful title. He was certainly persecuting the heretics who worshipped the despised Jesus of Nazareth, but what must have been his feelings when, in answer to his awe-struck question, the voice from heaven replied, 'I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest'? A man like Paul, at once Pharisee, Hebrew and Scribe, with head and heart filled with Old Testament scripture, trained to expect the fulfilment of prophecy and the glorious reign of the Messiah, wanted but these words in these circumstances, to bring about the unshakable conviction, that Jesus was the Christ. Thereafter all was clear.

It is here that we should appreciate the various items in this section that, perforce, we have passed over, particularly, the categorical statement of Philip that the sufferer and sin bearer of Isaiah chapter 53 was none other than the Lord Jesus:

'Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus' (Acts 8:35).

Immediately the apostle was free to speak in Damascus, this was the burden of his testimony:

'And straightway he preached Jesus (R.V.) in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God' (Acts 9:20).

'Saul ... confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ' (Acts 9:22).

Incidentally these last references show that, to a Jew acquainted with the Scriptures, the fact that Jesus was the Christ would also prove that He was the Son of God (John 20:31, Matt. 16:16), although to the untaught mind such a connection would be neither necessary nor obvious.

Regarding the added words used by the Lord in addressing Saul, 'It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks' (Acts 9:5), it is probable that they have allusion to the ox-goad used in the chastisement of refractory oxen while at the plough. This would indicate that Saul's conscience was already troubling him, and leads us back to the testimony of Stephen as the point at which occurred the initial conviction, which now ends in prostration before the Lord.

We have already spoken at length on the gracious acts of Ananias in the series *Paul and his Companions in The Berean Expositor* Vol. 26 pp 75-77, and therefore now pass on to the further statement concerning Saul of Tarsus given in Acts 9:15,16.

'He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake'.

In this passage occurs the seventh reference to the Gentile in the Acts, and the first use of the word in a good sense. The references that precede this one of Acts 9 are:

'Jews ... out of every *nation*' (Acts 2:5).

'Why did the *heathen* rage' (Acts 4:25).

'Pontius Pilate, with the *Gentiles*' (Acts 4:27).

'The *nation* ... will I judge' (Acts 7:7).

'The possession of the *Gentiles*' (Acts 7:45).

'The *people* of Samaria' (Acts 8:9).

Only with the conversion of Saul does the word Gentile appear in a favourable light, and throughout the remainder of his life he magnified his office as 'the apostle of the Gentiles' (Rom. 11:13). The place that Barnabas filled in introducing Saul to the believers in Jerusalem has been dealt with under the series *Paul and his Companions*



that speaks of the ministry of Ananias, to which allusion has already been made. Twice in this chapter do we read of a plot to kill Saul, and twice is his boldness in testifying for the Lord recorded (Acts 9:27,29). Twice also is he obliged to make his escape, once by a basket let down over the city wall, at Damascus, and again to Caesarea, and thence to Tarsus.

We shall hear no more of Saul until the important revelation given to Peter in Acts: 10 is recorded, and then we shall find Barnabas travelling all the way to Tarsus to seek Saul and to bring him back to the important centre, Antioch, whence as the apostle of the Gentiles Saul is sent on his first great missionary journey.

Of how much that has been passed over in this wonderful chapter, we are very conscious, but time flies, and we desire to make full proof of our ministry. This must be our excuse, if excuse be needed.

After an examination of Peter's testimony to Cornelius, the rest of the Acts will be found to be so interwoven with Paul's early epistles as to demand the most careful and painstaking study. We trust, however, that what has been brought forward in these studies already, has indicated with certainty the main trend of events in the Acts, commencing with Jew and kingdom at Jerusalem; passing on to Jew, Gentile and reconciliation at Antioch; and ending at Rome with the Jew set aside and the dispensation of the grace of God to the Gentile at length conferred upon the Lord's prisoner.

The vision that Peter had of the great sheet, and his subsequent visit to Cornelius, form part of the great movement that we see taking place in Acts 8 to 11, which prepares the way for the work of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. It will be found that there is nothing in Acts 10 to warrant the idea that Peter had a ministry among the Gentiles, for the vision of the sheet and the visit to Cornelius were exceptional. They accomplished their purpose, but Peter was left free to pursue his ministry among the circumcision.

The subject before us falls into four parts:

- (1) THE VISION OF CORNELIUS (Acts 10:1-8).
- (2) THE VISION OF PETER (Acts 10:9-24).
- (3) THE MINISTRY OF PETER (Acts 10:25-48).
- (4) THE EFFECT UPON THE CHURCH (Acts 11:1-18).

As we have already seen that the burning words of Stephen anticipates the wider ministry of the apostle Paul, so it is possible that the way was partly prepared for Peter, by the work done among the Samaritans and in the interview with the Ethiopian, by Philip. Speaking humanly, it is most certain that, had Peter not received this revelation from heaven, and had he not been instrumental in the conversion of the Gentile, Cornelius, the opposition that met Paul's emancipating message would have been even more bitter and intense than it was. The God of grace is all-sufficient, and Paul would have endured to the end, whatever had happened to Peter, but God in His grace uses means, and Stephen, Philip and Peter were used to prepare the way for this new and wider ministry. There is a most marked contrast between the character of Cornelius and that of the heathen to whom Paul was sent. Cornelius is described as

'A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway' (Acts 10:2).

Paul's converts are described variously as:

'Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led' (1 Cor. 12:2).

'When ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods' (Gal. 4:8).

'At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world' (Eph. 2:12).

Yet it is abundantly clear from Acts 10 that had he not had the vision of the sheet Peter would have called the devout, prayerful Cornelius, 'common and unclean'. How is this attitude possible if it is true that the Church began at Pentecost? Many commentators incline to the opinion that Cornelius was a proselyte, and it will be of service if we pause here to make sure that all our readers appreciate the status of a proselyte.

The word 'proselyte' is made up of *pros* = 'towards' and *eleutho* = 'to come', and is used by the LXX for the stranger or foreigner who came to dwell among the Jews and embraced their religion (Exod. 12:48,49; Lev. 17:8). In the New Testament the word refers to a convert from heathenism, but does not necessarily imply that the convert actually lives among Jewish people. These proselytes of Acts 2:10 came up to Jerusalem to keep the feast.

The initiation of the proselyte involved the observance of three rites. He must be circumcised; he must be baptised; and he must offer a sacrifice. The Jew looked upon the proselyte as though he were a newborn child. Maimonides says:

'A Gentile who is become a proselyte, and a servant who is set at liberty, are both as it were newborn babes, and all those relations which he had while either a Gentile or a servant, now cease from being so'.

There is a possibility that our Lord in His conversation with Nicodemus referred to this initiation. Calmet and his followers distinguish two kinds of proselytes, namely the *Proselyte of the gate* - these observed the seven precepts of Noah, but were not circumcised - and the *Proselyte of righteousness* - these were converts to Judaism, who were circumcised and observed the whole *law*. Cornelius was 'uncircumcised' (Acts 11:3), and therefore was not a proselyte, yet he is called 'a devout man, and one that feared God'. The dispersion of the Jew throughout the Roman world had of necessity influenced Gentile thought, and there were accordingly some who, though uncircumcised and outside the Hebrew pale, were nevertheless worshippers of the true God. Lydia, a woman of Thyatira, is said to be one who 'worshipped God' and is found at the place of prayer (Acts 16:14,13). At Thessalonica there were 'of the devout Greeks a great multitude' (Acts 17:4); at Athens Paul disputed with devout persons (Acts 17:17); and at Corinth Paul found a refuge in the house of one named Justus who 'worshipped God' (Acts 18:7). It was to this class that Cornelius belonged, for if he had been a proselyte he would not have been looked upon by the Jew as 'common and unclean'. This conclusion is further strengthened by Peter's confession:

'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: *but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him*' (Acts 10:34,35).

If preachers and teachers had perceived the truth which the latter part of verse 35 enunciates, in connection with the status of Cornelius, no problem would have arisen concerning justification by faith, and the fact that by works of righteousness no man can be saved.

We must now turn our attention to the vision given to Peter, which produced so great a revolution.

Joppa ! Did Peter ever think of Jonah? Was not Peter's name 'Simon bar Jonah'? Did not Jonah remonstrate with God because of His mercy to Gentiles? Were the problems of the expanding gospel forcing themselves upon Peter? We are not told, but we believe that he would have been neither human nor an apostle, if such were not the burden of his thought.

Falling into a trance upon the housetop he saw a vessel descending from heaven, and containing all the fourfooted beasts, reptiles of the earth, and fowls of the air, and a voice said to him: 'Rise, Peter, slay and eat'. It is hardly possible for any Gentile to enter into the thoughts that would fill the mind of a Jew, whether Christian or otherwise, who received such a command. We can, however, acquaint ourselves with the law that governed this matter of clean and unclean animals and see what is written:

'These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat' (Lev. 11:2,3).

Then follows the long list of prohibited animals, with the recurring sentiment:

'They are unclean to you' (Lev. 11:8).

'Ye shall have their carcases in abomination' (Lev. 11:11, cf. 11:20,23).

Not only so, but:

'These are unclean to you among all that creep: whosoever doth touch them, when they be dead, shall be unclean until the even' (Lev. 11:31).

All this prohibition is because Israel were a separated people:

‘For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy ... this is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth: TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten’ (Lev. 11:44,46,47).

This instruction to ‘make a difference’ is reiterated in the corresponding section of Leviticus, namely, chapter 20:

‘I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, which have SEPARATED YOU from other people. Ye shall therefore PUT DIFFERENCE between clean beasts and unclean ... which I have SEPARATED from you as unclean. And ye shall be holy unto Me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, *that you should be Mine*’ (Lev. 20:24-26).

It was in this atmosphere that the Jew was born, lived, moved and had his being. Practically from cradle to grave, from morning till night, waking or sleeping, marrying or giving in marriage, buying or selling, he was continually reminded that all the Gentiles were unclean, and that his own nation alone was holy unto the Lord. This separation to the Lord was seriously enforced upon his conscience by the scrupulous observances of the Levitical law.

If we observe the words that are used in the passages cited as translated by the LXX. into Greek, we shall perceive many a connection with New Testament teaching that may have passed unnoticed. ‘Make a difference’ in Leviticus 11:47 is *diasteilai*, and is found in Romans 3:22 and 10:12, where it occurs as the noun *diastole*. While accepted by us today as obviously true, Paul’s statement, ‘There is no difference’, regarding either sin or salvation, was, when first uttered, revolutionary in its effect. In Leviticus 20:24 and 25 the LXX uses two related words to translate ‘I have separated you’. In the first of the verses the word is *diorizo*, and in the second it is *aphorizo*. This word is also used to translate the words ‘put a difference’ in Leviticus 20:25. *Diorizo* does not occur in the New Testament, but *aphorizo* does. An examination of the ten occurrences of *aphorizo* in the New Testament will enable us the better to understand Peter’s attitude to Cornelius:

‘The angels shall ... *sever* the wicked from among the just’ (Matt. 13:49).

‘And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall *separate* them one from another, as a shepherd *divideth* his sheep from the goats’ (Matt. 25:32).

‘Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall *separate* you from their company’ (Luke 6:22).

‘The Holy Ghost said, *Separate* me Barnabas and Saul’ (Acts 13:2).

‘He departed from them, and *separated* the disciples’ (Acts 19:9).

‘Paul ... *separated* unto the gospel of God’ (Rom. 1:1).

‘Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye *separate*, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you’ (2 Cor. 6:17).

‘When it pleased God, Who *separated* me from my mother’s womb’ (Gal. 1:15).

‘For before that certain came from James, he (Peter) did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and *separated* himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision’ (Gal. 2:12).

The last reference reveals that Peter had been attracted by the freedom enjoyed by the converts of Paul’s gospel, and had ventured even to eat with them, but the old upbringing was too strong for him, and the coming of those of the circumcision caused him to separate himself once more, his dissembling causing even Barnabas to be carried away.

There are many passages in the Gospels, Acts and Epistles that show what an hold these Levitical laws had upon the Jewish conscience. Take the word *koinoo*, which means ‘to make common’. This is sometimes translated ‘to defile’ as in the following passages:

‘Not that which goeth into the mouth *defileth* a man’ (Matt. 15:11).

‘To eat with unwashen hands *defileth* not a man’ (Matt. 15:20).

‘And when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with *defiled*, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft (margin *with the fist or up to the elbow*, i.e. a ceremonious washing, not a washing that is required for ordinary cleanliness), eat not’ (Mark 7:2,3).

The following quotation will give some idea of the intensity of feeling that arose in connection with this matter of eating with a Gentile:

‘He who eats with an uncircumcised person, eats, as it were, with a dog; he who touches him, touches, as it were, a dead body; and he who bathes in the same place with him, bathes, as it were, with a leper’ (*Pirke Rabbi Eliezer*, 29).

The bearing of all this upon the words and attitude of Peter in Acts 10 is most evident by the following references:

‘Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is *common or unclean*’ (Acts 10:14).

‘What God hath cleansed, that call not thou *common*’ (Acts 10:15).

‘Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man *common or unclean*’ (Acts 10:28).

Here are the words of Peter himself. If we accept the chronology of the A.V., this incident occurred *eight years after Pentecost*, and Peter is still by his own confession ‘A man that is a Jew’. He, at least, did not believe that ‘the Church began at Pentecost’. Not only was he still a Jew, though a believer, but he was still under the Law. ‘It is an unlawful thing’, said he. How then can we tolerate the tradition that the Church began at Pentecost? He told Cornelius to his face that he would have treated him as ‘common and unclean’, for all his piety and prayers, had he not received the extraordinary vision of the great sheet. Yet at Pentecost:

‘All that believed were together, and had ALL THINGS COMMON’ (Acts 2:44).

When taken with Acts 10 this is absolute proof that *no Gentile* could have been there. *Yet the tradition that the Church began at Pentecost persists!*

Peter moreover makes manifest his state of mind by adding: ‘Therefore came I unto you *without gainsaying*, as soon as I was sent for’ (Acts 10:29). Can we imagine the apostle Paul speaking like this even to the most abject of Pagans? No, the two ministries of these two apostles are poles apart. Further, Peter continued: ‘I ask therefore *for what intent ye have sent for me?*’ (Acts 10:29). Can we believe our eyes? Do we read aright? Is this the man who opened the Church to the Gentile on equal footing with the Jewish believer? He asks in all simplicity, ‘What is your object in sending for me?’ Again, we are conscious that such words from the lips of Paul would be not only impossible but ridiculous. He was ‘debtor’, to wise and unwise, to Jew and Gentile, to Barbarian and to Greek. Not so Peter. He was the apostle of the Circumcision (Gal 2:8), and therefore the call of Cornelius seemed to him inexplicable.

‘*For what intent have ye sent for me?*’ Can we imagine a missionary in China, India or anywhere else on the broad earth, asking such a question, or asking this question in similar circumstances? Any Mission Board would ask such a missionary to resign his post, and rightly so. No! every item in this tenth chapter is eloquent of the fact that Peter had no commission to the Gentiles.

At last Peter ‘began to speak’ (Acts 11:15). Let us listen to the message he gives to this Gentile audience:

‘Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons (first admission): but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him (second admission). The word which God *sent unto the children of Israel* (note, not as Paul in Acts 13:26), preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all:) (third admission) ... published throughout all *Judaea* ... in the land of the *Jews*, and in *Jerusalem* ... preach unto the *people* (i.e. the people of Israel) ... whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins’ (Acts 10:34-43).

One cannot but be struck with the attitude of Peter. He does not preach directly to the Gentile audience, he rehearses in their hearing the word which God *sent to Israel*, saying nothing of a purely gospel character until the very end.

But for the further intervention of God we cannot tell how long Peter would have continued in this way. It is doubtful whether he would have got so far as inviting Cornelius and his fellows to be baptised, as his own words indicate:

‘Can any man *forbid water*, that these should not be baptized, which *have received* the Holy Ghost *as well as we*’ (Acts 10:47).

The upshot of this work at Caesarea was that even Peter was called upon to give an account of himself:

‘The apostles and brethren that were in Judæa heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and *didst eat with them*’ (Acts 11:1).

We find no remonstrance from Peter to the effect that seeing that the Church began at Pentecost, the conversion of Cornelius should have been anticipated and be a matter for rejoicing. No, Peter patiently, and humbly, and apologizingly, rehearsed the matter, even to the pathetic conclusion: ‘What was I, that I could *withstand God*?’ (Acts 11:17). Why should Peter ever think of withstanding God, if he knew that the Church began at Pentecost? It is abundantly evident that neither Peter, the other apostles, nor the brethren at Jerusalem had the remotest idea of any such thing:

‘When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, THEN hath God ALSO to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life’ (Acts 11:18).

We shall learn when we come to Acts 15 that the response of Peter to the call of Cornelius played a considerable part in stopping the extremists at Jerusalem in their attempt to shackle the Church of the Gentiles, and how it proved to be a preparation for the great ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. In this we rejoice, and see how the purpose of grace gradually unfolds as the narrative proceeds.

The abundance of material in these passages makes it difficult either to select or to stop, but needs must, and so we leave the reader to the profitable employment of studying this passage in all its bearings, being confident that in the atmosphere of the Scriptures, truth will blossom and the tradition of the elders wilt and die.

### **Antioch: The centre of the second section of the Acts**

#### **(Acts 11 and 12)**

No student of Scripture needs to be told that a knowledge of the history of Jerusalem is essential to the understanding of the Old Testament. This is so whether the point of view be the chronicles of Israel’s history, the prophecies of the minor or major prophets, the rise and dominion of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors, or, to come to the New Testament, the record of the Gospels, the Acts, many of the Epistles, and lastly the book of the Revelation. This city dominates the opening section of the Acts. Whether it is the preaching of repentance to Israel, or the evangelizing of Judæa and Samaria, Jerusalem is the divinely appointed centre. However, the second section of the Acts, which we are now to consider, takes us outside the ‘promised land’. Another city now comes into prominence. With this city the evangelization of the Gentile world, the ministry of Paul and the name, ‘Christian’ will for ever be associated.

What do we know of Antioch? With our present information, what sort of answers should we give to a general knowledge paper covering its history and geography? Antioch has been called the third city of the Roman Empire and its importance to all Gentile believers is such that no apology is needed for the present section, which seeks to bring before the reader something of the character and position of a city so intimately associated with all that we as ‘Christians’ hold dear.

For the sake of clearness we would remind our readers that two cities named Antioch are mentioned in the Acts. The first is referred to in Acts 11:19, 13:1 and Galatians 2:11, and is a city of Syria, about 300 miles north of Jerusalem, whereas the second is in Pisidia, in Asia Minor. Both were founded by Seleucas Nicator and both were named after his father Antiochus. No place was so suited as Antioch for the great work that was about to commence. It was called the Queen of the East, the third metropolis of the world, and the official residence of the Imperial Legate of Syria was there.

In Paul's day, the population of the city numbered perhaps as many as 500,000 and was composed of native Syrians, Greeks, Jews and Romans. There were the usual slaves and artists, and the sychophants who, alas, characterized every oriental city where East and West intermingled. So cosmopolitan was this place that *Libanius* said that he who sat in the Agora of Antioch might study the customs of the world. We are indebted to the writings of Josephus, and the books of the Maccabees for information concerning the history and appearance of Antioch, all of which we must pass by owing to limitation of space. Perhaps we may be justified in quoting from M. Renan's *Les Apotres*, a passage which vividly brings before the mind the character of the city associated with the evangelization of the Gentiles:

'It was an unheard of collection of jugglers, charlatans, pantomimists, magicians, thaumaturgists, sorcerers, and priestly impostors; a city of races, of games, of dances, of processions, of festivals, of bacchanalia, of unchecked luxury; all the extravagancies of the East, the most unhealthy superstitions, the fanaticism of orgies. In turns, servile and ungrateful, worthless and insolent, the Antiocheans were the finished model of those crowds devoted to Caesarism, without country, without nationality, without family honour, without a name to preserve. The great Corso which traversed the city was like a theatre, in which, all day long, rolled the waves of a population empty, frivolous, fickle, turbulent, sometimes witty, absorbed in songs, parodies, pleasantries, and impertinences of every description'.

Let us retrace our steps a little in order to link up Paul's movements with this city of Antioch.

In Acts 9 we find that on two occasions Paul's life was at stake, and that although he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord at Jerusalem, he was persuaded to go back to his home at Tarsus. On the surface and lacking further explanation, this circumstance might lie open to question. Did Paul's courage give way? Did he too easily allow himself to be persuaded to seek refuge in Tarsus? Would it not have been more to his credit if he had braved the storm by continuing to witness at Jerusalem? All that we know of that ardent soul leads us to suppose that he would have so stayed. Yet he retired into obscurity. There is however full and legitimate explanation, though it does not come to light until the twenty-second chapter of Acts is reached:

'And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; and saw Him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee: and when the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And He said unto me, *Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles*' (Acts 22:17-21).

This is the Paul we know and love. At any cost he wished to remain in the place where he had sought so hard to destroy the faith; but this might have savoured of more heroics and the Lord had greater work for this chosen vessel; therefore, disregarding the misunderstanding to which his action might lay him open, he returns to Tarsus, to abide the call that he knows must surely come.

We learn that as a result of the persecution that arose about Stephen, many 'travelled as far as Phenice' (a harbour on the South of Crete), 'and Cyprus' (an island on the East coast of Cilicia in the Mediterranean), 'and Antioch', preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only' (Acts 11:19). Some of the men who travelled thus far, were men of Cyrene, a city of Lybia, in North Africa, and these, when they came to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus (Acts 11:20). There is a difference of opinion among experts as to the true reading here. The Received Text reads *Hellenistes*, and means Greek-speaking Jews. The Revised Text reads *Hellenes*, Greeks, that is uncircumcised Gentiles. It is almost impossible to decide which is the true reading. Let us consider the alternative readings and their bearing on the narrative.

First, the Received Text *Hellenistes*, 'Greek-speaking Jews'. Almost without exception, this is the reading of B, D, E, G, H, and the cursive MSS. Supporting this reading is the statement of James in Acts 15:14, 'Simeon hath declared how God *at the first* did visit the Gentiles'. For if these at Antioch were 'Gentiles' Peter could hardly have been called 'the first'. To this may be added Peter's own testimony 'That the Gentiles *by my mouth* should hear the word of the gospel' (Acts 15:7).

While in their sequence in the sacred page verses 19 and 20 of Acts 11 follow the narrative concerning Cornelius, the events they describe occurred at a much earlier period, when the persecution arose about Stephen. This was before the conversion of Paul. At first these scattered believers limited their ministry 'to Jews only', but later, certain men from Cyrene and Cyprus evangelized the Greek-speaking Jews, the Grecians. Stephen had been martyred largely, at the instigation of *Hellenistes*, or Greek-speaking Jews (Acts 6:9), and it was the same class that plotted the assassination of Paul after his conversion (Acts 9:29). It would therefore be a signal triumph of the gospel for a great company of these Greek-speaking Jews to be brought to acknowledge the Lord. The fact that Barnabas was cognisant of the Grecian plot against the life of the apostle makes it doubly interesting that he should seek Saul and bring him back from Tarsus to Antioch.

Second, the Revised Text: The margin of the R.V. reminds the reader that while 'Greeks' is placed in the text, many ancient authorities read 'Grecian Jews'. The main arguments in favour of the Reviser's reading are (1) The trend of the narrative rather leads us to expect an added triumph yet it would make no point if these conversions at Antioch were merely among the Jewish population.

(2) The conversion of a number of Greek-speaking Jews at Antioch would not have excited special notice, nor necessitated the special mission of Barnabas:

'The entire context, therefore, conclusively proves that *Hellenes*, "Greeks", is the right reading, and it has accordingly been received into the text in spite of external evidence against it by all the best editors' (*Farrar*).

But we should not be content to introduce a reading into the text because of the deductions of commentators. Our first concern is to ascertain what is written in the Scriptures, and then to seek explanation. If we are to allow our opinion as to the fitness of a rendering to override evidences, where will it lead us? Our own conclusion is that the ministry of the dispersion at Antioch did not go so far as the inclusion of the uncircumcised Gentile, and that as there had already arisen grave troubles at Jerusalem on account of the conversion of the 'Grecians', those in authority made no delay in sending Barnabas, 'a good man' (Acts 11:24), and one most likely to conciliate where friction might occur.

When Barnabas had studied the situation at Antioch, he seems to have felt that the case demanded something freer and less cramped than any ministry that might be expected to emanate from Jerusalem: someone of the stamp of the martyred Stephen was needed. Immediately there would come to his mind Saul of Tarsus. Without hesitation he travelled north, and not without difficulty, as the original indicates he found Saul. Twice, therefore, the Gentile church is indebted to Barnabas for bringing the apostle Paul forward.

A whole year passed while Paul and Barnabas taught much people. The results seem to have crystallized in the emergence of the new name of, 'Christian'. 'And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch' (Acts 11:26).

The word 'Christ' is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word 'Messiah'. To the Greek mind it meant little or nothing. We have historical evidence that the Romans mixed up the title 'Christos' with 'Chrestus', for the decree expelling the Jews from Rome by Claudius (Acts 18:2) uses the term, and *Chrestianus* is common in inscriptions. It is most unlikely that the Jews would have given the title to the hated heretics. To do so would have meant the dragging of the very name of the Messiah in the mud of the street. The term used by the Jews was 'the sect of the Nazarenes' (Acts 24:5). They were more likely to perpetuate the reproach of the name of Nazareth than give the hated disciples the honoured name of 'Christian'. The word 'Christian' is a Greek rendering of a Hebrew word with a Latin termination, foreshadowing the world-wide movement to be associated with Antioch and the ministry of Paul. There is abundant evidence that the termination is Roman. We have such names as Cæsariani, Pompeiani, Ciceroniani, etc., etc.

Ignatius wrote:

‘Whosoever is called by any other name than this of *Christian* is not of God, and it is our duty not only to be so called, but to *be*’.

Gregory of Nazianzus said:

‘I honour Peter, but I am not called *Petrinus*: I know Paul, but I am not called *Paulinus*. I will not consent to be named of men, having been born of God. If I worshipped a creature I should not be a Christian. For why is the name of Christian precious? Because Christ is God’.

The Antiochians were noted for inventing names of ridicule, (see Julian *Misopogon*, where he answers their insults regarding his beard, and what Zosimus says of his emperor’s visit, iii. II page 140), and there is every reason to believe that this epoch-making name originated in the darkened wit of some loose living Antiochene. But there is another side of the matter. Not even the wit of Antioch could have invented the name of ‘Christian’ had there been no material upon which to work. That material was most certainly provided by the ministry of Paul. The first record of Paul’s public witness is given in Acts 9, where we read:

‘And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that He is the Son of God ... proving that this is the Christ’ (Acts 9:20,22 R.V.).

Later in Acts 17 we learn that this was his usual procedure:

‘And Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures ... that this Jesus, Whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ’ (Acts 17:2,3 R.V.).

Paul’s preaching left so strong an impression on the mind of Luke that instead of writing ‘this Jesus, Whom he preached’, a normal method of recording a past event, he records the actual words of Paul: and the Revisers, perceiving this, have inserted the words, ‘said he’. At Corinth we have the same insistence:

‘Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ’ (Acts 18:5 R.V.).

The Person and work of Christ are the glory of Paul’s epistles, and we can easily imagine that this blessed title, and the repeated insistence upon its meaning and worth, soon became associated with the little gathering at Antioch.

Reference is made at the close of Acts 11 to Claudius, and in chapter 12 to the death of Herod. As these references enable us to fix the date of Acts 12 with reasonable accuracy we will deal with them here, in order that the way may be left clear for the commencement of our study of the ministry of Paul in Acts 13.

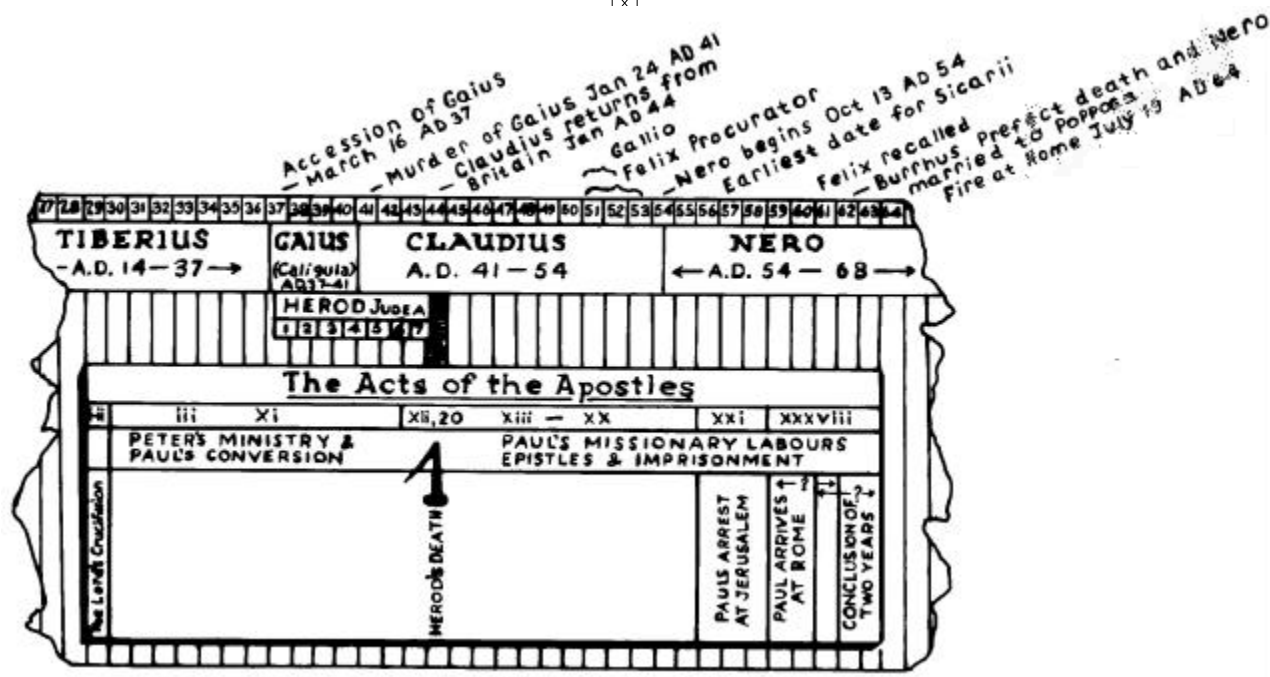
There is ample confirmation of the accuracy of the record that a famine befell the inhabitants of Judæa in the reign of Claudius. In his *Antiquities*, Josephus refers to it in three places, namely, iii. 15, 3; xx. 2,5; and 5,2. Acts 12 records the tragic death of Herod, and Josephus gives us a vivid description of his dreadful end (*Ant.* xvii. 6,5 to 8,1).

We further learn from Josephus that Herod Agrippa died on 6th August, A.D. 44, in the fifty-third year of his age, and in the seventh of his reign, having reigned four years under Caligula, and three years under Claudius:

‘Now, when Agrippa had reigned three years over Judea, he came to the city Cæsarea, which was formerly called Strabo’s Tower: and there he exhibited shows in honour of Cæsar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated to make vows for his safety’ (*Ant.* xix. 8,2).

Claudius had just returned from completing the conquests of Britain. His son received the name Britannicus in honour of this acquisition to the Empire. The date of the return to Rome from Britain was January, A.D. 44, and the festival held at Cæsarea ‘for his safety’, during which Herod died, enables us to fix the date of Acts 12. Accordingly we close this section with the following diagram which shows the Acts of the Apostles in relation to secular dates.





## CHAPTER 12

**The intimate association of Paul's Epistles with the Acts of the Apostles**

The opening verse of the Acts, suggests that in that narrative Luke intends to give a record of the things 'that Jesus' *continued* 'to do and teach' *after* His ascension. While Peter and Paul, Barnabas and Philip may be the active agents, they are but *agents*, the true Actor and Teacher throughout the record being Christ Himself.

We must remember that the record called 'The Acts of the Apostles', did not exist as we have it until the items recorded were past history. If the fact that Paul founded the churches of Galatia is a part of the *acts* of the apostles, does it not follow that the epistle to the Galatians is an integral part of the *acts*? True, Luke does not mention the epistles, but he had no need to, for they were contemporaneous with and supplementary to the history he wrote. Seeing that Paul's visit to Thessalonica is recorded in Acts 17 and his visit to Corinth in Acts 18, it is not gain but loss to segregate the epistles to the Thessalonians or the Corinthians, and not allow them full place in the Acts. To assert that Paul in one set of his *acts* could teach one thing, and in the epistles written *during the same period and to the same churches*, another, is manifestly inaccurate, and therefore unacceptable to lovers of Truth. For us there is but one deciding voice in all these matters, and that is the actual testimony of the Scriptures themselves. Accordingly we set out below references to the Acts made by the apostle in his epistles, and by their testimony we shall abide.

When the time comes for examination of the chronology of the epistles written during the Acts, we shall put forward evidence that goes to show that Galatians was written first. As however that evidence has yet to be adduced, we will follow the order of the epistles in the A.V. and commence with Romans, though every student knows it was written last of this series of epistles.

**Romans and The Acts**

EPISTLE.- 'Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, *separated* unto the gospel of God' (Rom. 1:1).

ACTS.- 'Separate Me Barnabas and Saul' (Acts 13:2).

EPISTLE.- 'Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was [have been] let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles' (Rom. 1:13).

'But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you ... When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain' (Rom. 15:23,24,28).

ACTS.- 'After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome' (Acts 19:21).

EPISTLE.- 'For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ' (Rom. 15:18,19).

ACTS.- 'And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry' (Acts 21:19).

'And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul' (Acts 19:11).

'Paul ... departed for to go into Macedonia. And when he had gone over those parts (note the map. Illyricum was contiguous with Macedonia), and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece' (Acts 20:1,2).

EPISTLE.- 'Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judæa; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints' (Rom. 15:30,31).

ACTS.- 'And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly ... they ... said unto him ... they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses ... This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people ... they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple' (Acts 21:17-30).

EPISTLE.- 'Greet Priscilla and Aquila' (Rom. 16:3).

'Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you' (Rom. 16:21).

'Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you' (Rom. 16:23).

ACTS.- 'After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla' (Acts 18:1,2).

'He sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus' (Acts 19:22).

'Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as ... Lucius of Cyrene' (Acts 13:1).

'The Jews ... set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason' (Acts 17:5).

It is evident that the apostle had no intention of keeping the epistle to the Romans distinct from his other *acts*, but, sought rather to interest them in the movement that was everywhere around them, and of which they and he formed an integral part. The epistle to the Romans therefore must be studied together with the Acts. Any attempt to divorce them should be looked upon with suspicion, especially when an attempt is made to teach one aspect of hope from the Acts, and another from the epistles of the very same period.

### Corinthians and the Acts

EPISTLE.- 'Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth' (1 Cor. 1:1,2).

ACTS.- 'After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth ... Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat' (Acts 18:1,17).

EPISTLE.- 'Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos' (1 Cor. 1:12).

'Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed ... I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase' (1 Cor. 3:5,6).

ACTS.- 'A certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus ... And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia (Corinth was the capital. See also 1 Cor. 16:15), the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace' (Acts 18:24,27).

EPISTLE.- 'I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius' (1 Cor. 1:14).

ACTS.- 'And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized' (Acts 18:8).

The reader will find many other allusions to the Acts, but the above are enough for our present purpose. The epistles of Paul are surely a part of his *acts*. Why rule them out? If, then, as we have shown, 1 Corinthians reveals

many links with the Acts, it will be superfluous to 'prove' anything regarding 2 Corinthians. Both epistles go together. Accordingly we pass on to:

### **Galatians and the Acts**

EPISTLE.- 'Ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it' (The R.V. translates it, 'made havoc') (Gal. 1:13).

ACTS.- 'As for Saul, he made havoc (R.V. translates 'laid waste') of the church' (Acts 8:3).

EPISTLE.- 'And 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).

ACTS.- 'I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day' (Acts 22:3).

EPISTLE.- 'When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed ... And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation' (Gal. 2:11,13).

ACTS.- 'Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church' (Acts 11:25,26).

EPISTLE.- 'Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles ... But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised ... why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews (to Judaize)?' (Gal 2:1 to 3,14).

ACTS.- 'And certain men which came down from Judæa taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question' (Acts 15:1,2).

EPISTLE.- 'That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith' (Gal. 3:11).

'Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law' (Gal. 5:4).

ACTS.- 'And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses' (Acts 13:39).

The epistle to the Galatians abounds with links that associate its teaching with the Acts. We have not forgotten the problems that await us in the parallel passages Acts 15 and Galatians 2, but that they are parallel, if not identical, calls for no further proof.

### **1 Thessalonians and the Acts**

EPISTLE.- 'Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus' (1 Thess. 1:1).

ACTS.- 'At midnight Paul and Silas prayed ... they came to Thessalonica' (Acts 16:25 and 17:1).

EPISTLE.- 'For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: but even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention' (1 Thess. 2:1,2).

ACTS.- 'And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely' (Acts 16:23).

EPISTLE.- 'For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know' (1 Thess. 3:4).

ACTS.- 'The Jews ... set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason ... crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also' (Acts 17:5,6).

There are other allusions to the Acts, in 1 Thessalonians 2 and 3, but the above are sufficient for our purpose. As with 2 Corinthians so with 2 Thessalonians, to establish the relationship of the first epistle establishes also the relation of the second. For our present purpose we are not concerned to prove the association of Hebrews with the Acts, because that epistle lies outside Paul's ministry to the Gentiles, and no good purpose will be served by merely multiplying evidence.

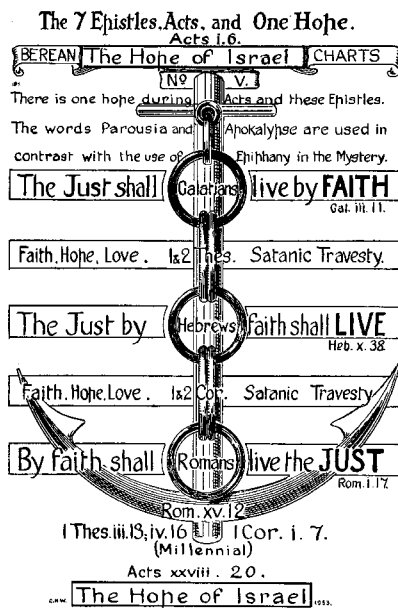
Following the apostle's example where he sometimes uses the objections of an imaginary opponent, we remind ourselves of the fact that there is no evidence to prove that the title 'The Acts of the Apostles' is inspired. This is true, and although we have used it to emphasize the fact that there could be no book until the 'acts' recorded therein were finished, and that, for instance, the epistle written to the Corinthians was most certainly as important an 'act' of Paul as those recorded in chapter 18 of the Acts, our argument is in no wise impaired should this narrative be called by any other name. The writer himself compares it with a 'former treatise' in which he had recorded 'all that Jesus *began* both to do and teach', and the implication is that 'the Acts' is a second treatise of all that Jesus *continued* to do and teach, after His ascension. This strengthens our argument, for the epistles of Paul make frequent reference to the fact that, though Paul is writing, the doctrine of which he writes was received by revelation. Christ still teaches in the epistles of Paul, and to omit them from a narrative that sets out to record 'all' that the ascended Lord 'continued' to do and *teach*, would be a calamity. Our argument depends not upon the title of the book but upon its purpose. It is a strange mentality that can talk of the Acts as though it were an independent fact, altogether separated from the epistolary activities of the same apostle, ministering to the same churches, at the same time as that with which the record deals.

We append a chart (page 130) that may be useful in visualizing this interdependence of Acts and Epistles, and this chart must be looked upon as a supplement to the one published in *The Berean Expositor* Vol. 25, p. 8, reprinted here on page 131.

The Acts of the Apostles		
The "Acts" of the Apostles.		
The epistles are a most important part of the acts of Paul and are woven into the book.		
<b>First Missionary Journey XIII, XIV.</b>		
<b>GALATIANS</b>		
ACTS	Chapter	13
ACTS	Chapter	14
ACTS	Chapter	11, 11, 13
ACTS	Chapter	11, 12, 3, 14
ACTS	Chapter	V 4
<b>Second Missionary Journey XVI-XVIII.</b>		
<b>THESSALONIANS</b>		
ACTS	Chapter	11
ACTS	Chapter	11, 2
ACTS	Chapter	11, 4
ACTS	Chapter	11, 9
<b>CORINTHIANS</b>		
ACTS	Chapter	1, 2
ACTS	Chapter	1, 14
ACTS	Chapter	11, 5, 6
ACTS	Chapter	11, 16
<b>ROMANS</b>		
ACTS	Chapter	1, 1
ACTS	Chapter	1, 13
ACTS	Chapter	11, 18, 19
ACTS	Chapter	11, 23, 24, 28
ACTS	Chapter	11, 30, 31
ACTS	Chapter	11, 3, 21, 23



Reprinted from B.E. Vol. 25 p. 8



In the opening chapter of this book, pages 3 and 4, we set out the structure of the book of the Acts as a whole, and found it to be sub-divided as follows:

- The present treatise, we found, fell under two heads:

- Having arrived at Acts 13, we must look at this second portion of the present treatise as a whole, when again we find that it too, falls under two heads, namely the twofold ministry of the one apostle Paul.

## The Twofold Ministry of Paul

<p>A ANTIOCH. 12:24 to 16:5. 'The Holy Ghost said'.</p> <p>Paul's independent ministry foreshadows 28:17-31.</p>	<p>A JEW withstands gospel. Stricken with blindness. A GENTILE (Paulus) believes, PAUL, 'After reading of law and the prophets', 'Say on'.</p> <p><i>Warning</i>.- 'Beware lest that come upon you <i>Result</i>.- 'Lo, we turn to the Gentiles'. <i>Conclusion</i>.- 'The word published throughout all the region. 'The door of faith opened unto the Gentiles'.</p> <p>which is spoken in the prophets'.</p>	
<p>B PAUL'S MINISTRY AFTER SEPARATING FROM THE SYNAGOGUE. 'I must also see Rome' 19:21.</p> <p>'So must thou bear witness also at Rome'. 23:11.</p> <p>B PAUL'S MINISTRY DURING DETENTION BY ROMANS. 23:23 to 28:16.</p>	<p>C 19:21-41.</p> <p>TEMPLE AT EPHESUS.</p> <p>C 21:27 to 23:22. TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM.</p>	<p>Uproar at Ephesus, Temple of Diana, scene of trouble.</p> <p>Paul not allowed to enter the theatre. Intervention of town clerk. Not blasphemous. Danger of being called in question for unlawful attitude. Uproar at Jerusalem, Temple of the Lord, scene of trouble. Intervention of Roman Captain. Charge of polluting holy place. Paul permitted to stand on stairs. Is it lawful to scourge a Roman? Take heed what you do.</p> <p>Casarea to Rome. Felix, Festus, Agrippa.</p>
<p>A ROME. 28:17-31. 'Well spake the Holy Ghost'.</p> <p>Paul's prison ministry foreshadowed in chapters 13 and 14.</p>	<p>The JEWS believe not, and blindness comes on them. The GENTILES now the object of salvation. PAUL, 'The law of Moses and the prophets' 'Be it known unto you'.</p> <p><i>Warning</i>.- What the prophet threatened now comes to pass. <i>Result</i>.- Two whole years unrestrained ministry to all that came to him.</p>	

At Antioch occurs the separation of Barnabas and Paul, and several features of this opening ministry foreshadow the close of the Acts. For example, Paul's first miracle contrasts with Peter's first miracle. Peter *heals* a Jew; Paul *blinds* a Jew. This Jew withstands the truth, and a Gentile, who bears the same name as the apostle, believes. Resulting from the opposition of the Jews at Antioch, there is a local turning from the Jew to the Gentile and Paul utters that word of warning which anticipates the dreadful quotation of Isaiah 6, with which the Jew was set aside in Acts 28. At the close of chapter 13 we read:

'And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region' (Acts 13:49).

and at the close of chapter 14 we read:

'And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles' (Acts 14:27).

There is a very remarkable contrast found in Acts 13 and Acts 28:

'But the Jews stirred up the *devout* and *honourable* women, and the *chief men* of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts' (Acts 13:50).

In contrast with this action of the devout, the honourable, and the chief men, let us read Acts 28:

'And the *barbarous* people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold ... In the same quarters were possessions of the *chief man* of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously' (Acts 28:2 and 7).

It is encouraging to observe the record of the Holy Spirit in these matters; the names of the 'devout' the 'honourable' and the 'chief' who expelled Paul, have gone down into oblivion, but wherever the Scriptures are read, the name of Publius is recorded with gratitude.

The ministry commencing at Antioch finds its sequel in the conflict concerning the status of the uncircumcised believing Gentile and the imposition of the decrees. This, as we shall see, constituted the middle wall of partition between the two parties in the early church. The next section commences at Acts 15:40. Except to call attention to the fact that the synagogue was the centre of this witness, we have given no details of these chapters. In them comes the vision of the man of Macedonia and the consequent preaching of the gospel in Europe for the first time. Here also is the record of Paul's visit to and testimony at Athens, and the beginning of the fellowship between Paul and Aquila and Priscilla. Acts 19:21 evidently constitutes a fresh section, for the words 'after these things were ended', seem to imply a new movement. It is precisely here that the narrative records the fact that the synagogue was visited for the last time (19:8), and that the disciples were separated, and met subsequently in the school of Tyrannus. Thus another link with Jerusalem and the Jew was snapped. Here, such is the evident comparison intended between the uproar caused at the Ephesian Temple and the uproar caused at the Temple at Jerusalem, that we give a few details.

The relation of these two sections is, moreover, strengthened when we observe that it was 'the Jews which were of Asia' (Acts 21:27) that stirred up the people, and that the uproar arose over, 'Trophimus an Ephesian' (Acts 21:29). While the Temple of Diana at Ephesus was the shrine of an idol, and the Temple at Jerusalem was the Temple of the Lord, yet the inspired narrative seems to place them over against one another, as much as to say that, in spirit, there was now little to choose between them. The action of the Town Clerk, the Roman Captain, and other parallels, will speak for themselves.

For the time being we have left the central section, 20:1 to 21:26, undeveloped. In it are recorded journeys made from Macedonia to Jerusalem, and also that, at Miletus, the apostle made known that a new ministry, associated with prison, awaited him (Acts 20:17-38). Most significant, also, is the fact, that at the opening of this division, Paul expressed the desire to 'see Rome' (Acts 19:21); and at the close, at Jerusalem, the Lord stood by the apostle and said:

'Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome' (Acts 23:11).

The third sub-division B 23:23 to 28:16, is concerned with the various trials of the apostle under Felix, Festus and Agrippa, and ends with the shipwreck at Melita, and the eventual arrival at Rome.



The reader is earnestly requested to make the outline of this important part of Scripture his own. Let him remember that the time and trouble which he takes in checking the references and seeing 'whether it is so' must necessarily be small when compared with the time and patience expended in discovering the outline at the first. This we have gladly done, giving the results freely, and we therefore feel that we can, without apology, ask all readers to give it more than a passing glance, for this part of the Acts is most important to us as believers of the Gentiles. It was during this period that the apostle made known the great foundation of justification by faith, upon which the truth of the mystery was subsequently to rest. The dispensation of the mystery was not given to Paul, nor did he make known that new revelation, until the Jew was set aside. Consequently the earlier epistles know nothing of it. Nevertheless, however high the building may be; however it may soar into heavenly places; it must rest solidly upon a good foundation, and it is in the Epistle to the Romans that that foundation is laid. There are dispensational features in Romans that have been superseded by others, more glorious, but Redemption, Righteousness and Resurrection remain the three R's, whether of Galatians and the opening of Paul's ministry, Ephesians in its highest glory, or 2 Timothy at its close.

## CHAPTER 14

### **The first missionary journey (Acts 13 to 16:5)**

#### **'Separate Me Barnabas and Saul'**

We generally speak of Acts 13 as being the commencement of the apostle Paul's great ministry, but if the details are examined we shall be reminded that, actually, this new ministry starts earlier, namely at 11:22, and, for a time, overlaps the ministry of Peter. A feature of the Acts already noted helps to confirm this. We refer to the recurrence of divine comment at different points of the narrative. This we exhibit so that the reader may be provided with all possible means of Berean-like study.

It will be seen from this tabulation that Acts 12:24,25 must be included in the new section of the Acts, which reveals the growth of the Word, in spite of Herod's actions, which are those of a potential antichrist (Acts 12:20-22). 'Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark' (Acts 12:25). This disciple's mother was Mary, to whose house Peter made his way after being liberated from prison by the angel (Acts 12:12). John Mark was the minister of Barnabas and Saul when they sailed from Antioch on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). But at Perga in Pamphylia he parted from them and returned to Jerusalem. Colossians 4:10 informs us that John Mark was 'sister's son', or 'cousin' (R.V.) to Barnabas, and it would seem that this blood relationship may have prevented Barnabas from viewing Paul's objection dispassionately, which led to the separation of Barnabas and Paul on the threshold of the new journey into Europe (Acts 15:37-39). Nevertheless it is good to record, not only for John Mark's sake, but also for the sake of the apostle who once had refused his further services, that, later, Paul could write :

'Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry' (2 Tim. 4:11).

These gracious words were said to one who had been called to the Lord's service almost immediately after the defection of Barnabas, and would have the effect of silencing discouraging criticism. The apostle mentions 'Marcus' (exactly the same name as 'Mark') in Philemon 24, and Peter calls Marcus his 'son' in 1 Peter 5:13. Whether these references are to the same man we cannot tell, nor can any affirm whether or not 'John Mark' is the writer of the 'Gospel according to Mark'. Tradition has it that John Mark is the Evangelist Mark, but there is no evidence on this point. It is not clear why one who served both at the beginning and the close of Paul's ministry should be the 'interpreter' as Mark is called by Peter, but again, that does not constitute evidence on either side.

This introduction leads us to Antioch and the movement that commenced there. It is with this that we are concerned, and so we pass on.

### Acts 12:24 to 16:5

#### Justification by faith

- A 12:24. 'But the word of God grew and multiplied'.
- B 12:25.    **a** Barnabas and Saul.  
              **b** John Mark taken with them.
- C 13:1-3.       Barnabas and Saul 'separated'  
                    by the Holy Ghost.
- D 13:4 to 14:28. **c**<sub>1</sub> Departure from Antioch.  
                          **d**<sub>1</sub> *Justification by faith apart from law of Moses.*  
                          **c**<sub>1</sub> Return to Antioch.
- D 15:1-35.     **c**<sub>2</sub> Men from Judæa raise the question.  
                          **d**<sub>2</sub> *Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.*  
                          **c**<sub>2</sub> Men that had hazarded their lives for the Lord Jesus bring the answer.
- B 15:36-39. **a** Barnabas and Paul.  
              **b** John Mark taken to Cyprus.
- C 15:40 to 16:4. Silas and Timothy approved  
                    by the brethren (15:26,27 and 16:2).
- A 16:5. 'And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily'.

At its opening Paul's ministry circled round a statement of truth and a conflict for that truth. The statement was the glorious doctrine of justification by faith (13:39): the conflict was the fight against the Judaism which imposed law and circumcision as necessary to salvation. We are therefore to become witnesses of one of the most important controversies that the world has known; a controversy ever fresh in its applications; a fight for the faith in which we are called upon to engage to this day.

By this time the church at Antioch had been established for at least a year (Acts 11:26), and the two men who played so prominent a part in its inception and upbuilding were present among the prophets and teachers there assembled (Acts 13:1). The passage concerning the apostle's namesake would probably flash across his mind: 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' (1 Sam. 10:11,12; 19:24); and, if it did, we can well imagine his prayer for grace to finish his course, and not turn aside in the tragic manner of his namesake. He would probably remember that Saul had persecuted David, even as he had persecuted the Lord.

We observe that Barnabas stands first and Saul last in the list of prophets and teachers given in Acts 13:1. That order was soon to be reversed, but it is encouraging to remember that the great apostle Paul himself knew a few years' discipline before he became competent for the fight.

We know practically nothing of Simeon, that was called Niger, nor of Lucius of Cyrene. Manaen is of interest seeing that he was foster brother of Herod the Tetrarch. Both were children nourished at the same breast (*suntrophos*), yet one is found numbered with the prophets, while the other killed one of the greatest of prophets, and was banished in A.D. 41.

'As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them' (Acts 13:2).

The words 'I have called' (*prosklemai*) are the perfect passive of *proskaleo*, and indicate that the call had already been given to Barnabas and Saul, and was now to be put into effect. Hitherto the title of apostle had not been used of either Barnabas or Saul, but from this time onward it became theirs. 'When the *apostles*, Barnabas and Paul heard' (Acts 14:14). Paul had been chosen as an apostle on the road to Damascus: 'Unto whom now I send (*apostello*) thee' (Acts 26:16-18). As he tells us, he had already been separated from his mother's womb

(Gal. 1:15). Yet he needed more than this commission and separation fully to qualify him for the service. This confirmation was now added. The Holy Ghost called upon the assembled church to 'separate Me, Barnabas and Saul'. The particle *de* (δε) is not translated in either the A.V. or the R.V. Weymouth's translation reads:

'Set apart for Me, now at once, Barnabas and Saul. When therefore the brethren had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away' (Acts 13:2,3).

While there are passages in the Acts that show that the gift of holy spirit was conferred by the laying on of hands, it is not always so. For example, Stephen was a man 'full of faith and of the Holy Ghost' yet the apostles laid their hands on him (Acts 6:5,6), and there is no suggestion that any gift was conferred upon Barnabas and Saul on this occasion. It seems rather to have been a means of expressing hearty agreement with their call to service, and is actually explained in the words of Acts 14:26, 'recommended to the grace of God for the work'. The apostle evidently referred to this occasion when he wrote:

'Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God' (Rom. 1:1).

The first step taken by the apostles Barnabas and Saul for the evangelization of the Gentiles is now recorded:

'So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus' (Acts 13:4).

Barnabas was of the country of Cyprus (Acts 4:36) and after the rupture with Paul he took John Mark with him back to Cyprus (Acts 15:39). While, as in the case of Barnabas and John Mark, family affection may sometimes prove a hindrance to spiritual work, there is no reason, in itself, why it should not be a help. So in the decision to make Cyprus the first sphere of labour, love of country may have had some weight.

The great mission had now been launched, and the course set. In our next section we shall be free to take up the record of the ministry accomplished on this island and to learn its most important dispensational lesson.

### **'Saul, who also is called Paul'**

#### **Acts 13:4-13**

As the little vessel leaves the shores of Syria carrying, on their great adventure, the two emissaries of a despised faith, what insignificant persons must they have appeared. There seems to have been no 'send off', except that lowly one in the atmosphere of prayer and fasting (Acts 13:3). As they traversed the miles of sea, slowly reducing the distance from the place of their initial ministry, there could have been little realization of the tremendous issues that hung, humanly speaking, upon their faithfulness and courage.

The strongest might have felt the task too great: still more such a man as Paul. His bodily presence is described by the Corinthians as 'weak' and as we hope to prove, he reminds the Galatians that he was with them on this very journey, during a bout of sickness (Gal. 4:13). Before the journey is accomplished and the apostle is back again at Antioch, he is to meet with the opposition of sorcery, the contradiction and blasphemy of the Jew, persecution at the hands even of the honourable and the devout, despiteful handling by the combined attack of Jew and Gentile, and the ordeal of stoning and being left for dead: yet is he sustained and preserved. The grace of God, to which they had been recommended (Acts 14:26), proved all-sufficient, and the door of faith had been opened to the Gentiles.

No particulars are given of the work done upon the island. The verb *kateggellon* used in Acts 13:5 suggests a 'continuance' of preaching in the synagogues of the Jews, a number of which may therefore have been visited at Salamis. The island is about 150 miles long, and the distance between Salamis and Paphos is 100 miles. It appears from the narrative, and from the relative positions of Salamis and Paphos, that, excepting the promontory east of Salamis, the whole of the island (Acts 13:6) was traversed and the gospel preached. Yet not until the arrival at

Paphos does the inspired chronicler find reason to record details, so that we do not know whether any or all of the fifteen other towns of considerable note (Pliny) were visited. Paphos, now called Baffa, was, at the time of the apostles, a port, where were the seat of the Roman Deputy and the site of one of the more famous temples dedicated to the worship of Venus. The Deputy is one named Sergius Paulus. Here it will be profitable to pause and see how the record bears witness to the trustworthiness of Luke as an historian.

The critics used to maintain that Sergius Paulus must have been Pro-praetor, not Pro-consul (Deputy), as Luke avers. There were many changes in the administration of Roman Government: at one time a country would be Imperial; at another it would be a Senatorial province. Amid all the changes Luke never falters, his every statement having been proved accurate. So here. Recently a coin has been dug up in Cyprus, bearing the inscription: 'In the *Pro-consulship* of Paulus'.

In 1912 Sir William Ramsay brought to light an inscription referring to Lucius Sergius Paulus, the younger, whose father was a Roman official. Galen, a heathen physician, writing about 100 years after Acts 13, speaks of one, Sergius Paulus, as well versed in philosophy, while Pliny the Elder, in his Natural History, three times refers to Sergius Paulus as a person interested in intelligent research, and as Pliny wrote about 20 years after the incident in Acts 13, there is every likelihood that he refers to the same man. It may therefore have been that having wide interests he could tolerate Elymas, and at the same time proffer an invitation to the preachers of the Word. In any case, we can but rejoice that he heard, saw and believed, a marked contrast with those spoken of by Isaiah, whose eyes were shut, whose ears were closed, and whose heart was hardened (*see* Acts 28:25-28).

At first it may cause surprise that so prudent a man as Sergius Paulus, should permit a sorcerer to be near his person, but we must not introduce into ancient times modern attitudes. Even so, with all our boasted civilization, the reader will discover a vast amount of superstition among all classes today. The horse-racing fraternity, whether they gamble in pounds or pence, are proverbially superstitious. The newspapers find ready readers intent on knowing all about their horoscopes and lucky days. Jewellers' shops exhibit a series of 'lucky stones' suitably set in silver or gold, and clairvoyants find among their clientele cute business men.

This sorcerer was a Jew who bore the name Bar-Jesus, but who assumed the title Elymas, which is, perhaps, derived from the Arabic *Elim*, and Hebrew *Elemoth*, both meaning a wizard. Greek and Roman literature is full of references to the credulity of this sceptical period. Rome greedily welcomed the Syrian fortune-tellers, and to adopt the language of Juvenal, 'The Orontes (the river upon which Antioch stood) itself flowed into the Tiber'.

'The Jewish beggar-women was the gipsy of the first century, shivering and crouching in the outskirts of the city, and telling fortunes, as Ezekiel had said, of old "for handfuls of barley, and for pieces of bread"' (*Conybeare and Howson*).

Pompey, Crassus and Caesar sought the aid of oriental astrologers, and the great satirist, Juvenal, pictures the Emperor Tiberius 'sitting on the rock of Capri, with the flock of Chaldeans round him' (Juvenal x. 93).

Concerning the hold of these sorcerers upon the public, Tacitus, the great historian, says, with scathing sarcasm, that they 'will always be discarded and always cherished' (Tac. Hist. i. 22). Pliny tells us that at Paphos there were two schools of soothsayers, one of which professed connection with Moses, Jannes and Jotapes, who were Jews, and *tauto recentior est Cypria*, 'a much more recent Cyprian one'. We have already mentioned that Pliny wrote of Sergius Paulus, and there is a possibility that in the words quoted he refers to the school of Elymas the Sorcerer. However that may be, there is no doubt that whether Elymas was officially connected with the Deputy, or whether he was only a mere hanger-on, there would be a financial aspect of the association that would cause him to view with jealousy, and oppose with ferocity, any new claimant for favour.

It is significant that Sergius Paulus called for Barnabas and Saul, not they for him. It will be remembered also that it was the Gentiles who asked Paul to preach to them in Acts 13:42. Thus it will be seen that the time for direct evangelizing of the Gentile irrespective of the Jew had not yet come.

The opposition of the sorcerer Bar-Jesus, and Paul's denunciation of him, is closely parallel with the experience of Peter recorded in Acts 8. This is no accident. The parallels that are discernible in the Acts between Peter and Paul would fill several pages of this book, and would make a contribution to our understanding of their specific

ministries. For the moment we must be satisfied with observing a few points in connection with the two sorcerers, Simon Magus, and Elymas.

#### Acts 8:9-24.

PETER.

Consequent upon gospel in Samaria.

SIMON the SORCERER.

Attack by imitation: 'Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity'.

Simon, a type of Israel with opportunity still left for repentance: 'Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me'.

#### Acts 13:6-12.

PAUL.

Consequent upon gospel in Cyprus.

ELYMAS the SORCERER.

Attack by perversion: 'Thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness'.

Elymas, a foreshadowing of Israel in Acts 28, stricken with blindness: 'Immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness'.

At this point, the inspired writer tells us that Saul possessed a Gentile name, *Paul*. It cannot be mere accident that the first convert in this new mission bore the same name as the apostle himself, Paulus and Paul of course being identical. There are many examples both in the Scriptures and in secular history of the possession of a double name. We think of Abram, Joseph and Daniel. Esther was known to the Persians as Hadassah. Hillel was known to the Greeks as Pollio. Peter was also called Cephas. Augustine in his sermons says:

'Paul suffers what Saul had inflicted; Saul stoned, and Paul was stoned; Saul inflicted scourgings on Christians, and Paul five times received forty stripes save one; Saul hunted the church, Paul was let down in a basket; Saul bound, Paul was bound'.

It was, and still is, the custom, for a Jew to have a Hebrew and a Gentile name. In our own Whitechapel it would be easy to find someone known familiarly in the street as Bill or Tom who, within the family circle, would be Isaac or Moses. The custom has indeed provided a joke in an illustrated Yiddish paper. Moreover, the names adopted by the Jew are contemporaneous with his times. In *Persian* and *Babylonian* times we have 'Nehemiah' and 'Belteshazzar'; under *Greek* influence we have such a name as 'Philip'. In *Roman* times we have 'Justus', 'Niger' and 'Priscilla'. In the *Middle Ages* we find Jews bearing the name 'Basil', or 'Leo'. (For a fuller treatment of the subject see Zunz' *Namen der Juden*). Jerome refers to the Roman custom of adopting the name of a country that had been conquered, such as Scipio, who, having conquered Africa, took the name Africanus. Certainly there is intentional emphasis upon the Gentile convert's name here. There is every likelihood that, as Paul was a freeman, his family took the name of some Roman family immediately associated with this freedom. So, from this time onward, the apostle is known as Paul; never again is he called by the old Hebrew name, which, with his old self and past, was dead and buried.

### Justification by faith

#### The opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 13:14-49)

The remaining part of the story of this journey centres chiefly in Antioch of Pisidia, and in it occurs the first record of an address by Paul. We have no inkling as to the mode of guidance in the itinerary, but as the nearest land was the mainland of Asia Minor, and as travellers in those days had little option regarding the chartering of vessels, the most natural thing was, that finding a vessel about to leave for Perga in Pamphylia, the apostles should accept

the fact as sufficient guidance, believing, most assuredly, that a 'work' had been mapped out for them, and that guidance as well as grace was theirs.

At Perga a sad thing happened:

'John departing from them returned to Jerusalem' (Acts 13:13).

He 'went not with them to the work' (Acts 15:38).

*Ergon*, work, *ergazomai*, to work, occur seven times in the narrative:

'Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the *work* whereunto I have called them' (Acts 13:2).

'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I *work* a *work* in your days, a *work* which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you' (Acts 13:41).

'And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the *work* which they fulfilled' (Acts 14:26).

'Known unto God are all His *works* from the beginning of the world' (Acts 15:18).

'But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the *work*' (Acts 15:38).

From these references it would appear that 'the work' actually began when the apostles, by themselves, evangelized the cities of Asia Minor, and it must also be noted that on the return journey Cyprus was not included. Moreover, when Paul proposed to visit 'every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord' (Acts 15:36) he apparently had no intention of revisiting Salamis or Paphos in Cyprus, for he went through Syria and Cilicia and on to Derbe. Pamphylia, as its name means, was 'the-all-tribe' land. Cyprus was under one governor, and was tolerably peaceful, but Pamphylia and the countries beyond were likely to inspire the traveller with dread. For years Pamphylia had been a stronghold of pirates and robbers, and in the lower regions of the country malaria was rife. The apostle's words: 'In journeyings often, in perils of waters (rivers), in perils of robbers' (2 Cor. 11:26) would well describe the dangers that intimidated John Mark. We, in our own land, have no experience of a flooding river such as would menace the safety and life of a traveller in Asia Minor. To a wavering disciple the vast central plain of Asia Minor, rising higher than Ben Nevis, with inland seas of salt to make the journey even more harassing, would also be daunting.

The fact that Paul made no stay in Perga at his first visit, but preached there on his return (Acts 13:13,14; 14:25) suggests that the apostle had taken ship for Cyprus at the 'opening' of the sea, that is in March, and so would arrive at Perga about May. Earlier in the year, the passes would be blocked with snow, and later the approaching winter would render the journey unsafe. In the month of May the inhabitants of Perga moved from the plains to the hills. Within recent times these *yailaks*, or summer retreats, have been described by travellers. If therefore Paul found the majority of the inhabitants of Perga on the move, it would account for his silence, and, possibly, also for John Mark's sudden fright. Moreover we find that the apostle often passed by smaller towns for the great centre of commerce or government, leaving to the church formed by his efforts the work of evangelizing the surrounding district. Whatever the cause, Antioch in Pisidia was the apostle's goal.

Antioch was a Roman colony and a centre of great importance:

'They came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said ...' (Acts 13:14-16).

As the synagogue plays such an important part in the early spread of the gospel, we take this opportunity of describing its officers and order of service, and giving other particulars that illuminate the Scripture record.

A synagogue could only be formed where there were at least ten men, preferably students of the law. The fact that the Lord used the number ten in His parables is reminiscent of this fact.

The Talmud says:

‘What is a great city? That in which were ten men of leisure. If there be less than this number, behold, it is a village’.

These men of leisure, *Batlanin*, were so described from their being unencumbered with worldly things. They ‘were at leisure only to take care of the affairs of the synagogue’. Of these ten men, three bore the magistracy and were called ‘The Bench of Three’. These were called ‘Rulers of the Synagogue’. Then there was the Chazan, or Bishop, of the congregation: ‘He oversees how the reader reads (*cf.* Paul’s concern “give attention to the reading”) and whom he may call out to read the law’. This office is the origin of the ‘Overseer’ *Episkopos*, or Bishop, of the early church. There were also three Deacons, or Almoners, on whom rested the care of the poor, and who were called *Parrasin*, or Pastors. The reader will see how natural it was for the apostles to appoint the seven deacons in Acts 6.

Another officer was the ‘Interpreter’ for the law was still read in the Hebrew even though none of the congregation understood it. Beside the Sabbath meetings, meetings were held on the second and fifth days of the week. To this the words of Acts 13:42 may refer, for ‘the next sabbath’ is *to metaxu sabbaton*, and *metaxu* means ‘between’ and so might refer to these weekly meetings that came between the sabbath days. It is however only just to say that Josephus uses the word in the sense of ‘after’ (Bel. v. 42). *The Companion Bible* reads ‘one of the weekly gatherings’.

Entering the synagogue we should find ourselves in a building unadorned, and differing from the heathen temples around them by the complete absence of any sculptured figure. On one side, behind a lattice window, sit the women. In the centre is the reader’s desk, and toward the side facing Jerusalem, is the Ark which contained the sacred scrolls. All round the building are seats so that ‘the eyes of all that are in the synagogue’ can be ‘fastened’ on the speaker. The chief seats are reserved for the rulers of the synagogue.

The service being begun, the minister calls out seven to read the law. First a priest, then a Levite, if present, then five Israelites. Thus in some editions of the Hebrew Bible one can still see, marked in the margin of the Law, 1st Priest, 2nd Levite, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th. The first lesson is then read. This is called the *Parashah*. Read in Hebrew, it is translated verse by verse by the Interpreter. After the *Parashah*, a short portion from the *Haphtorah*, which is a selection from the prophets, is read, the translation this time being at the end of every three verses. Then comes the *Midrash*, or sermon. This is not delivered by one set minister, but any qualified stranger or visitor could be invited by the ruler of the synagogue to give a word of exhortation.

This is just what happened at Antioch, where Paul readily and eagerly responded to the invitation of the rulers of the synagogue. The modern conception of a sermon, where a text is made the basis of an address more or less remotely connected with it, is not the *Midrash* of the synagogue. The *Midrash* arose naturally out of the reading of the law and the prophets.

In the present list of Jewish lessons, Deuteronomy 1 to 3:22 and Isaiah 1:1-22 form the forty-fourth in order, and Bengel makes the happy suggestion that this was the lesson on the day of Paul’s visit to the synagogue at Antioch. Farrar draws attention to the occurrences of two words used in Paul’s address, one of unusual form, *etropophoresen* (Acts 13:18), ‘carried them as a man carries his little son’ (LXX. Deut. 1:31), and the other, *hupsosen*, employed, most unusually, to convey the sense of ‘He brought them out’ (Acts 13:17; Isa. 1:2). The fact that these two words are found, respectively, in the first of Deuteronomy and the first of Isaiah, combined with the circumstance that the historical part of Paul’s exhortation turns on the subject alluded to in the first of these two chapters, and that the promise of free remission is directly suggested by the other, makes Bengel’s suggestion extremely probable, i.e. that these were the two chapters which had just been read.

In some respects Paul’s address differs from that of Peter recorded in Acts 2, while in others it is similar to it. Where Peter limits his remarks to the people of Israel and Jewish proselytes, Paul addresses his audience as ‘men of Israel’, ‘ye that fear God’, ‘children of the stock of Abraham’ and ‘whosoever among you feareth God’. Whereas Peter when preaching to Cornelius said ‘the word which God sent unto the children of Israel’ (Acts 10:36), Paul said to the whole congregation, ‘To you is the word of this salvation sent’ (Acts 13:26).

The apostle begins his address with a résumé of Israel's history and focuses attention on David. He then comes to his point:

‘Of this man's seed hath God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus’ (Acts 13:23).

He then pauses to bring in the witness of John the Baptist, afterwards proceeding to show that the very hatred of the Jew was but a fulfilling of the Scriptures they read every Sabbath day. Pilate's testimony to the Saviour's innocence is also adduced, and the fulfilment of all that was written, even to the particulars of His burial, is impressed upon them. Then, once more, he stresses his point: ‘But God raised Him from the dead’ (Acts 13:30), and lays before them the further witness of those who saw the risen Lord over a period of many days. He returns to the glad tidings that God had fulfilled the promises to the fathers.

After yet further proofs of the resurrection, the apostle comes to his glorious conclusion:

‘Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses’ (Acts 13:38,39).

Here Paul reaches the great doctrine of his early ministry, ‘Justification by faith without the deeds of the law’, a doctrine that finds its exposition in both the Epistle to the Galatians and the Epistle to the Romans. A structure of the exhortation follows.

### Acts 13:16-41

#### Paul's exhortation in synagogue of Antioch

- A 16-21. Résumé of Israel's history. Lo-ammi periods.
- B 22. David. After own heart.
- C<sub>1</sub> 23. A Saviour. Jesus.
- D 24, 25. Witness. John Baptist.
- C<sub>2</sub> 26. Salvation.
- E 27-29. Fulfilment, by rulers at Jerusalem, and by death and burial.
- F 30. God raised Him from the dead.
- D 31. Witness. Seen many days.
- C<sub>3</sub> 32. Glad tidings.
- E 32. Fulfilment, by promise.
- F 33. He hath raised up Jesus again.
- B 34-37. David. Sure mercies.
- C<sub>4</sub> 38,39. Forgiveness. Justification.
- A 40,41. Beware. Lo-ammi period threatened (fulfilled at Acts 28).

Some explanation will be demanded of the insertion at the opening and close of Paul's address of the words ‘Lo-ammi’. We have dealt with this feature in the series, ‘Fundamentals of Dispensational Truth’ in *The Berean Expositor* Vol. 27, p. 207; and in *An Alphabetical Analysis* part 2, under LO-AMMI, where it treats of the Book of Judges.

The years that Israel were in servitude were ‘Lo-ammi’ years, and therefore not reckoned in the divine calendar. What had already happened to Israel happened again, when, as recorded in Acts 28, they once more went out into another Lo-ammi period, which still obtains, and has already reached nearly two thousand years.

We must remember that it is quite inaccurate to teach that Paul turned from Israel as a whole to the Gentiles as a whole in Acts 13:46, for in Acts 14:1 we find him as usual in the synagogue. The explanation is that the turning from the Jew at Antioch was local and prophetic. It foreshadowed that great turning away of Acts 28, as we have shown by the balance of teaching of the whole section 13 to 28.



The closing verses of this witness at Antioch are:

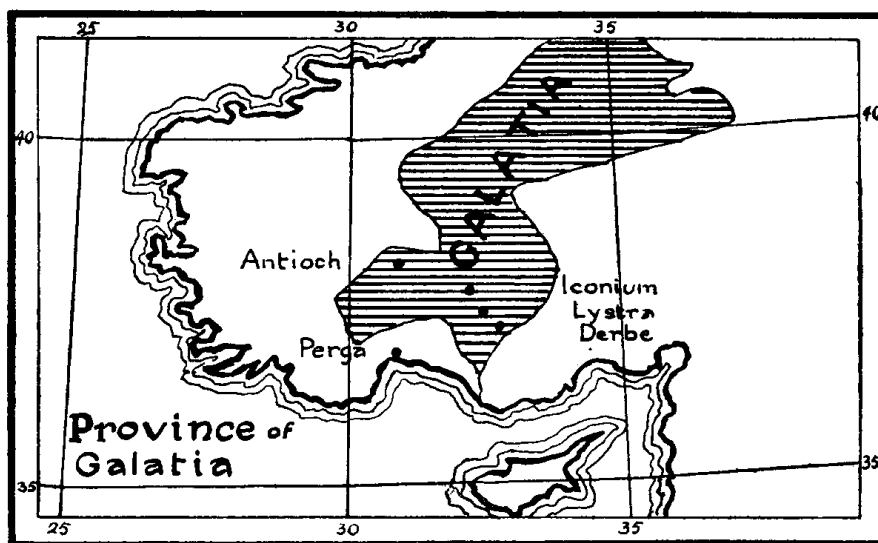
‘And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region’ (Acts 13:48,49).

It should be noted that the A.V. has given an unfortunate turn to the meaning of the word in translating *tasso*, in this verse, ‘ordained’. The word means to set in order, and while by no means denying the sovereign grace of God, looks also to the fact that whereas the Jews ‘judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life’, the Gentiles who heard rejoiced at the message and glorified God for His grace.

We have dealt with Paul’s doctrine of justification, apart from the law of Moses, in *The Berean Expositor* Vol. 18, p. 83, and in chapter 5 of *Just and the Justifier*. As this section has already reached its limits, we must refer the reader to those pages for further notes on this great subject.

### The Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Opened Door (Acts 13 to 14:28)

The Book of the Acts is so full of interesting subject matter that one has continually to recall the prime object of these studies, lest the unfolding purposes of grace which it describes should be obscured by the wealth of archaeological and other interests. Much, for example, that could be said about Antioch, Lystra, and the cities of Galatia visited by Paul on this momentous journey must be omitted here and left for the interested reader to discover for himself. One point, however, we will mention in passing. In the previous sentence we have used the term ‘Galatia’, and this may cause some readers to wonder whether a mistake has been made. Up till recently, the Galatia visited by Paul was considered to be the kingdom of that name, shown on maps of Asia Minor, and lying much further North than Antioch. Sir William Ramsay has, however, established from monumental inscriptions and ancient writings that the Roman Province of Galatia extended further South and included the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. We have given the evidence for this in *The Apostle of the Reconciliation*. All we can do here is to give two maps: the first from Dr. Kitto’s *Cyclopaedia* of 1847, and the second from Ramsay’s *Historical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* of recent date. The latter shows the political divisions of Asia Minor in A.D. 40-63.



Leaving this aspect of our subject, we turn now to the passage itself to seek to understand its message. What distinctive contribution does it make to our understanding of God's purposes? In the preceding section, we found that Acts 13:16-41 formed a complete member, so that we are left with the remainder of chapter 13, and the whole of chapter 14 to complete the record of the first missionary journey. Before attempting to go into detail, it will be advisable to look at the passage as a whole and to discover its scope by determining its structure. We observe that in Acts 13:42-51 we are still at Antioch of Pisidia, while in Acts 14:27 we are back again in Antioch of Syria. In the former, we read the prophetic words: 'a light of the Gentiles'; and in the latter, the dispensationally important words: 'He (God) had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles'.

Following out the places visited by the apostles, we obtain the following structure:

#### Acts 13:42 to 14:28.

- A 13:42-51. ANTIOCH (*In Pisidia*).- The Light to lighten the Gentiles.
- B 13:51 to 14:5. ICONIUM.- Jews and Greeks believe. Threat to stone.
  - C 14:6-20. LYSTRA.- The miracles and the witness against idolatry.
  - D 14:20-21. DERBE.- Many taught.
  - C 14:21. LYSTRA.- The return journey.
  - B 14:21. ICONIUM.- The return journey.
- A 14:21-23. ANTIOCH.- Confirming and commending.
- A 14:24. PISIDIA.- Passed throughout.
  - B 14:24. PAMPHYLIA.- They came to.
  - C 14:25. PERGA.- The word preached.
  - D 14:25-26. ATTALIA.- From thence they sailed.
- A 14:26-28. ANTIOCH (*In Syria*).- The door of faith unto the Gentiles.

In Acts 13:42, 'When the Jews were gone out' we have an anticipation of Acts 28, where 'the Jews departed' and the door of faith was closed to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. As Israel's door begins to swing to, the door for the Gentile swings open. Again, in Acts 13:43, the 'congregation (synagogue) was broken up' while in Acts 14:27 we read: 'And when they ... had gathered (*sunagagontes*) the church together', suggesting that the synagogue of the Jews was about to give place to a 'synagogue' of all believers.

We pass by the record of Paul's visit to Iconium without comment, except to mention that he evidently stayed there a considerable time (14:3), and that, while the Roman Colony at Antioch would deal with the administration of city affairs, Iconium, as an Hellenic city, would be much more democratic.

Ladies of high rank (13:50) could be used by the Jews in the former, but it was the mob in the latter that brought about the apostles' expulsion.

At Lystra, we must pause for a moment, as the record becomes more detailed, and is of evident importance. For the reader to understand the action of the people in offering sacrifice to Barnabas and Paul, it is necessary to know that the ancients believed that their gods often visited the earth in human form, and more than one such visit is associated with the neighbourhood of Lystra. Dryden's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis* reads:

'Here Jove and Hermes came, but in disguise of mortal men concealed their deities'.

Jove here is Jupiter, and Hermes Mercury, these being the corresponding Greek and Latin names for the same gods. In 1909 Sir William Ramsay unearthed a statue dedicated by the Lycaonians to the two gods, Jupiter and Mercury, showing that these two gods were associated together in the cult of the neighbourhood.

It is not quite correct to speak of the 'miracle' at Lystra in the singular, for there were actually two; not only the miracle of the healing of the lame man, but the miracle of the raising of Paul after being stoned and left for dead. The statement of the Acts leaves it undecided as to whether Paul actually died, as some think, or whether he was badly wounded and rendered unconscious, but the fact that he could rise up, go back to the city, and be off on his journey the next day is in any case sufficient to justify the term 'miracle'.

We give overleaf the expansion of the member C 14:6-20:

**Acts 14:6-20.**

A 14:6,7. They preached the gospel.

B 14:8-15. The miracle of the lame man.	C 8-10. The first Miracle.	<b>a</b> Impotent on feet. <b>b</b> Never had walked. <b>c</b> Heard Paul speak. <b>c</b> Faith to be healed. <b>a</b> Stand upright on feet. <b>b</b> He leaped and walked. <b>d</b> Gods. <b>e</b> Jupiter. Mercury. <b>f</b> Sacrifice. <b>e</b> Barnabas. Paul. <b>d</b> Men.
	D 11-15. Sacrifice attempted.	

A 14:15-17. Paul and Barnabas preach.

B 14:18-20. The miracle of Paul's recovery.	D 18. Sacrifice restrained.	<b>g</b> With these sayings. <b>h</b> Scarce restrained. <b>h</b> Not done sacrifice. <b>g</b> Unto them. <b>i</b> Jews came thither. <b>j</b> Paul stoned. <b>k</b> Disciples. <b>j</b> Paul arose. <b>i</b> Came into the city.
	C 19,20. The second Miracle.	

The reader will no doubt remember the dispensational character of Peter's healing of the lame man, as recorded in Acts 3 and 4, and will see that the healing of the lame man by Paul is an intentional parallel. The English reader is handicapped by the fact that the words 'save' and 'salvation' and the verb 'to heal' are sometimes translations of the Greek *sozo*. In Acts 4:9 Peter speaks of the impotent man being made 'whole', and in Acts 4:12 he uses the word 'salvation'. The word 'whole' here is *sozo*, and 'salvation' *soteria*. So, in Acts 14:9, when Paul perceived that the man had faith to be 'healed', the word used is *sozo*, 'saved'. Isaiah 6, quoted in Acts 28:27, ends with the words: 'I should heal them', using the ordinary word for 'healing'. This is followed immediately by the words:

'Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation (*soterion*) of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it' (Acts 28:28).

The lame man of Lystra is said to have 'heard' Paul speak, and his faith came by 'hearing'. In this respect Israel failed, and Romans 10, which gives us the text: 'Faith cometh by hearing', is a sad indictment against them.

Paul's two miracles on his first missionary journey are prophetic:

- (1) A Jew is blinded, upon which a Gentile (named Paul) is saved. This foreshadows the setting aside of Israel and the salvation of the Gentile as recorded in Acts 28.
- (2) A lame Gentile is healed, the language of the account being identical with that of Peter's miracle of healing.

With reference to the parallel between Paul's miracle in Acts 14 and Peter's miracle in Acts 3, we note that both miracles take place in the proximity of a temple, and both are followed by an outbreak of persecution. Peter is put into prison and brought before the High Priest; Paul is stoned and left for dead. Peter, and those with him, after his release, address their prayer to God, saying:

'Lord, Thou art God, Which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is' (Acts 4:24).

Paul, speaking to the idolatrous people of Lystra, says:

‘We ... preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein’ (Acts 14:15).

Moreover his reference to ‘vanities’ finds an echo in Peter’s quotation concerning the heathen imagining ‘vain’ things (Acts 4:25), although the actual words used are not the same.

Enough has been indicated, we trust, to demonstrate the Holy Spirit’s intention in this narrative, and to see its place in the outworking of God’s purposes of grace. Before concluding, however, we allude to one further point, which is not actually mentioned in Acts 14, but which, from subsequent Scriptures, is necessarily implied. It was here, in these circumstances, that Paul first became acquainted with the household of Lois, Eunice and Timothy. Paul refers to Timothy in his epistle as his own son in the faith, and in chapter 16 we find him ready to accompany Paul

on his journey. Here, therefore, must be placed the conversion of Timothy.

Writing from his last prison in 2 Timothy 3, Paul reminds his young successor of these early days:

‘Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, 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’ (2 Tim. 3:10-12).

What memories these words would produce in the heart of Timothy! And what significance they give to the recorded summary of this early work:

‘Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God’ (Acts 14:22).

And so at length these two men return to Antioch in Syria, whence they had been sent out, having ‘fulfilled’ the work which they had been set apart to do. They rehearse before the Church at Antioch ‘all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles’.

### **The open door and the many adversaries (Acts 15:1-35)**

In 1 Corinthians 16, written rather later than the periods covered by Acts 15, we read:

‘For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries’ (1 Cor. 16:9).

There is reason to believe that Paul is referring here to the period covered by Acts 19, and if so, we have only to read Acts 19:23 to 20:3 to see that he had opposition in abundance. The figure of the door is repeated in 2 Corinthians 2:12 and refers to the same period, though not to the same place.

In Colossians 4:3 the apostle again uses the figure of the door:

‘Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance’ (or, of the word).

We have not to search far here for ‘the adversaries’, for he immediately adds ‘For which I am also in bonds’. It seems that wherever and whenever a door was opened for the exercise of ministry, the apostle knew well enough that there would be adversaries. Acts 14 ends with the blessed fact that God had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. Acts 15 opens with the attempt of the adversary to counteract this movement of grace, and we find the apostle plunged into a fight upon the issue of which, speaking humanly, hung the fate of the glorious gospel that had been entrusted to him for the Gentiles.

At the outset of our study, let us remember, even with shame if need be, that it is almost impossible for any of us, when engaged in strife and conflict, even for the most worthy ends, to be entirely free from bias. This is very evident when one studies the various interpretations of Acts 15. It would be rather a waste of time to go over these

differences in detail, but there is one mistaken view to which we must refer, or suffer from a bad conscience by keeping silent. In the scheme of interpretation to which we refer, not only are the attempts to impose circumcision and law-keeping upon the Gentiles rejected as evil, but also the subsequent methods adopted out of respect for the weaker consciences of Jewish believers, *which is a totally different thing*. The seriousness of this point of view will be evident to any one who ponders the following explanation given on this scheme. With reference to James - who is described as the 'fleshly James' - it is stated that 'when he makes his decision, saying, "Wherefore *I* decide" he does not consult Peter or the rest of the apostles'. The reader will probably realize at once the inaccuracy of this view, for in Acts 15:22 we read that it pleased '*the apostles and elders, with the whole church*, to send chosen men of their own company'. If this interpretation were true what could we make of the express statement: 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost'?

Continuing our quotation, we read:

'It is to be noted that this epistle claims that this "burden" was placed upon the nations because "it seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us". It would have been more honourable for this flesh-controlled council to assume responsibility for their fleshly decision, instead of trying to place the responsibility upon the Holy Spirit Whom they wholly ignored'.

How many other false views of the Acts have been linked up with so-called 'apostolic mistakes'. Some, with wrong ideas as to the constitution of the Church, teach that the apostles made a mistake in Acts 1:6. Others find apostolic mistakes in other passages. And here, in Acts 15, not only are the apostles and elders found guilty, but Barnabas and Paul, Silas and Judas, men who were 'prophets' and had hazarded their lives for the Lord, are all accused of moral cowardice and spiritual dishonesty. If these decrees were 'fleshly' and not of God, how is it that we read in Acts 16:5, 'And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily'?

We have purposely refrained from naming the literature concerned, but those who have any knowledge of it will understand. We cannot help feeling saddened at such reading, but we remember that prayer is what is called for, and not censure.

Let us now come to the positive study of the Word. Before we can hope to understand the details of such a passage we must have a view of the whole, and we therefore give the structure as the next step in our exposition.

A reference to page 141 will show that the section before us is Acts 15:1-35. At verse 36, Paul proposes to re-visit every city where he had preached, and the section relating to his 'second missionary journey' begins. We have, therefore, a well-marked boundary at verse 35.

Upon examination we find that the passage falls into three pairs of corresponding sections as follows:

### **Acts 15:1-35**

A 15:1,2. Antioch. The Question. Paul. Barnabas.

B 15:3-5. Phenice, Samaria, Jerusalem.

The Pharisees' demand.

C 15:6-12. Apostles and Elders. Peter. Why put a yoke?

C 15:13-21. Men and Brethren. James.

Trouble not the Gentiles.

B 15:22-29. Antioch, Syria, Cilicia. No such commandment.

A 15:30-35. Antioch. The Answer. Paul. Barnabas.

Judas and Silas.

The complete analysis of this passage would occupy considerably more than a full page of this book, and we shall therefore only give the above skeleton outline, and then fill in each section as it comes before us. Those who are keen students of the Word will be more than compensated for their pains, if they will take the trouble to reproduce the structure as a whole after the details have been set out.

The first member of the structure, in this epoch-making fight of faith, is comprised in the first two verses:

‘And certain men which came down from Judæa taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question’ (Acts 15:1,2).

A 15:1,2. Antioch. The Question. Paul, Barnabas, and the men of Judæa.

- a Certain men come down from Jerusalem.
- b Their teaching.
- b The dissension.
- a Paul and Barnabas go up to Jerusalem.

The glorious doctrine of justification by faith apart from legal works of any kind, had been the central feature of Paul’s gospel on this wonderful journey through the cities of Galatia:

‘Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are JUSTIFIED from all things, from which ye could not be justified by *the law of Moses*’ (Acts 13:38,39).

After such a gospel had been preached it was obviously nothing less than diametric opposition for anyone to say: ‘Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved’. On such an issue compromise was utterly impossible, for essentials were at stake. When it was a matter of conscience with regard to the keeping of certain days, or of eating certain meats, Paul was most willing to meet the troubled believer more than half-way, but to suggest that the glorious doctrine of justification by faith should be dethroned from its place, and replaced by a legal ceremonial, was a call to arms that no follower of the Lord could fail to answer without shame.

‘*Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them*’. - Apart from the Acts, *stasis*, ‘dissension’ occurs only in the Gospels and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the Gospels the three references relate to Barabbas, and are translated ‘insurrection’ and ‘sedition’, the word in each case being associated with ‘murder’ (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19,25). In Hebrews 9:8, the same word is translated ‘standing’ in the passage: ‘While as the first tabernacle was yet standing’. It is obvious, of course, that this passage has nothing to do with sedition or insurrection, but it is useful in drawing attention to the basic meaning of the word. *Stasis* is derived from the verb *istemi*, ‘to stand’. The underlying idea is that of ‘making a stand’, but like most things human, the word deteriorated and came to mean in most cases ‘uproar’ (Acts 19:40), ‘dissension’ (Acts 23:7,10), or ‘sedition’ (Acts 24:5). We can verily believe that the apostle would most gladly have lived ‘peaceably with all men’ (Rom. 12:18), but the sacred cause of truth outweighed all personal considerations, and the apostle of grace and peace earned for his faithfulness the unenviable titles:

‘A pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes’ (Acts 24:5).

The ‘dissension’ at Antioch was two-fold. On the part of the apostles, it arose out of their stand for the truth of the gospel, while on the part of their opponents, it was due to their subversive views in connection with the law.

The word, ‘disputation’ - *suzetesis* derived from *zeteo*, to seek - is also of mixed meaning. While every ‘Berean’ must necessarily be a ‘seeker’ after truth, and must certainly ‘question’ any proposition put before him, the tendency of human nature is to abuse this attitude, and genealogies which minister questions’ (1 Tim. 1:4); and of the ignorant pride ‘doting about questions’ (1 Tim. 6:4). In 2 Timothy we read of ‘foolish and unlearned questions’, that gender

strife (2 Tim. 2:23). The apostle could write out of a full experience when he warned Timothy of the evil tendency of these things.

To return once more to the main narrative of our passage - it soon became evident that if the questions under discussion were ever to be settled, something more authoritative must be introduced. The apostle Paul needed no rule from Jerusalem for himself, but the Judaizers in the Church rejected his authority, and suggested that the matter should be taken to Jerusalem, thinking probably that the case would go in their favour, especially as James was known to have very strict views with regard to the law:

‘They determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question’ (Acts 15:2).

When we compare the record of Acts 15 with Paul’s own testimony in Galatians 2 we get the same facts presented from two different angles. Luke merely says that ‘certain other of them’ accompanied Paul and Barnabas, but Paul tells us specifically that they were accompanied by Titus, an uncircumcised Greek believer. Luke says: ‘They determined that Paul and Barnabas ... should go up’, while Paul writes: ‘I went up by revelation’. There is, of course, no discrepancy here. A rather similar case occurs in Acts 9:30 and 22:17,18. In the earlier passage we read:

‘Which when the brethren knew (i.e. that the Grecians went about to slay him), they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus’.

If we wonder how it was that such an ardent spirit should so tamely submit, in the face of danger, to being hurried off from the scene of witness, we find a complete answer in the later passage (Acts 22:17,18), together with the setting aside of Paul’s objections by the Lord Himself (verses 19-21).

The apostle’s going up to Jerusalem was of great importance, for it was there that two great battles were fought and won - first, with the Judaizers, who would nullify the cross of Christ by their insistence upon circumcision and the Law of Moses as essential to salvation; and then with that unbending spirit which confuses essentials and non-essentials. The apostle who fought to the last against the imposition of the law *as a means of salvation*, was at the same time most willing that the susceptibilities of a weaker conscience should be respected. In this he probably disappointed the most headstrong among his followers - and, as the extracts quoted earlier in this chapter show, these two quite different points of view are still apt to be confused today.

Our next section takes us to the Council itself. Meanwhile, a reading of Galatians 2 and 1 Corinthians 8 would be an excellent preparation of heart and mind for the next stage of our study in connection with the suggestions put forward by James (Acts 15:13-21).

### The twofold Decision (Acts 15:3-21)

We do not propose to deal in this section with the interval between the decision to go up to Jerusalem and the arrival there, except in so far as to supply the details of the structure:

B Acts 15:3-5.	
Phenice	c They passed through Phenice and Samaria
Samaria and	d Declaring conversion of Gentiles.
Jerusalem.	e The brethren.
‘It was needful	c They came to Jerusalem.
to circumcise them	d Declared all God had done.
and command them	e The Pharisees.
to keep the law’.	

Whether the deputation was met by certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, who said ‘It was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses’, or whether verse 5 means that the apostles repeated the demand that had been made by these men from Judæa, is a little uncertain. The A.V. indicates

the uncertainty in the margin, but it is not a matter of any vital importance. The point is that the demand emanated from these men and it was the settlement of this question that was uppermost.

The structure (page 165) emphasizes two speakers: Peter, who, to the chagrin of the sect of the Pharisees, will have no compromise over the matter of circumcision and law-keeping in relation to salvation; and James, who first whole-heartedly endorses and confirms this attitude, and then introduces the *entirely new* question conciliating the susceptibilities of the Jewish believer. Two questions, therefore, are before us, and 'right division' is as necessary here as in the vaster issues of dispensational truth.

C 15:6-12.

Apostles and Elders. **f** Apostles and Elders consider the matter.

**g** Much disputing.

PETER

**h** Peter rose up.

'Why ... put a  
yoke upon the neck  
of the disciples?'

**i** Gentiles by my mouth should  
hear gospel.

**j** Among us.

**k** God knoweth.

**l** Them and us.

**m** PUT NO DIFFERENCE.

**k** God. Why tempt?

**I** Neither our fathers nor we.

**f** All multitude kept silence.

**g** Gave audience.

**h** Barnabas and Paul.

**i** Gentiles. Miracles wrought.

**j** Among them.

There is no suggestion in verse 7 that the assembly at Jerusalem was dominated by either Peter or James, for there is 'much disputing' before Peter stands up to speak. It should be noted that when Peter refers to Pentecost he speaks of 'us' and 'them', the latter referring, not to some hypothetical Gentiles on the day of Pentecost, but to the first Gentiles to be addressed by Peter as recorded in Acts 10. It is true that Paul may have preached to Gentiles before Peter went to Cornelius, but even so, this would not invalidate Peter's words, for he says explicitly 'God made choice among us'.

The incident recorded in Acts 10 has already been considered in these pages, and Peter's summary needs no exposition. He stresses the following points :

- (1) God knows *the heart*, the inference being that the Pharisees were more concerned with *externals*.
- (2) God gave *the holy spirit* to these believing Gentiles, and it is therefore impossible to teach that such cannot be saved *except they be circumcised*.
- (3) God put no difference between *us* and *them*. How can we dare to question God?
- (4) God purified their hearts *by faith*. What place in salvation, therefore, can *rites* and *ceremonies* have?
- (5) These legal obligations had been a yoke too heavy for *Israel*. Was it wise, then, to put the same yoke upon the *Gentiles*?
- (6) 'We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they'.

Peter's argument was unanswerable. The law as a means of salvation was obsolete. The Jews themselves, who had the law by nature, were saved by grace, through faith. The emphasis on there being 'no difference' - the central feature of the structure - must have rejoiced the heart of the apostle of the Gentiles (see Rom. 3:22; 10:12).

This noble testimony to salvation by grace coming from the leading apostle of the Circumcision, silenced the disputants and prepared an audience for Barnabas and Paul. It should be noticed that the order in naming these apostles changes in the narrative. While they are at Antioch it is 'Paul and Barnabas', but when they arrive at Jerusalem, the order is reversed. This reversed order is maintained in the actual letter drafted by the Council, but it



should be noted that where Luke is recording the facts himself, he reverts to the old order (Acts 15:22). It seems clear that Barnabas spoke first.

‘Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them’ (Acts 15:12).

The obvious parallel between the miracles and experiences of Peter and of Paul would not fail to make an impression. For example:

- PETER. (1) The healing of the lame man (Acts 3 and 4).  
 (2) The conflict with the sorcerer, SIMON (Acts 8:9-24).  
 PAUL. (1) The healing of the lame man (Acts 14).  
 (2) The conflict with the sorcerer, BAR-JESUS (Acts 13).

To the Jew, confirmation by miracle would be a stronger argument than almost anything else, and it would seem, judging from the interval of silence that followed ‘After they had held their peace’ (Acts 15:13), that the multitude as a whole were convinced.

From Galatians chapter 2 we gather that the apostle, knowing only too well how easily a multitude can be swayed, and knowing that there were false brethren secretly at work, communicated the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles privately to them that were of reputation. Peter, James and John, therefore, were convinced that Paul’s apostleship and gospel were of the Lord, and took their stand for the truth at the public gathering.

We must now pass on to the testimony of James, and before examining his words in detail, we give the structure of the passage.

C 15:13-21.	
Men and Brethren.	<b>f</b> James ... me.
	<b>g</b> Gentiles visited.
JAMES.	<b>h</b> <sub>1</sub> The agreement of prophecy.
	<b>h</b> <sub>1</sub> The knowledge of the Lord.
‘My sentence is that we trouble not the Gentiles’.	<b>f</b> James ... my.
	<b>g</b> Gentiles turn to God.
	<b>h</b> <sub>2</sub> Write that they abstain.
	<b>h</b> <sub>2</sub> Moses is preached.

James takes up the claim made by Peter - calling him by his Hebrew name Simeon - and, directing his argument to those who revered the Old Testament writings, draws attention to a passage from one 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 the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called, saith the Lord, Who doeth all these things which were known from the age’ (Acts 15:15-18 Author’s translation).

It should be noted that James does not say ‘This fulfils what is written by the prophet’; he simply says ‘To this agree the words of the prophets’. The word translated ‘agree’ is *sumphoneo*, which gives us the word ‘symphony’, and as a noun is translated ‘music’ in Luke 15:25.

We could therefore interpret James’ meaning as follows:

‘The inclusion of the Gentile upon the same terms as the Jew is in harmony with such a passage as Amos 9:11,12 (which in the Septuagint Version reads as above) and it is therefore clear that the spirit in which Peter enjoins us to act now, is that in which the Lord has revealed He will act in the future. He has known these things, which He has commenced to do, since the age, and to object, or to impose restrictions, is but to tempt God as our fathers did in the wilderness, with dreadful consequences, as we all know’.

The fact that James could give such hearty support to the position taken by Paul and subsequently by Peter, was a shattering blow to the Judaizing party in the Jerusalem church. A little man might have been content with this victory and have ignored the susceptibilities of the Jewish believers. Not so, however, the apostle James. He realizes the feelings of shock and abhorrence which would almost inevitably result from the Jewish Christians coming into contact with the revolting customs of the Gentiles, and he therefore gives a double sentence:

- (1) With regard to the immediate question, as to whether believing Gentiles must submit to circumcision and the law of Moses, before they can be sure of salvation, my answer is 'No'. 'My sentence is, that we *trouble not* them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God'.

In the body of the letter sent to the Gentiles it is categorically stated that such teaching was a 'subverting of souls' and that no such commandment had been given by the leaders at Jerusalem (Acts 15:24).

- (2) My sentence is not, however, harsh or mechanical. I am by nature and upbringing a Jew, and I know the horror that seizes the mind at the bare possibility of contact with those who have partaken of meat offered to idols, or with those who have not been particular about the question of blood. While we yield no ground with regard to justification by faith, we must not forget that we are called upon to walk in love, to remember the weaker brethren, and to be willing to yield our rights if need be. My sentence, therefore, is that we write to the Gentiles that believe 'that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood' (Acts 15:20).

Three of these items we can readily understand as being offensive to a Jewish believer, though inoffensive to a Gentile. One, however, is a grossly immoral act and cannot be classed as in the same category. The reason for its inclusion here is not that James meant for a moment to suggest that sexual immorality was a matter of indifference, but rather that, knowing how the Gentile throughout his unregenerate days looked upon this sin as of no consequence, James realized that he was likely, even after conversion, to offend by taking too lenient a view. This is brought out most vividly in 1 Corinthians, an epistle that deals with the application of the decrees sent from Jerusalem, and which we must examine before this study is complete.

James follows his counsel of abstinence by a reference to Moses:

'For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day' (Acts 15:21).

His meaning appears to be that there was no need to fear that, by reducing the appeal to only four points, the scruples of the more rigid Jewish believer would be invaded. Moses was preached every sabbath day in the synagogue, and the synagogue was the nursery of the Church. If we will but put ourselves in the position of the early Church we shall see the wisdom of this decision. The coming into the synagogue of men whose practices filled the body of the people with horror, would be a serious hindrance to the advance of the gospel. It might even mean the destroying, for the sake of 'meat', of one for whom Christ died. We shall see presently that Paul's spiritual application of the decrees of Jerusalem went much further than James' four items. He would not eat meat, or drink wine, or do anything that would cause his brother to stumble.

Such, then, was the two-fold decision of the Church at Jerusalem, a decision which, taking the state of affairs at that time into account, must commend itself to all who have any sympathy with the teaching of the apostle Paul. Such a state of affairs was not ideal, and could not last. It was, as the decrees put it, a question of imposing 'no greater burden than these necessary things' - much in the same way as the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 enjoined abstinence because of 'the present distress' (1 Cor. 7:26).

We must leave the consideration of the letter and of Paul's application of its principle for the next section. Meanwhile let us learn from Acts 15 to be as inflexible as a rock where vital truth is at stake, but as yielding as grace will permit, where it is a question of our 'rights' and the consciences of others.

## The Decrees and Paul's Interpretation of their spirit

(Acts 15:22-35)

The assembled church, together with the apostles and elders, agree with one accord to the appeals of Peter and James, and their decision is recorded in a letter sent by the hands of Barnabas, Paul, Silas and Judas. This letter is of intense interest, not only on account of its teaching, but also because it is the earliest church letter in existence. Let us take it out of its setting for the moment and look at it as a letter, complete in itself.

'The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:

Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:

It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.

For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well' (Acts 15:23-29).

Such is the letter itself. Its inter-relation with the context is best seen by expanding the structure of this section as follows:

### Acts 15:22-29.

<p><i>B</i> 15:22-29. Antioch, Syria and Cilicia.</p>	<p><b>n<sub>1</sub></b> IT SEEMED GOOD.  <b>o<sub>1</sub></b> To apostles, elders and whole church.  <b>p<sub>1</sub></b> Send chosen men.  <b>q<sub>1</sub></b> Chief men among the brethren.  <b>r<sub>1</sub></b> Greeting. No such commandment.</p> <p><b>n<sub>2</sub></b> IT SEEMED GOOD.  <b>o<sub>2</sub></b> Assembled with one accord.  <b>p<sub>2</sub></b> Send chosen men.  <b>q<sub>2</sub></b> Men who hazarded their lives.  <b>r<sub>2</sub></b> Tell you the same things.</p> <p><b>n<sub>3</sub></b> IT SEEMED GOOD.  <b>o<sub>3</sub></b> To the Holy Spirit and to us.  <b>p<sub>3</sub></b> Lay no other burden.  <b>q<sub>3</sub></b> That ye abstain.  <b>r<sub>3</sub></b> Fare ye well.</p>
<p>'We gave no such commandment'.</p>	

Three times the words 'It seemed good' occur. First, 'Then pleased it (it seemed good to) the apostles and elders, and the whole church'. Secondly, 'it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord'. And thirdly, 'it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us'. To break this threefold cord, the whole church, with the apostles and elders, together with Barnabas and Paul, and Silas and Judas, as well as the Holy Spirit Himself, would have to be regarded as in the wrong. Any system of interpretation necessitating such an assumption is self-condemned.

It is certainly true that Peter acted hypocritically at Antioch, and was publicly rebuked for it by Paul (*see* Gal. 2), but we are definitely told in this case that Peter was to be 'blamed', and it is in no way to be compared with the solemn agreement manifested in Acts 15.

We now turn to Paul's application of these decrees, as we find it in his first Epistle to the Corinthians. In chapters 5 to 7 the apostle reproves the church with regard to fornication, while in chapters 8 and 10 he deals with the question of meats offered to idols. It will obviously be profitable to consider the apostle's own interpretation of the Jerusalem ordinances as revealed in these chapters.

It appears that the Corinthian conception of morality allowed a man to 'have his father's wife', and not only so, but the offence was made a matter of boasting. The apostle had already written to this church, commanding them not to company with men guilty of such offences, but they had misunderstood him. He takes the opportunity now of correcting the misunderstanding by saying in effect:

'If I had meant that you were not to company with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters: you would need to go out of the world. What I enjoin has reference to a *brother* who practices any of these things - with such an one no not to eat; but I have no idea of attempting to judge the world or of setting up a code of morals for the ungodly' (1 Cor. 5:9-12).

He clinches his exhortation by showing that the sin of immorality is a sin against a man's own body, and that that body, if redeemed, should be regarded as a temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6:13-20).

In 1 Corinthians 7 the apostle deals with the question of marriage, and explains that 'for the present necessity' it would be as well for all to remain unmarried. But these statements were not to be taken as commandments for all time, nor even for all believers at that time. It was a counsel of abstinence, because the Lord's coming and the dreadful prelude of the Day of the Lord were still before the Church. With the passing of Israel a change came, and the apostle later encouraged marriage, as we find in his prison epistles. The fact that Ephesians 5 sets aside 1 Corinthians 7 does not make 1 Corinthians 7 untrue for the time in which it was written - any more than the setting aside of the decrees of Acts 15 makes Acts 15 a compromise or a mistake. Each must be judged according to the dispensation that obtained at the time. The dispensation of the Mystery had not yet dawned either in Acts 15 or 1 Corinthians 7.

With regard to the pollution of meat offered to idols, the apostle agrees that, strictly speaking, 'an idol is nothing in the world' (1 Cor. 8:4) - and therefore one might say, Why should I refuse good food, simply because someone who is ignorant and superstitious thinks that its having been offered to a block of wood or stone has polluted it? This is true, rejoins the apostle in effect, but 'take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling-block to them that are weak'. The thing that must be uppermost in the mind, is not the safeguarding of our own so-called liberties, but the safeguarding of the weaker brother for whom Christ died. To achieve this, the apostle is willing to go much further than 'the four necessary things' of the Jerusalem decrees. In 1 Corinthians 8:13 he writes :

'If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh (even though it satisfy the most scrupulous Jew) while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend'.

A further interpretation of the spirit of the decrees is found in chapter 10:

'All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that 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 ... conscience, I say, *not thine own* ...' (1 Cor. 10:23-29).

If we can but keep in mind those words, 'Not thine own', we shall have no difficulty in understanding the principles involved in the decrees of Acts 15.

If man has failed under the law of Sinai, it is not surprising to find that he fails many times under grace. The moderate request that the Gentiles should abstain from the 'four necessary things', while the Jewish believers had 'Moses preached in the synagogue every Sabbath day' would lead, in time, wherever the flesh became prominent, to a line of demarcation between the churches of Judæa and those of the Gentiles. This gradually grew to become 'a middle wall of partition', a division that could not be permitted in the Church of the One Body. The One Body was not, however, in view in Acts 15. Only those things known of the Lord 'since the age', only those things that

harmonized with the Old Testament prophecies were in operation in Acts 15, and nowhere throughout the Acts is there a hint that a Jew ceased from being a Jew when he became a Christian. On the contrary, he became the better Jew, for he was believing the testimony of the law and the prophets. Even justification by faith, as preached by Paul, was to be found in the law and the prophets, and was, therefore, not part of a mystery or secret purpose.

We have, therefore, in Acts 15 two vastly different themes. One is *eternally* true, and independent of dispensational changes. The other is *relatively* true, but to be set aside when that which is perfect has come. The former is doctrinal truth, the latter the practical manifestation of graciousness and love.

Returning to Acts 15, we come to the conclusion of the matter.

### Acts 15:30-35

<p>A 15:30-35. ANTIOCH. <i>The Answer.</i></p> <p>Paul and Barnabas, Judas and Silas.</p>	<p><b>a</b> Apoluo. Dismissed. <b>b</b> The epistle delivered. <b>c</b> <i>Paraklesis</i>. Consolation. <b>c</b> <i>Parakaleo</i>. Exhorted.</p> <p><b>a</b> <i>Apoluo</i>. Dismissed. <b>b</b> Teaching and preaching.</p>
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We learn from these verses that, upon reading the letter from Jerusalem, the Gentiles 'rejoiced for the consolation'. The word here not only means 'consolation' but also 'exhortation', as can be seen in the next verse. We read further that Judas and Silas, 'being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren .... and confirmed them'; and their work now being done, they return to Jerusalem. Verse 34 is an interpolation (*see* Revised Text), being evidently added by some scribe because of the presence of Silas at Antioch in verse 40.

There now remain two short passages to conclude our study of the large section that we have had before us (Acts 12:24 to 16:5) of which the structure is given in outline on page 141. These further passages contain one or two features that are far-reaching, both in their effects, and in the way they manifest the superintending hand of God, Who worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will, and these we must consider next.

### Preparation for a wider sphere of ministry

#### (Acts 15:36 to 16:5)

We come now to Paul's second missionary journey. Although most of the ground that was covered by Barnabas and Paul as recorded in chapters 13 and 14 is traversed again here, the two apostles no longer share the joys and sufferings of mutual service for, alas, as they had themselves declared at Lystra, they were men of like passions with ourselves. We are sure that the removal of Barnabas and the substitution of Silas were of God, but it is equally true that the Lord does not need the failure of man to accomplish His purposes.

Paul early exhibited that lovable trait that shines out so brightly in his epistles - an extreme solicitude for the spiritual well-being of his young converts. The untranslated *de* in verse 36 indicates an element of urgency, and some even think that its presence implies that Paul had raised the question of revisiting the churches of Galatia earlier to Barnabas. However this may be, we find that although Barnabas is named first in the separation to the work in Acts 13, it is Paul and not Barnabas who expresses the desire to revisit the scenes of his sufferings and of the triumphs of the Lord's grace.

In verse 37, we read that Barnabas wished to take with them his nephew 'John, the one called Mark'. There may have been a variety of motives for this. Barnabas was a near kinsman of John Mark. No doubt he had felt grieved to think that his nephew had turned back at the first, and rejoiced now to know that he had returned and was willing to serve. We cannot say that Barnabas was entirely free from personal motives; his intentions, like those of most of us, were probably mixed. Neither is there any reason to regard Paul's attitude as faultless. We know that Moses

spoke unadvisedly with his lips, and Asaph rebuked himself saying, 'this is my infirmity'. David, also, said 'in his haste', that all men were liars. Paul himself, when he stood before the High Priest, had to confess that he had spoken words not seemly to be uttered to one in such an office. We do not attempt, therefore, to apportion the blame.

The word used to indicate Paul's decision is *axioo* - 'Paul *thought* not good' (Acts 15:38). This is the word that gives us 'worthy' in Ephesians 4:1, and suggests a process of weighing, to ascertain the 'worth'. The word occurs again in Acts 28:22, where it is translated, 'desire'. In this passage the rulers of the Jews say in effect, We know that this sect is everywhere spoken against, but we feel the time has come for some sort of investigation to be made, and having weighed the matter over, we should like to know what you think.

Throughout the New Testament record, whether in the Acts or in the epistles, we find that Paul is kind and courteous, although he can be moved to burning point where the truth is at stake. He weighs the matter over here, and decides that the claims of the gospel and the success of these early ventures of faith must not be imperilled by allowing half-hearted service to be condoned, or by allowing the slightest intrusion of favouritism in the choice of witnesses. And so: 'Paul did not deem it fitting to take with them one who withdrew from them from Pamphylia, and went not to the work' (Acts 15:38). So ended the fellowship that saw the planting of the gospel of the grace of God in Cyprus and Galatia. Paul does not re-visit Cyprus, leaving this for Barnabas and his nephew.

We now look beyond the movements of men, and see the hand of the Lord at work. Barnabas was a Levite and would therefore have considerable influence with his own people, but the Lord was about to call Paul and his associates to a wider field. Before this second missionary journey was finished, Europe was to be entered. In such a sphere a Levite would have no special influence, but a Roman citizen would be invaluable (Acts 16:37,38). Possibly Silas had been present at Antioch when Peter and Barnabas had momentarily given way to the Judaizers, and being a Spirit-guided man, and a prophet, he may have foreseen what would happen. Paul would naturally feel the need for loyal companionship, and Silas seemed the heaven-sent man. The names of both Barnabas and Paul appeared in the letter sent from Jerusalem, and the absence of one of the principals might have given a handle to the enemy, but Silas was also named and his evidence would therefore be sufficient justification.

The Church seems to have endorsed Paul's attitude for we read;

'And Paul choose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches' (Acts 15:40,41).

These verses are the beginning of another section of the correspondence seen in the structure, and it will be useful to have the whole passage before us, shorn of detail, as we draw to its conclusion.

- A 12:24.           The Word of God grew and multiplied.
- B 12:25.           Barnabas and Saul. John Mark taken.
- C 13:1-3.          Barnabas and Saul. Separated.
- D 13:4 to 14:28. The mission in Galatia.
- D 15:1-35.        The conference in Jerusalem.
- B 15:36-39.        Barnabas and Paul. John Mark to Cyprus.
- C 15:40 to 16:4. Silas and Timothy approved.
- A 16:5.            The churches established and increased.

The choice of Silas and Timothy is seen to be in correspondence with the separation of Barnabas and Saul by the Holy Spirit in Acts 13:1-3. The choice of Silas was important, but the choice of the next servant of the Lord was critical. Returning to Derbe and Lystra, the apostle finds a certain disciple there named Timothy - his father a Greek and his mother a Jewess who believed. From what we can gather from the Scriptures, Timothy was a young man, and of a retiring disposition, one who needed to be reminded in a letter that the Lord had not given a spirit of cowardice, and to be told to be 'no longer a water-drinker'. This young man had, from his infancy, been taught the Holy Scriptures, and was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. It will be remembered that Luke simply tells us that the church at Antioch decided to send Paul and Barnabas up to Jerusalem, and we only learn from Paul himself that he went up by revelation, So here, Timothy's fitness for the work is set forth in

everyday language. We learn, first, that he was 'a disciple'; secondly, that his mother was a 'Jewess, and believed, but his father was a Greek'; and thirdly, that he was 'well reported of', not only in his own home town of Lystra, but also in the adjacent city of Iconium. He was, therefore, likely material.

Timothy's more particularly spiritual qualifications we learn from Paul himself. In his first letter to Timothy, giving him his 'charge', the apostle writes: 'This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee' (1 Tim. 1:18).

We know that Silas was a prophet (Acts 15:32), and it may be that he was inspired to indicate the Lord's will with regard to Timothy. Something of this sort would have been necessary in view of the defection of John Mark, and Timothy's youthful and timid nature. At some time also - and probably at the time of his call - Timothy received a spiritual gift, for we read:

'Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery' (1 Tim. 4:14).

'Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands' (2 Tim. 1:6).

Such gifts as these, together with 'prophecy' and the 'laying on of hands' do not properly belong to the Church of the Mystery. They are referred to in the apostle's prison ministry as something carried over from a previous dispensation and belonging to a special order of men who had pioneer work to do. They are not repeated, neither is there any reference to this supernatural endowment found in the epistles of the present calling. Perhaps Luke was constrained to omit the prophecies and the laying on of hands, and to concentrate attention upon discipleship, Bible training, and good report, so that we might remember that the teacher should be 'apt to teach' as well as 'marked out by prophecy'.

The fact that Timothy was a child of mixed parentage, was another qualification. He could sympathize with the Greek, and he could also understand the Jew. In this connection the large-mindedness of Paul again shines out. A smaller man, having won so signal a triumph regarding circumcision as Paul had done at Jerusalem, would have hesitated before circumcising Timothy. Not so the apostle; to him circumcision and uncircumcision were nothing, the glory of God was all. If Timothy could better serve the Lord in the synagogue by being circumcised, then let the rite be performed at once. Spiritual gifts, prophecies, laying on of hands and a Jewish rite, all combine to fit this young servant for his high office.

And so these three set out on their journey, delivering 'the decrees for to keep'. As a result, we read firstly that the churches were 'established in the faith' - for the decrees made the imposition of circumcision upon the Gentile null and void; and secondly, that they 'increased in number daily' - for the susceptibilities of the Jewish believers were now recognised and the causes of stumbling removed by the voluntary abstinence on the part of the Gentile believers from those things that caused offence. We are now on the verge of the next great movement in the Acts, and to this we must address ourselves in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 15

### The Second Missionary Journey

(Acts 16:6 to 19:20)

We now approach another section of the Acts, and a wider circle of witness. In the nineteenth chapter we have the separation of the Church from the Synagogue, and in the sixteenth chapter the call of the man of Macedonia. In response to this call the Gospel enters Europe. Such a chapter as this ranks in importance with Acts 2, 13 and 28.

We have given in the Appendix to *The Apostle of the Reconciliation*, an adjustment of the Structure of the Acts, so that this vision may at least be noted, but at best the outline suggested was a reconstruction of the work of others and cannot be allowed to take its place in this book. We therefore turn to the pages of the Acts afresh, examining each step as we go. The result of this investigation is that the outline in the appendix to *The Apostle of the*

*Reconciliation*, is found to be insufficient. It is true that the geographical terms are there, and in the order shown, but there is little value in a mere list of names - except of course, that they show the footsteps of the apostles and the opening up of the Roman world to the Gospel. Let the reader and the writer share together, as far as possible, the thrill of first discovery and see the light dawn as patience, persistence and prayer overcome obstacles. The obstacles are many and various. Chief among them is the wealth of detail and the amount of material. Look for instance at the places mentioned: Galatia, Phrygia, Asia, Mysia, Bythnia, Troas, Macedonia, Samothracia, Neapolis, Philippi, Thyatira, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Mars' Hill, Corinth, Syria, Cenchrea, Ephesus, Casarea, Antioch, Alexandria. To turn these geographical names into centres of real interest would demand a volume. And if we add to these the different peoples that cross and re-cross the path, and the varied experiences of the apostle, from the prison at Philippi to the Acropolis at Athens, the difficulty grows.

To return to our quest, here then are the chapters awaiting us, and we are convinced that they are stamped with the hallmark of inspiration, that we have found throughout the Scriptures. We begin with the conviction that the vision at Macedonia is a feature of importance, and we therefore make a note of it. We write '*Macedonia: Vision*'. As we do so, there comes to mind another vision, recorded in chapter 18, and as this is a likely parallel, we make a note of that too. '*Corinth: vision*'. Philippi, which follows the Macedonian vision, occupies a large space, and we provisionally set aside the rest of chapter 16, under the heading '*Philippi*'. As we do so, however, we observe that there is recorded here the strange occurrence of the damsel possessed with a spirit of divination, and that the spirit, instead of opposing the apostle, apparently endorses his message, saying: 'These men are the servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way of salvation'. This is evidently an indication that the old enemy is adopting new tactics, and this item is therefore important. So we note, '*Spirit of Python: Way of Salvation*'. As we do so, we recall that there is an incident parallel to this further on in the Acts, and to our delight we find waiting for us the record of the Jewish exorcists, who used the name of 'Jesus, Whom Paul preacheth'. This is so obviously a corresponding member that we set it down in its place - '*Evil Spirit: Jesus, Whom Paul preacheth*'. We are now well started, and soon the hospitality of Lydia and of Aquila and Priscilla are noted, and at the last minute we find that minute perfectness necessary to confirm the whole scheme - the two references to Phrygia and the region or country of Galatia. We now have the main outline of the new section before us, and soon we have the joy of seeing it grow in beauty before our eyes. And not only so, but we have also exchanged a barren list of geographical terms for the living issues of apostolic witness and conflict.

What has taken a few minutes to recount here represents, of course, in practice as many hours of search and frustration. The pleasure which the reader has shared with us in the recounting cannot, therefore, be anything like as keen as the joy that comes from the initial discovery. Truly the searching of the Scriptures brings its own reward, and it is not without reason that the central member stresses the 'nobility' of the *Bereans*, who searched to see whether these things were so. We have deliberately taken up a certain amount of space in introducing this structure, as so many readers ask us 'how it is done'. There is no royal road to success, and it is most important that there should be no invention. There are usually one or two obvious indications placed by the Lord on the surface, ready to give the lead to any who will follow. The structure of the passage is as follows:

#### Acts 16:6 to 19:20

- A 16:6-11.     **a** 16:6. PHRYGIA, a country of GALATIA.
- b** 16:6-11. THE VISION. MACEDONIA.
- B 16:12-40.     **c** 16:12-15. PHILIPPI. Lydia. Come into my house.
- d** 16:16-18. PHILIPPI. Spirit of Python. The way of salvation.
- e** 16:19-40. PHILIPPI. Result: Prison and salvation.
- C 17:1-14. THESSALONICA AND BEREA. 'More noble'.
- A 17:15 to 18:23. **b** 17:15 to 18:17. THE VISION. ATHENS and CORINTH.
- a** 18:18-23. The country of GALATIA and PHRYGIA.
- B 18:24 to 19:20. **c** 18:24-28. EPHEBUS. Aquila and Priscilla.
- They took him unto them.
- d** 19:1-16. EPHEBUS. Evil spirits. Jesus Whom Paul preacheth.



e 19:17-20. EPHEBUS. Result: Name of Lord magnified.

We cannot deal with the vision of the man of Macedonia without going on to speak of the witness at Philippi. This, however, demands a complete section, and we will therefore content ourselves here with presenting the structure of this new section, and adding a few words with regard to Phrygia and the country of Galatia (16:6, and 18:18-23).

'Now when they had gone throughout the country which is Phrygian and Galatic' (Acts 16:6).

This is Sir William Ramsay's rendering, to which he adds the note 'A single district to which both adjectives apply' - 'the country which, according to one way of speaking, is Phrygian, but which is also called Galatic'. If we turn back to Acts 14 we find that the apostles fled from Iconium to Lystra and Derbe, and so apparently crossed a boundary. In Acts 18:23 we find the order of the names is reversed, and we now read from Sir William Ramsay:

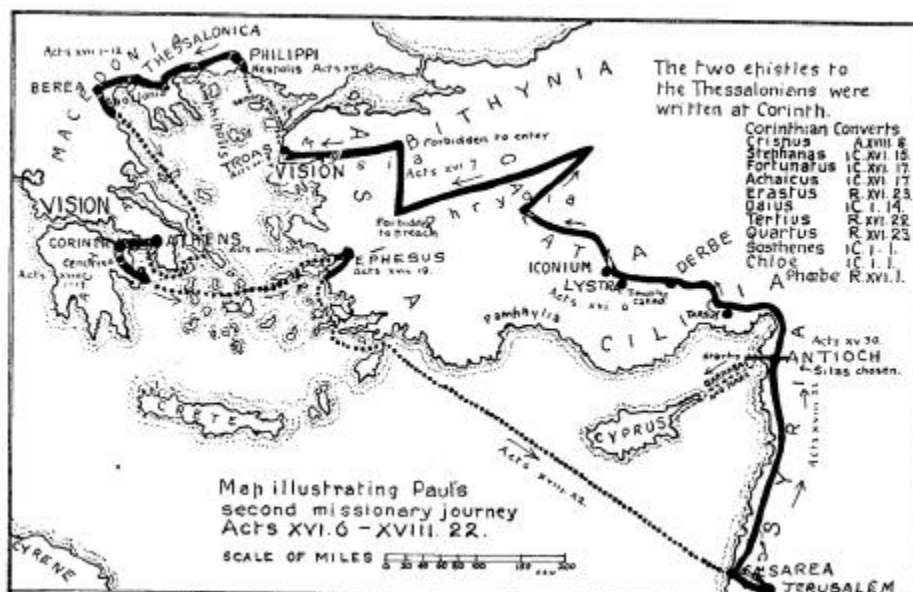
"He went over all the country which is Galatic and Phrygia". The country denoted by the phrase in 16:6 is that which was traversed by Paul after leaving Lystra: it is therefore the territory about Iconium and Antioch, and is rightly called Phrygo-Galatic, "the part of Phrygia that was attached to Galatia". But the country which is meant in 18:23 includes Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, and could not rightly be called "Phrygo-Galatic".

A glance at a map showing the political divisions of Asia Minor between the years A.D. 40 and 63, explains the ground of Sir William Ramsay's objection quoted above. The Galatian province had taken within its borders a part of Phrygia on the west, and as Derbe, Lystra and Iconium had originally belonged to Lycaonia, which had been absorbed on the east, the exactness of Luke's description 'All the country which is Galatic and Phrygian' is striking. No one who was acquainted with the geography of Great Britain would use the term 'The London Scottish and Midland Railway', and no one acquainted with the geography of the period covered by the Acts would expect any other description in Acts 18:23 than that used by Luke.

The reader may not be keenly interested in the arguments that prove that when Paul speaks of 'Galatia' he means the Roman Province of that name, and not the smaller Northern Kingdom. We therefore take it as proven that Antioch, Lystra, and Derbe are the cities of Galatia wherein the churches of Galatia were formed, and to which the apostle addressed his epistle. Should any readers wish for the complete array of facts and arguments, we must refer them to the writings of Sir William Ramsay as the matter is technical and would occupy far more space than we can spare.

Our main object in this chapter has been to introduce the new departure, and to set out the structure. We are now ready for the exposition of these epoch-making journeys - journeys which penetrated into Europe, and so brought the history of our own evangelizing a step nearer.

We append a rough map of this second missionary journey and hope that it will enable the reader to follow more closely the footsteps of these missionaries of grace as they break up new ground for the gospel message.



### The Vision at Troas (Acts 16:6-11)

In our previous pages we left the apostle, accompanied by Silas and Timothy, delivering to the churches the decrees that had been ordained at Jerusalem. So far from this being a retrograde movement, as some have supposed, owing to a confusion between the two separate issues that were before the assembly at Jerusalem (Acts 15), this was undoubtedly a step towards growth and peace, the inspired comment being:

‘And so (or "then indeed") were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily’ (Acts 16:5).

Our new section (Acts 16:6 to 19:20), a section fraught with the greatest interest to every believing Gentile (for in this second missionary journey, the gospel was first proclaimed in Europe) opens with a geographical reference that has only been fully understood in recent times. Commenting on the words: ‘Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia’ (Acts 16:6), Conybeare and Howson write:

‘We are evidently destitute of materials for laying down the route of St. Paul and his companions. All that relates to Phrygia and Galatia must be left vague and blank, like an unexplored country in a map’.

All this has, happily, been altered since the completion of the archaeological labours of Sir William Ramsay previously described. His researches have an important bearing on the dating of the Epistle to the Galatians and other matters in connection with the churches of Galatia, but we must pass on to consider the purpose of this journey, as planned by the apostle and actually led by the Lord. The reader is advised to consult the rough map given overleaf, at each stage in the progress recorded in Acts 16:6 to 18:22, as an intelligent grasp of the geography of the route is a considerable asset.

### Acts 16:6-11

#### The Vision of the Man of Macedonia

A 16:6-8.

NEGATIVE.	<b>a</b>	Asia. Preach ( <i>Laleo</i> ).	}		{	Paul,
‘Forbidden’.	<b>b</b>	Bithynia.	}	‘They’	{	Silas,
		Assayed to go.			}	Timothy.

B 16:9-10.	<b>c</b>	Vision appeared.	}			
‘Enlightened’.	<b>d</b>	Man of Macedonia.	}			
			}			‘He’, Paul.
	<b>d</b>	Come over and help us.	}			
	<b>c</b>	After he had seen the vision.]	}			

A 16:10,11.

POSITIVE.	<b>b</b>	Endeavoured to go.	}		{	Luke
‘Called’.	<b>a</b>	Preach ( <i>Euaggelizo</i> )	}	‘We’	{	joins
		unto them.			}	them.

The structure of this section is simple but nevertheless useful. The reader should notice the unobtrusive way in which Luke indicates, by the use of the pronoun ‘We’, his presence at Troas, and then on through the journey up to Acts 17:1, where the pronoun is again dropped until 20:5 - from which point it continues to the end of the narrative.

The story of the first preaching of the gospel in Europe falls into three parts. First, we have the closing of doors in Asia Minor, then the opening of the door at Troas, and finally the entry through that newly-opened door into Macedonia. From the contemplation of this record, one great principle emerges, a principle which is true for all time, and for all classes of the Lord’s people: namely, that the leading of the Lord is just as real when opportunities for service are closed by Him, as when they are opened. Apart from actually telling the apostle in plain language that he must cross over to Macedonia, there does not appear to be any other way in which he could have been led, except by the use of compulsion, which is quite foreign to the Lord’s method of dealing with his willing servants. There may have been also a need to test this little band, as they start on such a momentous journey. What was the compelling power that had led them thus far? An apparent rebuff would try their temper, would test the genuineness

of their obedience, and would indicate whether it was the maturing of their own plans or the ready following of the Lord's leading that was uppermost in their hearts. There can hardly be a greater test for whole-heartedness than to have all one's ardour apparently rejected, to be ready to offer one's self upon the sacrifice and service of the gospel, only to be met with unexplained prohibitions. Yet all along there have been these seasons of trial. Paul himself had withdrawn earlier into Arabia; Moses before him had spent forty years in the desert. Let us remember that a closed door may be the unexpected answer to our prayers. The writer himself can say without exaggeration that some of the things for which he cannot be too thankful have been closed doors, even though they were bitterly disappointing at the time. If rightly accepted, the closed door urges us forward as it did the apostle and his company. Being forbidden to 'speak the Word in Asia', we can well understand that there could be no thought of turning back.

Striking northward until they came 'over against' (*kata*) Mysia, they 'assayed' to go into Bithynia. The word 'assayed' is, in the original, *peirazo*, from *peiro*, 'to pierce' or 'perforate' and so 'to test' or 'make trial'. In the Acts we find the word translated 'tempt' in 5:9 and 15:10, and the noun form *peirasmós* occurs in 20:19 as 'temptation'. In Acts 9:26 we read that the apostle 'assayed' to join himself with the disciples at Jerusalem, the idea being that he naturally felt somewhat diffident about his reception, but made the attempt. It is right, therefore, for the believer, when faced with an apparently shut door, to try the latch, in case it merely needs a touch to open it, but there must be no forcing of the lock.

Failing to receive permission to enter Bithynia, these three devoted men went on their way once more, arriving in due course at Troas. We must not, of course, allow our imagination to invest these three way-worn travellers with a classical scholar's interest in ancient Troy, but, on the other hand, it seems almost impossible for a man like Paul, brought up in the Cilician University City of Tarsus, famous for its philosophy and learning, not to have had some interest in the scene of Homer's famous poem. And further, Troy was not only famous because of its legendary past, but on several memorable occasions it had been visited by men of world-wide renown. Here Xerxes had passed on his way to the attempted conquest of Greece; here also Alexander the Great, at the tomb of Achilles, had conceived his idea of world conquest. In Suetonius, also, we read:

'A report was very current, that he (Julius Cæsar) had a design of withdrawing to Alexandria or Ilium (Troy), whither he proposed to transfer the imperial power, to drain Italy by new levies, and to leave the government of the city to be administered by his friends' (Suetonius J.C. lxxix).

Where the conquerors of earthly territory had gathered inspiration or had cast their approving gaze, there the apostle of the Gentiles, harbouring the vast design of traversing the length of the Roman empire in the cause of Christ, received his call to cross the sea, and plant the standard of the cross on European soil.

We can well believe that, having arrived at the sea coast, the apostle and his companions would feel that they had reached a crisis. Either they must receive instructions to enter some specific territory, or there would seem nothing left but to return from whence they came. Earnest prayer would ascend to heaven before they retired to rest; and with what relief and thanksgiving they must have listened the next morning to the apostle's account of his vision. During the night he had seen a vision of a man of Macedonia, and the man had cried, 'Come over and help us'. Not only would they be grateful for the fact that Asia and Bithynia had been closed to them, seeing that it had led to this fuller venture for the faith, but they would also realize that, had they stayed in either Asia or Bithynia, the apostle might never have met that 'beloved physician' who not only ministered to the apostle's needs, but wrote the treatise we are at the moment studying.

Paul makes two references to Troas in his epistles:

'When I came to *Troas* to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord' (2 Cor. 2:12).

'The cloke that I left at *Troas* with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments' (2 Tim. 4:13).

There is also a visit to Troas on the return to Jerusalem recorded in Acts 20:5,6.

Having heard the account of Paul's vision, we read that they 'gathered assuredly' that the Lord had called them to preach the gospel in Macedonia. *Sumbibazo*, 'to gather assuredly' is an interesting word, made up of *sum* 'with',

and *baino* 'to go' - the idea being that these men of God 'put two and two together', and made the vision 'walk with' its interpretation. The word is used of the apostle himself in Acts 9:22, where, after his conversion, he was able, with the knowledge he already possessed of Old Testament prophecy, to 'prove' that the 'Jesus' he had formerly persecuted was 'the very Christ'. He was enabled so to marshal his Old Testament prophecies and make them 'walk together' with the actual facts of the life of Jesus of Nazareth that many were convinced. There are three occurrences of the word in the epistles (Eph. 4:16, Col. 2:2 and 19), in which the apostle uses it with reference to the members of the body being 'compacted' or 'knit together', but the same underlying thought of 'going together' is evident upon examination. Here, therefore, as earlier, the apostle and his companions exercised the 'sound mind' that had been given them, and we can well imagine the surprise with which they would have listened to the idea sometimes put forward that 'faith' and 'reason' should be kept apart.

Hesitation and uncertainty now give place to directness and activity. 'Immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia' says Luke; and this endeavour being successful, they loosed from Troas, and coming by a straight course to Samothracia, arrived on the next day at Neapolis (Acts 16:11). The 'straight course' here must not be regarded as obvious and inevitable, for we learn from Acts 20:6 that the return journey from Philippi to Troas occupied five days. The word translated 'a straight course' is *euthudromeo*, which according to Conybeare and Howson, is a technical expression meaning 'to sail before the wind'. The passage between Tenedos and Lemnos was not without some risk, owing to the proximity of very dangerous shoals (Purdy's *Sailing Directory*), and the hand of the Lord can be seen in giving a favourable passage.

At Neapolis, the apostle set foot for the first time on European soil. This town is the modern Kavala, and served as a port for Philippi. As a port it left much to be desired, but as the great Via Egnatia (the military road through Macedonia) began here, it was the invariable landing-place for travellers crossing from the shores of Asia Minor.

The next section of the Acts opens with the words:

'And from thence to Philippi' (Acts 16:12).

We have heard the cry of the man of Macedonia, and we have seen the response to it. Everything is now ready for the first great proclamation of the gospel in Europe. An examination of this epoch-making visit must occupy our attention in the next pages.

### **Philippi. The First Converts (Acts 16:12-15)**

Philippi! How poor the reception given by this city to the heralds of salvation, but how rich the response when the love of the truth had been received.

Luke speaks of Philippi in this passage as 'the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony' (Acts 16:12). The actual capital was Amphipolis, and a writer composing a fictitious narrative would almost certainly have made the apostle go straight to this city. Amphipolis had, however, fallen into insignificance, and Philippi, owing to its association with the battle between Octavius and Antony on the one side, and Brutus and Cassius on the other, had grown in importance. The victory won by Octavius was celebrated by making Philippi a colony, with the privilege of immunity from taxes. A table known as the 'Pentinger Table' represents Philippi as a flourishing city, with houses drawn on the site, while Amphipolis, the capital, is only vaguely chronicled. The rival claims of Amphipolis and Philippi are not *in themselves* of great importance to us today, but they are interesting as demonstrating Luke's veracity as a writer. Every item of proven history that is brought to light intensifies our appreciation of the fact that Luke had 'accurately followed from the very first', in order to give us 'certainties'.

In connection with Acts 16:12, Bishop Wordsworth puts forward the suggestion that the word *meris*, translated 'of that part' should be understood as referring to the frontier as *meros* is translated elsewhere 'coast of Tyre and Sidon', and 'coast of Casarea' (Matt. 15:21; 16:13). According to this view, the verse would read: 'Philippi, which is chief of the border cities of Macedonia'.

Philippi was also a 'colony' and coins have been found bearing the inscription COL., AUG., JUL., PHILIP (i.e. *Colonia, Augusta, Julia, Philippensis*).

At this point it would perhaps be advisable to get some idea of the constitution of a Roman colony. The Greeks and the Romans looked at the world from two different points of view. The Greeks were philosophers, poets, artists, and their citizenship was intimately associated with their literature; hence for them the world was divided

into 'Greeks' and 'Barbarians'. The Romans, however, 'thought imperially', each man being either politically a 'Roman', or else belonging to a people subjected to Roman rule. The Roman terms were *cives* and *peregrini*, 'citizens' and 'strangers'. The fundamental idea of a 'colony' was that the city of Rome was, so to speak, transplanted and reproduced in some distant part of the Empire. The colonies were primarily intended as a protection at frontiers; and they also provided a means of settling and rewarding soldiers whose active service was over. The insignia of Rome were displayed in the city, and the Latin language was spoken and used on the coinage. The colonists paid poll-tax as citizens, and also a ground tax, as they were outside Italy. Philippi and Troas, however, had the special privilege of the *Jus Italicum*, which raised them to the same state of immunity from taxation as belonged to Italy itself (Hoeck's *Römische Geschichte*). With these things in mind, the reader will realize that the passage in Philippians 3, which speaks of 'our citizenship' being 'in heaven' (verse 20) would mean much more to those who received the letter than is immediately obvious from the words used.

The fact that Philippi was a military centre would account for the smallness of the Jewish population, and also for the presence of Lydia of Thyatira, 'a seller of purple'. Thyatira had been famous from early days for the purple dye which was made there, from the shells of a mollusc commonly known as *Tyrian Purpura*. Homer mentions the purple dye of Lydia in the Iliad:

'And as by Lydian or by Carian maid  
The purple dye is on the ivory laid' (Iliad iv. 141).

An inscription has also been found in the ruins of Thyatira, bearing the title 'The Dyers'.

To return to the narrative itself - upon arrival at Philippi, the apostles did not at once begin to preach, for we read that they 'abode certain days'. Then apparently, when the Sabbath day came, having already discovered that there was no synagogue in the city:

'We went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither' (Acts 16:13).

True to the dispensational character of the time, the apostle keeps literally to the principle of 'the Jew first' (Rom. 1:16) and waits until the Sabbath day. Finding no synagogue, and knowing the customs of his people, he turns to the river-side and finds there a place where 'prayer was wont to be made'. The word in the original is *proseuche*, and we learn from contemporary writers that this was an enclosure of circular shape, open to the sky, and near a river or the sea, because of the ablutions necessary in Jewish worship. Josephus records a number of decrees that were made by different rulers in connection with this custom. The following is one short extract:

'We have decreed, that as many men and women of the Jews as are willing so to do, may celebrate their Sabbaths, and perform their holy offices according to the Jewish laws; and make their proseuchae at the seaside, according to the customs of their forefathers; and if any one, whether he be a magistrate or a private person, hindereth them from so doing, he shall be liable to a fine, to be applied to the uses of the city' (Ant. Bk. xiv. 10,23).

Why only women are said to have resorted to this place of prayer is unexplained, but, whatever the reason, one can well imagine what a rebuff this reception would be to any false pride. However, the apostle and his companions were led of the Lord, and were apparently willing to walk in His way. One at least of the women who listened would have caused the apostle and his fellow-workers to exchange understanding glances. They had been forbidden to speak the word in Asia, and had travelled across the sea to preach to the men of Macedonia, and now, to their surprise and joy, their first convert is found to be a woman belonging to the very province from which, as preachers, they had been excluded. The words 'which worshipped God' which appear in verse 14, indicate that Lydia was already a proselyte.

Lightfoot draws attention to the place that women occupied in Macedonia as follows:

'It may, I think, be gathered from St. Luke's narrative, that her social position was higher in this country than in most parts of the civilised world. At Philippi, at Thessalonica, at Berea, the women - in some cases certainly, in all cases probably, ladies of birth and rank - take an active part with the apostle (Acts 16:13; 17:4,12. It forms moreover a striking coincidence, and surely an undesigned coincidence, between the history and the epistle, that while in the former the gospel is related to have been first preached to women, and the earlier converts specially mentioned are women, in the latter we find the peace of the Philippian Church endangered by the feuds of two ladies of influence, whose zealous aid in the spread of the gospel the apostle gratefully acknowledges' (Phil. 4:2).

There are no accidents in Divine providence. It was peculiarly fitting that this new departure should be associated with a 'colony', a miniature Rome, and it is also suggestive, in view of the emancipating and enlightening doctrine, that the first to receive the gospel were women, and not men.

In verse 14 we read that Lydia's heart was 'opened' and in the following verse we find her home opened also. The words 'She constrained us' suggest that the apostle did not readily accept her invitation. We know, however, that he fully acknowledged the right of every servant of the Lord to be maintained, at least, by those to whom he ministered; and he also declared that it would have been quite right for him to have been accompanied by a wife, or a sister in the Lord, but these privileges he had foregone lest his sincerity should be called in question.

The only other occurrence of the word translated 'constrained' here is Luke 24:29, where the Lord 'made as though He would have gone further' (verse 28). Lydia's trade would have demanded a considerable capital, and she may, therefore, have been a woman of means. The apostles would be grateful indeed to the Lord, Who had gone before, preparing a place for them, and raising up helpers who were willing to use their material possessions for the furtherance of the gospel.

### **Satan's Attempt at Compromise, and Paul's Refusal (Acts 16:16-18)**

If, speaking humanly, the reception which the apostle received at Philippi was humbling to the flesh, subsequent events at the same city show how impossible it is to foresee what may be the sequel to a genuine call to preach in any particular place. One might be pardoned for expecting that, with the two closed doors in Asia and Bithynia, and the vision of the man of Macedonia, Philippi would have proved to be a place where great gatherings assembled to hear the Word, and converts were numbered by the hundred. A little experience, however, would modify these expectations, and the presence and persistence of an active enemy would be kept in mind. If Troas proved to be an open door, the apostle's added words: 'And there are many adversaries', most certainly fitted the situation. The first test encountered by the apostles was that of the out-of-the-way meeting place by the river side, and the fact that only some women were present. This was faithfully met, the situation accepted, and the Word preached. One heart was opened, and a household baptized, so that the first encounter was a victory for faith. What will be the next move on the part of the opposition? Instead of creating a disturbance and getting the apostle expelled from the city, the enemy of truth changes his tactics and attempts to compromise the purity of the gospel. If Balaam cannot curse Israel, he will involve them in evil associations, and we have the testimony of Revelation 2 that this method will be repeated at the time of the end. It is a method of attack to which every faithful minister of the truth is peculiarly susceptible. Only those who have walked alone for years, because of the demands of the faith, can have any conception of the strength of the temptation to join up with this or that, so that the stigma of isolation and peculiarity may be removed. To capitulate, however, means a life's work shipwrecked; and we can see this drama enacted for our learning in the remainder of the section dealing with Philippi.

'And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: the same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this she did many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour' (Acts 16:16-18).

The A.V., in the margin, draws attention to the fact that ‘spirit of divination’ may be rendered ‘spirit of Python’. As this encounter with the powers of darkness at Philippi occurs at a most critical period in the history of the preaching of the gospel, we must seek to get as full an understanding as possible of what this expression involves.

Speaking of the agency of evil spirits, the Rev. Walter Scott writes:

‘Of all the devices which he has ever employed for these purposes, one of the most successful has been to invest, as far as he was able, error with the form, and to array it in the beauties of truth; to imitate all the methods which God has adopted to demonstrate the divinity of the true religion; and thus to transform himself into an angel of light. If God has raised up true, Satan has raised up lying prophets. If God has commissioned His servants to work real miracles, Satan has employed his to exhibit counterfeit ones. If to the Jews were committed the oracles of God, to the heathen were committed the pretended oracles of Delphos and Dodona, and many others. If the intrinsic excellence and the purifying tendency of the doctrines of the gospel, and the beauties of holiness adorning the character of those who have been commissioned to publish them, are amongst the means which God has employed to recommend His truth, the servants of Satan have been transformed as the ministers of righteousness, and have pretended deep concern for the happiness of those to whom they have delivered their message. And it has been thought, and is maintained at the present day by some, that his giving answers by the oracles to which our attention is now to be directed, has been amongst the principal means by which he has carried on his intercourse with our fallen sinful world’ (*Existence of Evil Spirits*).

There is a growing tendency to ‘explain away’ the references to demon possession which we find in the Scriptures. It is suggested that our Lord merely accommodated Himself to the superstitions of the age, and that, if He had lived today, He would have called the disease by its true name of ‘epilepsy’. The symptoms recorded in Matthew 17:15, Mark 9:17,18 and Luke 9:39 are certainly very like those of epilepsy, but the Lord’s words clearly attribute these very symptoms to actual demon possession. The demoniacs of the Gospels do not express themselves as they would if they were insane or hypochondriacal (Matt. 8:29; Mark 1:24); they answer questions put to them in a rational way. They also recognise that they are possessed by demons (Mark 5:9), and the Lord commands these demons not to make Him known as the Messiah (Mark 1:34 margin). We also learn that these demoniacs knew that Jesus was the Son of God (Matt. 8:29), and the Christ (Luke 4:41). If he is at all uncertain, the reader should not remain satisfied with the few remarks given above, but should tabulate for himself all that is written in the Gospels in this connection. We believe that the result will be a conviction that actual demon possession is the truth of the matter.

The damsel that followed the apostle at Philippi was ‘possessed with a spirit of Python’. Python, in Greek mythology, was the name given to the Serpent that was born of the mud left by the flood. The Serpent was killed by the god Apollo, to whom it was supposed that the Serpent’s powers of prophecy and oracular utterance were transferred. Apollo’s oracle was at Delphi, where a priestess called *Pythia* gave cryptic replies to questioners’ enquiries.

The following are some of the cases of Satanic opposition encountered at various stages of the apostolic witness:

- (1) At the entry of the gospel into Samaria, we find Satanic opposition represented by Simon the Sorcerer. This man ‘believed’ but had very questionable ideas concerning the bestowal of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:9-24).
- (2) At the entry of the gospel into Galatia, under the separate ministry of Paul and Barnabas, we find again Satanic opposition represented by Elymas the Sorcerer, who was smitten with blindness, ‘not seeing the sun for a season’ (Acts 13:6-11).
- (3) At the entry of the gospel into Europe, we find Satanic opposition represented by the damsel possessed with the spirit of Python. This spirit was cast out (Acts 16:16-18).
- (4) When Athens was visited, the city of the world’s wisdom, the name of the Lord was confused with those of the demons that played a prominent part in Greek idolatry, for the philosophers said: ‘He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods (Greek, demons)’ (Acts 17:18).

- (5) At the separation of the church from the synagogue, we read that, 'certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus'. These men were overpowered and wounded (Acts 19:13-16).

There is no reason to doubt that 'Python' was simply another name for 'that old Serpent, the Devil', and the apostle was not going beyond his experience when he spoke the comforting words of Romans 16:20: 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly'.

We observe here - for our learning and warning - that this demon-possessed woman spoke words of truth. No fault can be found with her statement: 'These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation' (Acts 16:17).

This was certainly true, and the God Who sent them is given His true place and title. 'The Most High ...' is a title used elsewhere in the Acts by Stephen (Acts 7:48). They were also truly described as 'servants' on their own confession, for Paul uses the same word (*doulos*) again and again to define his own position as 'a servant of Jesus Christ' (Rom. 1:1). There are but five words used in the original for the phrase: 'Which show unto us the way of salvation', and we believe it would be difficult for the wisest Christian to express in five words a truer and fuller synopsis of apostolic witness. The word 'show' here is *kataggello*, used in Acts 13:5,38 and 15:36 and elsewhere for Paul's 'preaching'. Also, the use of the word 'Way' as a symbol of the gospel is masterly; the same word is used elsewhere in Acts 9:2; 13:10; 18:26; 19:9,23; 22:4 and 24:14. Here, then, we have a perfect presentation of truth. The apostle and his companions are 'servants', the One they serve is 'The Most High God', and their great work is 'to shew unto us the way of salvation'. Yet we read that the apostle was grieved and commanded the spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of the woman - 'And he came out the same hour'. Satan has no conscience and no honour. He will persecute, imprison, and kill, or, on the other hand, he will quote Scripture and utter the most irreproachable commendation of the gospel and its messengers, but he has but one end - to deceive, to corrupt, to keep the Son of God, if possible, from His rightful throne.

As servants of the most high God, we must look deeper than the surface before we allow anyone to involve our ministry with theirs. They may give an unimpeachable testimony to the Truth, they may appear to be ministers of righteousness, and yet, all the time, they may be like the false apostles and emissaries of him who, for his own ends, comes as an 'angel of light'. The apostle here was evidently sensible of 'Satan's devices' and would not allow his ministry to be thus compromised. We are not, of course, endowed with any supernatural gift of infallibility, and there is a possibility that, at times, our concern for the sacred trust committed to us, may have caused us to refuse some proffered fellowship that would have been helpful. If this should have been so, He Who judges the thoughts and intents of the heart will deal with us both righteously and in mercy.

### **Paul and Silas, and the Philippian Jailor (Acts 16:19-40)**

In Acts 16:16 we read that the damsel possessed by the spirit of Python 'brought her masters much gain by sooth-saying'. The word *ergasia*, 'gain' occurs four times in the Acts, and in each case we find it to be the motive behind the persecution of the apostle (Acts 16:16,19; 19:24, 25). The flame of persecution, which was fanned by the Evil One, was directed to one end - to destroy the testimony of the gospel. The kind of instrument used to this end was immaterial so long as the end itself was achieved, and so we find him using both Jews and Gentiles. At one time it was Saul of Tarsus, a Hebrew and a Pharisee, whose moral uprightness was such that he could write of that period of his life: 'touching the righteousness of the law blameless'. Saul would have scorned to have followed the rabble, or to have been moved by the desire for gain; nevertheless he persecuted the Church. The Jews, either by their religious leaders, or because of their own fanatical adherence to the tradition of their fathers, persecuted the Church. But we find that the Gentiles also persecuted the Church, moved by the fact that the Christian faith, by supplanting their idolatries, robbed them of their gains, and at length, Rome, the protector of the apostle during the Acts, became the great persecutor of the Church under the awful rule of Nero and his successors.

During the period covered by the first fifteen chapters of the Acts we read of persecution arising from the following causes:



- (1) The leaders of Israel were grieved because the apostles preached, through Jesus, the resurrection of the dead (Acts 4).
- (2) The leaders of Israel were cut to the heart by Stephen's speech. They stoned him, and another persecution was begun (Acts 7 and 8:1).
- (3) Saul of Tarsus, being troubled in his conscience (he was kicking against the goad at his conversion, 9:5) organised a great persecution of the Church (Acts 8 and 9).
- (4) The Jews, being incensed at Saul's conversion and subsequent witness, took counsel to kill him (Acts 9:23,29).
- (5) Herod stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church. James was killed. Peter was imprisoned. He saw that it pleased the Jews (Acts 12).
- (6) The Jews at Antioch, filled with envy at the evangelizing of the Gentiles, stirred up opposition - and expelled the apostles (Acts 13).
- (7) The Jews from Antioch and Iconium (apparently from envy and hatred) followed Paul to Lystra and stoned him, leaving him for dead (Acts 14).

At Acts 16 we meet with the first *Gentile* persecution and another factor enters into the situation: 'They saw that the hope of their gain was gone'. In a world composed as it is of religious zeal and sordid greed, it is practically impossible to witness for the truth without touching the interests and arousing the antagonism of one or other of these representative opponents. When one reads a funeral eulogy which declares that the man who has died 'had not an enemy in the world' one is inclined to think: He did nothing, therefore, in the cause of truth.

Returning to Acts 16, we find that Paul and Silas are caught and taken before the rulers, the charge against them being:

'These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans' (Acts 16:20,21).

Wordsworth remarks here:

'Christianity was hated as Judaism, by the heathen, and as worse than heathenism by the Jews. It had to contend against Judaism and Heathenism, and it triumphed over both'.

We feel sometimes, in our small degree, that those responsible for *The Berean Expositor* are in much the same condition. The orthodox are against our teaching because it traverses the 'traditions of the elders' and the Modernists are against us because we are out of date and old-fashioned. It is good at such times to think of the apostles and take courage from their experience and example.

The Jews were not liked by the Romans, and a Roman colony particularly would endeavour to keep them out. About this time the Jews had caused such disturbances at Rome, that Claudius had expelled them by edict (Acts 18:2).

'He banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus' (Suet. Claud. xxv).

Judaism was a *religio licita* (a lawful religion) within the Roman Empire, but those in authority were free to punish any unauthorized introduction of any new object of worship.

Luke's historical veracity is again evident here. He says that the apostle was taken to the 'rulers' and brought before the 'magistrates'. As a colony, Philippi was rather like a miniature Rome, and justice would therefore be administered in it by two officers called *duumviri*. This title was rendered in Greek *strategos*, the word translated by the A.V. 'magistrate'. Inscriptions have been found in Philippi, bearing the names and titles of *duumviri*, and one of them, whose name was found at Neapolis, was actually *duumviri* when Paul was taken at Philippi.

The men who laid the charge against the apostle and his companions were too wise to refer to their private grievances; they were very conscious of the pride that held sway in a Roman Colony, and it was to this pride that they appealed. Had the apostle or Silas uttered the words, *Civis Romanus sum* ('I am a Roman'), even the pride of Philippi would have yielded to the pride of Rome, but they evidently refrained and endured the ignominy of being beaten in the market place. On three occasions the apostle tells us that he was 'beaten with rods', and in each case he could have saved himself by announcing his citizenship. Let those who have somewhat hastily condemned the apostle for his appeal to Caesar, ponder these facts.

The 'rending off' of their clothes shows that brutal violence was indulged in (*perirregnumi*) - a part of the 'shameful' treatment to which the apostle refers in 1 Thessalonians 2:2. The Roman procedure would be adhered to in a Roman Colony, and the apostle and his companions would be stripped, either completely or to the waist, and tied to a post erected for that purpose in the market place.

'It was the first of three such scourgings with the rods of Roman lictors which Paul endured, and it is needless to dwell even for a moment on its dangerous and lacerating anguish ... But such horrors occurred eight times at least in the story of one whose frame was more frail with years of suffering than that of our English missionaries, and in whose life these pangs were but such a drop in the ocean of his endurance, that, of the eight occasions on which he underwent these horrible scourgings, this alone has been deemed worthy of even passing commemoration' (*Farrar*).

After the scourging, the keeper of the prison was enjoined to keep his prisoners 'safe', and this he interpreted by thrusting them into the inner prison, and fastening their feet in the stocks. Here, unattended, with backs lacerated, with feelings outraged, in utter darkness, lay the men who had so willingly responded to the call of the man of Macedonia to 'come over and help us'. If Paul and Silas had moaned throughout the night, refusing comfort and accusing one another of having made a complete mistake, it would have been but human. We must remember, however, that Paul had received his commission in terms of suffering (Acts 9:16), while Silas was commended to the churches as one who had 'hazarded' his life for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we read:

'And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them' (Acts 16:25).

The original here is *proseuchomenoi humnount*, 'praying, they were singing' and it is possible that the 'hymn' may refer to the group of Psalms called the 'Hallel' (cf. Matt. 26:30: 'And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives').

Hobart has given us a volume dealing with Luke as a physician, and draws attention to the many medical terms found in his writings. The word describing how the prisoners 'heard' the singing of Paul and Silas through the prison wall, is *epakroaomai*, a term used in the medical profession at that time for 'hearing by placing the ear to the body'.

While the apostle and his companions were singing, and the other prisoners listening, there came the shock of an earthquake. The doors flew open, and everyone's bands were loosed. The first impulse of the jailor was to draw his sword and we read that he 'would have killed himself', for under the Roman law the jailor would have had to endure the same punishment as the prisoners who escaped. We find the same anxiety about the escape of prisoners later on in the narrative, in Acts 27:42.

The jailor uses the word *kurioi*, 'Sirs', in his appeal to Paul and Silas, and in their reply they point him away to *Ton Kurion*, 'The Lord'. Whether the jailor meant by the word 'saved' what the Scriptures mean, we cannot tell, but, that after being given the answer: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house', we read that Paul and Silas 'spoke unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house'. It is well to remember that the 'word' here, *logos*, implies a 'logical account' showing that after preaching the way of salvation in the simple terms of verse 31, the preachers followed the declaration with explanation and instruction.

The jailor then washes the wounded backs of the Lord's servants, and in turn he and his house are baptized.

The magistrates were, apparently, rather perturbed about their very un-Roman conduct, and 'when it was day' sent the sergeants (or lictors, the bearers of the rod) saying 'Let these men go'.

‘But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out’ (Acts 16:37).

‘How often’ says Cicero, ‘has this exclamation, *I am a Roman citizen*, brought aid and safety, even among barbarians in the remotest part of the earth’.

And so we find this terrible beginning of the apostle’s testimony in Europe overruled for the furtherance of the gospel. The publicity that such an unfair condemnation would give, the testimony to the character of the preachers that the trial afforded, the intervention of the earthquake, the salvation of the jailer, the public recognition by the magistrates at the end, would all combine to give the message of the gospel a hearing such as a normal procedure could never have afforded.

It would not be justifiable, in entering upon a new sphere of service, actually to pray for stripes and imprisonment, but one can take courage from these examples and stand firm in spite of the fiercest opposition. It is a strange feeling, that has often been the experience of the writer, to steam into the railway station of some new town, observe its public buildings, its multitude of churches, its teeming numbers, and to contemplate the complete insignificance to most of the people in the town of the coming into its midst of just one mere speaker, armed only with his Bible and a desire to spread the light and liberty of the truth. Nevertheless there are happy occasions of victory to be recorded, in the name of the same Lord, who, in the Acts, gave the vision, permitted the indignities, granted the salvation, and at length established such an assembly as the church of the Philippians.

Satan’s twofold attack had failed and the gospel standard was firmly planted in Europe. Paul neither compromised with the Devil (Acts 16:17,18), nor gave place to him (Acts 16:25). He was, by grace, proof against both flattery and frown, and came out of the conflict ‘more than conqueror through Him that loved us’. For the sake of the gospel, he could become either a Jew or a Roman, and later on, among the Greek philosophers, we again find how true it was, that he was, ‘made all things to all men’, that ‘by all means he might save some’. Two households at least were ‘saved’ before the apostle departed. Truly these men were the ‘servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation’.

### **Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:1-14)**

With the preaching of the gospel in Philippi we get the first real conflict between the heralds of the cross and the power of the world, as represented by Rome. With the preaching of the Word in Athens, the conflict is extended and we meet the wisdom of the world, as represented by the city of Athens. In the colony of Philippi it was the Roman magistrates, and the jailor that were prominent, whereas in Athens we have the Stoics and Epicureans. Before his arrival at Athens, however, we have the record of the apostle’s visit to Thessalonica and Berea.

There is much in common between these two visits, and the parallel may be set out as follows:

### **Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:1-14)**

- A 17:1. Thessalonica. The synagogue of the Jews.
- B 17:2,3. Scripture. Reasoning. Opening. Alleging.  
Three sabbath days.
- C 17:4. Some believed. Devout Greeks. Chief women  
not a few.
- D 17:5. But the Jews.
- E 17:5-9. The uproar. The charge.
- F 17:10. Paul and Silas sent away.
- A 17:10. Berea. The synagogue of the Jews.
- B 17:11. Scripture. Received. Readiness. Searched. Daily.
- C 17:12. Many believed. Honourable women, Greeks,  
and of men, not a few.

- D 17:13. But the Jews.  
 E 17:13. The stir. The knowledge.  
 F 17:14. Paul sent away.  
 Silas and Timothy remain.

By noting verses 10 and 14 we find that Paul, Silas and Timothy were together at Berea, but that Luke had evidently stayed behind to continue the work at Philippi. Luke was with the apostle when he was met by the demon-possessed damsel, for he uses the pronoun 'we' (Acts 16:16), but the third person is employed after this until Luke again joins the apostle as indicated by the reappearance of the 'we' at Acts 21:1.

The route taken by the apostle from Philippi to Thessalonica was the one usually followed. We have a document called the Antonine Itinerary, which gives the length of this journey as one hundred miles; Philippi to Amphipolis 33 miles; from there to Apollonia another 30 miles, and so to Thessalonica 37 miles. We have no record of how long this journey took, and it is idle to speculate.

The next happening of spiritual importance occurs at Thessalonica, and we accordingly find this city now brought into prominence. It was ideally situated as a centre from which might be 'sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and in Achaia, but also in every place' (1 Thess. 1:8). Its geographical position and political importance made it a natural point of contact with the whole neighbourhood. On modern maps the city is named Salonika.

Nothing is said in Acts 17 of the physical condition of Paul and Silas, but a passage in 1 Thessalonians 2 speaks volumes:

'For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: but even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention' (1 Thess. 2:1,2).

The Christian church began in the synagogue and was not separated from it until this second missionary journey was over (Acts 19:9). So we read in Acts 17:2 that, '*as his manner was*', Paul went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures'. The basis of the apostle's reasoning was, therefore, 'the Scriptures', and his method is defined as 'opening and alleging', with the object that his hearers might become convinced that the suffering and risen 'Jesus' was truly 'the Christ'. We had one glimpse of the apostle's method in Acts 13, and here we have another. We shall profit by giving it our careful consideration

The word *dialegomai*, 'reasoning', indicates an argument, in which two or more speakers take part, or in which one speaker argues out the pros and cons in the course of his remarks. The passage before us says that Paul 'reasoned with them out of the Scriptures', and his method is further illuminated by the two words that follow: 'opening and alleging'. The word translated 'opening' is *dianoigo*, 'to open thoroughly', and is used literally for opening a door, and figuratively for opening the understanding. In Acts 16:14 *dianoigo* is used with reference to the opening of Lydia's heart, and in Luke 24:32 and 45 we have the example of Christ, Who 'opened' the Scriptures, and then 'opened' their understanding. Paul was closely following His Master's footsteps.

'Alleging' is *paratithemi*, 'to place beside'. Its first occurrence in the New Testament is associated with parables, a mode of teaching in which one thing is placed beside another, because of some resemblance, as for example :

- 'The field is the world' (Matt. 13:38).  
 'Another parable *put* He *forth*' (Matt. 13:24).

We have an early use of the word in Exodus 19:7 where Moses 'laid before' the people the words of God.

The apostle's 'argument', therefore, was two-fold. First he opened up the Scripture and saw to it that the understanding of his audience was also so far opened that they understood the passage cited, and then by bringing passage after passage and placing them over against their actual fulfilment - that had only just become history - he sought to prove that the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy was the Christ he preached, and that, in spite of Jewish prejudice, 'He must needs have suffered' and that He had risen from the dead. Paul's first object was to convince

his hearers that 'Jesus was the Christ', and that He had indeed died and risen again -a fact of which he reminds the Thessalonians when writing to them in his first epistle:

'For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again' (1 Thess. 4:14).

We have only two sources of information regarding the subject-matter of the apostle's ministry: the record of the Acts where the churches are first founded, and the subsequent epistles where they are given added teaching. We should therefore read 1 and 2 Thessalonians while we have this chapter in the Acts before us, so that we may be able to compare the apostle's line of teaching in the Acts with that in the epistles.

That the apostle followed much the same method elsewhere is evident from 1 Corinthians 15:

'That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures' (1 Cor. 15:3,4).

'Whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed' (1 Cor. 15:11).

The Thessalonian epistles throw considerable light upon the way in which the apostle spent his time at Thessalonica. In 1 Thessalonians 2 we read:

'Ye 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' (1 Thess. 2:9).

From the apostle's remarks in Philippians it would appear that, but for the gracious and repeated contributions made by that assembly, his evangelistic work in Macedonia would have been rendered almost impossible (Phil. 1:5; 4:15). Judged by modern standards it strikes one as extraordinary, that within the limits of Acts 16:40 and 17:1-14, there could be formed a company of believers so fully grown in grace as not only to have made their own witness secure, but also to have followed the apostle with gifts to enable the work in Macedonia to go forward.

To add to the apostle's burden at Thessalonica, we find that at the time of his visit a famine was raging, and Lewin in his *Fasti Sacri No.* 1735 says that a modus or peck of wheat was sold for six times its usual price.

The result of this devoted ministry at Thessalonica was that 'some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas'. The word 'consorted' is *proskleroo*, *pros* meaning 'towards', and the remainder of the word, 'to take by lot'. They 'threw in their lot' with the apostle and his companions, and so formed the nucleus of the church. We are not told their names here, but we learn that there were a multitude of 'devout Greeks' (the word 'devout' indicating that they were already proselytes) and 'not a few of the chief women'. The inclusion of the women here and again at Berea (verse 12) is an interesting feature.

The 'open door' at Thessalonica was not, however, long free from 'adversaries'. Beginning at verse 5, we read:

'The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go' (Acts 17:5-9).

Several points of importance must be considered before we leave Thessalonica for Berea. In the first place we note that the charge made against the apostle was very similar to that which swayed Pilate, and led him to hand the Saviour over to the enemy. To be convicted of having said: 'There is another king, one Jesus' would entail very severe punishment. The apostle had evidently emphasized the *kingdom* of the Lord at Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:5), and had given a prominent place in his ministry to the hope of the Second Coming. This provided a basis for his enemies upon which to found the false charge that he had preached another king in opposition to the rights of Cæsar.

As the apostle could not be found by the mob, Jason, in whose house he had stayed, was dragged before the 'rulers of the city'. The word for 'rulers' in Acts 17:6 and 8 is *politarchs*, a term not used before this chapter and

never used again afterwards. Here, once again, Luke shines out as a truthful historian. Unlike Philippi or Troas, which were 'colonies', Thessalonica was a 'free city'. Such cities were allowed a measure of self-government, and were generally as 'Greek' in their atmosphere as a colony was 'Roman'. The Roman Governor did not interfere with purely local matters, and the local magistrates were even granted the power of life and death.

These magistrates are referred to by Luke as *politarchs*. In connection with the apostle's visit to Thessalonica, in some free cities there was a 'senate' or 'assembly' - an arrangement which was true of Thessalonica (see Acts 17:5 where the word *demos* is used). In connection with the apostle's visit to Thessalonica, it is interesting to note that the British Museum contains the following inscription on marble slabs that once formed part of a triumphal arch built to commemorate the victory of Augustus over Antony.

The title "Politarch", and the names, Sosipator<sup>1</sup> Secundus<sup>2</sup> and Gaius<sup>3</sup> were inscribed on a triumphal arch in the town of Thessalonica. The original is now in the British Museum.

ΠΟΛΕΙΤΑΡΧΟΥΝΤΩΝ ΣΩΣΙΠΑΤΡΟΥ<sup>1</sup> ΤΟΥ ΚΛΕΟ ΠΑΤΡΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΛΟΥΚΙΟΥ ΠΟΝΤΙΟΥ ΣΕΚΟΥΝΔΟΥ<sup>2</sup>  
Υ<sup>2</sup> ΠΟΥΒΛΙΟΥ ΦΛΑΟΥΙΟΥ ΣΑΒΕΙΝΟΥ ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΦΑΥΣΤΟΥ ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΝΙΚΟΠΟ  
ΛΕΩΣ ΖΩΙΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΡΜΕΝΙΩΝΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΝΙΣΚΟΥ ΓΑΙΟΥ<sup>3</sup> ΑΓΓΛΗΙΟΥ ΠΟΤΕΙΤΟΥ~~ΕΕΕ~~  
. . . . .

There are seven names in this inscription, and three of them are the same as those borne by friends of the apostle from this very district: Sopater of Berea (Acts 20:4), Secundus of Thessalonica (Acts 20:4) and Gaius, the Macedonian (Acts 19:29).

The whole atmosphere is changed when we step out of Acts 16 into Acts 17. We leave a Roman colony, with its 'praetor' (Acts 16:20) and 'lictors' (Acts 16:35), and its appeal to Roman exclusivism (Acts 16:21); and we enter a Greek city with its *demos* (Acts 17:5), and its *politarchs*.

The Jews' attempt to move the city proves abortive, the magistrates finding nothing against Jason, except that he entertained some new religious ideas. Apart from having to give some guarantee that he would not imperil the peace of the city, he is allowed to go free.

As the apostle had no desire to foment strife, and realized that he would not further the truth by another period of imprisonment, he permitted the brethren to send Silas and himself away by night to Berea. The structure emphasizes the close parallel that is intended with the visit to Thessalonica, but whereas Acts 17:2,3 represents the apostle as 'opening and alleging' from the Scriptures, in the corresponding passage in connection with Berea, this feature is kept in the background, and the attitude of the Bereans brought to the fore :

'These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so' (Acts 17:11).

This reference has stood on the title page of *The Berean Expositor* ever since it was published in 1909, and together with 2 Timothy 2:15, has been our watchword and inspiration ever since. Berea is now called Verria, and is a city of some 20,000 inhabitants. At the time of the apostle's visit, there were sufficient Jews among the population to justify a synagogue, and it was of these Jews that the term 'more noble' was used.

Light is thrown upon the choice of Berea and the withdrawal by night, by some words of Cicero addressed to a prefect of Macedonia whose maladministration had exasperated the people:

'You came to *Thessalonica* without the knowledge of any, and by night; and when you could not endure the laments of the mourners and the storm of complaints, you stole away to the *secluded town of Berea*' (Cic. in Pis. 36).

The word *eugenes*, 'noble' is used in Acts 17 in a figurative sense, and approximates to the Latin 'ingenuus'. The word is used in our own language in the form 'ingenuous', meaning noble in character, generous, honourable, straightforward. The ingenuous character of the Bereans was manifested in their attitude towards the apostle's teaching and the Scriptures. *Eugenes* also occurs in Luke 19:12, and 1 Corinthians 1:26.

'Readiness of mind' here is *prothumia*, and occurs also in 2 Corinthians 8:11,12,19; 9:2, and Romans 1:15. The 'readiness' of the Bereans did not indicate any lack of critical faculty. They received readily, but they also searched daily to see whether the things so readily received 'were so'. The magazine (a series of articles from which this book was compiled) was entitled *The Berean Expositor* with this in mind. However strongly convinced the writer of its articles may be as to their truth, it is nevertheless our sincere hope that these articles will be placed side by side with the Scriptures, to see whether what is stated is, in fact, true.

In verse 12 we read that, as a result of the apostle's ministry, 'many of them believed', which is in contrast with the 'some' who believed in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4,12).

The apostle, however, was not long left undisturbed. The Jews at Thessalonica obtained knowledge of his activities at Berea and travelled the 57 miles that intervened. The apostle reveals in 1 Thessalonians 2:17,18, that he had hoped to have been absent from Thessalonica for but a 'short time', and had indeed attempted to return 'once and again', but, as he says, 'Satan hindered us'. Sad words indeed for Paul to write of the zeal displayed by his kinsmen according to the flesh.

It had become evident by now that Paul was the object of this Jewish rage, and so, leaving some behind to establish the little company in the faith, once more, as a fugitive, the apostle is 'sent away as it were to the sea'. There is no need to interpret *Hos epi ten thalassan* as though it implied that the apostle merely made a feint of going to the sea, and then turned inland. *Winer* gives a number of references to the classics to show that *Hos epi* denotes intention. From some point on the coast a suitable vessel was found, and we read that 'they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens'.

Paul's experiences in the Greek city of Thessalonica, and his encouraging interval at Berea, would be a helpful preparation for his witness in Athens, the metropolis of the world's wisdom, the city of philosophy, culture, and art, and yet a city of superstition, idolatry, and moral darkness. Paul was ready to preach to the wise or to the unwise, at Athens or at Rome, and we look forward in our next pages to considering together the triumph of Christ, as the Wisdom of God, in the city which represented the world's finest philosophy.

### Athens (Acts 17:16-34)

Before the apostle is permitted to speak for the truth in Rome, the metropolis of the world, he comes first into contact with the wisdom of ancient Greece. To the Romans he writes: 'Christ is the end of the law for *righteousness* to everyone that believeth', while to the Corinthians he writes: 'Christ is the power of God and the *wisdom* of God'. The apostle's steps were guided, not only with respect to the salvation of sinners in the various towns he visited, but also in such a way that he himself would learn from each successive stage some fresh aspect of the fulness of Christ.

The record of the apostle's visit to Athens as given in Acts 17:16-34 can be comfortably read in five minutes, but to appreciate, even intellectually, the full meaning of the apostle's words, makes demands that can only be satisfied by a liberal education. As to the spiritual teaching of the passage, each will receive according to his capacity.

We must endeavour in these pages to acquaint the reader with the city of Athens, as Paul knew it, and to explain his reference to the two classes of philosophers, the Stoics and the Epicureans. We must also say something about Mars' Hill, about the character of the Athenians, their temples, their art, and the idolatry with which the city was full. And then finally, with the atmosphere understood and appreciated, we shall be able to perceive the aptness of the apostle's speech, and the way in which he became 'all things to all men, that by all means he might save some'.

Apollonius of Tyana (B.C. 4 - A.D. 97), a Pythagorean philosopher, travelled over a good deal of the route taken by Paul. He was driven out of Antioch by the insults of the people, and sailed away, as did the apostle, from Seleucia and Paphos. His entrance into the city of Athens is described as follows:

'He went post haste up from the ship into the city: but as he went forward, he fell in with quite a number of students of philosophy'.

He also comments upon the religious devotion of the Athenians, and upon their altars to unknown gods:

‘Where also alters of unknown gods are erected’ (*Hou kai agnoston daimonon bornoi hidruntai*).

Athens was a ‘free’ city, that is to say, free to live under its ancient constitution and to make new laws, providing of course that the interests of Rome were not touched. From the inscriptions, we gather that in the apostle’s time the constitution of Athens consisted of three estates, the Areopagus, the Council of Six hundred, and the People, the Areopagus taking precedence. The words ‘Areopagus’ (Acts 17:19) and ‘Mars’ Hill’ (Acts 17:22) are really the same, one being Greek and the other Latin and English.

Before we go further, we shall be well advised to go back to the record in Acts 17, and discover its structure, so that we may have the backbone of the argument in our minds, as we consider each of the individual items in turn.

### Paul at Athens (Acts 17:15 to 18:1)

- A 17:15-17. Paul bears witness at Athens.
- B 17:18. The philosophers encounter him.
- C 17:18-21. Jesus and the resurrection. ‘Some said ... other some’.
- D 17:22-23. The Unknown God. *Agnosto*.
- E 17:23-29. 

Philosophy	a 23-25. The Creator. No need of temples.
and	b 25-29. The creature. We are His
Idolatry.	offspring.
	a 29. The Creator. No graven image.
- D 17:30. Times of ignorance. *Agnoiias*.
- C 17:30,31. ‘That man’ and the resurrection. ‘Some mocked, others said’.
- B 17:33,34. A philosopher cleaves to him.
- A 18:1. Paul departs from Athens.

Paul’s encounter with the philosophers, and the conversion of at least one of them, Dionysius the Areopagite, is evidently the important feature of the passage. Paul’s preaching of Jesus and the resurrection was the doctrine that struck these philosophers as something ‘new’, and his double reference to ‘ignorance’ (17:23,30), coming from one whom they had esteemed a ‘Babbler’, must have impressed them.

We read that the apostle’s spirit was ‘stirred within him’ as he saw the city ‘wholly given to idolatry’- or, as the margin has it, ‘full of idols’ (Acts 17:16). A writer of ancient times, Petronius, said of Athens that ‘it was easier there to meet a god than a man’, and Paul would have been horrified to see that they had even erected a statue of the High Priest of Israel, Hyrcanus. Statues in every conceivable attitude, size and material met the beholder’s gaze at every turn. There were more statues in Athens, said Pausanias, than in the whole of Greece.

True to one part of his commission the apostle ‘disputed in the synagogue with the Jews’, but he also remembered that he was the apostle to the Gentiles, and so we find him ‘in the market place daily’, disputing with them that met him (Acts 17:17). Three topographical features of Athens must be understood if we are to follow the apostle’s steps intelligently: the Agora, the Areopagus, and the Acropolis. The Agora (or market place) lay at the foot of the hill that dominates the city. In the Agora was the Painted Porch, which gave its name to the Stoic school of philosophy which met there. The Areopagus was the rocky elevation a little removed from the Agora, and obtained its name from the legend that Mars was tried there by an assembly of the gods for murder. On the top of this hill was a platform about 60 yards long and 24 yards broad, the platform being approached by a flight of steps. At the top of the steps were two stones, one called the Stone of Impudence, upon which Paul would have taken his stand. A rock-cut bench accommodated the assembled judges. Here, some centuries earlier, Socrates had answered to the charge of corrupting the Athenians with strange gods and new doctrines, and had been condemned to death.

The Acropolis, an isolated rock rising from the centre of the city, is not mentioned by name in the Acts, but it must have been included in the apostle’s sweeping reference to ‘temples made with hands’ and ‘art and man’s device’. It was the heart of the city, and was to the Greek what Mount Sion was to the Hebrew. Aristides, the rhetorician, fancifully expresses the attitude of the Athenians to the Acropolis by saying that it was the middle of five concentric circles of a shield, of which the outer four were Athens, Attica, Greece, and the world. At the Acropolis were temples and shrines in one jewelled heap; here also stood the Parthenon, the Temple of the Virgin,



regarded as the jewel upon the girdle of the earth, an architectural marvel. The visitor to the British Museum should not fail to examine the collection known as the 'Elgin marbles' where portions of this and other temples from the Acropolis may be seen.

In the Agora, the apostle encountered 'certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics'. With regard to the Epicureans, Dr. Churton observes:

'They allowed that the world was made, but maintained that it came together by chance, "a fortuitous concourse of atoms", and that the Deity took no part in its administration'.

Cicero reports that Epicurus said 'Death is nothing to us, for what is dissolved is insensible', while Tertullian writes: *Nihil esse post mortem, Epicuri schola est*: 'After death is nothing is the teaching of Epicurus'.

The Stoics, on the other hand, were pantheists and fatalists. They taught that the Deity pervades the matter of the world, just as honey fills the comb of the hive. They undermined the doctrines of Providence, and personal responsibility, and judgment to come, and also believed that under the One God, Who ruled above, were divine beings, called demons, who acted as mediators. The doctrines of the two schools have been summed up in the words 'Pleasure' and 'Pride'.

It is interesting to note that Seneca, who was a Stoic, speaks as follows:

'It is usual to teach men how to worship the gods. We should forbid men to light lamps on the Sabbath, *because the gods have no need of light*, and men take no pleasure in smoke. He that knows God serves and honours him. We should forbid men to bring sheets and bathingcombs to Jove, or to hold a glass before Juno, for God seeks no ministers. Why not? He ministers to mankind; He is everywhere and ready to assist all'.

The apostle's words in Acts 17:24,25 become even more pointed in the light of this Stoic's remarks.

Some of the philosophers that heard Paul speak said: 'What will this babbler say?' The word 'babblers' here is *spermologos*, primarily a small bird like a sparrow, a 'seedpicker'. It was later applied to beggars who picked up what food they could in the Agora, and then to those who, like parasites, lived by flattery.

Others who heard Paul said:

'He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection' (Acts 17:18).

The word 'gods' here is *daimonion*, and it is practically impossible for Luke to have written this word without thinking of Socrates, who had been charged with *kaino daimonia eispheron*, 'bringing in new demons'. As we have noted earlier, to the Athenian a 'demon' was not a 'devil', but a lesser divinity; and the emphasis which the apostle placed on 'Jesus and the resurrection' made them think that he was introducing another of the many 'demons' with which the pagan world abounded. There are some, even, who think that they imagined 'Jesus and Anastasis' to be two gods, and it is certainly true that there were altars at Athens to such qualities as Fame and Modesty, Impetuosity and Persuasion.

We next read (verse 19) that 'they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?' The magnetic word here was the word 'new', for Luke adds:

'All the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear something NEWER (*kainoteron*)' (Acts 17:21).

Demosthenes noted this characteristic of the Athenians, and another writer gave them the nickname *kechenaioi*, or 'gapers'. Demades suggested that the crest of Athens ought to have been a great tongue.

And so the apostle standing in the midst of Mars' Hill, surrounded by men for whom any reference to the Old Testament Scriptures would have been useless, seizes upon the presence of an altar to the unknown god, to preach to these philosophers a wonderful gospel appeal - an appeal, however, which cannot be rightly appreciated without some understanding of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophies.

Bishop Wordsworth has given a good summary of the apostle's address as follows:

'This speech contains a statement of the *Unity* of the Godhead (v. 23), against Polytheism; of the *Creation* of all things by Him, against the Epicurean theory of a fortuitous concourse of atoms; of its *Government* by Him, against the Stoic doctrine of Fate, and the Epicurean notion of indifference (vv. 23,24); of the Divine Omnipresence, and of the *autarkeia* (self-sufficiency) of the One Great First Cause (v. 25) in opposition to the popular theology; of the origin of *all nations* from one *blood*, against the Athenian conceit of their own dignity as *autochthones* (indigenous to the soil, as distinct from a settler); of the spirituality of the Godhead in opposition to idolatry (v. 29); of the witness to God's existence, and other attributes, in man's conscience and in human nature, and in the visible world (v. 29). It concludes with a reply to the objection that these are new doctrines (v. 30), and with a statement of the doctrine of human accountability and universal judgment to come by One Whom God has appointed; of which He has given a pledge by His resurrection from the dead'.

It is to be regretted that the A.V. makes the apostle open his address with a reference to Athenian 'superstition', for this at once alters the whole tone of his speech. A better rendering would be: 'I observe that in every respect ye are very religious'. As Farrar remarks, 'It is possible to be "uncompromising" in opinions, without being violent in language or uncharitable in temper'.

The apostle then proceeds :

'For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD"' (Acts 17:23).

Diogenes Laertius tells us that the Athenians, suffering from an epidemic, were commanded by Epimenides to allow sheep to wander at will, and wherever one lay down, to sacrifice it to THE PROPER GOD. We also have the words of Philostratus: 'It is wise to speak well of all the gods, and that at Athens, where altars even of unknown gods are erected'.

It is absolutely necessary in speaking, that one's hearers, whether Jews or Gentiles, believers or unbelievers, should have some common ground with the Speaker, which he can use as a starting-point. The 'common ground' between Paul and the Jew was provided by the Old Testament Scriptures and their Messianic testimony, and he accordingly proceeded to prove from the Scriptures 'that Jesus was the Christ'. No such common ground, however, was possible with the apostle's audience on Mars' Hill. He therefore seizes upon the confession of ignorance and need that stood out so pathetically on that altar, and with that as a basis, he proceeds to lead his hearers on, until at last, by a series of steps, he reaches his subject of 'Jesus and the resurrection'.

'Whom therefore ye ignorantly (or perhaps, "unconsciously") worship, Him declare I unto you' (Acts 17:23).

The apostle then proceeds to demonstrate the folly both of idolatry and of both schools of philosophy, by proclaiming the true nature of God, the Creator.

The fact that the Greeks of Athens had gone so far as to erect a statue in honour of Hyrcanus, the High Priest, makes it quite within the realm of possibility that, having adopted practically all the gods of Asia, Europe and Africa (see *Jerome* on Titus), they might have included also the God of the Jews. They could not, however, have erected a statue for the Jews abominated graven images. Also they could give their altar no name, for the Jews avoided the utterance of the name 'Jehovah'. Dion Cassius speaks of the God of the Jews as *arrheton*, 'not to be expressed' (37:17), and Caligula, speaking to the Jews, refers to their God as 'Him that may not be named by you' (Philo).

Standing upon Mars' Hill, the apostle had before him perhaps the most wonderful assemblage of 'temples made with hands' and objects of devotion 'engraved by art and man's device' that the world could provide, but he sweeps them all aside, to point his hearers to the true God. Appealing to their own poets and philosophers - Aratus of Cilicia and Cleanthes had said, 'We are his offspring' - the apostle, without endorsing the mythology of these writers, shows how unreasonable it is for the 'offspring' of God to think that the Godhead is 'like unto gold, or silver, or stone'.

To the Jew, the apostle's witness was that 'Jesus' was the 'Anointed'. To the philosopher, he declares that 'that Man', Who had been raised from the dead, was the Lord's 'appointed'.

'Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead' (Acts 17:31).

The historic fact of the resurrection was open to all men to investigate, and upon this the apostle based his claim. The times of ignorance had passed, and God now commanded 'all men everywhere' to repent.

At the mention once more of the 'resurrection of the dead', some 'jeered', while others said: 'We will hear thee again of this matter'. So far as we know from the Scriptures no church was founded at Athens, but at least one trophy of grace was brought from this city of idols and philosophy - Dionysius, the Areopagite. We know nothing of the social standing of the 'woman named Damaris', but her inclusion here brings Athens into line with Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea, for women are specially mentioned in each of these cities as being among the first to believe.

And so, with undaunted faith, the apostle passes from Athens, the city of learning, to Corinth, the city of license.

### **Paul at Corinth. The Second Vision (Acts 18:1-17)**

We now come to the apostle's visit to Corinth, which immediately follows his witness at Athens. The two cities were widely different in character and associations. The great concern of the men of Athens was 'to speak or to hear some new thing'. Corinth, on the other hand, was regarded as the 'Vanity Fair' of the Empire, and its reputation for evil was such that its very name became a term to express the foulest immorality. *Korinthiazesthai* became a synonym for licentiousness, and the meaning of 'Corinthian' is still given in the English Dictionary as 'a licentious man about town'.

The famous temple of Aphrodite Pandemos, that crowned the Acrocorinthus, was served by a thousand *heirodoulou*, 'consecrated slaves' whose lives were devoted to immorality in the name of religion. It was from Corinth that Paul wrote the terrible indictment of Gentile depravity that forms the second half of Romans 1. When a 'Corinthian' appeared on the stage at this time, he was usually represented as drunk. Corinth was a seaport and a centre of commerce. It therefore attracted merchants from all quarters, and the mixed character of its population influenced the whole for evil.

Upon arrival at Corinth, Paul finds a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus and lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla. This man and his wife had been obliged to depart from Rome because Claudius had commanded that all Jews should leave the city.

Finding that he was of the same craft - the craft of tentmaking - the apostle took up his abode with this worthy couple, to whom the whole company of Gentile believers are particularly indebted (Rom. 16:3,4). Paul had entered Athens 'alone', but here in Corinth his loneliness would have been intensified. Who would think twice about this weary Jew? He knew only too well how cruel the money-loving merchants could be, and would not have looked to them for help or sympathy. He therefore turns his footsteps to the Jewish quarter and there by the grace of God he comes upon Aquila.

The decree issued by Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed was instrumental, under God, in bringing about the birth of the Saviour at Bethlehem. The decree of Claudius was equally overruled here to bring about this happy fellowship between Aquila, Priscilla and the apostle. Suetonius says of Claudius that 'he banished from Rome all Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus'.

There is every reason to believe that Paul had been brought up in comfortable, if not in affluent, circumstances. He had been taught a trade, not because his parents had ever intended that he would be obliged to work at it for a living, but because this procedure was in accordance with the teaching of the Rabbis. Rabbi Judah, for instance,

writes: 'He that teacheth not his son a trade, doth the same as if he taught him to be a thief'. And Gamaliel, at whose feet Paul had sat, said that he that had a trade in his hand was 'like a fenced vineyard'. 'St. Paul, after working miracles, stood in his workshop at Corinth, and stitched hides of leather together with his hands, and the angels regarded him with love, and the devils with fear' (*Chrysostom*).

The fact that there was a 'Chief Ruler' of the synagogue at Corinth indicates its importance and numerical strength. A stone has been discovered in Corinth, dating from between B.C. 100 and A.D. 200, bearing the inscription (*Suna goge hebr (aion)*, 'Synagogue of the Hebrews', and there is every probability that this stone was actually in position during the apostle's stay.

Continuing with the narrative in chapter 18, we read:

'He reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed by the word (Texts read *logos*) and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ' (Acts 18:4,5).

Here we have the same enthusiasm, the same methods, the same object. And here, alas, also the same result, the opposition and blasphemy of the Jews. Once more there were branches broken out of the olive tree, and once more the apostle turns to the Gentiles (Acts 18:6).

Before we go further, it may be as well to give the structure of the whole passage, which is as follows:

#### **Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:1-17)**

- |             |  |   |  |
|-------------|--|---|--|
| A 18:1-7.   | CLAUDIUS.<br>( <i>Roman Emperor</i> ).           | a | Jews expelled from Rome.   |
|             |  | b | Synagogue. The Word.   |
|             |  |   | Jews oppose and blaspheme.   |
| B 18:8.     | CRISPUS.<br>( <i>Chief Ruler of Synagogue</i> ). |   | Believed. Baptized.  |
| C 18:9,10.  | VISION.  |   | Much people in this city.  |
| A 18:11-16. | GALLIO.<br>( <i>Roman Deputy</i> ).              | b | Hard by synagogue. The Word.   |
|             |  |   | Jews made insurrection.  |
|             |  | a | Jews driven from judgment-seat.  |
| B 18:17.    | SOSTHENES.<br>( <i>Chief Ruler</i> ).            |   | Beaten (Believed later, 1 Cor. 1:1).<br><span style="float: right;"><i>of Synagogue</i>).</span> |

We find, therefore, that the theme of Acts 18:1-17 revolves around five focal points - the action of two Roman rulers, the action of two synagogue rulers, and the vision granted to Paul by the great Ruler over all, the Lord Himself.

On two occasions the apostle announced in a synagogue that he would turn to the Gentiles, once in Antioch (Acts 13:46), and once again in Corinth (Acts 18:6). In both cases we read in the immediate context that the Jews not only opposed but 'blasphemed'. The apostle himself knew only too well the dreadful hatred from which this blasphemy came, for he confessed before Agrippa that he had himself 'compelled believers to blaspheme' (Acts 26:11), while in Romans 9:1-3 he writes that his heart was heavy for his kinsmen, for he himself used to wish himself accursed from Christ.

There are some who have attempted to draw the dispensational boundary either at Acts 13:46, or at Acts 18:6, but just as Paul's turning to the Gentiles in Acts 13 was followed by a series of synagogue visits from Acts 16 to 18, so again, after the utterance given in Acts 18:6, we find the apostle once more in a synagogue in Ephesus in Acts 19:8. The synagogue witness ends in chapter 19, but Israel as a people are not set aside until after the critical conference at Rome (Acts 28).

With reference to Acts 18:6 Alford writes:

‘Not absolutely, but only at Corinth: for we find him arguing with the Jews again in the synagogue at Ephesus. I have adopted the punctuation of Lachmann, erasing the colon after *ego*: “I shall henceforth with a pure conscience go to the Gentiles”‘.

When the opposition of the Jews at the synagogue reaches the culminating point of blasphemy, the apostle withdraws and finds accommodation in the house of one named Justus, ‘whose house joined hard to the synagogue’. There may be more reasons than one for the inclusion of this detail. It may indicate that Paul was still hopeful that many of the Jews he had left would nevertheless come under the sound of the gospel - and in this he was most certainly right, if Crispus and his household were brought in, in this way - and the position of the house may also have indicated that the complete separation of the church from the hope of Israel was not yet due.

The reader will remember that the vision seen by Paul here in Corinth is in structural correspondence with the vision of the man of Macedonia, seen in Troas. (For the structure of Acts 16:6 to 19:20, which shows this correspondence, see page 188).

‘Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city’ (Acts 18:9,10).

Athens, the city of culture and philosophy, has no such vision, and no such promise, but Corinth, where sin was brazen and depravity enthroned, provides an arena for the triumph of Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). The Lord tells Paul in the vision that He has ‘much people in this city’. Truly, as the apostle wrote to the Corinthians:

‘Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish ... base ... despised ... things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence’ (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

The apostle continues at Corinth for a year and six months, teaching the word of God, and upon the arrival of Timothy, who had been sent back from Athens to Thessalonica, he writes his two epistles to the Thessalonians. With regard to the date of these epistles, Conybeare and Howson give the following notes:

- (1) ‘It was written not long after the conversion of the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:8,9), while the tidings of it were still spreading (*apaggelousia*, present tense) through Macedonia and Achaia, and whilst St. Paul could still speak of himself as only taken from them for a short season (1 Thess. 2:17).
- (2) St. Paul had been recently at Athens (3:1), and had already preached in Achaia (1:7,8).
- (3) Timotheus and Silas were just returned (*arti*, iii. 6) from Macedonia, which happened soon after St. Paul’s arrival at Corinth’.

These epistles to the Thessalonians were not given to reveal some new or esoteric doctrine, but to help those who had already believed and been taught, and now needed encouragement and correction by the way.

The Jews appear to have waited for some favourable opportunity for venting their anger against the apostle, and the coming of a new Roman Governor seems to have provided them with the long desired weapon. Gallio was the younger brother of Seneca, and took his name from Junius Gallio the rhetorician, who had adopted him (*Dio. Cass. xl. 35*). Tacitus informs us that Gallio died in the year 65 (*Tac. An. xv. 73*), and Pliny tells us that *after his consulship* he had a serious illness, on which account he took a sea-voyage (*Pliny N. H. xxxi:33*). We also learn from his brother Seneca that it was *in Achaia* that he boarded a ship for the sake of his health (See *Ep. 104*). Gallio would not have been appointed deputy until his brother Seneca had been restored to favour, which makes the earliest possible date A.D. 50, for in A.D. 49 Seneca had been recalled from his exile in Corsica and appointed tutor to the young Nero. Prefects were bound by edict to quit Rome about the middle of April. When Cicero traversed the same course, he took about 50 days to get to Cilicia, so that Gallio would have arrived at Corinth at some time during June. We are therefore practically forced to put the date of Gallio’s proconsulship at A.D. 53, a very striking testimony to Luke’s accuracy as a historian. Moreover, under Tiberias, Achaia had been an Imperial Province, while under Claudius it was restored to the Senate and reckoned as an ‘unarmed province’, governed by a proconsul (A.V. ‘deputy’). In all these changes, never once does Luke falter or make a mistake. Critics who have attempted to

discredit his accuracy have been covered with confusion, and some, like Sir William Ramsay, have been converted to a belief in his inspiration.

Seneca spoke of his brother as the 'sweet Gallio', and said of him that 'no mortal is so sweet to any single person as he is to all mankind'. It is in this light that we must understand the comment: 'Gallio cared for none of those things'. The attempt to scare him by the charge 'This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law' failed, and before Paul could make his defence, Gallio dismissed the case. Had it been a breach of Roman law, Gallio would have dealt with it as a Roman, but seeing that there had been committed no 'wrong or wicked lewdness', and that it was evidently some squabble about Jewish laws and customs, he says to the Jews, 'Look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters'. Thus, through the instrumentality of Gallio, the promise by the Lord in the vision was fulfilled.

We do not know for certain that Sosthenes succeeded Crispus as the chief ruler of the synagogue, but it seems probable. There is no record in the Acts of his conversion, but the fact that Crispus and Sosthenes are both mentioned in the opening chapter of the epistle to the Corinthians makes it appear likely.

The apostle now turns his thoughts toward Jerusalem. He had set foot in Philippi, the chief city of one part of Macedonia, he had witnessed and suffered in Thessalonica, he had spoken both in the Agora and on the Areopagus at Athens, and had seen the triumph of the cross at Corinth. He had encountered a good deal of opposition, but he had also made some friends in the faith: Lydia of Thyatira, Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Sopater of Berea, Dionysius and Damaris, Aquila and Priscilla, Crispus and Sosthenes - all trophies of grace and fellow-helpers in the Christian witness.

One other great city is to be visited before this second missionary journey is concluded - the city of Ephesus, whose name is so intimately associated with the great revelation of the Mystery towards which the narrative of the Acts is drawing steadily nearer. It will not be long before we arrive at the prophetic foreshadowing, and then the actual experience once more of prison (an experience from which no earthquake delivers), and which lasts between Caesarea and Rome for about four years. These themes we must consider in subsequent pages, as together we follow the narrative of those things which the ascended Christ continued to do and to teach through his servants.

### **John's Baptism and Special Miracles (Acts 18:24 to 19:20)**

With the conclusion of his ministry at Corinth, Paul now turns his face to Jerusalem. There are two points in connection with this visit to Jerusalem that we must notice particularly, because of the indication they give that the ground is still Jewish:

- (1) THE VOW. - 'Having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow' (Acts 18:18).
- (2) THE FEAST. - 'I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem' (Acts 18:21).

It may be as well to settle one point in this connection at once. There are some who suggest that the reversal of the order 'Priscilla and Aquila' in verse 18 indicates that it was Aquila, and not Paul, who had the vow. A knowledge of what was incumbent upon a man who made a vow, however, makes it clear that Paul, who was anxious to get to Jerusalem, was the one under the vow, and that Aquila, who stayed behind, could not have been under any such obligation. The Nazarite vow, according to the law (Num. 6:1-21), necessitated the offering of the hair that had been shaved off, together with a burnt offering, at the Temple. The taking of a vow of this sort was usually a means of acknowledging some great deliverance, from sickness, or accident, or some other calamity. To look back to Acts 18 and endeavour to find this deliverance at the judgment-seat of Gallio, is to limit our interpretation unduly. The Acts does not record a tithe of the sufferings and the deliverances that Paul experienced. We have only to turn to his epistles, Galatians, Thessalonians and Corinthians, to meet with such a list of afflictions, that it would seem almost impossible for any one man to have endured them all, and to have been brought through alive and able to serve. We may take as an example the list given in 2 Corinthians 11, remembering at the same

time that we should have had no knowledge of most of these troubles, had not the apostle 'become a fool' in his boasting.

'In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep' (2 Cor. 11:23-25).

Added to this almost unprecedented suffering, is a list of 'perils' that beset the apostle in his ministry, and the passage concludes:

'Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches' (2 Cor. 11:26-28).

Coming back to Acts 18, it would appear that the apostle, who was still an Israelite, still looking for the hope of Israel, and yearning for the salvation of his own kinsmen, could find no means of expressing his thankfulness for so great a deliverance more appropriate than the taking upon him of the Nazarite vow. Paul was not 'under the law' so far as salvation was concerned, but at the same time he was not standing in the full light of the Mystery, as made known in his prison epistles. Christianity was still a movement among the Jews. It destroyed no legitimate Jewish aspirations, but rather pointed to the Lord Jesus as the true Messiah and the fulfilment of all their hopes. It is this fact that colours the whole of the Acts up to 28:28, and all the epistles written before that period (namely, Galatians, Thessalonians, Hebrews, Corinthians and Romans).

Lightfoot, referring to Rabbinical teaching, writes as follows;

'Nazarism was, most ordinarily, for thirty days; though sometimes it was for years, and sometimes for term of life. He whose vow was expired, was to bring three beasts, one for a burnt offering, another for a sin offering, and a third for a peace offering. If he polled his head in the country, as Paul did at Cenchrea, he was to bring his hair, and burn it under the caldron' (*Lightfoot*, Vol. ix. 307).

Josephus, also, in speaking of Bernice who sacrificed her hair as part of a vow, gives the period as thirty days (B.J. II. 15. 1).

Coming back to the Acts, let us next notice the accuracy of Luke's language. In Acts 18:18 the word translated 'shorn' is *keiramenos*, while in 21:24 we have the word *xuresontai*, 'shave'. *Keiro* refers to the cutting or cropping of the hair (as, for example, the polling of the head of Absalom) and we find that the Mishna (I. c. Vol. ii. page 167) permitted this to be done by a temporary Nazarite in foreign lands. Acts 21:24, however, refers to the actual 'shaving' of the head. The apostle recognises the distinction between these two words in 1 Corinthians 11:6: 'If it be a shame for a woman to be *shorn* or *shaven*'. Dion Cassius, also, tells us that when the Prefect of Egypt, for his own ends, sent an unusually large tribute, that had been wrung out of the people by extortion, Tiberius rebuked him by saying that he wished his sheep 'shorn' (*keiresthai*) and not 'shaved' (*apasuresthai*).

Bearing in mind the apostle's vow, we can at once understand his desire to get to Jerusalem without delay. At Ephesus he enters the synagogue and reasons with the Jews, but although 'they desired him to tarry longer time with them', we read that 'he consented not; but bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem'.

Luke gives no details of the visit to Jerusalem, or of the keeping of the feast, or the conclusion of the Nazarite vow. All he says is:

'And when he had landed at Casarea, and *gone up*, and saluted the church, he *went down* to Antioch' (Acts 18:22).

The details were apparently not necessary for Luke's purpose in writing the Acts, and we must abide by the inspired decision. Nothing of moment seems to have taken place, no conference with the leaders at Jerusalem, and no turmoil or riot among the Jews. The apostle was permitted to fulfil his vow in peace. 'He saluted the church', and turned his steps once more to the regions beyond.

Jerusalem was not the spiritual centre of Paul's activity, but rather Antioch; and it is to Antioch, where he first received the definite call to evangelize the Gentiles, that his footsteps now turn. After a little time spent among friends, a short period of refreshment, we once again find the apostle on the road. The call to service, and the needs of his spiritual family could not be ignored:

'And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples' (Acts 18:23).

The fact that he visited the churches 'in order' enables us to follow the apostle's footsteps as he visits the church which was founded when he and Barnabas had responded to the call in Acts 13. Passing through the 'upper coasts' (i.e. the highland district of the Western Taurus range), he at length arrives at Ephesus, and so is able to fulfil his promise that, 'if God will', he would return to them again (Acts 19:1 and 18:21).

Before we deal with Acts 19, however, and Paul's great work at Ephesus, we have another incident to consider, that took place while Paul was absent from Ephesus:

'A certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly' (Acts 18:24-26).

Apollos had many natural and spiritual advantages. He was born at Alexandria, a seat of learning, and was instrumental in the diffusion of the Greek language and the production of the Greek version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. According to the A.V. Apollos is described as 'an eloquent man'. The word is *logios*, which, according to Philo (Vit. Mos. i. 5) means 'learned' and according to Josephus 'eloquent' (Ant. xvii. vi. 2). Josephus speaks of Judas and Matthias as 'two of the most *eloquent* men among the Jews, and most celebrated interpreters of the Jewish laws'. The word must not, however, be made to include all that is conveyed by the word 'eloquence' today, or as it would have been understood by the Greek rhetorician. Nevertheless it is clear that Apollos must have had a natural gift that surpassed that possessed by Paul, for the apostle reminded the Corinthians that, according to their standards, they had said of him: 'His bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible' (2 Cor. 10:10).

Apollos was not merely eloquent; he was also 'mighty in the Scriptures', and 'instructed in the way of the Lord'. On the other hand, we read that he knew 'only the baptism of John'. There are some who think that Apollos was not a believer in the Lord Jesus, though true so far as he went. The texts, however, read in verse 25: 'He taught diligently the things concerning Jesus'. The word 'diligently' is *akribos*, 'accurately', and is found again in verse 26 - 'more perfectly'. Apollos had the foundation of the faith, but he stopped short at the baptism of John. He could, however, be a very convincing speaker, so far as proving the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus was concerned, for John's baptism was appointed for the very purpose of making the Messiah manifest to Israel (John 1:30-34).

When Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos speak, they felt as some of our readers have probably often felt when listening to an earnest man, preaching with fervour and grace, but knowing only the truth as far as Acts 28. We have personal knowledge of more than one instance, in which readers of *The Berean Expositor* have emulated the kindly act of Aquila and Priscilla, and have been able to 'expound the way of God more perfectly'. Apollos evidently profited by their gracious ministry, and, when he wished to pass into Achaia, the brethren commended him by letter. We read that he 'helped them much which had believed', and 'mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ'.

While Apollos is at Corinth, Paul arrives at Ephesus, and he too is met with the same limitations as were found in Apollos. This time, however, instead of one man, it is twelve disciples who 'knew only the baptism of John'.

The controversy that has arisen over this passage (Acts 19:1-12), as to whether Paul baptized these believers, or whether verse 5 refers to what took place when men heard and believed John the Baptist's testimony, will perhaps remain a moot point until we know 'even as we are known'. We give below the structure of the passage as set out in *The Companion Bible*. According to this structure, the words of verse 5: 'When they heard this, they were baptized



in the name of the Lord Jesus' refer to what took place when men believed the testimony of John the Baptist, and not to the re-baptism of the twelve disciples by Paul himself.

### Acts 19:1-12. Paul. Ministry at Ephesus.

- c 1. Paul's arrival at Ephesus.
- d 1. Certain men. Their character. Disciples.
- e 2. Spiritual gifts. Their ignorance of them.
- f 3. What they had received. John's baptism.
- g 4,5. What Paul said. Paul's description of John's action.
- g 6. What Paul did. Luke's description. Paul's action.
- f 6. What they now received. Special gifts.
- e 6. Spiritual gifts. Their use of them.
- d 7. The men. Their number. About twelve.
- c 8-12. Paul's continuance at Ephesus.

The words *pneuma hagon* ('the Holy Ghost') in verse 2 refer to spiritual gifts, and not to the Holy Spirit Himself. These coming gifts of the Spirit had been spoken of by John, but the men concerned here had not heard of Pentecost. After this interview with the apostle, we read that 'the holy spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied'.

After this the apostle spends three months in the synagogue, 'disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God'. We read that some of those who heard 'were hardened', and once again there is a movement towards the Gentiles:

'He departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus' (Acts 19:9).

This 'school of Tyrannus' was probably what the Jews called *Beth Midrash*, a kind of private rabbinical seminary, and here the apostle continued for the space of two years, so that all in Asia 'heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks'.

'And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul' (Acts 19:11).

Why should God have wrought 'special' miracles by the hands of Paul, just at this point? The word translated 'special' is not easy to explain, because it changes its meaning and application at different times. The word *tugchano* means 'to hit a mark, as with an arrow' (Homer II. xii. 394), and then, by an easy transition, 'to hit upon', 'to light upon', with the element of chance attached, as in Acts 17:17, 'to meet by chance' (*paratugchano*). *Hotuchon* means 'an everyday man', or, with the negative, 'no ordinary man'; and the word is used by Josephus in describing Herod's temple as 'no common work'.

Coming back now to the record of Acts 19, let us notice the two kinds of miracles that are particularized.

'So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them' (Acts 19:12).

These miracles are said to be 'special' - miracles with 'no chance work about them', intended to 'hit the mark'. Paul was in a city full of 'magic' (see 19:19). In his opening ministry at Philippi he had been the subject of Satanic attack through the instrumentality of the damsel possessed by the spirit of Python, and here again in Ephesus we have the same sort of contrast. The complete failure of the Jewish exorcists to cast out the evil spirit by calling over him the name of 'Jesus', is exactly parallel with Paul's refusal to allow Satan to bear witness to the fact that he was showing to the people 'the way of salvation'.

As a result both of the positive witness of the 'special' miracles, and of the utter failure of the Jewish exorcists, we read that 'fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified'. Moreover, there was a public confession and a burning of the books relating to 'curious arts' to the value of 50,000 pieces of silver. Many of these magical books and leaves of papyrus - known as *Ephesia grammata* - have since been discovered.

Immediately after this public exhibition of the triumph of the gospel over the powers of darkness, we read of Paul's desire to go to Rome: 'I must also see Rome also'. He had found the door temporarily shut in Asia (Acts 16:6), and had seen the vision at Troas (16:9). At Philippi, a Roman colony, he had witnessed the failure of the Devil's first effort to compromise the new witness, and at Ephesus also, the temple-keeper of Diana, he had seen the triumph of light over darkness. Another round of ministry had been brought to a glorious conclusion. The gospel had been preached, many had believed, and the powers of darkness had been driven out of their strongholds.

We conclude this very inadequate survey with a simplified structure, trusting that it may be of service to any who desire to prosecute their studies further.

### Acts 18:24 to 19:20

A 18:24 to 19:7. JOHN'S BAPTISM.	a <sub>1</sub> APOLLOS.- 'Knowing only the baptism of John'. Taught 'more perfectly'.
	a <sub>2</sub> DISCIPLES.- 'Unto John's baptism'. 'Spake with tongues and prophesied'.
B 19:8-10.	The word of the Lord Jesus heard.
A 19:11-19. SPECIAL MIRACLES.	a <sub>3</sub> PAUL AND EVIL SPIRITS. - 'Went out of them'.
	a <sub>4</sub> SONS OF SCEVA AND EVIL SPIRITS. - 'Prevailed against them'.
B 19:20.	So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

### CHAPTER 16

### The Third Missionary Journey

(Acts 19:21 to 21:39)

### Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19:21 to 20:4)

The second missionary journey comes to an end with the words of Acts 19:20: 'So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed', and we must now begin our study of the apostle's third journey.

If we refer back to the structure which was given on page 4), we shall find that the next verse (19:21) marks the beginning of the final section of the book. As the structure shows, this section corresponds with the close of Peter's ministry:

E 12:1-23.	JERUSALEM. Peter's imprisonment. Close of ministry.
E 19:21 to 28:31.	EPHESUS TO ROME. Paul's imprisonment. Close of one ministry and commencement of the prison ministry, and the 'dispensation of the mystery'.

This closing section is divided into two parts, the first part dealing with the time during which Paul was still free (19:21 to 21:39), and the second with the remainder of his recorded ministry, during which he was a prisoner, in Caesarea, on board ship, and at Rome (21:40 to 28:31). We will not attempt to set out the structure of these two parts together, but rather concentrate upon the first part - the apostle's third missionary journey which closes the apostle's activity as a free man during the Acts.

Let us first consider the section in broad outline:

### Acts 19:21 to 21:39

#### 'I must also see Rome' (19:21)

- A 19:21 to 20:4. THE UPROAR (*thorubos*, 20:1). Temple at Ephesus.
- B 20:4-16. TROAS. A work wrought among the Gentiles.
- C 20:17-38. MILETUS. Bonds. The Holy Ghost.
- C 21:1-17. TYRE AND CÆSAREA. Bonds. The Holy Ghost.
- B 21:18-26. JERUSALEM. What God had wrought among the Gentiles.
- A 21:27-39. THE UPROAR (*thorubos*, 'tumult' 21:34). Temple at Jerusalem.

It will be seen that the section begins and ends with an uproar in a temple, in each case instigated by men of Asia, while its central members deal with prophetic warnings concerning the 'bonds' that awaited the apostle. We must now follow his footsteps through each of these six subdivisions, noting particularly the events that led to his apprehension at Jerusalem by the Roman soldiers, which was the first step in the series of incidents that brought him finally to Rome. Across the whole of Acts 19:21 to 28:31 might be written the apostle's opening words: 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome' (Acts 19:21), while across the second section could be written the Lord's answering words:

'Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome' (Acts 23:11).

Before we examine this passage more intimately, and before we attempt a description of the great Temple of Diana, let us acquaint ourselves with the disposition of the subject-matter.

### Acts 19:21 to 20:4

#### The Uproar. The Temple at Ephesus

- A 19:21-22. **a** After these things were ended.
  - b** MACEDONIA; pass through.
  - JERUSALEM; I must go to.
  - MACEDONIA; sent unto.
  - c** ASIA; he himself stayed.
- B 19:23-27. **d<sub>1</sub>** No small stir about that way.
  - e<sub>1</sub>** DEMETRIUS. Silversmiths.
  - DIANA. Silver shrines.
  - d<sub>1</sub>** No small gain.
  - e<sub>1</sub>** This craft. No gods.
  - This craft. Great goddess.
- C 19:28-34. **f** When they heard.
  - g** They cried: GREAT IS DIANA OF THE EPHESIANS.
  - h** Confusion.
  - i** GAIUS AND ARISTARCHUS.
  - j** PAUL.
  - h** Confusion.
  - i** ALEXANDER.
  - f** When they knew.
  - g** They cried: GREAT IS DIANA OF THE EPHESIANS.
- B 19:35-41. **d<sub>2</sub>** Appeasement.
  - e<sub>2</sub>** Goddess.
  - d<sub>2</sub>** Be quiet.
  - e<sub>2</sub>** Goddess.
  - d<sub>3</sub>** Lawful.

- A 20:1-4.   **a** After the uproar was ceased.  
                   **b** MACEDONIA; for to go.  
                       SYRIA; to sail to.  
                       MACEDONIA; return through.  
                   **c** ASIA; his companions.

The reader will observe - and the structure brings this into prominence - that Macedonia is very much in the apostle's mind at this time.

'After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through *Macedonia* and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season'(Acts 19:21,22).

'And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into *Macedonia* ... he purposed to return through *Macedonia*' (Acts 20:1-3).

His objective was Jerusalem, and then Rome, but his way was through Macedonia, and he sends on ahead two trusted workers, while he himself stays in Asia. In 1 Corinthians 16 the apostle reminds the church of the collection for the saints (1 Cor. 16:1) which was to be taken by him to Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:3), and he tells them that he will come to them when he has passed through Macedonia. This is the journey that is recorded in the chapter of the Acts that we are now considering.

Although he had accomplished so much, by the grace of God, the apostle still looked eagerly out on to the great Roman world, desiring to preach Christ in the regions beyond. The words 'I must see Rome' indicate his desire and willingness, and, in writing to the Romans, he contemplates passing through Rome to Spain (Rom. 15:22-29).

In order to appreciate what happened to the apostle, and the incidents recorded in Acts 19 with regard to Ephesus and the Temple of Diana, we must acquaint ourselves with some of the ancient records.

We gather from the first epistle to the Corinthians, that it was written at about the time of the Passover, and that the apostle intended to remain in Ephesus until Pentecost (1 Cor. 5:7; 16:8). This would give an approximate date for Acts 19:23, as the month of May. This particular month was specially dedicated to the goddess of Ephesus. *Dr. Chandler* found an inscribed marble slab in this district, and the following translation will perhaps help us to understand the presence of the crowds and their enthusiasm for the worship of Diana.

'Inasmuch as it is notorious that, not only among the Ephesians, but also everywhere among the Greek nations, temples are consecrated to her and sacred portions ... besides this, as the greater token of veneration paid to her, a month is called by her name; by us *Artemision* ... in which (other cities) general assemblies and *Hieromenia* are celebrated, but not in the holy city, the nurse of its own, the Ephesian goddess: the people of Ephesus, deeming it proper that the whole month called after her name be sacred and set apart to the goddess, have determined by this decree, that the observation of it by them be altered. Therefore it is enacted that in the whole month *Artemision* the days be holy, and that nothing be attended on them, but the yearly feastings ... for from this improvement in our worship our city shall receive additional lustre, and be permanent in prosperity for ever'.

The reader who is acquainted with the narrative of Acts 19 will see that Demetrius was but expressing the sentiments that were evidently popular. There was obviously a close association in the minds of the people between the 'improvement' of the worship of Artemis (or Diana, in our version) and the prosperity of the city.

'By this craft we have our wealth ... this our craft is in danger ... also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth'.

So great was the magnificence of this temple that it was included in the seven wonders of the world. The attitude of the Ephesians themselves towards it can be gauged from the fact that an offer by Alexander to dedicate the spoils of a conquest to the building of the temple, on condition that he should be permitted to inscribe his name on the front of the building, was refused (*Strabo*).

A description of the temple is found in Pliny, who says it was 425 feet in length, 220 feet broad, and supported by a hundred or more columns, each of which had been contributed by a prince, one of them being the famous Croesus.

Among the privileges of the Temple of Ephesus was the right of asylum it gave to all who came within bow-shot. This right attracted to its precincts the scum of the earth, and the nature of the worship of the goddess completed the general atmosphere of corruption.

‘Ionia had been the corruptress of Greece (hence the proverb "Ionian effeminacy"), Ephesus was the corruptress of Ionia - the favourite scene of her most voluptuous love-tales, the lighted theatre of her ostentatious sins’ (*Farrar*).

Our Lord’s saying, ‘To him that hath shall be given’ is most certainly true with regard to the student of Scripture. The more we bring, for example, to the epistle to the Ephesians, the more we take away. When we realize something of the immoral atmosphere in which many of the Ephesian saints had been born and bred, and which perhaps still shadowed the lives of their relatives, we can the better understand Paul’s faithful reference to sensual sins in Ephesians 5:3-5, and the depths suggested by his reference to the shameful things ‘which are done of them in secret’ (Eph. 5:12).

In Ephesians 2 the apostle stresses the ‘foundation’ of the spiritual temple, and its ‘chief corner-stone’. This, too, would have an appeal to the Ephesians, for they would know that in order to avoid damage by earthquake, the upper foundations of the Temple of Diana had been built at vast cost on artificial foundations of skin and charcoal laid over the marsh.

Again, the apostle emphasizes the privilege that the Ephesians possessed in Christ, of being ‘fellow-citizens’. The following extract from Josephus will give some idea of the privileges that were granted by the state to the Jews living in Ephesus.

‘I have at my tribunal set these Jews, who are citizens of Rome, and follow the Jewish religious rites, and yet live at Ephesus, free from going into the army, on account of the superstition they are under. This was done before the twelfth of the calends of October, when Lucius Lentulus and Caius Marcellus were consuls ... and my will is, that you take care no one give them any disturbance’ (Ant. xiv. x. 13).

In paragraph 17 of the same book x. we actually meet the word ‘fellow-citizens’.

The temple of Diana was also a treasury, in which a large portion of the wealth of Western Asia was stored up. Guhl, a German writer, says that the Ephesian Temple was, in the ancient world, rather what the Bank of England is today. The emphasis on ‘riches’ of grace and glory in the epistle to the Ephesians gathers fuller interest in the light of this fact.

During the month of May a great fair was held, and Ephesus would swarm with people from all parts of Asia.

Pliny, the Roman, writing half a century after the time of Paul’s visit to Ephesus, speaks of the utter neglect into which heathen institutions had fallen in the neighbouring province of Bithynia, as a direct consequence of Christian teaching - and this in spite of the fact that the Christians were a persecuted sect.

Paul’s teaching concerning the vanity of idolatry was apparently well known, for Demetrius says:

‘Not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands’ (Acts 19:26).

When personal interest, superstition, and racial pride combine, little more is required, and the words of Demetrius act like a spark on tow. In verse 29 we read:

‘The whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul’s companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre’ (Acts 19:29).

In the narrative here, there are several items of interest that confirm the accuracy of the inspired writer. It is, for instance, assumed that there was a theatre at Ephesus, and that it was large enough to hold a great concourse of people. Moreover, it is further assumed that it was natural for the people to go there, both as a confused multitude, and as a legal assembly. The ruins of the theatre testify to its original grandeur. *Fellows* estimates its capacity at 30,000, while *Wood* suggests 25,000. In any case, it was evidently a vast structure. We also read of 'certain chief men of Asia' sending to the apostle 'desiring him not to adventure himself into the theatre'. The original here is *asiarchs*, and this word is actually found on inscriptions and coins. Another point that is vouched for by archaeology is the reference to the silver shrines of Diana, which are said to have been made by Demetrius (Acts 19:24). *Lewin* gives an illustration of an *Aedicula*, or miniature shrine, of Cybele, and mention is made of similar shrines by many ancient writers.

The 'town-clerk', also, is a familiar figure in the annals of the time. The original word is *grammateus* (Acts 19:35), which might perhaps better be translated 'recorder':

'He had to do with state papers; he was keeper of the archives; he read what was of public moment before the senate and assembly; he was present when money was deposited in the Temple; and when letters were sent to the people of Ephesus, they were officially addressed to him' (*Conybeare and Howson*).

For example, a letter sent from Apollonius to the Ephesians is addressed: *Ephesion grammateusi* - 'To the Ephesian town-clerk'.

The town-clerk refers to the city of the Ephesians as a 'worshipper' (*neocoros*) of the goddess Diana. The word used by Luke here is peculiar, and means literally 'a temple sweeper'. This eventually became a title of high honour, and was boastfully exhibited on the coins of the period.

In verse 38 we read:

'The law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another' (Acts 19:38).

We learn from Pliny that these large cities were assize towns, and he specifically names in the province of Asia, Sardis, Smyrna and Ephesus. The town-clerk refers to the presence of the pro-consuls (or 'deputies') and indicates that the 'assizes' were actually on - 'The law is open' (*Agoraioi agontai*).

It has been said that the recorder's speech here might well be regarded as a model for popular harangue. Such excitement, suggests the recorder was *undignified*, as the grandeur of their worship was unimpeached; it was *unjustifiable*, as they could prove nothing against the men; it was *unnecessary*, as other means of redress were open to them; and finally, if neither pride nor justice prevailed, the thought of the Roman Power should have restrained them - for, as Hackett has remarked, 'There was nothing on which the Roman looked with such jealousy as a tumultuous meeting'.

The accuracy of Luke's record and the danger in which the apostle was placed are illustrated by the account we have of the martyrdom of Polycarp.

'The proconsul, observing Polycarp filled with confidence and joy, and his countenance brightened with grace, was astonished, and sent the herald to proclaim in the middle of the stadium, "Polycarp confesses that he is a Christian". When this was declared by the herald, all the multitude, Gentiles and Jews, dwelling in Smyrna called out "This is that teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our gods; he that teacheth the multitude not to sacrifice, nor to worship". Saying this, they cried out, and asked Philip the Asiarch to let a lion loose upon Polycarp' (*Euseb. H.E. iv. 15*).

We must now bring our survey of this incident to a close with two further notes:

(1) The word *ekklesia* is used in Acts 19 on three occasions, and it is well to bear the implications of this fact in mind when we are speaking of the 'Church'. The passages are as follows:

'The *assembly* was confused' (Acts 19:32).

'Determined in a lawful *assembly*' (Acts 19:39).

‘He dismissed the *assembly*’ (Acts 19:41).

- (2) The following inscription, which is dated A.D. 55, and therefore corresponds closely to the period of Acts 19, shows how accurate Luke has been in his record concerning the town-clerk:

‘Apollonius to his father ... and to his mother ... consecrated the enclosure and this monument ... having filled the offices of clerk at this market, town-clerk, and high priest, and having been in charge of the record office. Erected on the 28th of the month Demarchusius in the year 13. He also served the senate by means of assessors in the time of the proconsul Paulus’.

While much has necessarily been left unsaid, we trust that the structure of the passage and the few archaeological notes that have been given, will make the story of Acts 19 the clearer, and so intensify the reader’s interest in the work of the great apostle to the Gentiles.

### Paul at Troas (Acts 20:4-16)

Continuing with our study of the apostle’s third great missionary journey, we now leave Ephesus and accompany him on his way towards Jerusalem, and eventually Rome. We have already seen from the structure (Acts 19:21 to 21:39) given on page 246 that the record of this journey from Ephesus to Jerusalem is in six sections, and that the visit to Troas (B 20:4-16) is the second of these. We must now fill in the detail of this second section before proceeding further.

#### Acts 20:4-16

D 20:4,5. These going before (Paul and a few others went round by Macedonia - see notes).

E 20:5,6. **k** Tarried at Troas.

**l** Sailed away from Philippi.

**m** After days of unleavened bread.

F 20:7-12. **n** Paul preached on first day of week.

**o** Ready to depart on the morrow.

**p** A young man, taken up dead.

**q** His life is in him. Trouble not.

**n** Paul talked a long while, till break of day.

**o** So departed.

**p** The young man, brought alive.

**q** Not a little comforted.

D 20:13,14. Paul, minded to go afoot. Met at Assos.

E 20:15,16. **k** Tarried at Trogyllium.

**l** Sailed by Ephesus.

**m** The day of Pentecost.

Were it not for the information to be found in the epistles, we should know very little of the eventful period covered by the opening verses of Acts 20:

‘And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia. And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece’ (Acts 20:1,2).

Before the tumult, Paul had intended to leave Ephesus at Pentecost (1 Cor. 16:8), and had instructed Titus to meet him at Troas (2 Cor. 2:12,13). From the writings of Cicero, and the chronology of Wieseler, we learn that a voyage from Ephesus to Athens occupied fourteen days, and to Corinth one day longer. While awaiting with some anxiety the coming of Titus, Paul occupied himself in preaching the gospel (2 Cor. 2:12), but he adds:

‘I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia’ (2 Cor. 2:13).

This explanatory comment is followed in the next verse by a note of triumph which might well be written across the first four verses of Acts 20, viz, 'Thanks be unto God, Which always causeth us to triumph in Christ' (2 Cor. 2:14).

Leaving Troas, the apostle goes on into Macedonia, of which Philippi was the chief city. Although his heart was warmed by the affection of the Philippians, he writes in 2 Corinthians 7:

'When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest (see "no rest", 2 Cor. 2:13) but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears' (2 Cor. 7:5).

During this three months' stay in Greece (Acts 20:3), the apostle wrote his wonderful epistle to the Romans, with which his first series of inspired epistles closes. Towards the end of this epistle, we read:

'Whosoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you ... But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem' (Rom. 15:24-26).

In verses 30 and 31 of this same chapter of Romans, Paul manifests his apprehension concerning 'them that do not believe in Judæa'. This apprehension was only too well founded, for he was just on the point of embarking for Cenchrea, the Corinthian sea-port, when a Jewish plot to waylay him was discovered. Lewin's remark here is worth recording, even though Alford feels it to be inconsistent with what is said in Acts 20:4 :

'Paul eluded his adversaries by a change of route. He determined, instead of crossing the sea direct, to go round by Macedonia (The reader would be well advised to consult the map here). The better to evade a watchful foe, Paul and his friends divided themselves into two companies, and it was arranged that Timothy, Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius of Derbe, Tychicus and Trophimus should sail to Troas, the common resting-place, and there await the apostle's arrival, and that Paul himself, and Luke and Titus with Jason should make a forced march by land up to and through Macedonia and rejoin the others at Troas'.

Speaking of these same events, Farrar writes:

'Of the seven converts who accompanied St. Paul, Sosipater son of Pyrrhus, a Berean, Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy of Lystra, Tychicus and Trophimus of Ephesus and Luke - all except the latter (i.e Luke) left him apparently at Philippi and went on to Troas to await him there'.

Farrar's view seems more in accord with all the facts that we possess, but the matter is not important enough to debate. Whatever the truth may be, some arrived at Troas and 'tarried for us' (says Luke) - 'and we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days' (Acts 20:6). We have no information as to whether the apostle actually observed the feast of unleavened bread or not. Probably, being in Philippi, he did not, although in another community, if the influence of Jewish upbringing had been strong, he would have had no scruples in doing so.

The journey from Troas to Neapolis had only taken two days on a former occasion (Acts 16:11). It would seem, therefore, that the wind must have been contrary in this case, as we read that it took five days to make the return journey. It has been supposed that from Neapolis, or at least from Troas, to Patara, Paul chartered a vessel, for it not only waited for him at Assos, but sailed by Ephesus, and waited for the elders at Miletus.

The famous letter written by Pliny the younger from Bithynia to the Emperor Trajan some 50 years after Paul's visit to Troas, provides an interesting sidelight on Luke's inspired record. Concerning the early Christians, Pliny writes :

'They were wont to meet together on a stated day before it was light, and sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ as God, and bind themselves by an oath not to commit any wickedness, but on the contrary, not to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them: and when these things were ended it was their custom to separate, and then to come together again to a meal which they ate in common without any disorder'.



With these words we may compare the record of Acts 20:7 :

‘And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight’.

Much has been written regarding the true translation of the phrase ‘The first day of the week’. The original reads *En de te mia ton sabbaton*, and has sometimes been translated ‘The first of the sabbaths’. *The Companion Bible* has the following note on this point:

‘FIRST, &c. = first day of the sabbaths, i.e. the first day for reckoning the seven sabbaths to Pentecost. It depended upon the harvest (Deut. 16:9), and was always from the morrow after the weekly sabbath when the wave sheaf was presented (Lev. 23:15). In John 20:1 this was the fourth day after the Crucifixion, "the Lord's Passover". Cp. Ap. 156. This was by Divine ordering. But in A. D. 57 it was twelve days after the week of unleavened bread, and therefore more than a fortnight later than in A.D. 29’.

The reader may feel that there is a weak point in this argument, for there is no evidence given for the ‘twelve days’ that this view necessitates. Those who regard ‘the first day of the week’ as referring to Sunday, draw attention to the fact that if we assume this day to be the Sabbath, then, as this day begins at sunset, by travelling at day-break Paul would have been travelling on the Sabbath. This would not have been likely in view of the Jews’ bitter opposition to his teaching, and the apostle’s conciliatory attitude at Jerusalem a few weeks later (Acts 21:21-24). It is also a point worth considering that if we translate *Sabbaton* and *Sabbata* as ‘Sabbath’ and ‘Sabbath day’, then there is no word for ‘week’ in the New Testament, which seems rather unlikely.

If we were not called under the dispensation of the Mystery, we should feel obliged to devote considerable space and time to this subject, but as the question of the observance of any particular day, be it a Sabbath, or the first day of the week, belongs only to those of other callings, we feel that we can safely leave the matter without further investigation. The same remark applies to the expression that meets us in Acts 20:7: ‘to break bread’. We have already realized on other and fundamental grounds, that the observance of a New Covenant memorial feast has no place in the dispensation of the Mystery, and we are therefore not personally concerned with the question as to whether these believers at Troas met to keep the Lord’s supper, or whether, as in Acts 27:33-35, the words simply indicate an ordinary meal. We have already written fairly fully on this debatable subject, and we trust therefore, that we shall not be charged with seeking to evade the issue, if we say no more about it here.

The apostle’s speech referred to in verse 7 (Acts 20.) lasted until midnight, and we read that a ‘certain young man named Eutychus ... fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead’. The fact that even such a speaker as the apostle could have at least one member of his congregation overcome with sleep sounds a very human note. The wording of verse 9 reads like the record of an eye-witness. First, the young man sinks into drowsiness (‘being fallen into a deep sleep’) and then, having been overpowered (‘entirely relaxed by sleep’), he falls from the third loft where he had been sitting, and is ‘taken up dead’. The word translated ‘dead’ is *nekros*, which is used 18 times in the Acts and in every other instance without ambiguity. The apostle immediately descends to where the young man lies. He does not first reassure the mourning company that the young man’s ‘life is in him’, but at once embraces him, as Elijah and Elisha had done before him (1 Kings 17:21 and 2 Kings 4:34). After ‘breaking bread’ and continuing his discourse until daybreak, the apostle departs.

The structure here (page 254) brings into correspondence the division of his company and the waiting of some of them for Paul at Troas, and the division of his company and the waiting of them all for Paul at Assos.

‘And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot’ (Acts 20:13).

The distance between Troas and Assos is between 20 and 30 miles, and travellers have spoken of difficulty in finding the road. In Paul’s day, however, there was a good Roman road (*see the Antonine Itinerary*), and it was doubtless along this road that the apostle travelled.

Some commentators ‘wonder why’ the apostle took this course, but we believe that any who have been engaged for any length of time in public ministry, especially if it has involved meeting fresh people and dealing with fresh

problems, will readily understand the apostle's imperative need for a few hours entirely free, even from the company of those he loved so well.

Meeting the ship at Assos, the apostle continues his journey via Mitylene, Chios, Samos and Trogyllium to Miletus. In the two verses that describe this journey (Acts 20:14,15) we find the characteristic variety of expression that denotes that the record is a *personal* one. We read that they 'came' to Mitylene; they 'came opposite' Chios; they 'touched at' Samos; they 'remained', for a while at Trogyllium; and at length 'came' to Miletus. The apostle had deliberately 'sailed by' Ephesus, in order to save time, 'for he hastened, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost'.

With this remark, the section before us reaches its conclusion. There is an intensity about these steps leading to Jerusalem, and we begin to sense that a crisis is at hand - a crisis which prepared the way for the introduction of a new dispensation, and which is therefore of intense interest to all who realize their association with the dispensation of the Mystery.

### The Prison Ministry Foreshadowed (Acts 20:17-38)

#### Elders and Overseers

An examination of a modern map will show that considerable changes have taken place on the coast at Miletus since the days of the apostles. What in those days were islands off the coast are now gentle elevations on dry land, while the river Meander near which Miletus stood, has brought down so much soil in its circuitous course that the whole aspect of the place has completely changed. Miletus is placed by the sea in Ptolemy's geography, and is stated to have had four havens, one of which could hold a fleet.

In Acts 20:16 we read that 'Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia'. For some unrecorded reason, however, the ship was delayed and Paul seizes the opportunity to send to the Church at Ephesus asking the elders to meet him at Miletus. Ephesus is some 40 miles away, so that the journey was a possible one for any who were sufficiently zealous to make it. And so we find the little band at Miletus, eagerly listening to the last message they would receive from the apostle, until the time came for him to write his wonderful epistle to the Ephesians.

As we have a great deal of ground to cover, let us first avail ourselves of the help afforded by the structure.

#### Acts 20:17-38

G Acts 20:17-18. CALL TO THE ELDERS. They come.

H<sub>1</sub> Acts 20:18-21.

TEACHING.

*Apostello, anagello.*

I Acts 20:22-25.

GRACE.

**a** I have kept nothing back.

**b** I have taught.

**c** *And now* I go bound.

**d** Bonds await me.

**e** Finish my course.

**e** Testify gospel of grace.

**c** *And now* I know.

**d** See my face no more.

**f** Record.

**g** Shunned not to declare.

**h** Take heed.

**i** Yourselves.

**j** The flock.

**h** Overseers.

**j** The flock.

H<sub>2</sub> Acts 20:26-31.

WARNING.

*Apostello,*

*anagello.*

	<i>i</i> Your own selves.
	<i>f</i> Remember.
	<i>g</i> Ceased not to warn you.
<i>I</i> Acts 22:32. GRACE.	<i>c</i> And now I commend.
	<i>e</i> Word of His grace.
<i>H</i> <sub>3</sub> Acts 20:33-35. PRACTISING.	<i>a</i> I have not coveted.
	<i>b</i> I have showed.
<i>G</i> Acts 20:36-38. LEAVE-TAKING OF THE ELDERS.	
	They accompany him.

It will be observed that the subject-matter falls into three main groups. The sections labelled *H*<sub>1</sub>, *H*<sub>2</sub> and *H*<sub>3</sub> are in the nature of a personal defence, linking together, as the apostle so often did, his teaching and his manner of life. The sections labelled *I* are concerned with the apostle's ministry of grace, with its hint of prison, and his commending of his hearers to the grace of God.

Before tracing the apostle's teaching through this section, let us first become acquainted with what was involved in the office of an 'elder', for we shall meet this title in the pastoral epistles, and there has been a good deal of controversy as to its exact significance.

The word translated 'elder' is the Greek *presbuteros*, which occurs in its Anglicized form in 1 Timothy 4:14 as the word, 'presbytery'. The base of the word is *proeisbenai*, 'to be far advanced in', *probaino* being translated both 'to go on' (Matt. 4:21), and 'of great age' (Luke 2:36). Persons of mature years were considered worthy of offices of trust, and so we have the words *presbeia*, 'ambassage' (Luke 14:32), and *presbeuo*, 'I am an ambassador' (Eph. 6:20). The idea of age associated with the holding of office is familiar in our present-day words 'alderman' and 'senator'.

In the Old Testament the 'elders' of Egypt are referred to (Gen. 50:7 LXX *presbuteros*), and the 'elders' of Israel (Exod. 3:16<sup>\*</sup>), and the title occurs many times in the Gospels. The word is often disguised in our language under the title 'priest', for our Saxon forefathers spoke of the 'elder' as a *preoster* or *preste*. The sacerdotal associations linked with the word 'priest' in its modern usage should not be applied to *presbuteros*. The English word 'priest' should be reserved for the Greek *hierous*, a title which, so far as the Church is concerned, belongs only to the Lord Himself.

In the pastoral epistles, and in the epistles written by James, Peter and John, we again meet with this office of 'elder', and find the word applied to women as well as to men (1 Tim. 5:2; Tit 2:3). Its heavenly counterpart is also referred to twelve times in the Book of the Revelation. Moreover we read that there were elders in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15:2) and that the apostle ordained elders in every church in Galatia (Acts 14:23).

In Acts 20, we find the elders of Ephesus addressed by another title:

'Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*' (Acts 20:28).

The word 'overseers' here is the translation of the Greek *episkopos*, which is a compound of *epi*, 'upon' or 'over,' and *skopeo*, from *skeptomai*, 'to look'. Apart from this occurrence in Acts 20:28, the four other occurrences of *episkopos* are translated 'bishop'. The related word *episkeptomai* is translated ten times 'visit', and once 'look out'. The first of these references (Matt. 25:36, 'Sick, and ye visited Me') gives some idea of the unofficial and kindly meaning of the word.

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\* In Exodus 3:16 the LXX Greek *gerousia* (senate) is translated elders, with *presbuteros* being so translated in Exodus 18:12 and 24:1.

*Episkopeo* is translated 'looking diligently' in Hebrews 12:15, and 'taking the oversight' in 1 Peter 5:2; while *episkope* is translated 'visitation' in Luke 19:44 and 1 Peter 2:12, 'bishoprick' in Acts 1:20, and 'office of a bishop' in 1 Timothy 3:1.

The tendency of the Saxon to soften some of the harsher sounds of the Greek is seen in the transition from the original *episkope* to 'bishop', and from the Greek *kuriake* (retained in the Scotch 'kirk') to the Saxon 'church'. When applied to Christ Himself, the office of Bishop is linked with that of Shepherd:

'For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls' (1 Pet. 2:25),

In chapter 5 of the same epistle we find the figure of 'feeding the flock' associated with 'elders', and Christ Himself as 'the Chief Shepherd'. Paul uses the same figure in Acts 20, where he speaks of the 'elders' being made 'overseers' (or 'bishops') over 'the flock' (Acts 20:28).

It is a striking tribute to Dean Alford's honesty to read in his Greek New Testament the following frank statement concerning the A.V. translation 'overseers' in this passage. Irenaeus is quoted as teaching (1) that 'bishops' and 'elders' were two distinct titles, and (2) that neighbouring churches were brought in so that there might not seem to be *episkopoi* in one church only.

'That neither of these was the case', the Dean comments, 'is clearly shown by the plain words of this verse: he sent to *Ephesus*, and summoned *the elders of the church*. So early did interested and disingenuous interpretations begin to cloud the light which Scripture might have thrown on ecclesiastical questions. The A.V. has hardly dealt fairly in this case with the sacred text, in rendering *episkopos* (verse 28) "overseers": whereas it ought to have been "*bishops*", that the fact of elders and bishops having been originally and apostolically synonymous might be apparent to the ordinary English reader, which now it is not' (Alford *in loco*).

If we turn to the pastoral epistles we shall receive abundant confirmation of the fact that the words 'presbyter' and 'bishop' are synonymous:

'For this cause left I thee in Crete ... and ordain elders (*presbyters*) in every city ... if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop (*episkopos*) must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but ... a lover of good men, ... just, holy, temperate' (Titus 1:5-8).

It is quite clear here that the apostle uses the two titles *presbuteros* and *episkopos* of one and the same office. This can also be confirmed by comparing the passage quoted above (Tit. 1:5-8) with 1 Timothy 3:1-7:

'If a man desire the office of a bishop, he ... must be blameless, the husband of one wife ... apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre ... one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity' (1 Tim. 3:1-4).

The next two verses provide further light upon the 'office of a bishop':

'For if a man know not how to *rule* his own house, how shall he *take care* of the church of God?' (1 Tim. 3:5).

The word 'rule' here must be carefully interpreted if we are not to fall into the very error to which the apostle refers in Acts 20:

'Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them' (Acts 20:30).

There is nothing so likely to produce an overbearing prelacy as a misconception of the kind of 'rule' a 'bishop' was called upon to exercise. Peter refers to the evil consequences of attempting to be 'lords over God's heritage', and John puts his finger on the same temptation when he speaks of Diotrephes, 'who loveth to have the preeminence' (3 John 9).

We are reminded by such passages as these of the following words, which will no doubt be familiar to some of our readers:

‘But man, proud man,  
Dress’d in a little brief authority,  
Most ignorant of what he’s most assured,

\* \* \*

Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven  
As make the angels weep’.

The figures of a shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep, and of a father in his own household, should have been sufficient to prevent any misunderstanding of the word ‘rule’. The word itself (in 1 Tim. 3:4 and 5) is *proistemi*, which means ‘to preside’, and then ‘to stand before’ so as to defend and maintain (compare Titus 3:8,14). The figure of a father presiding over and maintaining his own house, is then transferred to the bishop ‘taking care’ of God’s house, the church. The only other occurrences of *epimeleomai*, ‘to take care’ are found in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:34,35).

In Ephesians 4 the apostle speaks of the order of ministry given by the ascended Christ as follows:

‘And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers’ (Eph. 4:11).

We have already seen that a bishop must be ‘apt to teach’ (1 Tim. 3:2), and that the office of a bishop is interchangeable with that of an ‘elder’ and a ‘shepherd’. The word ‘pastor’ in Ephesians 4:11 is *poimen*, which is translated ‘shepherd’ in John 10:14, and is linked with *episkopos* in 1 Peter 2:25. The office of ‘elder’ or ‘bishop’ is therefore included in the gifts of Ephesians 4:11 under the double title of ‘pastors and teachers’.

The introduction of bishops and deacons in Philippians 1:1 is in line with the teaching of this particular epistle which stresses service rather than salvation. Their presence in this epistle also provides an interesting parallel with the epistles to Timothy and Titus as shown in the skeleton structure below:

#### The seven epistles of Paul, after Acts 28

A EPHESIANS. The Mystery.			
B PHILIPPIANS.	<b>a</b>	Bishops and Deacons.	
		<b>b</b>	The Prize.
C PHILEMON.		Truth in Practice.	
A COLOSSIANS. The Mystery.			
B 1 and 2 TIMOTHY.	<b>a</b>	Bishops and Deacons.	
		<b>b</b>	The Crown.
AND TITUS.			

On closer examination we find that even the rule of bishops and deacons had failed by the time 2 Timothy was written, and that ruin rather than rule seems to be the keynote of the Church’s external order from this time onwards. It is not in any sense a ground for boasting that we can see no rule of bishops and deacons today. If we are obliged to walk an individual path, let us not boast, but rather remember the position from which the Church, in its manifest aspect, has fallen. Nevertheless, we can rightly rejoice - that, though all should fail, ‘He faileth not’ - and in these closing days, with apostasy on the horizon, we can but cling more closely to the One Who is more to us than bishop, elder or pastor could ever be.

#### The Prison Ministry Foreshadowed (Acts 20:17-38)

##### Paul surveys his ‘Acts’ ministry (Acts 20:18-21)

If the reader will refresh his memory, by turning back to page 261, he will see that the opening member of the structure, with its reference to ‘Elders’, occupied all the available space. We must now turn our attention from

ministry in general and the particular office denominated Elder or Bishop to the ministry of the apostle Paul, and that phase of it that was drawing to a close, covered in the structure by H<sub>1</sub> 20:18-21, and H<sub>3</sub> 20:33-35, where the apostle surveys his preaching and his practice up to that time. Even though the reader were unacquainted with the passage, his first perusal of verses 18-27 would suffice to convince him that Paul is reaching the close of one ministry, and looking on to the opening of another, and that this second ministry is so closely connected with imprisonment, that the apostle entertains no hope of seeing these Ephesian believers again.

Before we follow his argument, it will be profitable to observe how much there is in common between the phraseology of this recorded speech and that of the epistles written by the same apostle.

- ACTS.- 'After what manner I have been with you' (Acts 20:18).  
 EPISTLE.- 'Ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake' (1 Thess. 1:5).  
 ACTS.- 'Serving the Lord' (Acts 20:19).  
 With the exception of the statement of our Lord Himself, 'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon', *douleuo* is used exclusively by the apostle for service unto the Lord. There are six occurrences in his epistles which, together with Acts 20:19, make seven in all.  
 EPISTLE.- 'Fervent in spirit; serving the Lord' (Rom. 12:11 and see also Rom. 14:18; 16:18; Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:24 and 1 Thess. 1:9).  
 ACTS.- 'Serving the Lord with all humility of mind' (Acts 20:19).  
 EPISTLE.- 'In lowliness of mind let each esteem other' (Phil. 2:3). Paul is responsible for six out of the total seven occurrences of *tapeinophrosune*, 'humility of mind'.  
 ACTS.- 'With many tears, and temptations' (Acts 20:19).  
 EPISTLE.- 'My temptation which was in my flesh' (Gal. 4:14).  
 ACTS.- 'How I kept back nothing that was profitable' (Acts 20:20).  
 EPISTLE.- 'But if any man draw back' (Heb. 10:38).  
 ACTS.- 'How I kept back nothing that was profitable' (Acts 20:20).  
 EPISTLE.- 'All things are not expedient' (1 Cor. 6:12).  
 There are sixteen occurrences of *sumphero* 'expedient' or 'profitable' in the New Testament: eight occur in the Gospels and Acts 19:19, and the other eight exclusively in Paul's epistles.  
 ACTS.- 'The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city' (Acts 20:23).  
 EPISTLE.- 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit' (Rom. 8:16).  
 ACTS.- 'That I might finish my course' (Acts 20:24).  
 EPISTLE.- 'I have finished my course' (2 Tim. 4:7).  
 These are the only occurrences of *dromos* 'course', except that in Acts 13:25, where, again, Paul is speaking. The use of the verb *teleioo* 'to perfect', in the sense of finishing a race, is characteristic of the apostle's language, especially in Philippians 3 and the Epistle to the Hebrews.  
 ACTS.- 'Over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you (*tithemi*) overseers' (Acts 20:28).  
 EPISTLE.- 'Whereunto I am appointed (*tithemi*) a preacher' (2 Tim. 1:11).  
 ACTS.- 'Not sparing the flock' (Acts 20:29).  
 EPISTLE.- 'If God spared not the natural branches' (Rom. 11:21).  
 There are seven occurrences of *pheidomai* 'to spare', in Paul's epistles. Elsewhere it is found only in Acts 20:29 or 2 Pet. 2:4,5.  
 ACTS.- 'Therefore watch, and remember' (Acts 20:31).  
 EPISTLE.- 'For ye remember, brethren, our labour' (1 Thess. 2:9).

*Mnemoneuo.* - This is a word very characteristic of the apostle Paul. He uses it again in Acts 20:35, seven times in the Church Epistles and three times in Hebrews.

ACTS.- 'Therefore ... remember ... night and day' (Acts 20:31).

EPISTLE.- '*With labour and travail night and day*' (2 Thess. 3:8).

The association of night and day as an indication of continuance is a characteristic expression of Paul. He uses the combination seven times (Acts 26:7; 1 Thess. 2:9; 3:10; 2 Thess. 3:8; 1 Tim. 5:5; 2 Tim. 1:3). The other epistles do not use the expression.

ACTS.- 'I ceased not to warn every one' (Acts 20:31).

EPISTLE.- '*Warning every man, and teaching every man*' (Col. 1:28).

This word *noutheteo*, 'to warn', occurs in seven passages, all of them in Paul's epistles. It occurs nowhere else except in Acts 20:31, where it is Paul who is speaking.

ACTS.- 'An inheritance among all them which are sanctified' (Acts 20:32).

EPISTLE.- '*The inheritance of the saints in light*' (Col. 1:12).

ACTS.- 'I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel' (Acts 20:33).

EPISTLE.- '*Neither ... used we ... a cloke of covetousness*' (1 Thess. 2:5).

This is a characteristic attitude of the apostle Paul.

ACTS.- 'These hands have ministered unto my necessities' (Acts 20:34).

EPISTLE.- '*We ... labour, working with our own hands*' (1 Cor. 4:11,12).

ACTS.- 'These hands have ministered unto my necessities' (Acts 20:34).

EPISTLE.- '*Distributing to the necessity of saints*' (Rom. 12:13).

- ACTS.- 'These hands'; 'These bonds' (Acts 20:34; 26:29).  
 'How that so labouring ye ought to support the weak' (Acts 20:35).
- EPISTLE.- '*We both labour and suffer reproach*' (1 Tim. 4:10).  
*Kopiao*, 'to labour' is a word much used by the apostle. He employs it fourteen times in his epistles. None of the other apostles use the word except John (Rev. 2:3).

Here, within the compass of eighteen verses, we have eighteen instances of the usage of words peculiarly Pauline. Could there be more convincing proof that Luke is a faithful eye-witness, and a trustworthy historian?

We now return to the opening of the apostle's message to the elders of Ephesus:

'Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind' (Acts 20:18,19).

While we might have expected that the apostle would have put foremost the preaching of Christ or doctrinal purity, we observe that he speaks first of his own personal integrity. To this aspect of the subject he returns in verses 33-35. His reason for reminding his hearers of his unselfishness and lowliness may have been that as he was about to leave them and enter another phase of ministry, he would have them realize that he was not following this course out of self-seeking. Indeed, he said later, 'I count not my life dear unto myself', and he would inculcate in these believers the self-same spirit, making them willing, though sorrowful, that the Lord's service should deprive them of his presence. From beginning to end of his ministry the apostle was able, with a good conscience, to bring together his 'doctrine' and his 'manner of life'.

After this reminder, the apostle passed on to the outer circumstances in which he had triumphed by grace:

'And with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews' (Acts 20:19).

The western mind regards weeping as a sign of weakness, but Paul was eastern in this respect, and once more in this address he appeals to his tears saying:

'Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears' (Acts 20:31).

When the apostle felt obliged to write the stern letter he did to the Corinthians, he said:

'For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you' (2 Cor. 2:4).

There could be no doubt, suggested the apostle, of his unselfishness and the intensity of his concern for all who came under his ministry. From the commencement of that ministry the Jews had been his enemy, had stirred up opposition, and had laid wait for him, plotting against his life. This is recorded in Acts 9:23, and Acts 23:12 gives the account of a further plot. Again, in Acts 13, 14, 17, 18, 19 and 20, we read of Jews following the apostle from one city to another stirring up opposition, but there is no record of his meeting with such antagonism in Asia itself. The apostle appeals to what was common knowledge among his hearers, though not recorded in detail by Luke. In the same way, Paul speaks of scourgings, beatings, shipwrecks, prisons, and many perils when writing to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:23-28), but we should have remained in ignorance of these many sufferings had not the apostle become 'a fool' in boasting.

'I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you' (Acts 20:20).

*Hupostello*, 'to keep back', is a word used for the reefing of a sail (Pind. 1. 2. 60), and the apostle uses it as a man of keen perception, possessed of a ready use and appreciation of language, as an intimate study of his writings reveals. He had possibly heard the word in use during his voyages, and, with the ministry of the word ever in mind, he seized upon its applicability to his own attitude in the case in point. He had not 'lowered sail', but with every stitch of canvas set he had fulfilled his ministry of the Word and Gospel. He did not however make the unqualified claim that he had 'kept back nothing', but added the words, 'that was profitable for you'. He had but recently written the Epistle to the Corinthians, where he plainly says that he had, of purpose, 'kept back' certain doctrines



because of the immaturity of the Corinthian saints (1 Cor. 2 and 3). But nothing was kept back because of fear, or policy, or self-seeking. Our English word 'profitable' is not full enough to convey the apostle's meaning here. The word he used was *sumphero*, which is often translated 'expedient' but even this word has taken upon itself a somewhat sinister meaning. The Greek word occurs twice in the Acts, the first occurrence being Acts 19:19, where it is translated 'brought together':

'Many of them also which used curious arts *brought* their books *together*, and burned them before all men' (Acts 19:19).

In Acts 19:19 the word is used transitively, but in all other passages it is intransitive. While therefore we cannot translate 'I kept back nothing that would bring you together', we must not import into either the word 'profit' or 'expedient' some of their modern meanings. The apostle lets a little light into the nature and method of his teaching:

'I ... have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house' (Acts 20:20).

'*Showed*' - This word must not be confused with an entirely different word that is translated 'showed' in verse 35. Here, the original is *anaggello* (pronounced *anangelo*) and means 'to declare', as in verse 27, where the apostle uses the word a second time. The word suggests that the messenger had 'brought back' word, as in Acts 14:27, where the apostle 'rehearsed' all that God had done. It also means an unreserved declaration, as the occurrence in Acts 19:18 reveals:

'many ... confessed, and shewed their deeds' (Acts 19:18).

The reader will observe that in Acts 19:18-20, it is recorded of the Ephesians that they 'brought together' their books, and confessed and 'showed' their deeds and that the apostle, apparently impressed with this genuine repentance, ever quick to search his own heart, and ever ready to assimilate and use current words and occurrences, is found using the same word of himself on the next possible occasion.

'*And have taught*' (*didasko*, Acts 20:20). - Teaching holds a far more important place than some believers are prepared to admit. Our Saviour's public ministry combined preaching with teaching (Matt. 4:23), and His commission to the apostles, given in the last chapter of Matthew, is '*Teaching* them to observe' (Matt. 28:20). The Acts of the Apostles is a continuation of all that Jesus began to do and to teach (Acts 1:1), and the last verse of the Acts brings together 'preaching' and 'teaching' (Acts 28:31). It was from among certain 'prophets and teachers' that the Holy Ghost separated preachers for the evangelizing of Galatia (Acts 13:1). From this word comes *didaskalia*, 'doctrine', which, apart from Matthew 15:9 and Mark 7:7, is a word exclusive to Paul's writings, where it occurs nineteen times. *Didache*, another word translated 'doctrine', is more evenly distributed. *Didache* is teaching in process, but *didaskalia* is the substance of the teaching, or, as we express it, doctrine itself.

Teachers, *didaskaloi*, were included in the gifts of Ephesians 4:11, and the apostle stressed the fact that he was not only an apostle, or a preacher, but a *teacher* of the Gentiles (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11), and the apostasy of the last days is associated more with 'doctrines' (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:3), and 'teachers' (2 Tim. 4:3) than with preachers. This teaching the apostle had conducted both 'publicly' and 'from house to house'.

*Demosios*, 'publicly', is found only in the Acts of the Apostles, where it occurs four times:

'The *common* prison' (Acts 5:18);

'Beaten us *openly*' (Acts 16:37);

'Convinced the Jews ... *publicly*' (Acts 18:28, and Acts 20:20).

In like manner *demos*, 'the people', occurs four times, and is found only in the Acts.

The apostle's ministry was not conducted in a corner. Like his Master he could say:

'I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing' (John 18:20).

Unlike the Lord, however, his ministry was not confined to public speaking. He trained and taught the believer in things pertaining to faith, life and godliness, and so the apostle says, 'publicly and from house to house'. Saul the persecutor was thorough:

'As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison' (Acts 8:3),

and the same zeal that he manifested as a zealot for the religion of his fathers now characterized him as a champion of the cross. In the apostle's days the church was often accommodated in the house of a believer (Rom. 16:5; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2). Aquila and Priscilla knew the value of this homely ministry (Acts 18:26), and alas, the propagandists of the last few days will be aware of it too (2 Tim. 3:6), and will find a ready ear in those who 'wander from house to house' (1 Tim. 5:13).

Having defined his ministry as 'serving the Lord', and its true presentation as 'with all humility of mind'; its accompaniments of 'tears, temptations and lying in wait of the Jews'; its unreserved exposition, 'I kept back nothing'; its wisdom and consideration, 'that was profitable' not for his own profit but 'unto you', and having further particularized this ministry as one of both 'public' and 'private' teaching, the apostle proceeds to summarize its substance:

'Testifying (*diamarturomai*) both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 20:21).

His ministry was a testimony: in verse 24 we shall meet the word again, 'to testify the gospel of the grace of God'. *Diamarturomai*. - *Dia*, 'through' is emphatic, and akin to our 'thorough'. It should never be forgotten that the Greek word for 'witness' (*martur*) is the word translated 'martyr' in Revelation 2:13 and 17:6, and that our word 'martyr' is but the Greek word 'witness' in English letters. Paul's testimony was always at the risk of life and limb, and while it is not necessary for a true witness to be martyred, yet He Who reads the thoughts and intents of the heart, knows whether we hold His truth so dear that Smithfield\* itself could not turn us back. We boast not. We realize only too keenly our frailty, but we pray that such may be the character of our 'testimony' in His sight.

Paul's testimony was to both 'Jew and Greek'. Were we unprepared by this reference, we would probably slip into the error of thinking that 'Jew and Gentile' is the common phrase in the New Testament, whereas it is not so. It is true, that the A.V. reads in 1 Corinthians 10:32:

'... neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God'.

and this has been made the foundation of a special attempt at 'right division', but the fact remains that *Hellen* (Greek) and not *Ethnos* (Gentile) is used here. Again, in Romans 1:16 we read 'To the Jew first, and also to the Greek', but in Romans 2:9,10 the identical phrase is translated, 'to the Jew first, and also the *Gentile*', but this is without warrant. The same correction is needed in John 7:35, Romans 3:9 and 1 Corinthians 12:13.

'Jews' are coupled with or contrasted with 'Greeks' in no less than twenty-one passages of the Acts and Epistles, and while the Jew and the Gentile do occur together, it is with nothing like the same frequency, and cannot compare with the reiterated 'Jew and Greek' of Paul's epistles. To attempt an explanation of this peculiarity is beyond our present scope. That it is of purpose we most surely believe, and the series *Wisdom, Human and Divine* in *The Berean Expositor* Vols. 26 to 29 dealing with Greek wisdom will give direction to the enquiring mind\*. In the Jew, God manifested the bankruptcy of human righteousness; in the Greek the utter failure of human wisdom. To both Paul preached and taught the same need, viz.:

'Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 20:21).

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\* Smithfield in London was a place where martyrs were burnt at the stake during the Reformation.

\* Or see the booklet *Wisdom, Human and Divine* by the same author and publisher.

‘Repentance’ is *metanoia*, and means ‘a change of mind’, or ‘an after mind’. Repentance presupposes that one has entertained false ideas, consequently we find repentance urged upon Israel concerning their false ideas as to the King and Kingdom. The Corinthians had entertained false ideas concerning the scope of their liberty in Christ, and had to be shown that liberty was not license (1 Cor. 8:9,10). The man caught in the snare of the Devil was delivered upon repentance or, as it is expanded, by acknowledgment of the truth (2 Tim. 2:25). Paul urged repentance upon philosophic Athens (Acts 17:30), no longer restricting this need to the people of Israel, and in another summary of his earlier ministry he said:

‘I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judæa, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance’ (Acts 26:19, 20),

So the Thessalonians:

‘Turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God’ (1 Thess. 1:9).

Repentance, however, cannot be separated, except mentally, from the positive act of faith. He who ‘turns from idols’ without ‘turning to the living God’ may be but ‘empty, swept and garnished’. Repentance and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ go together.

At this point we must bring this study to a close for it is too late in the section to consider the implication of such words as ‘faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ’. The interested believer, however, knows the prime importance of the words, and it is with them that Paul brings the survey of his ‘Acts’ ministry to an end. His next words denote a change, ‘And now’, but this too we leave for consideration in our next section.

### **The Prison Ministry Foreshadowed (Acts 20:17-38)**

#### **‘Pure from the blood of all men’ (Acts 20:22-27)**

From verse 18 to verse 21 of Acts 20 we have followed the apostle’s description of the nature and substance of the ministry that he commenced in Acts 9, and that was now drawing to its close. At verse 22 we are conscious of a change:

‘And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me’ (Acts 20:22,23).

‘*I go bound in the spirit*’. - The fact that in the next verse the apostle speaks of ‘The Holy Ghost’ suggests that the earlier phrase should be interpreted in the sense that the apostle, though still outwardly a free man, was nevertheless already, ‘in the spirit’ entering into, by anticipation, the bonds and afflictions that awaited him. His missionary journeys were always under the leading or constraint of the Spirit, either directly in relation to the immediate Person of the Holy Ghost, or by the answer of his own spirit to the leading of the Lord. He had been ‘separated’ by the Holy Ghost (Acts 13:2), and had been ‘sent forth by the Holy Ghost’ (Acts 13:4). Sometimes, also, he had been forbidden of the Holy Ghost (Acts 16:6,7). Furthermore we read in Acts 18:5 that Paul’s spirit was stirred within him, and in Acts 19:21 that he ‘purposed’ in the spirit the journey that was now leading him to Jerusalem and Rome. So here, having arrived at Miletus, we find that he was already the prisoner of the Lord ‘in spirit’. He was definitely bound for Jerusalem. On occasions in the past he had planned to visit some particular church or country but had been ‘let’, as he told the Romans. Now, however, Jerusalem is most definitely his goal. As in the case of his Lord, there came a time when he had to set his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, even though well-meaning disciples should urge to the contrary.

The ostensible reason for this particular journey was the delivery of the collection made among the Gentiles for the poor saints at Jerusalem. Paul’s journeys to Jerusalem mark definite stages in his career. In Acts 9:2 we read that Paul planned to bring those ‘of this way ... bound unto Jerusalem’, while after his conversion we read of his assaying to join with the disciples at Jerusalem and needing the mediation of Barnabas to break down the barrier of fear and suspicion that would have kept him out. It was at Jerusalem, also, that the decisive battle was fought for

Gentile exemption from the bondage of the law (Acts 15), and it was at some such conference as this that he was asked to 'remember the poor' (Gal. 2:10). The fulfilment of this exhortation, in the shape of an offering collected in the churches, he was about to lay at the apostles' feet in Jerusalem. While this was the ostensible object of his visit, however, the apostle began to realize that the Lord had another purpose in view. What this purpose was he did not, at the time, fully know, except that it was connected with his ministry and would probably cost him his liberty. His attitude, however, is one of heroic acceptance:

'But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God' (Acts 20:24).

The Received Text here reads: 'That I may finish my course *with joy*', but the Revised Text omits the last two words (*meta charis*), and there does not appear to be sufficient evidence for their retention. The apostle might well have wished that the end of his career would be 'with joy', but he was far more concerned that he should 'finish', whether with joy or otherwise. Another point to note about this verse is that it provides us with a case in which the Greek *logos*, so often translated 'word', claims its fuller meaning, 'account'. Also, in the phrase: 'so that I might finish my course', the word *os* is not, strictly speaking, 'so that' but rather 'as'. The rendering given by Alford seems to recognise these various features:

'I hold my life of no account, nor is it so precious to me, as the finishing of my course'.

This figure of a 'course' or 'race' is one that is characteristic of the apostle, and he was able, at the close, to say: 'I have finished my course'. The word translated 'course' (*dromos*) is borrowed from the Greek sports, and, in a verbal form, is found in 1 Corinthians 9:24 and Hebrews 12:1: 'They which run in a race run all ... so run, that ye may obtain', and 'Let us run with patience the race that is set before us'.

In his desire to 'finish' his course the apostle manifests once more his conformity to his Lord, Who said near the beginning of His ministry: 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work' (John 4:34), and at the close: 'I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do' (John 17:4). It is encouraging to remind ourselves that not all the injustice represented by Rome, could prevent either the Lord or His servant from finishing their course.

In 2 Timothy 4:7, the finishing of the course is associated with keeping the faith. In Acts 20:24, it is associated with 'The ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God'.

The servants of the church at Ephesus are called 'presbyters' and 'bishops', but the apostle refers to his service as *douleuo*, 'the service of a bond slave'. The word he uses for his 'ministry' is *diakonia*, which gives us the word 'deacon'. The apostle uses this same word when he says: 'I magnify mine *office*' (Rom. 11:13), and when he describes the offering he was taking to Jerusalem as 'my service' (Rom. 15:31). Moreover, the magistrate is spoken of in Romans as a '*minister* of God' (Rom. 13:4), and Christ Himself as a '*minister* of the circumcision' (Rom. 15:8). The same word (*diakonos*) is used of Phoebe, who is called 'a servant'.

The same word is also used by Paul, when he claims that he had been made 'a minister' in connection with the ministry of the Mystery (Eph. 3:7 and Col. 1:23). This ministry Paul says he 'received', and, in after years, he wrote to Timothy:

'I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, Who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious' (1 Tim. 1:12,13).

The ministry which the apostle received is defined in a variety of ways. In Acts 9, the apostle was told that he was a chosen vessel to bear the name of the Lord Jesus before Gentiles and Kings, and before the children of Israel. In Acts 26:16-18, we have a very full statement concerning his ministry, which we shall have to consider when we reach this chapter. Here, in chapter 20, however, it is defined very simply as a 'testimony of the gospel of the grace of God'. A man may be a wonderful speaker, and by the power of his oratory may be able to move his audience to tears or laughter. A man who 'testifies', on the other hand, may sound in the ears of those accustomed to oratory 'contemptible', and yet his words may carry conviction, and move his audience, not merely to tears but to repentance and faith. A 'witness', however, can scarcely hope for a hearing if his manner of life does not agree with

his doctrine. In the New Testament preacher and teacher alike are given the title 'witness'. John the Baptist was sent to 'bear witness' of the Light (John 1:7), and in Acts 1:8 we read that the apostles were appointed at Jerusalem as 'witnesses', the resurrection being specially stressed as the object of their witness (Acts 1:22). The whole of Paul's ministry is summed up by the Lord himself as a 'witness', for in Acts 23 we read:

'Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome' (Acts 23:11).

The apostle himself sums up his ministry in similar terms when speaking before Agrippa:

'Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come' (Acts 26:22).

It was because Paul was a witness that he served with humility, for he could take no personal credit for his message. As a witness (or martyr), he was not deflected from the path of faithfulness by either tears or temptations. As a witness, he kept back nothing that was profitable. As a witness he 'testified' to both Jews and Greeks. Even though at Jerusalem bonds and afflictions awaited him, these things could not hinder his witness, though they might completely prevent other forms of service.

Resuming the description of his ministry, the apostle continues, in verse 25:

'And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men' (Acts 20:25,26).

We must defer consideration of the phrase 'the kingdom of God' until we reach the end of the Acts. It is obvious, however, from the passage quoted above, taken in conjunction with verses 19-21, that the preaching of 'the kingdom of God' included 'repentance' and 'faith'.

With the words 'ye all shall see my face no more', the apostle reaches the particular part of his address that was personal both to himself and to the Ephesian Church. This is evident in verse 38 where we read: 'Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more'. Because of certain obscure references in the Epistles to Timothy, it has been assumed by some that Paul did in fact see the Ephesian Church again. In 1 Timothy 1:3 we read: 'As I besought thee to abide still in Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia'. These words have been construed into meaning that Paul himself had been in Ephesus. The passage is an example of an 'interrupted structure' in a sentence, a feature that finds many illustrations in the apostle's vivid writing. As examples that are fairly obvious to the English reader we may quote Galatians 2:4 and 2:6. The words *kathos paraklesa* ('As I besought' 1 Tim. 1:3) are without an apodosis\*. The thought seems to be: 'As I besought thee *then*, so I beseech thee *now*'. Paul does not say that he 'left Timothy' at Ephesus, although he does say that he 'left Titus' at Crete. There is no evidence that Paul visited Ephesus again. The passage is explained sufficiently if we understand that on some particular occasion, when sailing by Asia, Paul made this request to Timothy.

Again, in 1 Timothy 3:14, the apostle writes: 'These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly'. Inasmuch as Paul sailed by Ephesus, and arranged to meet the elders of that church at Miletus on one occasion, there is every probability that he would make the same arrangement when he wished to see Timothy. Moreover, it is suggestive that, whereas the apostle, writing from prison expresses a confident hope that he would revisit the Philippian Church (Phil. 1:25; 2:24), and in the epistle to Philemon he asks him to prepare him a lodging (Phile. 22), there is no such suggestion in the epistle to the Ephesians, or in regard to the neighbouring church at Colosse, though he writes in Colossians 2:1: 'For them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh'. We have no need, therefore, to defend the apostle in any way. We believe that his words were true to fact, and that the Ephesian Church saw his face no more.

It is clear from Scripture that the apostle realized, as perhaps few have done since, the solemn responsibility that attached to his position as minister. In Acts 18:6 we read:

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\* The apodosis is the concluding clause of a sentence, usually conditional, e.g., 'If thine enemy hunger, *feed him*Ø.

‘And when they (the Jews) opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be on your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles’.

The apostle, whose knowledge of the Old Testament is apparent from his writings, had evidently pondered the solemn words of Ezekiel and had taken them to heart. In chapter 33 we read:

‘If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, *his blood shall be upon his own head* ... But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet ... if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand’ (Ezek. 33:3-6).

In Acts 20:26 the apostle declares: ‘I am pure from the blood of all men’, and the ground of his confidence is expressed in the following verse:

‘For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God’ (Acts 20:27).

There are some who clutch at this statement in their endeavour to moderate the teaching of Scripture concerning the Mystery, pointing to this passage as a proof that ‘all the counsel of God’ had been made known, as though this expression covered truth which at the time of utterance had not been revealed. Those who take this view seem to forget that Paul makes another equally important statement concerning his ministry in Acts 26:22:

‘Saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come’.

The ‘whole counsel of God’, at the time of Acts 20, was limited to the testimony of the Law and Prophets. If there was still further truth to be revealed, truth unknown to the Old Testament Scriptures, and not yet revealed to the apostle, no one could possibly blame Paul for not making it known, and he could obviously have no responsibility in the matter.

### **The Prison Ministry Foreshadowed (Acts 20:17-38)**

#### **Final counsel, example and commendation (Acts 20:28-38)**

In his examination of the teaching of the apostle Paul, the student of the Scriptures will have recognised that it is rare to find either believer or fellow servant exhorted to follow a particular course, without, either in the near or remote context, the apostle himself being found practising the precepts he preached. The elders of Ephesus had witnessed this balanced exhibition of ‘doctrine and manner of life’ (Acts 20:17-27), with its challenge concerning Paul’s faithfulness as well as his tenderness and courage, so that the apostle had no hesitation in introducing his correspondingly searching exhortation with the word ‘therefore’:

‘Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood’ (Acts 20:28).

It is comparatively easy to warn a company concerning the evil character of those who are without, or of those who differ from them, but this the apostle did not do. He bade them take heed unto themselves, and said further in verse 30: ‘Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them’.

Evidently it was a customary thing for Paul, when addressing those who held any office of responsibility in the church, to use the word *prosecho*, ‘take heed’, for it is found only twice outside the pastoral epistles. To Timothy and to Titus he wrote:

‘Neither give heed to fables’ (1 Tim. 1:4).

‘Not giving heed to Jewish fables’ (Tit. 1:14),

and revealed that the apostasy of the last days would result from ‘giving heed to seducing spirits’ (1 Tim. 4:1). As a counter to this, the same section of 1 Timothy emphasizes the importance of giving heed ‘to the reading’ (1 Tim. 4:13). In the Gospels, this same word is translated a number of times ‘beware’, as in the exhortations ‘beware of

false prophets', 'beware of the leaven of the Pharisees'. The hand of Luke in the writing of Acts, or, conversely, the influence of Paul on the writing of Luke is indicated by the expression *prosechete heautois*, 'take heed unto yourselves', for it occurs only in Luke's writings (Luke 17:3; 21:34; Acts 5:35; and 20:28).\*

The overseers of the church were 'bishops', *episkopoi*, and we have seen that such were practically synonymous with 'pastors' or 'shepherds' (see pages 260-266). The church is therefore appropriately referred to here as a 'flock'. The Greek words for 'feed' and 'flock' are from the same root. The word for 'flock' is *poimne* and occurs five times in the New Testament. In five other places, however, the diminutive *poimnion* is used:

'Fear not, little flock' (Luke 12:32).

'All the flock ... not sparing the flock' (Acts 20:28,29).

'Feed the flock ... ensamples to the flock' (1 Pet. 5:2,3).

The word 'shepherd' is *poimen* (Luke 2:8), and the word translated 'feed' is *poimaino*. While the idea of 'feeding' is prominent in this word, and Davison deduced it from the Homeric word *pou*, 'flock' and *mao*, 'to care', the following passages will show that the thought of the exercise of 'the rod and the staff' is not absent from the word.

'Out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall *rule* My people Israel' (Matt. 2:6).

'He shall *rule* them with a rod of iron' (Rev. 2:27).

'Who was *to rule* all nations with a rod of iron' (Rev. 12:5).

'He shall *rule* them with a rod of iron' (Rev. 19:15).

These passages are quotations from Old Testament Scriptures, those in the Revelation quoting Psalm 2, while that in Matthew quotes Micah 5. Where the A.V. of the New Testament reads 'rule' the A.V. of Psalm 2:9 has 'break', *raa*, which is a word indicating severe chastisement upon evil, and in the Hiphil\* is translated 'to bring evil', 'to afflict' and 'to punish' (Jer. 25:29; 31:28; Zech. 8:14). On the other hand the Hithpoel is translated 'must shew himself friendly' (Prov. 18:24), so that the affliction, though it seem evil, is for good. The word translated 'ruler' in Micah 5:2 is the Hebrew *mashal*, which not only means to rule, to govern, or to have dominion, but 'to speak or to use, parables or proverbs' (Ezek. 17:2; 24:3) and so suggests the ruling of a people by wisdom and warning. It may be that Peter knew this double meaning, and the association of rule or dominion with the idea of a shepherd, and to save the overseers from a false assumption of power, he said:

'Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; *neither as being lords* over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock' (1 Pet. 5:2,3).

With these facts in mind, we can the better appreciate the meaning of the apostle in his exhortation to the elders of Ephesus. The R.V. has the marginal note against the words 'church of God': 'Many ancient authorities read, *the Lord*'.

From one angle, it makes very little difference to us whether the apostle called the church, 'the church of God' or 'the church of the Lord', but it is of importance to us to see to it that we do not allow the displacement of one single word of inspired Scripture and especially in a passage that has to do with the Person of the Saviour. If the word *kuriou*, 'Lord', had occurred in the original it is difficult to understand why anyone should alter it to read *Theou*, 'God', for the word 'Lord' here creates no difficulty in the subsequent statement, 'which He hath purchased by His

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\* We must defer full consideration of this subject until the closing section of the book, when we hope fully to demonstrate that such an influence is not a matter of conjecture but of fact.

\* These terms and others used in concordances, etc., are indications concerning the 'voice', 'mood' and 'tense' of Hebrew words. While the reader need not burden himself with these terms, he should on the other hand avoid acceptance of dogmatic assertions based merely upon a list of words. For instance, the comparison of Hiphel (causative) with say the Niphal (or middle voice) would lead to erroneous deductions.

Own blood'. In the early church there were also many who held Arian and Socinian views who would have exposed the alteration in one of their writings or controversies. If *Theou*, 'God', was the original word, Alford says:

'But *one reason* can be given why it should have been altered to *Kuriou*, and that *one was sure to be operated*. It would stand as a bulwark against Arianism<sup>\*</sup>, an assertion which no skill could evade, which must therefore be modified. If *Theou* stood in the text originally, it was sure to be altered to *Kuriou*'.

Further, there is no other instance in the writings of Paul, where he speaks of the 'church of the Lord', whereas the title the 'church of God' is frequently used. We have already demonstrated that Paul's speech recorded in Acts 20 abounds in Pauline expressions, and this fact has some weight with us now. It is unsettling for the English reader to be told in the margin of the R.V. about 'many ancient authorities'. It might mean much or little, but inasmuch as the Revisers themselves failed to find sufficient evidence to make an alteration, the marginal note seems to us a disturbing intrusion. We would also mention for what it is worth that the finding of the 'Numeric Version' favours the A. V. in its translation of the title.

Believing, then, that the original text read 'church of God', we meet a very extraordinary statement.

'The church of God, which He (i.e. God) hath purchased with His (i.e. God) own blood'.

This has not been allowed to pass unmodified. There is no manuscript evidence for adding the word *hiou*, 'son', after *Tou idiou*, 'His own', but Dr. Hort was an adept, to use his own language, 'in the art of conjectural emendation'. Speaking of this mischievous practice, Dean Burgon commenting on Acts 20:28, says:

'We charitably presume that it is in order to make amends for having conjecturally thrust out *To pascha* (the Passover) from S. John 6:4, that Dr. Hort is for conjecturally thrusting into Acts 20:28, *Hiou* (after *Tou idiou*), an imagination to which he devotes a column and a half, but *for which he is not able to produce a particle of evidence*. It would result in our reading, "to feed the Church of God, which He purchased" - (not "with His own blood", but) - "with the blood of His Own SON": which has evidently been suggested by nothing so much as by the supposed necessity of getting rid of a text which unequivocally asserts that CHRIST is GOD'.

The unusual expression *haima Theou* (blood of God) met with in Ignatius, who wrote to the Ephesians, and its equivalent in the Latin of Tertullian *Sanguine Dei* (blood of God) seem to demand Acts 20:28, as its warrant. The word 'purchase', *peripoieomai*, was to be used in writing to this same assembly (see Eph. 1:14) where *peripoiesis* is used for 'the purchased possession'. Such a church, purchased at such a price, demanded the utmost care on the part of its overseers, and the very strangeness of the apostle's wording but strengthens his appeal. Wolves were to take advantage of the apostle's absence, and enter in, and 'out from' their own selves, self-seeking and ambitious men would rend the church.

Paul had experienced the power of 'perverse things', for we meet with the word *diastrepho* in Acts 13, where Elymas seeks 'to turn away' the deputy from the faith, and where Paul charges him with 'perverting' the right ways of the Lord. He uses the word also in Philippians 2:15, where he speaks of a 'perverse' nation.

For the space of three years the apostle had not ceased to warn every one night and day with tears, but that witness now drew to its close. What could he do more? However faithful a testimony may be, it is marked with mortality, and by the transient nature of all flesh. But if Paul must cease, God abides, and so the apostle points them away to the one and only source of all grace and ground of all hope, God and His Word.

'And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified' (Acts 20:32).

Paul's influence upon Luke is evident in the record of Acts 14:3, where we read:

'Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the *Word of His grace*, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands'.

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\* Named after Arius, of the 4th century, who taught that the Son was created by the Father.



We have already drawn attention to the similarity of language in Acts 20:32 with passages in Ephesians and Colossians.

Without clearer revelation it is impossible for us to decide whether the apostle, with the new ministry in front of him with its impending change, spoke prophetically, commending these believers to 'that word of His grace which ... build ... inheritance', but which had not yet been made known.

As Peter, it will be remembered, exhorted those who were in charge of the flock not to serve for filthy lucre but rather to be ensamples, so Paul repudiates any idea that he had been prompted by covetousness, and asserts that he was an example, saying:

'Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye 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' (Acts 20:34,35).

How truly the apostle could say; 'I have shewed you'. With an available choice of five different compounds of the word and with *deiknumi* itself making a sixth, the word he used for 'show' was *hupodeiknumi*. Let us endeavour to understand the reason for his choice. He could have used *deiknumi*, 'to show', which would have been a perfect parallel with the example of the Lord, Who, when He had spoken the word of peace 'shewed unto them' His hands and His side (John 20:20). Paul, too, could supplement his saying in the same way, though not in the same blessed degree. *Anadeiknumi*, 'to show up by raising aloft, hence to indicate', would hardly fit his purpose, for the word is used to indicate the choice of someone to fill an office (Acts 1:24). *Apodeiknumi* means 'to point away from other things', with the object of focussing upon one, and so 'to prove' (Acts 25:7), but that was not quite the suitable word. *Endeiknumi* means 'to point out', the English idiom using 'out' to express the Greek idea of showing what was 'in'. *Epideiknumi* means 'to show up, as a specimen', 'to exhibit'. This the apostle might have used, for Luke 24:40 uses it of Christ showing His hands and His feet.

But Paul passes all these by, and selects the word *hupodeiknumi*, 'to show under', to give a glimpse, to suggest, as it were, without making too much 'show' in the process. Truth demanded that the apostle should remind the Ephesians of the consistency that had always existed between his doctrine and his practice, but in giving that needful reminder a beautiful humility constrained him to seek out a word that would not be too 'showy'. Such is the wonder of the inspired Scriptures, their every word and part of speech yielding a full measure of teaching. The apostle refers in the latter part of verse 35 to a saying of the Lord that is not recorded in any of the four Gospels. This is not surprising, for Luke, under the influence of Paul, in the preface to the Gospel that bears his name, makes it very evident that there were many attempts to retain the words which the Lord spoke, and John goes so far as to say that he supposed that the world itself could not contain the books that would have to be written were everything the Saviour had taught recorded. In connection with the exhortation to 'support the weak' we must remember that it is only after centuries of Christian teaching, the world has become conscious that the weak have some claim for protection, and that this doctrine would have been rejected by the ordinary Roman citizen of the apostle's day.

To revert to the narrative, the apostle then knelt down and prayed with the little company of elders. They wept sore, falling on Paul's neck and kissing him, for he who roused undying enmity inspired also undying friendship, for they 'sorrowed most' because of his words, 'that they should see his face no more'. 'And they accompanied him unto the ship'.

Paul would have been the last to have rebuked these sorrowing saints. He ever blended 'natural affection' with the more austere graces of his calling. He knew what it was to desire to see the face of his son Timothy once more before his death (2 Tim. 1:4), and he had already written to the Thessalonians that he had 'endeavoured' the more abundantly to see their face with great desire (1 Thess. 2:17), and again, in the next chapter, he wrote 'Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face' (1 Thess. 3:10).

The full bearing of this chapter upon Paul's prison ministry will be better realized when we reach chapter 28, and can view it shorn of the wealth of detail that has nevertheless made our study of it so precious. Like the apostle himself, we have to 'drag' ('gotten from', 21:1) ourselves away, for time and space have gone and we must draw to a close.

### From Tyre to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-17)

‘And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara: and finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth’ (Acts 21:1,2).

We have now reached the last stages of the fateful journey to Jerusalem. The believers seem to have clung to the apostle up to the very point of the launching of the ship, for the words, ‘were gotten from them’, translate *apospao*, a word actually used in Acts 20:30 by the apostle when speaking of those who would ‘draw away’ disciples after them. ‘Tearing himself from them’ is the translation suggested by Farrar. The wind was favourable, and they ran with a straight course to Coos. Rhodes is famous for the vast colossus which bestrode the harbour. At the time of the apostle’s visit, only the two legs remained on their pedestals, the huge body of a man in bronze which formed the upper portion of the statue having been previously hurled down by earthquake. This figure, like the Temple of Diana, was one of the seven wonders of the world, and we can well imagine that the apostle, with recent memories of Ephesus, and the decline in the number of its idolatrous worshippers, would look upon this fallen colossus as another Dagon. We do not know the reason which caused the apostle to disembark at Patara. It may be that Paul desired a more direct journey than by the coastal route. This is suggested by the expression, ‘finding a ship sailing out to Phenicia’, where *diaperon* is used. The fact that this word is chosen to describe a journey across a lake (Matt. 9:1) reveals the intention of Luke here in Acts 21:2. If the reader will take a map of Paul’s journeys and join Patara on the sea coast of Asia Minor with Tyre on the coast of Palestine, the line so drawn will pass Cyprus, which will be ‘on the left hand’ (Acts 21:3). Upon arrival at Tyre, the apostle ‘sought out’ some disciples, and tarried there seven days. *Aneurisko* means not merely ‘to find’ but ‘to find out’.

There was now no cause for anxiety as to reaching Jerusalem in time for Pentecost, since the providential discovery of the ship at Patara, and the favourable journey which they had made, left him with a fortnight to spare. There was no reason why the apostle should proceed immediately to Jerusalem, for he knew only too well that every day he remained in Jerusalem would increase the possibility of passionate opposition and enmity arising. Had Paul the slightest uncertainty regarding his mission to Jerusalem, or had he been desirous of finding a ‘reason’ for altering his plan, he, like the tested souls of whom he wrote in Hebrews 11:15, ‘might have had opportunity to have returned’. During the seven days which he spent at Tyre, some of the disciples there, speaking through the Spirit, intimated that he should not go up to Jerusalem. This has been interpreted by some to indicate that when Paul thereafter proceeded to Jerusalem, he did it in disobedience to the Spirit’s warning; we will deal with this point when we reach verse 11.

At the end of the seven days the little band moved on to their goal, and the disciples who earlier had heard the warning ‘not to go up’, now ‘brought’ the apostle and his companions on their way. The Greek word *propempe* translated here ‘brought us on our way’, is translated ‘accompanied’ in Acts 20:38. ‘And being brought on their way by the church’ in Acts 15:3; see also Romans 15:24; 1 Corinthians 16:6; Titus 3:13, and 3 John 6. This appears to indicate that maturer consideration had revealed the will of the Lord, and that the words spoken by the Spirit in Acts 21:4 were in the nature of a test and a warning - not a prohibition.

From Tyre, the last stage of the voyage was made, and the little band landed at Ptolemais, now known as Acre. The apostle, having saluted the brethren, stayed one day. The journey to Caesarea, a distance of some 40 miles, was probably accomplished overland. Here the apostle waited until the eve of the feast, and found delightful and encouraging fellowship in the house of Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven (Acts 6:1-5) who was intimately linked with the fortunes of Paul, through Stephen the first Christian martyr. Philip was a Hellenist (Acts 6:1-5), and had manifested the same spirit which moved the apostle to the Gentiles, in that he carried the gospel to the hated Samaritans and preached it to the despised Ethiopian. What heart-searching conversation these two servants of the Lord must have had. The persecution that arose about the stoning of Stephen influenced the career of Philip, but it also was associated with the conversion, the conviction and the commission of Saul of Tarsus.

Had the writer of this volume been treated with more human kindness and sympathy in his early years, he might still have been found in the ranks of the strictly orthodox, using possibly his talents to combat the teaching of the mystery; as it happened the Lord overruled painful circumstances to close many doors of so-called ‘opportunity’, and to lead in everything but actual fetters and chains to a ‘prison ministry’. With what joy, nevertheless, do we

look back on those overrulings, and so must Philip the evangelist and Paul the apostle have humbly yet victoriously praised God for 'sovereign grace o'er sin abounding'.

Philip had four unmarried daughters, and these believing women possessed the gift of prophecy. We are not told that they uttered any specific prophecy during Paul's stay at the house, but we do read of the coming of another prophet, and what he said:

'And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judæa a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem' (Acts 21:10-12).

We meet with this prophet Agabus earlier in the narrative of the Acts, for in Acts 11:28 he is found foretelling a famine in the Roman world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius. Agabus adopted the manner of some Old Testament prophets; and enforced his spoken prophecy with dumb show. Zedekiah made horns of iron to visualize his prophecy (1 Kings 22:11), and Isaiah walked 'naked and barefoot' as a sign to the people (Isa. 20:2).

Until now, Paul knew that bonds and afflictions awaited him, and this had been the testimony of the Holy Ghost in every city (Acts 20:23), but now at Cæsarea, for the first time, definite particulars are given. 'Jews at Jerusalem' would bring about the binding of the apostle, and he would be delivered 'into the hands of the Gentiles'. Upon hearing this, both the writer of the Acts - the other companion of Paul, and the believers assembled at Cæsarea, besought him 'not to go up to Jerusalem'. In Acts 21:4, no particulars are given, but they are in verses 11 and 12, and in the latter case we are sure that the urgent request 'not to go up to Jerusalem' immediately followed the hearing of the prophecy.

In many particulars the apostle Paul followed the footsteps of His Lord, Who when the time came set His face as a flint to go up to Jerusalem, Matthew 20:17,18; Mark 10:32; and Luke 19:28. We know, too, how Peter rebuked the Lord, when he first heard of His prospective death at Jerusalem (Matt. 16:21,22), to whom the Lord had to say:

'Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men' (Matt. 16:23).

This word 'savourest' might be considered by a literalist too free a translation of *phroneo*, yet with the marginal note of Isaiah 11:3 in mind the translation of Matthew 16:23 is seen to be almost an inspiration:

'And shall make Him of quick understanding' (margin, scent, or, smell).

Paul, too, was given a keen scent with regard to things of God, for while fellow-believers might judge after the sight of their eyes, or argue from expediency, he had but one purpose to accomplish, and that was to go to Jerusalem, leaving the rest with His Lord. That Paul was right is made evident by the sequel:

'Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not he persuaded, we ceased, saying, **The will of the Lord be done**' (Acts 21:13,14).

What a light these few words throw upon the character of the apostle and the strength of the temptation that beset him: 'Mean ye to break my heart?' Not 'cross my will' or 'thwart my desire'. What else could his companions say than: 'The will of the Lord be done'? This incident having passed, the little party proceeded to Jerusalem. The introduction of so prosaic a fact as 'we took up our carriages' (verse 15) - or in modern English: 'we packed our bags', is of importance, for it shows that Paul acted with deliberate calmness, showing no symptoms of fanatical enthusiasm.

The city of Jerusalem was always crowded at the time of the feast, and so, like the Saviour, Paul was not entertained by any of the high officials of the Church at Jerusalem, but Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, gave him a lodging. Mnason, with one or two other believers from Cæsarea, appears to have accompanied the apostle, and as he was aware of the adverse prophecy, it was all the more praiseworthy that he gave such a dangerous guest

hospitality. As the result, his name is read where the New Testament has penetrated, while the memory of men who commanded obeisance at the time have been forgotten. It is possible that the words *archaio mathete* may mean 'an original disciple', i.e., one who had been brought into the light of the gospel at the visit of Paul and Barnabas to Cyprus on their first missionary journey; or it may refer to the day of Pentecost, as the word *arche* indicates in Acts 11:15. With Mnason the apostle rested upon his arrival in Jerusalem, and gathered strength for the approaching conflict. It was the apostle's Bethany:

'And when we came to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly' (Acts 21:17).

This was the fifth and last recorded visit of the apostle to Jerusalem since his conversion.

The structure of the section before us is simple:

#### **Acts 21:1-17**

- J Acts 21:1-3. From Miletus to Tyre.
- K Acts 21:4. Prophecy. 'Not go up to Jerusalem'.
- L Acts 21:5,6. Departure. Accompanied.
- J Acts 21:7-9. Tyre to Caesarea.
- K Acts 21:10-14. Prophecy. 'Not go up to Jerusalem'.
- L Acts 21:15-17. Departure. Accompanied.

How intimate is the record of these days:

'Both the state of the weather and the direction of the wind are known. We can point to the place on the map where the vessel anchored for the night, and trace across the chart the track that was followed, when the moon was full. Yet more than this. We are made fully aware of the state of the apostle's mind, and of the burdened feeling under which this journey was accomplished' (Conybeare and Howson).

All is now ready, Pentecost has come, Paul is at Jerusalem, the city teems with fanatics and enemies, but a purpose that goes back before the overthrow of the world is about to emerge, and grace beyond dreams is to be made known through this same Paul, as the prisoner of Jesus Christ for us Gentiles.

We therefore prayerfully anticipate our study of the remainder of this section of the Acts, which must occupy our attention in the next pages. May our sense of gratitude to the earthen vessel, and our appreciation of his loyalty amid temptation and sufferings for 'His body's sake which is the church', be none the less, because, in these days so far distant from the throbbing events recorded, we are able to lift serene eyes to the unseen hand that guided and upheld the apostle, that we through his ministry might learn of heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

#### **The reception of the apostle at Jerusalem (Acts 21:18-21)**

We left the apostle in the care of the old disciple Mnason, with whom he spent the last peaceful night that he was to know for, perhaps, the rest of his tumultuous life.

'And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present' (Acts 21:18).

Before examining this new section in detail, let us see the structure:

#### **Acts 21:18-26**

- M 21:18. Went in. Paul and his companions.
- N 21:19. Gentiles. What God had wrought.

- O 21:20. Many thousands zealous of the law.  
 P 21:21,22. Informed. False statement.  
 P 21:23,24. Informed. Prove that they are nothing.  
 O 21:24. Thou, thyself, keepest the law.  
 N 21:25. Gentiles. What the elders and apostles had written.  
 M 21:26. Entered in. Paul and the men who had a vow.

‘James and all the elders were present’ (Acts 21:18).

There is something about this statement that calls up the words of Galatians 2:6: ‘These who seemed to be somewhat’.

‘It must have been with an almost painful shyness - that timid provincial neophytes, like Timothy and Trophimus (the latter especially, an uncircumcised Gentile, whom his teacher had encouraged to regard himself as entirely emancipated from the Jewish law) - found themselves in the awful presence of James, the Lord’s brother - James, the stern, white-robed, mysterious prophet, and the conclave of his but half-conciliated Judaic presbyters’ (Farrar).

The apostle Paul, however, who had withstood Peter to the face, and had yielded by subjection no, not for an hour, went forward without hesitation to meet this council and ‘saluted them’. He then ‘declared particularly’, that is, gave a fairly detailed account, of ‘what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry’. Paul had been absent about four years (Acts 18:21); he referred to ‘the space of three years’ as the duration of his ministry in Asia, and he would have much to tell concerning Ephesus, Philippi, Galatia and elsewhere. We cannot tell whether Paul alluded to the antagonism, not only of the unbelieving Jews, but of the believing Jews, which had attempted to wreck his work at Corinth and Galatia, but in either case the freedom and grace enjoyed by the Gentile churches would have been made very manifest by his report, and the disclosure would act like breath on glowing tinder. Ever since James, Cephas and John had asked Paul to ‘remember the poor’ (Gal. 2:10), it had been his intense desire that he should be able to bring an offering from the Gentile churches to Jerusalem as evidence of their recognition of indebtedness and a manifest token of their fellowship and goodwill. In pursuit of his desire he had arranged that each church should select their own representative and personally deliver the love gift of the churches to the leaders at Jerusalem.

That Paul entertained very serious doubts concerning his reception at Jerusalem, is made clear in his epistle to the Romans. The full structure of Romans 15:8 to 16:23 will be found in chapter 19 of *Just and the Justifier*\*. From it we lift those members that reveal the fears entertained by the apostle in connection with this visit to Jerusalem.

And that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy  
 (Rom. 15:9).

Might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost  
 (Rom. 15:16).

May be accepted of the saints (Rom. 15:31).

The offering up of the Gentiles to God, *was acceptable*, for they were sanctified by the Holy Ghost. But of the offering sent by the Gentiles to Jerusalem, Paul can only earnestly express the hope, *may it be accepted* by those who are saints, not by nature, but by grace. O the tragedy of the sectarian spirit! No doubts were entertained as to the acceptableness of the poor Gentile converts by a holy God, but grave doubts were entertained as to whether those self-same converts would be acceptable to certain other sinners saved by grace! Paul’s fears seem to have been only too well founded. The offerings had been in his charge throughout the journey. Had they been lost, stolen or left behind, Luke would have recorded the fact.

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\* An exposition of Paul’s epistle to the Romans, by the same author.

'One by one he would call forward the beloved delegates, that they might with their own hands, lay at the feet of James, the sums of money which his Gentile Churches had contributed out of their deep poverty, and which in many and many a coin bore witness to weeks of generous self denial. There lay all this money, a striking proof of the faithfulness with which Paul, at any rate, had carried out his share of the old compact at Jerusalem ... and on this occasion, if ever, we might surely have looked for a little effusive sympathy, a little expansive warmth, on the part of the community which had received so tangible a proof of the apostle's kindness. Yet we are not told about a word of thanks, and we see but too plainly that Paul's hardly disguised misgiving as to the manner in which his gift would be accepted, was confirmed' (*Farrar*).

We are certainly told that when the Elders at Jerusalem heard Paul's report, 'they glorified the Lord', but this was immediately followed by words that must have well nigh quenched any glow of anticipation those first words of the Elders had kindled:

'And (they) said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: and they are informed of thee ...' (Acts 21:20,21).

Let us pause at this word 'informed'. The structure brings it into prominence, for it is repeated in verse 24. 'Studiously indoctrinated' or, 'sedulously informed' have been suggested as conveying the veiled threat that, with all the charity in the world, one feels to have been behind the words. Zeal can alas be the outcome, not only of love and faith, but of envy. *Zelotes* would remind the apostle that once, as a Pharisee, he had been 'zealous' for the tradition of his fathers (Gal. 1:14), and what a bitter sectarian it had made him. The verb *zeloo*, while it is used in a noble sense in the New Testament, is mostly used for the cruel emotion of 'envy'. The two occasions where it comes in the Acts are:

'The patriarchs, *moved with envy*, sold Joseph' (Acts 7:9).

'But the Jews which believed not, *moved with envy*' (Acts 17:5).

*Zelos*, too, though it stand for a 'zeal of God', may also stand for zeal 'not according to knowledge' (Rom. 10:2). So then, the introduction of such words as 'zealous of the law' and 'they are informed of thee' would stifle any uprising of joy at the brief doxology that had first been uttered.

'They are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs' (Acts 21:21).

How near, and yet how far from the truth, false charges arising from sectarian zeal can be! For instance, the Christian public have been 'informed' or 'studiously indoctrinated' that *The Berean Expositor* takes away all Scriptures from the church, except four short epistles, and that as an inference from our teaching concerning the Lord's Supper, we have very little regard for the doctrine of the atonement. We also understand that we are said to deny the Second Coming of the Lord. Further, like misstatements are made, which become weapons and stumbling-stones to the unwary. We may not expect to find much in the theology of Kipling that we could endorse, but we can enter very really into the words:

'If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools;  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools'.

Had Paul known these lines, we think he would have felt that they were almost a part of his biography.

Did Paul, at this time, remember Stephen, with whose death he was so intimately associated? Did he remember how the truth Stephen had stood for had been 'twisted'?

'Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God ... This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us' (Acts 6:11,13,14).

Most certainly the apostle had not taught *the believing Jew* to 'forsake Moses'. He had taught him to see that his hope of righteousness by his own attempts to keep the law was vain, but he had spoken not a word about the circumcision of the children of believing Jews, and had actually circumcised Timothy. What he had resisted was the attempt to force the yoke of the law upon believing *Gentiles* and to compel them to be circumcised, but such distinctions would be brushed aside by a partisan. Seven times do we read of 'customs' in the Acts (6:14; 15:1; 16:21; 21:21; 25:16; 26:3, and 28:17), and any teaching that touched the sacred 'rites' of either Jew or Roman was sure to arouse intense antagonism. The word translated 'forsake' in the phrase 'forsake Moses' has an ugly sound in the original. It is *apostasia*, a word that occurs but once more in the New Testament where it is used for the awful 'falling away' that is associated with the days of the man of sin (2 Thess. 2:3). *Apostasion* moreover is translated 'divorcement', and this would also be uppermost in the mind of a Jew.

Here, then, was the state of affairs at Jerusalem, and the apostle, however he might endeavour to conciliate such opposition, would know that out of this condition would arise the circumstances which prophets had foretold in every city through which he had passed on his journey to Jerusalem. Paul knew what it was to fear, he knew what it was to pray for boldness, and he required all the grace and strength that his faith could muster as he listened to this accusation and foresaw its consequences. We watch him going to the temple at the request of the rulers, as a lamb to the slaughter. He was, however, to hear 'the night following' the encouraging words:

'Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome' (Acts 23:11).

We have however anticipated our subject a little, and must return to follow the steps of the apostle as recorded in the section we are examining.

### **The Apprehension of the apostle in the Temple (Acts 21:27-34)**

When we examine Paul's epistles, we find they contain two contemporaneous lines of teaching which, if taken as two parts of a whole, make an intelligible presentation of truth, but if segregated, could easily become the tenets of two opposing factions.

One of the objects of the apostle's ministry was the conciliation of the church at Jerusalem without yielding any of the peculiar truth that constituted both the glory of his message among the Gentiles, and its offensiveness to those that believed, but who were still zealous of the law.

In his then recently written epistles to the Corinthians and the Romans, this conciliatory spirit is especially manifest, not only 'to the Jews', but 'to the Greeks' and 'to the Church of God' (1 Cor. 10:32). He had not only urged respect for the conscience of one who failed to shake off his earlier feelings regarding idols (1 Cor. 10:27-29) but had counselled the same charitable attitude to the believing, yet ceremonial, Jew (Rom. 14). He had expressed his attitude in the well-known words:

'Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as 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. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some' (1 Cor. 9:19-22).

This represented one side of the apostolic character and attitude. But there was another aspect of his teaching necessary to complete the whole, and that was his unsparing opposition of all attempts on the part of Judaizers to bring his converts under bondage. He had called these Judaizers 'false brethren', 'deceitful workers', and even 'dogs'. He had declared that those who had gone back to 'the weak and beggarly elements' of the law were comparable with those who returned to the rites and ceremonies of heathen gods; he had spoken of the 'curse' and the 'wrath' that must be associated with the law, and had even declared that any believer who submitted to circumcision would fall from grace, and that Christ would profit such an one, nothing.

Unless, therefore, we see Paul and his doctrine as a whole, we shall not be able to understand what is recorded of him in Acts 21.

‘A modern writer has said that he (Paul) could not do this without untruth; and that to suppose the author of the epistles to the Romans and Galatians standing seven days, oil cakes in hand, in the temple vestibule, and submitting himself to all the manifestations with which Rabbinic pettiness had multiplied the Mosaic ceremonials which accompanied the completion of the Nazarite vow - to suppose that in the midst of the unbelieving Priests and Levites, he should have patiently tolerated all the ritual nullities of the temple service of that period, and so have brought the business to its tedious conclusion in the elaborate manner above described, is just as credible as that Luther in his old age should have performed a pilgrimage to Emsieden with peas in his shoes, and that Calvin on his death bed should have vowed a gold-embroidered gown to the Holy Mother of God’ (*Farrar, ref. to Hausruth*).

But in view of the apostle’s avowed willingness to be made ‘all things to all men’ already expressed in the quotation from 1 Corinthians 9, we can see that for Christ’s sake he would have endured, with pity and with prayer, the tedious ceremonial attached to the liberation of a Nazarite vow, could he thus disarm those who misunderstood and attacked his testimony of the grace of God to the Gentiles. We must remember, moreover, that the Temple still stood at Jerusalem, that Israel, as Israel, were still a people before God, that, until the apostle reached Rome, the hope of Israel was not deferred, and that while the law as a means of salvation had been set aside by the sacrifice of Christ, yet the Jew, during the period of the Acts did not cease to be a Jew by becoming a Christian. He still worshipped the God of his fathers, and continued to do so until the dispensation changed.

Paul had never taught the Jew to ‘forsake Moses’ in the sense that his adversaries alleged; neither had he said that they ought not to circumcise their children, but much of his teaching could easily be so misrepresented as to convince the zealot of the law that he was a most dangerous heretic

‘What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law’ (Acts 21:22-24).

Let us acquaint ourselves with the meaning of this proposition. The word *agnizo*, ‘purify thyself with them’, is the word used in the LXX for *nazar* in Numbers 6:3. We have already seen that Paul had ‘polled his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow’ (Acts 18:18), but he still needed to complete that vow, for the word *keiramenos*, ‘to poll the head’, is not the same as *xuresontai* ‘shave the head’ of Acts 21:24. The former word, used in Acts 18:18, is never used by the LXX of the final Nazarite *shaving* of the head at the expiration of a vow. The fact that a vow had been taken in Cenchrea which demanded fulfilment at Jerusalem, seemed to the leaders at Jerusalem a heaven-sent opportunity which they immediately seized. Let the whole thing be done as publicly as possible, and let Paul undertake the cost attaching to the ceremonial purification of these four men, as others had done before him; ‘be at charges with them’. It was the custom for a wealthy Jew to assist his poorer brethren in this way. *Lewin* says: ‘There was not a more charitable act in the estimate of the Jews, or one more calculated to acquire popularity, than to assist the poor Nazarite by supplying the necessary funds’. Josephus records the return of Agrippa from Rome, and how he ‘offered all the sacrifices that belonged to him, and omitted nothing which the law required; on which account he ordered that many of the Nazarites should have their heads shorn’ (Ant. xix. 6, 1).

What a wonderful exhibition this action of grace on Paul’s part! A mere doctrinaire would have repudiated the humiliating conditions suggested by the leaders at Jerusalem. He would also feel resentment at the very casual acceptance of the gift, to gather which he had spent so much time and prayer. He could easily have hidden behind the evident fact that he had stood for complete emancipation from all such dead ceremonial works. But Paul knew better. He believed and taught that true grace was Christ-like, and this overcame all objections, leading him meekly to submit where he might have waged war against, ‘those who seemed to be somewhat’.

**‘And when the seven days were almost ended’ (Acts 21:27)**



In Acts 24:18 the apostle said that they who arrested him found him 'purified in the temple, neither with multitude nor with tumult'. In the law seven days is a usual period for purification (Exod. 29:37; Lev. 14:8; Num. 12:14), and in the law concerning the Nazarite provision is made for anyone contracting ceremonial impurity, which enjoins upon him the necessity of waiting for seven days till offerings be made and restoration effected. So also at the close of the vow, it seems that to make doubly sure the priests demanded a lapse of seven days before release could be given. Towards the close of this period:

'The Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man. that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)' (Acts 21:27-29).

To understand why the people could be so easily inflamed, some acquaintance will be necessary with the conditions that obtained at the time of Paul's visit. The populace had but recently been infuriated by Claudius under whose orders the golden robes of the High Priest had been locked away in the tower of Antonia. Such an exhibition of fury resulted that the presence of the Prefect of Syria with a large force was required to keep the peace. Claudius yielded to pressure, and the obnoxious order was cancelled. Josephus, moreover, tells us that during the Procuratorship of Cumanus a Roman soldier had expressed his contempt for the Jewish ceremonies, by a gesture of the most insulting indecency, thereby again plunging the Jews into turmoil. The Procurator was cursed and the soldiers were stoned. This brought upon the Jews such punishment that the number trapped and cut down by the sword is variously stated at ten and twenty thousand. Again, a Roman soldier roused the Jews by the burning of a copy of the Scriptures in public, and so insistent was the Jewish opposition that, this time, Cumanus thought it best to sacrifice a common soldier to gain time and keep the peace. Cumanus was finally banished, and at the time of Paul's visit, Felix was Procurator of Judæa. Felix was guilty of several outrages and, moreover, only seven weeks before Paul's arrival at Jerusalem, an Egyptian, posing as a Messiah, had raised 30,000 followers who expected the walls of Jerusalem to fall down flat at his approach. Four thousand of his poor dupes actually accompanied him to the Mount of Olives, where Felix killed four hundred and took a number of prisoners.

It will, therefore, be perceived that abundant material existed for another outburst, and the arrival of some Jews from Asia provided the spark. 'Men of Israel, help!' From one to another passed the words 'The people!' 'The Law!' 'The Holy Place!' 'Here is the hated renegade!' Having seen Paul walking in the streets with the Gentile Trophimus, these fanatical Jews jumped to the conclusion that Paul had taken him into the Temple.

'To defile the Temple was what every enemy of the Jews tried to do. Antiochus, Heliodorus, Pompey, had profaned it, and very recently the Samaritans had been charged with deliberately polluting it by scattering dead men's bones over the precincts. Instantly the rumour flew from lip to lip that this was Saul, of whom they had heard - Paul the *mesith* - Paul, one of the Galilean *Minim* - one of the believers in 'the Hung' - Paul, the renegade Rabbi, who taught and wrote that Gentiles were as good as Jews - the man that blasphemed the Torah - the man whom the synagogues had scourged in vain - the man who went from place to place getting into trouble with the Romans; and that he had been caught taking with him into the Temple a Gentile dog, an uncircumcised *ger*. The punishment for that crime was death - death by the full permission of the Romans themselves; death even against a Roman who should dare to set foot beyond the *chel*' (Farrar).

The Talmudic writers themselves have said that the cause of the destruction of the second Temple was 'groundless hatred' (Joma, f 9.2).

Had not the sanctity of the Temple disallowed the shedding of blood within its precincts, Paul would have been killed on the spot. To avoid profanation therefore the Jews dragged him down the steps into the outer court, through the 'Beautiful Gate', which the Temple police shut behind the surging throng. This momentary delay was providential. A Roman soldier was always stationed at the western cloister during festivals, and he gave immediate warning of the tumult. Lysias, the chief Captain, then appeared with centurions and soldiers, and the Jews, now faced by disciplined soldiers, 'left beating Paul', and, as the first hand of a Roman soldier was laid upon the prostrate Paul, he became 'the prisoner of Jesus Christ', prophetic warnings of what awaited him at Jerusalem were verified, and the first steps that were to eventuate both in Roman imprisonment and wondrous revelation were taken.

At this point we will pause and set out the structure of the section before us:

- M Acts 21:27. Jews of Asia.
- N Acts 21:27. Stirred up the people.
- O Acts 21:28. Charge. He brought Greeks.
- P Acts 21:29. Supposition. Paul and Trophimus.
- Q Acts 21:30,31. Paul. Drawn out ... about to be killed.
- R Acts 21:32. Chief Captain and soldiers.
- Q Acts 21:32. Paul. They left beating him.
- R Acts 21:33-36. Chief Captain. Borne of the soldiers.
- O Acts 21:37. Question. Canst thou speak Greek?
- P Acts 21:38. Supposition. Art thou that Egyptian?
- M Acts 21:39. Jew of Tarsus.
- N Acts 21:40. A great silence.

The Chief Captain having secured the apostle, binding him by two chains, demanded ‘who the man might be, and what he had done?’ receiving however but a confused and contradictory reply. Probably afraid that they were to be cheated of their prey, the mob cried out ‘Away with him!’ (*Aire auton*), using the identical words of the yelling crowds who demanded the crucifixion of Christ, as recorded in Luke 23:18. The Chief Captain had ordered Paul to be taken to the barracks, but the surging mob carried the fettered apostle off his feet, and he was only saved from being torn limb from limb by the presence of the soldiery. In the midst of all this tumult, one man remained calm - the poor battered prisoner !

‘May I speak a word to you?’ said a voice speaking in Greek. Lysias had evidently assumed that he had at last laid hands on the false Messiah already mentioned and who had eluded pursuit since Passover, but he knew that this Egyptian impostor could not speak Greek like that which he now heard. ‘I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people’ (Acts 21:39). The request was strange, and in all probability would have been refused, had not some dignity and authority made themselves manifest beneath the battered appearance of the prisoner. To gain attention and command respect the apostle had given at length the fact of his citizenship of Tarsus, adding, as further weight, the comment as to the importance of the city. Moreover, the Romans, if brutal, were also brave, and the fact that a prisoner, and a Jew, just snatched from a violent death, should request leave to turn and face his persecutors would impress them in his favour.

Lysias apparently ordering one of Paul’s hands to be unchained, the prisoner, standing on the stairs, with arm uplifted, made signs that he wished to speak. His voice fell upon their ears with quieting effect, for the ‘Hebrew tongue’, in which Paul spoke (*te Hebraidi dialekto*) was the Syro-Chaldaic, the language of the native population of Palestine. Had the apostle spoken in Greek the majority would have misunderstood him, but hearing what to them, would be ‘the holy tongue’, a stillness fell upon them all.

Here we must stay. The address which the apostle gave and its sequel, constitutes the opening of the last great section of the Acts, which closes in Rome, with the imprisoned apostle ‘teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him’. With this closing section of the Acts is bound up that ministry with which, through electing grace, all our hopes are associated.

## CHAPTER 17

**From Jerusalem to Rome (Acts 22:1 to 28:22)****The section as a whole, and Paul's opening speech (Acts 22:1-22)**

With this speech, made by Paul to the assembled throng in the Temple area, we commence the great section of the Acts which leads from Jerusalem to Rome; to the rejection of Israel and the suspension of their hope; to the prison ministry of the apostle and to the revelation of the Mystery. While, therefore, the whole record of the Acts - being Scripture, and dealing as it does with the opening years of Christian testimony - must be of the greatest importance to all believers, this closing portion is of particular interest to all those who, by grace, realize the change of dispensation with which this imprisonment of Paul is associated.

Before we examine the apostle's speech, we must obtain a view of the section as a whole (Acts 22 to 28). We discover that it preserves the record of several of Paul's speeches, not only to the Jews at Jerusalem, as in the opening section, but also to the Jews at Rome, in the closing section, and in between these two we have recorded the utterances before the two Roman Governors, Felix and Festus, and also the defence before King Agrippa.

The structure reveals the organic oneness of this great section. We observe two recurring items.

- (1) A pointed reference to hope (Acts 23:6; 24:15; 26:6,7; 28:20).
- (2) A testimony to the apostle's innocence (Acts 23:29; 25:11,25; 26:31; 28:18).

Moreover, in every case where the apostle is permitted to plead he refers not only to his doctrine but to his manner of life. Before proceeding further we must set out the structure of this whole section in order that these items may be given their rightful place.

**Acts 22:1 to 28:22****From Jerusalem to Rome**

A <sub>1</sub> 22 to 23	<b>a</b>	Manner of life. Law of fathers, Pharisee.	}	
To Jews at Jerusalem.	<b>b</b>	Damascus. Conversion and Commission. Light. Saul! Saul! Gentiles.	}	HOPE of Resurrec-
	<b>c</b>	The Lord stood by me. Good cheer.	}	tion.
B <sub>1</sub> FINDING OF LYSIAS. - <i>Nothing worthy of death or bonds.</i>			}	
A <sub>2</sub> 24 to 25:22. To Felix and Festus.		Manner of life. Sect. Heresy.	}	HOPE of Resurrec-
B <sub>2</sub> FINDING OF FESTUS. - <i>Nothing worthy of death.</i>			}	tion.
A <sub>3</sub> 25:23 to 28:15. To Agrippa.	<b>a</b>	Manner of life. Straightest sect. Pharisee.	}	
	<b>b</b>	Damascus. Conversion and twofold commission. Light Saul! Saul! Gentiles.	}	HOPE of Twelve

	c	Angel stood by me.		Tribes.
		Fear not.		
B <sub>3</sub>		FINDING OF AGRIPPA. - <i>Nothing worthy of death or bonds.</i>		
A <sub>4</sub>		28:16-22. Manner of life. Customs. Sect.	}	
		To Jews		HOPE
		at Rome	}	of
B <sub>4</sub>		FINDING OF PAUL'S CONSCIENCE. - <i>No cause of death.</i>		Israel.

We now return to the apostle's testimony before the Jews, as recorded in Acts 22 and 23.

We read in Acts 21:40 and in 22:2 that Paul spoke 'in the Hebrew tongue'. This word *Hebrais* occurs but three times in the New Testament (Acts 21:40; 22:2; and 26:14). Twice it is used of Paul, and once it describes the language used by the Lord at the conversion of Paul.

The history of the Hebrew language may roughly be divided into two parts, the first covering the whole period of its use up to the Babylonian exile, and the second, the period commencing from the exile and continuing through to the present time. Since the Babylonian captivity, the 'Hebrew' of the Old Testament had given place to a modified form. This 'Hebrew' was:

'The language spoken by the Jews in Palestine in the time of Christ. It might more accurately have been called *Syro Chaldee*, being a mixture of the Aramaean of Daniel and Ezra with the Ancient Hebrew' (Dr. A. Young).

When the Jews heard Paul address them in the Hebrew tongue, they kept the more silence. It was not only a concession to their extreme national and religious pride, but an intimation that the speaker was not a stranger to the sacred tongue. The Lord, when He spoke from heaven to the stricken persecutor, made the same concession.

The question has been raised as to whether Luke understood Hebrew. It cannot be settled from the record of this speech, for Paul could have given Luke a translation afterwards, or Luke could have been inspired by God to give it without intermediate assistance. On the other hand, the presence of a number of Hebraisms make it possible that Paul did not translate the speech for Luke, but that Luke gave his own translation, revealing himself by the presence of Hebrew forms of speech instead of ordinary Greek. Dean Alford's conclusion is:

'Now we do find, (1) that the speech is full of Hebraisms, (2) that while it contains several expressions occurring nowhere but in the writings of Luke, not one is found in it peculiar to Paul, or even strikingly in his manner. Our inference then is that Luke himself has rendered this speech from having heard it delivered; and, consequently, that he was acquainted with Hebrew'.

The matter is not of sufficient importance to pursue further. There is this to be said, however; all other writers of the Scriptures were Hebrews. Luke has been considered the exception, partly by reason of his Gentile name, and partly from tradition, but while there is insufficient evidence to settle the point there is every probability that 'Luke the beloved physician' will not prove to be an exception to the rule.

The apostle's purpose in this speech is expressed by himself in his opening words: 'Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence' (Acts 22:1). The Greek word translated 'defence' has passed into our own language in the word 'apology'.

In the course of time the word has departed from its original meaning, and today an 'apology' may be 'A frank acknowledgment, by way of reparation, of offence given', or 'A defensive argument, often, specifically, the argumentative defence of Christianity'. The apostle however conciliatory his manner in the choice of argument, or even of the language in which he addressed the enraged gathering near the Temple, was certainly not apologetic in the modern sense. Sturdy defence need not be rude, and firm conviction of the rightness of one's position is not made more evident by stubbornness or lack of courtesy. In his short speech, spontaneously uttered in circumstances

of great pressure, the apostle gives us a model both of courtesy and concession, coupled with unflinching faithfulness and courage.

Men who had but immediately beforehand charged him with abominable conduct, accompanying their false charge with a ruthless and savage attack which had led Paul into the extremely unpleasant, and possibly dangerous, position of being a prisoner in the hands of the Roman guard, were addressed by the apostle as he opened his defence with the courteous and respectful words, 'Men, brethren, and fathers'. Further, to gain their confidence, he spoke of his early training at the feet of Gamaliel, and of his zeal, manifested alas in persecuting 'this way' unto the death. Animated with the same motive, he turned from speaking in Greek to the Roman Captain (Acts 21:37) to the use of Hebrew when addressing the members of his own nation. They had accused him of polluting the sanctuary. He therefore not only tells them his place of birth and his training in Jerusalem, but adds that he was: 'taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day'. He might have said, 'and was blindly fanatical, as ye all are this day', but he did not. Again, when he introduces the name of Ananias, he omits what is recorded in Acts 9 as to Ananias being 'a disciple', and refers to him as 'a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there' (Acts 22:12). Moreover, as further evidence of his correct attitude toward the Temple, Paul told them of an occasion when, praying in the Temple and being in a trance, the Lord appeared to him. But his appeal was in vain; it found no response, for it was made in the face of the most adamant of all human antagonism viz., religious bias. As soon as the apostle reached the point in his narrative where the Lord bade him: 'Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles' (Acts 22:21), the pent up fury of the fanatical throng burst forth, for:

'They gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live' (Acts 22:22).

Paul had led up to the critical statement of verse 21 with consummate skill and yearning sympathy. He knew, he implied, just how they felt against himself at that moment, for had not he himself been a zealous persecutor? They called for his blood, as he, too, had consented to the death of Stephen and others. His choice of words in the reference to the '*perfect manner* of the law of the fathers' would be recognised as a claim on his part to have studied with patience and devotedness the intricacies of traditional lore, affirming that it was nothing less than a divine interposition that had changed the whole current of his life at the beginning, and again, in a later period, while praying in the Temple. He revealed that even there he had resisted the command to leave Jerusalem.

We bring the opening study of this section of the Acts to a close with a presentation of the structure of the speech and its effect, for, if this is perceived, it will be comparatively easy to follow the divine argument contained in the twenty-three verses concerned.

#### Acts 22:1-23

- A 22:1. Opening words 'Men, brethren and fathers'.
- B 22:2. Effect when they heard 'Hebrew'. Kept more silence.
- C 22:3-5. Persecution. Prison. Death.
- D 22:6-16. VISION on the way to Damascus.
  - a And it came to pass (*egeneto*).
  - b Come nigh unto Damascus.
  - c A *light* and a *voice*.
  - d Thou shalt be His witness (*martur*).
- D 22:17,18. VISION in the Temple.
  - a And it came to pass (*egeneto*).
  - b Come again to Jerusalem.
  - c I saw Him ... saying.
  - d They will not receive thy testimony (*marturia*).
- C 22:19,20. Persecution. Prison. Death.
- A 22:21. Closing words: 'Unto the Gentiles'.

*B* 22:22,23. Effect when they heard 'Gentiles'. Lifted up voices.

The parallelisms and contrasts of the speech are evident. The silence that was secured by Paul's use of the Hebrew language is in direct contrast with the uproar that followed the pronouncement of the hated word 'Gentile'. The double reference to Paul's early zeal and persecuting spirit is of importance in his endeavour to prove that he had not easily departed from the religion of his fathers, while the central position of the two visions, with their emphasis upon 'Witness' and 'Testimony', reveal the nature of Israel's blindness, and the nature of the apostle's early ministry.

Like the Twelve, Paul was a witness of what he had 'seen and heard'. He was about to make known that he was also set apart as a witness of something more (Acts 26:16), but this we will consider in its own place.

'Far hence unto the Gentiles' (Acts 22:21) is the first occurrence of *ethnos* in this section, and in the statement that 'the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles' (Acts 28:28) occurs the last reference of *ethnos* in the Acts.

Paul is still, in Acts 22, in Jerusalem, but already, in spirit, he sees the fulfilment of the Temple vision in Rome.

### **Paul's defence before the Council (Acts 23:1-35)**

The apostle's testimony from the castle stairs ended in tumult. At the hated word 'Gentiles', 'They ... lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live' (Acts 22:22, cf. 21:36). This same word *aire* ('away') had been uttered once before by the mob when they clamoured for another Prisoner - the Lord Himself (Luke 23:18; John 19:15). The apostle is here following closely in the footsteps of his Master.

Paul's speech having been made in Hebrew, the chief captain is at a loss to know the meaning of this fresh outbreak, and so we read: 'The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him' (Acts 22:24). The apostle had already been submitted on previous occasions to the cruel and degrading punishment of being beaten with Roman rods, and of being scourged in Jewish synagogues: 'Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods', (2 Cor. 11:24,25). And now it seemed that he would have to endure the *horrible flagellum*, or 'whip', a form of torture which in Roman hands sometimes ended fatally.

In Acts 22:25 we read: 'And while they were binding him down with the thongs' (Alford). Some expositors, including Conybeare and Howson, and Lewin, consider that the 'thongs' refer to the 'lash' of the whip, but others, among them Alford, Wordsworth and Farrar, interpret the word in the sense of 'something that binds'. The word *himas* occurs elsewhere in Mark 1:7, Luke 3:16 and John 1:27, where it refers to the 'latchet' of a shoe. The prefix *pro* in the verb *proteino* 'to bind', refers to 'the position of the prisoner, which was bent forward and tied with a sort of gear made of leather to an inclined post' (Alford).

Three times already Paul, a Roman citizen, had suffered the illegality of being beaten, without revealing his station and claiming exemption. True martyrdom, however, is never separated in Scripture from the thought of 'witness'. The same Greek word *matur* is translated both 'martyr' and 'witness', as for example:

'Thou shalt be His *witness*' Acts 22:15).

'The blood of Thy *martyr*' (Acts 22:20).

'The faithful *witness*' (Rev. 1:5).

'My faithful *martyr*' (Rev. 2:13).

Suffering apart from service, suffering endured for its own sake, and without an object in view, is not martyrdom in the Scriptural sense. While the apostle felt that there was still hope for Israel, he endured in silence, but he had now entered the closing phase of his ministry, and Israel's days were numbered. To suffer the ignominy of examination by torture would now serve no useful end. It would benefit no one, and it would not uphold any vital truth. In the circumstances, it would have been a piece of unreasonable stoicism, and Paul therefore says to the centurion that stood by: 'Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?' (Acts 22:25).

The apostle's undaunted courage had been fully manifested during the time that had elapsed since the Romans had intervened, and the centurion recognised that this was no mere evasion, or a dishonest attempt to gain time. Moreover, he knew that to claim Roman citizenship falsely was often punishable by death (Suet. Claud. 25).

To bind a Roman, and to scourge him uncondemned, broke two laws, the Lex Valeria and the Lex Porcia, and there was also an edict of Augustus prohibiting the application of torture generally. Describing this same period under the heading 'Festus succeeded Felix', Josephus writes, in his 'Wars of the Jews':

'Florus ventured then to do what no one had done before, that is, to have men of equestrian order whipped, and nailed to the cross before his tribunal; who, although they were by birth Jews, yet were they of Roman dignity notwithstanding' (Jos. Wars. ii: 14, 9).

The fear that possessed the chief captain 'because he had bound' Paul, does not refer to the fact he had taken Paul into custody, but rather to the illegal binding preparatory to scourging. What was called 'militaris custodia', by virtue of which a Roman citizen awaiting trial could be chained by his right hand to the left hand of his guard, was provided for by Roman law. The fact that Paul was consigned to a centurion afterwards indicates that he was put into this type of military custody.

The effect of Paul's words upon the centurion was immediate and pronounced. As a great Roman writer has said: 'How often has this exclamation, *I am a Roman citizen (Civis Romanus Sum)*, brought aid and safety among barbarians in the remotest parts of the earth' (*Civ. Verr.* v. 57).

The centurion at once hastens to the chief captain's quarters, saying: 'Take heed what thou doest; for this man is a Roman'. The captain himself then comes back to this astonishing Jewish prisoner - whom he had once suspected of being an Egyptian fanatic (Acts 21:38), and who spoke 'Greek' and 'Hebrew' with equal facility (Acts 21:37, 40) - and asks: 'Tell me, art thou a Roman?' (Acts 22:27). Lysias himself had the prænomen 'Claudius' (Acts 23:26), indicating that he had obtained his freedom during the reign of Claudius, and, looking at the apostle, and seeing nothing to indicate either wealth or position, he says: '*I know how much it cost me to get this citizenship*'. Farrar's note here is as follows: 'Verse 28, *Ego oida poso*, D. Though unsupported by evidence, the colloquialism sounds very genuine'. Alford's note reads: 'For *pollo*, *oida poso* D (remarkable and possibly original, *pollo* being a gloss; but if so, the genuine reading has been now overborne by the intruder')'.

Dio Cassius tells us that the *civitas* of Rome was, in the early part of the reign of Claudius, sold at a high rate, and it is to this that Lysias evidently refers. The apostle's quiet rejoinder is given in verse 28: 'But I was free born'. We have no information concerning the apostle's parents apart from the scanty references that occur in his own writings. The mere fact of being a citizen of Tarsus would not have conferred this privilege, for while Tarsus was an *urbs libera*, or 'free city', it was not a *colonia*, or 'colony'. Besides, he had already revealed to the captain that he was a Tarsian (Acts 21:39). For some reason unknown to us, Paul's father or one of his more remote ancestors must have obtained the right of Roman citizenship.

The apostle's claim is too great to be resisted, and he is immediately released. The soldiers who were to have tortured him, withdraw, and we read that 'the chief captain also was afraid ... because he had bound him'.

Still anxious to obtain information upon which he can frame an accusation, Lysias next arranges for the apostle to appear before the Sanhedrin: 'On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them' (Acts 22:30). Before considering the apostle's defence before this council, let us first see how the section (Acts 22 and 23) is constructed.

## Acts 22 and 23

### Paul before the Jews

- A<sub>1</sub> 22:1,2. OPENING WORDS. HE SPAKE IN HEBREW. Men,  
brethren and fathers.
- B<sub>1</sub> 22:2-30. DEFENCE AND CONSEQUENCES. **a** Silence.  
**b** Conciliatory address.  
**c** Tumult.  
**d** Paul taken to castle.  
**e** Paul a Roman.  
**f** Jewish council.
- A<sub>2</sub> 23:1. OPENING WORDS. Men and brethren.
- B<sub>2</sub> 23:2-24. DEFENCE AND CONSEQUENCES. **a** Smite on mouth.  
**b** Dividing address.  
**c** Dissension.  
**d** Paul taken to castle.  
**e** Paul and Rome.  
**f** Jewish conspiracy.
- A<sub>3</sub> 23:25-30. OPENING WORDS. He wrote a letter. The most excellent governor Felix.
- B<sub>3</sub> 23:31-35. DEFENCE RESERVED.

Here we see the oneness of the apostle's two-fold defence. The first section is given in an atmosphere of tense feeling, the second before the highest Jewish authority. Paul had already claimed Roman citizenship; he now claims equality with his Jewish hearers. On the stairs, before the excited mob, he had cried, 'Men, brethren and fathers'. Now, before the Sanhedrin, 'earnestly beholding the council' with a steady glance that betrayed neither servility nor fear, he begins, 'Men and brethren'. The Sanhedrin was a judicial body of seventy-two, made up of twenty-four chief priests, twenty-four elders, and twenty-four scribes and doctors. The council originally met in an apartment of the inner Temple, but as it was impossible for a Gentile to enter the sacred enclosure, and as the Romans had granted the Sanhedrin the power of inflicting the death penalty in connection with any Gentile passing into this sacred enclosure and so were obliged to have a representative there, it now met in a room just outside the Temple precincts.

Ananias, the high priest, was one of the worst of his kind. The Talmud speaks of him as rapacious, gluttonous and greedy; defrauding the lower priests of their tithes, while sending his minions with bludgeons to collect his own tithes from the threshing floors.

'Few pitied him when he was dragged out of his hiding place in a sewer to perish miserably by the daggers of the Sicarii, whom, in the days of his prosperity, he had not scrupled to sanction and employ' (Farrar, quoting Gratz and Josephus).

Several things, no doubt, combined to annoy this unprincipled man - Paul's omission of the title 'fathers', claiming his right as a Sanhedrist and a Rabbi, his unflinching look, and his emphasis upon a 'good conscience before God'. The High Priest's command that the apostle should be smitten on the mouth was a violation of both decency and privilege, and would have been peculiarly offensive to a Jew. 'He that strikes the cheek of an Israelite strikes, as it were, the cheek of the Shekinah, for it is said, He that strikes a man strikes the Holy One' (*Sanhedr*).

Once again the apostle stands where his Lord had stood before him (Matt. 26:62,63), but it cannot be said of Paul that, 'as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth'. It is very difficult for anyone today to judge whether Paul was right or wrong when he replied, 'God shall smite thee, thou whited wall'. His words may have been prophetic, for Ananias died, as we have seen, an ignominious death at the hands of assassins. However, whether this be so or not, the apostle immediately apologizes, saying, 'I wist not, brethren, that he was the High



Priest', and supplements his acknowledgment by quoting Scripture against himself: 'For it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people' (Acts 23:5). Did Paul's words 'I wist not' mean that, through defective vision, he had not recognised the High Priest? Or did they mean that, knowing the character of Ananias, and that he had attained his office through bribery, and had ruled as a tyrant, he refused to recognise such a man as a true holder of the office. Calvin and others have suggested that Paul spoke ironically, but none of these explanations seems to square with the apostle's retraction, and it would seem that Paul frankly acknowledged that he had committed an offence, even though the pressure under which it had been committed had been almost unbearable. Those who criticise the apostle's swift resentment should remember and follow his equally swift acknowledgment.

Just as earlier Paul had seen that suffering at the hands of the Roman captain would accomplish no good end, so now he perceives that further conciliation in his attitude towards the Sanhedrin would be fruitless. He therefore throws into their midst the apple of discord, and so divides his judges into the two opposing factions of Pharisees and Sadducees. He eventually has to be saved from being 'pulled in pieces' by the advent of the Roman guard. The apostle was evidently not altogether happy about this expedient as we see from his acknowledgment before Felix:

'Let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, *while I stood before the council, except it be for this one voice*, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day' (Acts 24:20,21).

When we consider the extreme danger in which the apostle often stood, and the violence, confusion, and uncertainty in which he lived, the wonder is, not that he occasionally manifested that he was indeed a man of like passions with ourselves, but that he endured so nobly, and followed the Lord so closely. We love the earthen vessel, but, like Paul himself, we look for perfection in One only, our Saviour and Lord.

If Paul's words spoken before Felix seem to point in one direction, the Lord's words, as recorded in Acts 23:11, seem to point in the other: 'Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome'. We therefore leave the question of how far Paul was right or wrong in his attitude to the council, and would seek rather to 'consider our own selves, lest we also be tempted'.

In verse 16, against the general background of tension and strife, a gentler note is introduced. 'Paul's sister's son' discovers a conspiracy against the apostle, and comes forward to warn the chief captain - a homely touch that the lonely captive would fully appreciate. This further plot apparently helped Lycias to make up his mind, and he summons two centurions, commanding them to make ready a bodyguard of horse soldiers, to conduct Paul safely to Felix. The letter that accompanied the prisoner was ingeniously worded so that any charges that might be preferred against the writer for his illegal handling of a Roman citizen would be obviated. These, and other points, we shall consider in subsequent pages.

### **Paul before Felix and Festus (Acts 24 and 25)**

According to Roman law, it was necessary that a prisoner who had been sent with an *elogium* should, wherever possible, be tried within three days. In this case, however, Felix had to communicate with Jerusalem, and command the presence of the High Priest and elders - which would occupy at least two days - and it is therefore not surprising that the case against Paul was not heard until 'after five days', (Acts 24:1). The priests and elders, not being eloquent in Latin, procured the services of an orator named Tertullus. Conybeare and Howson cite at length the Latin passage in Valerius Maximus from which it is inferred that all pleadings, even in Greek provinces, were conducted before Roman magistrates in Latin. Lewin, however, draws attention to the introduction of Greek, in spite of this law, even at Rome itself.

Roman law permitted the accuser and the accused to plead in person, and we find Paul using this right. Frequently, however, *advocati* (Gk. *rhetoires*, as in Acts 24:1) were employed - generally young lawyers who served in this way in the provinces, in order to obtain experience.

In Acts 24 Tertullus follows the usual custom, and opens his address with a *captatio benevolentiae*:

‘Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, we accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness’ (Acts 24:2,3).

The use of the word ‘providence’ here is an indication of the Latin persuasion of the speaker. A coin of Commodus is known, bearing the inscription *Provid. Aug.*, and *Providentia Caesaris* is a common phrase on coins of the emperors. With regard to the implications of verses 2 and 3, it is certainly true that Felix had suppressed bandits in the country, and had only recently rid the land of a false Messiah, an Egyptian. His real character, however, cannot be gathered from these opening compliments. Tacitus wrote of him:

‘In the practice of all kinds of lust and cruelty he exercised the power of a king with the temper of a slave’ (Hist. v. 9).

‘We may trace the *libidinem* in his persuading Drusilla to leave her husband and to live with him; the *saevitiam*, in his procuring the assassination of the high priest Jonathan, who had given him good but distasteful advice; the *servile ingenium* in that "he trembled" under castigation, but was not corrected’ (W. G. Humphry).

After the opening panegyric, Tertullus passes on to the accusation. This he divides up under three heads:

- (1) The accused was a public pest, a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the Empire.
- (2) He was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.
- (3) He had attempted to profane the Temple.

This threefold accusation implied that Paul had offended against both Roman and Jewish law. The first offence amounted to *majestas*, or treason against the Emperor, while the third in itself was punishable by death.

The word for ‘a pestilent fellow’ is *loimos*, ‘a plague’. What a name to give this bearer of life and light to a stricken and dying world! The word for ‘sedition’ is *stasis*, which occurs in connection with the charge laid against Barabbas (Mark 15:7), and is also used for the ‘uproar’ in Ephesus (Acts 19:40). Tertullus was careful not to refer to Paul as a leader of the ‘Christians’, for the title ‘Christ’, being the Greek equivalent of ‘the Messiah’, might have involved the Jews themselves.

Considerable differences of opinion exist among textual critics as to whether the second half of verse 7 and the first half of verse 8 should be included in the text or not. In the A.V. the passage reads:

‘Whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him’ (Acts 24:6-8).

If we omit the suspected passage, then the words ‘of whom’ refer to Paul. If, on the other hand, the A. V. be retained, they would refer to Lysias. Felix certainly adjourned the case, saying: ‘When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter’ (verse 22), but whether or not this was an act of evasion it is impossible to say. Certainly Lysias never came, and Felix never heard the conclusion of the trial. In any case no doctrinal point is affected by the uncertainty in verses 7 and 8, and we therefore propose to follow the A.V.

Before, however, we consider Paul’s defence before Felix, we must get a general view of the whole of the section.

#### **Paul before Felix and Festus (Acts 24:1 to 25:22)**

A<sub>1</sub> 24:1. TIME.- After five days.

B<sub>1</sub> 24:1-9. CHARGE.- Tertullus informed against Paul

(*emphanizo*).

C<sub>1</sub> 24:10-21. DEFENCE.- I cheerfully answer for myself.

D<sub>1</sub> 24:22-27. JUDGMENT.-

a Judgment to come.

*Felix*.

b Willing to show the Jews a pleasure.

A<sub>2</sub> 25:1. TIME.- After three days.

B<sub>2</sub> 25:2-7. CHARGE.- The High Priest informed against Paul (*emphamzo*).

C<sub>2</sub> 25:8. DEFENCE.- He answered for himself.

D<sub>2</sub> 25:9-12. JUDGMENT.- **b** Willing to do the  
*Festus.* Jews a pleasure.  
**a** I stand at Caesar's  
judgment seat.

A<sub>3</sub> 25:13. TIME.- After certain days.

B<sub>3</sub> 25:14,15. CHARGE.- The chief priests informed against Paul (*emphanizo*).

C<sub>3</sub> 25:16. DEFENCE.- Licence to answer for himself.

D<sub>3</sub> 25:17-22. JUDGMENT.-  
*Festus.* **a** I sat on the judgment  
seat.  
**b** Would Paul go to  
Jerusalem?

It will be seen that Paul's trial before the two Roman Governors falls into three sections, marked by the recurrence of 'Time', 'Charge', 'Defence' and 'Judgment'. With regard to the fourth heading, it will be observed that in the first section it is not the judgment-seat of either the Roman Emperor or the Roman Governor that is in view, but rather the 'judgment to come', at the prospect of which even Felix trembled. The judgment of God and the judgment of man are in striking contrast. Felix hoped for money from Paul, and to cover his own evil tracks upon his recall to Rome, he left him a prisoner, wishing 'to show the Jews a pleasure'. Festus also, for higher and purer motives, was willing to make concessions to the Jews, and have Paul tried at Jerusalem; a point that is repeated in the third account, as the structure shows (Acts 25:17-22).

We come now to the trial before Felix, and Paul's defence. There is no flattering opening in this case, but the apostle does make an initial statement that would probably help to secure a sympathetic hearing: 'Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself' (Acts 24:10). From Josephus we learn that Felix had held this office for a period of six years, and was not recalled until A.D. 60. He had also, according to Tacitus, held rule jointly with Cumanus prior to A.D. 52. Whatever his character, Felix was bound to have been acquainted with the land and the people, and this is all that Paul claims.

The first point made by the apostle is given in verse 11: 'Because it is in thy power to ascertain that only twelve days have passed since I went up to Jerusalem to worship'. The twelve days are made up as follows:

1st Day.- Arrival at Jerusalem (21:15-17).

2nd Day.- Interview with James, etc. (21:18).

3rd Day.- Purification in the Temple (21:26).

7th Day.- The seven days nearly completed.

Paul arrested (21:30).

8th Day.- Before the Sanhedrin (22:30).

9th Day.- Conspiracy Revealed (23:12).

10th Day.- Arrival at Caesarea (23:33).

11th and 12th Days.- In custody (23:35).

13th Day.- Trial before Felix (24:1).

Felix knew the date of Pentecost, and could confirm that Paul had actually arrived for this feast. A complete account of all his movements for the whole time under review was obtainable. The further points in his defence were:

(1) POSITIVE.- He came to *worship* in the Temple.

- (2) NEGATIVE.- No evidence was produced by Tertullus to show that he had been found disputing with any man, or raising up the people, either in the synagogue or in the city.

He had been charged with being the ringleader of a sect called the Nazarenes. This he willingly admitted, but it was no crime against Roman law to believe 'all things which are written in the law and the prophets'. His accusers might call it 'heresy', but Paul claimed that it was the worship of the God of his fathers.

The phrase 'the God of my fathers' was the usual term to denote the tutelary<sup>\*</sup> god of a particular nation, and as such a legal object of worship under Roman law. The terms 'heresy' and 'sect' are not used in an ecclesiastical sense in Paul's defence. His very accusers belonged to two different sects - the Pharisees and the Sadducees - and Paul is simply claiming for this new sect of the Nazarenes the toleration normally allowed by Roman law and enjoyed by his accusers.

In verse 15 the apostle emphasizes the hope of resurrection which he held in common with the sect of the Pharisees, and in the following verse declares that he exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and man. When the proper occasion presented itself, Paul was very ready to preach to Felix (*see* Acts 24:25), but this opportunity had not yet arrived. He concludes his defence by asking why the Jews from Asia, who were supposed to have seen him polluting the Temple, were not present at the trial to bear their witness against him. The only evil doing, the apostle claims, that the council could bring against him was the split that his declaration concerning the resurrection had caused in their ranks.

The ring of truth that was so evident in the apostle's defence, his ready admission of 'heresy', the harmony of his statements with the letter written by Lysias, the failure to produce witnesses, and the manifest religious animosity of his accusers, convinced Felix that Paul was innocent. He had a 'more accurate knowledge of that way' than his hearers had credited, and he defers the trial, saying: 'When Lysias comes down I will decide finally between you (*diagnosomai*)'. Paul is now given into the charge of a centurion, who is instructed to afford as much relaxation and liberty as the case allowed, permitting his friends to visit him and minister to his needs. There was already a company of believers at Caesarea, including Philip the Evangelist. Josephus, speaking of the custody of Agrippa when he was a prisoner, uses the word *aneseos*, 'remission' or 'relaxation', in connection with the centurion who was friendly to him upon receiving news of the death of the Emperor Tiberius.

There are some who would criticise the apostle for not preaching the gospel to these Roman officials, just as they would criticise his method of speaking to the philosophers at Athens. There are several facts, however, that should be carefully weighed before we attempt to criticise:

- (1) The council at Athens had in earlier days the power of life and death, and even if this power was later reduced, Paul's liberty was in danger.
- (2) The Sanhedrin still retained the power of life and death.
- (3) The administration of provincial Roman justice was very much influenced by the character of the judges, and the pressure that could be brought to bear upon them by influential natives.
- (4) It is the duty of a man accused before the law to indicate his innocence before he asserts his rights, and this was the line of conduct that Paul pursued.
- (5) It is quite false to charge the apostle with either reticence or cowardice. An examination of his apologies in Acts 17, 23, 24, and 25 will show how Christ and His gospel were either actually introduced, or would have been introduced but for the cutting short of his defence by his opponents.

Moreover, chapter 24 shows how faithfully the apostle seized the opportunity which Felix presented, of preaching the gospel even while a prisoner:

'And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ' (Acts 24:24).

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\* Tutelary = serving as guardian, giving protection.

The word *paraginomai* ('came') may indicate that Felix had been away and had now returned. His wife, Drusilla, was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I, whose end is described in Acts 12:19-23, and the sister of Herod Agrippa II, mentioned in Acts 25 and 26. Drusilla was originally married to Azizus, the king of Emesa, but this marriage was soon dissolved, as recorded by Josephus:

'While Felix was procurator of Judæa, he saw this Drusilla, and fell in love with her; for she did indeed exceed all other women in beauty; and he sent to her a person whose name was Simon, one of his friends; a Jew he was, and by birth a Cypriot, and one who pretended to be a magician; and endeavoured to persuade her to forsake her present husband, and marry him; and promised, that if she would not refuse him, he would make her a happy woman. Accordingly she acted ill, and because she was desirous to avoid her sister Bernice's envy, for she was very ill-treated by her on account of her beauty, was prevailed upon to transgress the laws of her forefathers, and to marry Felix; and when he had had a son by her, he named him Agrippa. But after what manner that young man, with his wife, perished at the conflagration of the mountain Vesuvius, in the days of Titus Cæsar, shall be related hereafter' (*Ant. of Jews*, xx. 7, 2).

Wordsworth comments here:

'St. Paul was tried on a charge of breaking the Law at the instance of the Jews, before a ruler who had set those laws at defiance, and who yet is flattered by them' (3-9).

From Drusilla, Felix had probably heard of the Messianic hope of Israel, and of the new 'heresy' that claimed that Jesus was the Christ. And so we read that Felix 'sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ'. The expression here: *tes eis Christon pisteos* ('The unto Christ faith') is a striking one. According to the revised texts the name 'Jesus' should also be added.

We have no means of knowing the length of time occupied by the apostle, or the line of approach he adopted. He may have appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures for the benefit of Drusilla, or he may have approached his subject along the lines of Acts 17. The veil, however, is lifted for a moment in verse 25, and we read that 'as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled' (Acts 24:25).

The word *dialogismos* ('reasoning') is used in an evil sense in the New Testament and is forbidden by the apostle himself in several places (Rom. 1:21; 14:1; 1 Cor. 3:20; Phil. 2:14; 1 Tim. 2:8). We must be careful, however, not to jump to false conclusions. 'Reasonings', *dialogismoi* (plural), are repudiated by the apostle in five passages in his epistles, but 'reasoning' (*dialegomai*) is actually used of him ten times in the Acts and is twice translated 'preaching' (Acts 20:7,9). The last occurrence of *dialegomai* in the Acts is this reference in chapter 24, where Paul 'reasons of righteousness, continence, and judgment to come'.

The man who listened to this 'preaching' of the 'faith unto Christ Jesus' was a Roman libertine, and the woman a profligate Jewish princess. Farrar says of Felix:

'He had been a slave, in the vilest of all positions, and the vilest of all epochs, in the vilest of all cities ... Ample and indisputable testimony, Jewish and pagan, sacred and secular, reveals to us what he had been'.

It was to this man that the apostle spoke of a judgment-seat, where there is no respect of persons, and where the Judge Himself knows the thoughts and intents of the heart. In verse 25 we read that 'Felix trembled', but the 'convenient season' never materialised, and the evil past held him in its grip. He 'communed' with the apostle on several occasions after this, but, finally, upon his recall to Rome, he violated the law in the endeavour to placate the Jews, and left Paul bound.

### **Paul before Festus and Agrippa (Acts 25 and 26)**

We must now take up the narrative at the beginning of chapter 25.

Festus, who appears in the last verse of chapter 24, and the first verse of chapter 25, provides us with one of the few certain dates in the chronology of the Acts. As Festus died in A.D. 61, and Felix was recalled in A.D. 60, there can be no doubt as to the dating of this new chapter.

The narrative of Acts 25 speaks of Festus in a more favourable light than was the case with Felix. Festus certainly attempted to administer 'even-handed' justice, and Josephus says of him: 'Festus succeeded Felix as procurator, and made it his business to correct those that made disturbances in the country' (*Wars of Jews* ii 14,1).

Three days after his arrival at Caesarea, Festus went up to Jerusalem and one of his first interviews would undoubtedly have been with the High Priest. By this time Ananias had been superseded by Ismael, the son of Fabi (see *Josephus Ant.* xx. 8, 8), but, although there had been a change in the person of the High Priest, it is evident that there had been no change in the attitude of the Jews themselves towards the prisoner at Caesarea. The High Priest desires of Festus a 'favour', intending that, if the request were granted, Paul should be waylaid and killed before he could reach Jerusalem. However, Festus maintains the Roman standard of justice and replies:

'It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him' (Acts 25:16).

As Lewin comments: 'The answer of Festus was such as became an imperial Prefect, and worthy of being written in letters of gold'.

Festus did, however, attempt one concession, and asked Paul whether he would be willing to go up to Jerusalem to be tried by the Sanhedrin, under his protection (Acts 25:9). However, the apostle knew that he was to witness at Rome, and, cutting short any further bargaining with justice, he pronounces the irrevocable words '*Caesarem appello*'.

'I stand before Caesar's tribunal, and there ought my trial to be. To the Jews I have done no wrong as thou knowest full well. If I am guilty, and have done anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if the things whereof these men accuse me are nought, no man can give me up to them. I APPEAL UNTO CAESAR' (Acts 25:10,11 *Conybeare & Howson*).

It could not have been very pleasant for a newly-arrived governor to have his first public trial end in this way, but against such an appeal there was no argument. Accordingly, Festus holds a brief consultation with his Assessors and, finding that Paul's appeal is valid, replies: 'Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? Unto Caesar shalt thou go'. The wording here seems to convey the unspoken thought - 'And you little realize what this appeal will mean'.

While the case was taken, by the apostle's appeal, out of the hands of Festus, he was still under obligation to remit to the supreme tribunal the *apostoli*, or report upon its previous progress. He was, moreover, in some perplexity, for the testimony of the Jews had been irregular, a mere accumulation of many and grievous complaints, which they could not prove. As he says in verse 27: 'It seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him' (Acts 25:27). In these circumstances, the advent of King Agrippa seemed providential. On the death of his uncle, Agrippa had been made king of Chalcis. Claudius had also given him the tetrarchy of Batanaea, and to this Nero had added part of Galilee and Peraea. Bernice was Agrippa's sister, and had been the wife of his uncle, the king of Chalcis. Her relationship with her brother was the subject of suspicion (Juv. vi. 156), and she subsequently became the wife of Polemon, King of Cilicia, and the mistress of Titus. Drusilla, as we have already noted, was her younger sister.

The Herodians owed much to Roman patronage, and King Agrippa lost no time in paying a visit to the new Roman Governor. Seizing the opportunity that this visit presented, Festus remarks to his guest:

'There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him' (Acts 25:14,15).

Festus then recapitulates the facts of the case, and Agrippa intervenes with the words: 'I would also hear the man myself'. We must remember that Paul was now outside the jurisdiction of Festus, and that Agrippa also had no authority in the matter. It was simply an excellent opportunity for getting the opinion of one who was intimately

acquainted with the points at issue, so that Festus might be able to frame some reasonable account of the charges laid against the prisoner.

The reader may appreciate, at this point, a reminder of the general disposition of the subject-matter in this section of the book.

A<sub>1</sub> 22 and 23. To Jews at Jerusalem.

A<sub>2</sub> 24 to 25:22. To Felix and Festus.

A<sub>3</sub> 25:23 to 28:15. To Agrippa.

A<sub>4</sub> 28:16-22. To Jews at Rome.

This, of course, is only the barest skeleton. The full structure is set out on page 312.

There were two periods in this part of the apostle's career, during which he was a prisoner for two years. The first was at Caesarea, where he was held a prisoner, with opportunity to see his friends, for two years (Acts 24:27). After this he was again held in custody by Festus while he formulated a charge that could be sent with him, and then was sent on a journey to Rome, where once again he was a prisoner for another period of two years, receiving all that cared to visit him.

Paul's defence before Agrippa is the fullest of which we have any record. He was no longer on trial, and he availed himself of this splendid opportunity to give a complete testimony.

### Paul before Agrippa (Acts 26)

A 1-3. Agrippa acknowledged as an expert.

B 4-7. Paul's manner of life from his youth. A Pharisee.

C 8. Personal appeal to Agrippa. 'Incredible'. (*Apistos*).

D 9-15. Contrary to Jesus of Nazareth. Jerusalem. Damascus.

E 16-18.

Paul's  
Commission.  
The two  
commissions.

**a** Stand (*Histemi*).

**b** Witness.

**c** Both. I have ... I will.

**d** People and Gentiles.

**e** Forgiveness. Inheritance.

D 19-21. Obedience to heavenly vision. Damascus. Jerusalem.

E 22,23.

Paul's  
commission.  
The first  
commission  
re-stated.

**a** Continue (*Histemi*).

**b** Witnessing.

**c** *None other things.*

**e** Suffer. Rise.

**d** People and Gentiles.

C 24-28. Personal appeal of Festus, and of Paul to Agrippa (*Pisteuo*).

B 29. Reference to present manner of life. Except bonds.

A 31,32. Agrippa gives his opinion.

We will not go over the ground already covered by the apostle in his former defences, but deal rather with those items that he brings into prominence in this particular speech before Agrippa.

Paul could, of course, have refused to speak before Agrippa, or, on the other hand, he might have abused the opportunity by seeking to flatter him. In fact he did neither; his one object was to serve the Lord. The apostle does not begin with any personal compliments with respect to Agrippa's character, but he does acknowledge that he was 'an expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews' - a statement that was an undoubted fact.

Of Agrippa's father, Josephus writes:

'He also came to Jerusalem and offered all the sacrifices that belonged to him, and omitted nothing which the law required; on which account he ordered that many of the Nazarites should have their heads shorn. And for the golden chain which had been given him by Caius, of equal weight with that iron chain wherewith his royal hands had been bound, he hung it up within the limits of the temple, over the treasury, that it might be a memorial' (*Ant. xix. 6,1*).

The fact that Paul had been apprehended in the Temple, while associating himself with those who had taken the Nazarite vow, and the fact that he now wore the Roman chain, would no doubt make some appeal to Herod's son.

The apostle begins by going over the ground already covered by Acts 9 and 22 - his early life, his persecuting zeal and the vision on the road to Damascus. At verse 16, however, he breaks new ground. Truth hitherto unrecorded is now revealed, and as this new revelation is of vital importance to all who rejoice in the dispensation of the Mystery, verses 16-18 must be given our closest attention. Let us note first that it is here for the first time that we are told what the Lord Himself said to the apostle on the road to Damascus. It may, perhaps, be objected that this statement is not true, and that in Acts 9 we can read for ourselves what the Lord said. To make sure about this point, let us turn to Acts 9:

Verses 1 and 2 record the journey to Damascus.

Verses 3 and 4 record the vision and the voice.

Verse 5 reveals that it is the Lord Who speaks.

Verse 6 tells Paul to go into the city and wait for instructions.

Verses 15 and 16 record what the Lord said *to Ananias about Paul*, but that is all.

It is clear, therefore, that all the Lord actually said to Paul is not recorded in Acts 9, and it will be found that this is also true of Acts 22. Chapter 22 records *the words of Ananias* (verses 13-15), and we also learn that Paul was to be a witness of all that he had seen and heard, but it is to Acts 26 that we must turn to learn *for the first time* what the Lord actually said to Paul at his conversion and commission.

Two of the new features contained in this record are found in the words 'Both', 'I will appear unto thee', and 'Now I send thee' in verses 16 and 17, and in the summary of doctrine contained in verse 18:

'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and 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' (Acts 26:18).

The close association between these words and the doctrine of the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians will be obvious.

In contrast with this new commission, recorded here for the first time, is the old commission to which the apostle returns in verses 20-23. In these verses he preaches 'repentance', and proclaims 'none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come', - which obviously could not refer to the mystery hid in God.

We have already seen from Acts 20:24 that Paul had received some commission from the Lord that was intimately associated with 'bonds', and now, having appealed to Cæsar, the apostle is at liberty to reveal the fact that from the beginning he had known that his commission was two-fold:

- (1) Witnessing to Israel and the Gentiles the things which he had, seen and heard, while
- (2) Awaiting a future appearing of the Lord, when the terms of the new ministry associated with prison would be made known to him.

At last the fresh appearing had taken place, and the terms of the new commission given. Verse 18 anticipates, in a condensed form, the doctrine that is more fully expressed in Ephesians and Colossians (*see Eph. 1:7,13,14,18, and Col. 1:12,13*).



The word 'both' necessitates a two-fold witness. Just as a believing and intelligent reading of John 16:12-14 compels us to seek for a subsequent revelation after the Spirit of Truth had come, so equally a believing and intelligent reading of Acts 26:16-18 compels us to seek for that subsequent revelation of truth that was given after Paul had become the prisoner of the Lord for the Gentiles. This revelation is found in those epistles that bear the stamp of prison, namely: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and 2 Timothy. These epistles contain the revelation of the Mystery, and give dispensational grounds for the Gentiles' right to the blessings summarized in Acts 26:18.

In verse 24, Paul's defence is interrupted by Festus crying with a loud voice: 'Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad'. It is rather strange that, for entirely different reasons, Paul is twice interrupted upon reaching the word 'Gentiles'. The fanatical Jews hear him up to this point, and then cry 'Away with him'. Festus also hears him up to the same point, and concludes that a Jew who imagines that he can possibly have a mission and a message to the Gentiles must be mad.

It is sad to think that there are many Christians who, by their opposition to the apostle's claims and their attitude towards those who would make these claims known, take practically the same position as that taken by Festus when he said of the apostle, 'Much learning doth make thee mad'. Paul, however, understands the attitude of Festus, and answers him courteously. He had listened

with growing wonder to a tale of visions, revelations, persecutions, prophecies, the assertion that sins could be forgiven, and that the darkness not only of the Jew but also of the Gentile could be dispersed. It was no wonder that his Roman upbringing would not allow him to accept such statements at all readily.

Having replied to Festus, the apostle turns again to Agrippa. King Agrippa had a knowledge of Moses and the prophets, and he also knew the facts of the past few years. As Paul says in verse 26, 'This thing was not done in a corner'. And so, in verse 27, the apostle asks: 'King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest'. How are we to understand Agrippa's reply? On this point, Farrar writes:

'Not old in years, but accustomed from his boyhood to an atmosphere of cynicism and unbelief, he could only smile with the good-natured contempt of a man of the world at the enthusiastic earnestness which could even for a moment fancy that *he* would be converted to the heresy of the Nazarenes with their crucified Messiah, ... "You are trying to persuade me off-hand to be a Christian" he said with a half-suppressed smile' - (Farrar).

Lewin, on the other hand, writes:

'Agrippa was deeply moved, and the confession fell unbidden from his lips "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian"'.

Another interpretation is this:

'*En oligo*, as the expression is used by the apostle himself in another place (Eph 3:3) may mean, "in short" ... "In short, you are persuading me, the most zealous of Moses' followers, to be a Christian", But this interpretation is not consistent with Paul's reply, "I would to God that both *almost (en oligo)* and *altogether (en pollo)* ..." - (Lewin).

Conybeare and Howson give the following note:

'*En oligo* cannot mean "almost", which would be *par oligon*. It might mean either "in a few words" (Eph 3:3), or "in a small measure" or "in a small time" ... We might render the passage thus: "Thou thinkest to make me a Christian with a little persuasion". We should observe that *peitheis*, "persuade" is in the present tense, and that the title "Christian" was one of contempt' - see 1 Pet. 4:16.

The note in *The Companion Bible* is as follows: 'To put it briefly, thou art persuading me to become a Christian'.

We feel reluctant to part with the thought enshrined in the words 'almost persuaded', but truth is greater than sentiment. Pilate before the Saviour asked 'What is truth?' but there is no reason to believe that he was really seeking the light. Felix, too, enquired of Paul concerning faith in Christ, and actually trembled as he heard, but there is no evidence that there was the slightest movement towards repentance. And so it seems, alas, to have been with Agrippa.

In spite of this, however, the apostle replies with his whole soul:

‘I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds’ (Acts 26:29).

Agrippa’s verdict was that nothing worthy of death or of bonds could be laid to Paul’s charge, and that if he had not appealed to Cæsar, he might have been given his freedom. How Festus framed his letter we do not know, but it is certain that there could have been no specific charge against the apostle according to Roman law.

### From Cæsarea to Melita (Acts 27)

The record of the voyage, shipwreck and arrival at Rome which occupies so much space in the closing section of the Acts is perhaps the most wonderful record of travel that has been preserved from ancient times. Since 1856, no writer on the subject can ignore the volume entitled: *On the Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul, with Dissertations* by James Smith. All writers of note, such as Conybeare and Howson, Lewin, Alford, and Farrar, who have had the twenty-seventh chapter of the Acts before them, have given unstinted praise to this writer. In addition, Conybeare and Howson had the help of Admiral Sir Charles Penrose, whose notes on the narrative make Luke’s record, owing to the exactness of his nautical references and the breadth of his knowledge, little short of a miracle were the record but the figment of his imagination.

Independent research is commendable, and originality, where it is unaffected, is charming, but any attempt on our part to write on Acts 27 without reference to these technical treatises would be folly. Moreover, while it is impracticable to smother our pages with quotation marks, it would be a waste of good material to attempt avoidance of the use of the language of those who have made the subject their own. Like all writers since 1856 we are indebted to James Smith, and with this introduction and recognition let us open the book at Acts 27 and learn its lessons.

Paul was not the only prisoner who was to be delivered to Rome, and Julius, a centurion of the Augustin cohort, whose duty it was to see his charges safely to Rome in the shortest time, finding a trading vessel of Adramyttium about to sail by the coast of Asia, embarked with his men and prisoners and the eventful voyage commenced. Few Biblical maps show Adramyttium, but the reader would do well to acquaint himself with this as with every detail of this momentous voyage. This sea-port is on the coast of Mysia, opposite Mitylene, not far from Pergamos and Troas. It will be seen that such a port would well serve the centurion’s purpose. Paul was courteously treated and, at the end of the first day’s sail, permitted to land at Sidon ‘to go unto his friends to refresh himself’. The wind that had enabled them to cover this 67 miles, now changed, and they ‘sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary’. To a landsman, ‘sailing *under* Cyprus’ suggests the south side of the island. The truer translation is ‘under the lee’, and, in the case in point, this was the north side, for the record continues: ‘And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia’. One glance at the map will confirm this rendering and fix the route.

Myra, is practically due north of Alexandria in Egypt, and with the prevailing wind, it was not strange that a grain ship from Alexandria should be found so far off the straight course to Rome. Seizing the opportunity thus presented, the centurion transferred his living freight, and the ship started on its journey to Rome.

‘And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone’ (Acts 27:7).

Let us be sure that we know the geography of this verse. Cnidus is the last point of land that would afford protection from the prevailing wind, and will be found on the extreme corner of Asia Minor, before the coast turns north. Seeing that the ship could neither enter Cnidus, nor hold on its way along the north shore of Crete, the course was changed, so that she passed round Salome, to the lee of the island. ‘Hardly passing it’ shows that the winds were still contrary, and the navigator was therefore forced to begin to think of finding a harbour commodious enough to winter in. Fair Havens was reached, and for some time the ship waited for a change in the weather.

It was now nearly the end of September and the close of the sailing season. After 'the fast', which was the Day of Atonement, 'sailing was dangerous'. The Greeks dated the opening of the sailing weather as 'after *Dionysia*'. We must not misjudge these ancient navigators. They had neither chart nor compass, but steered by the stars, consequently in that part of the year, when for lengthy periods 'neither sun nor stars might appear', the seamen naturally hesitated to try the open sea. Discussions evidently took place as to whether they should winter where they were, or take the next favourable chance of sailing along the coast another thirty-four miles, and wintering in Phenice (27:12). Prisoner though he was, the apostle was permitted a voice in these proceedings, and said:

'Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives' (27:10).

However, the centurion and the owner of the vessel were of the opposite opinion. Fair Havens had little to offer as a winter resort, whereas Phenice (the modern Lutro), but a few hours' sail away, was the only real harbour in Crete, safe in all weathers, and much used by Alexandrian corn-ships.

At this point we pause to draw attention to the phrase, 'if by any means they might attain to' (27:12). The language here is unambiguous, and the facts of the case prove that the element of doubt rightly adheres in these words. When, during the next year or more, the apostle, who had passed through this terrible experience, came to write the Epistle to the Philippians, he uses the same expression saying, 'if by any means I might attain unto the out-resurrection from among the dead' (Phil. 3:11). To remove from these words the same element of uncertainty that must be allowed them in Acts 27, has the appearance of handling the word of God deceitfully. If in Philippians 3:11 Paul meant only that resurrection which is the common hope of the church, uncertainty of attainment would have been foreign to the subject, but if he was speaking of a prize which will be awarded at 'that day' by the Lord in His capacity of 'the righteous Judge', then the element of uncertainty is rightly an integral part of the passage, for a prize to be *won*, and that could not be *lost*, is a contradiction in terms. If the prize of Philippians be kept distinct from the common calling, or the blessed hope of the church, truth will be seen both in Ephesians and Philippians, but if we confound Hope and Prize, a greater shipwreck than was Paul's experience awaits us.

But to resume.

'And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete' (27:13).

From Fair Havens to Cape Matala was but four or five miles, so that with a gentle southerly wind the cape would be weathered, and the thirty-five miles from that point easily covered. It is possible that fair weather sails were set, and we know from verse 16 that a boat was in tow, so with hearts lightened and a good prospect before them the ship once more set sail.

How often in life does not that 'south wind blow softly', over-riding the severer counsels of grace and truth. Alas! the gentle breathing of the south wind in the sails and cordage was but a siren song, for scarcely had they passed the cape than a typhoon burst upon them. The word *tuphonikos* describes the circular whirling of the clouds caused by the meeting of the S. and the E.N.E. winds. Both Pardy's *Sailing Directory* and Smith's *Voyage and Shipwreck*, say that this is exactly what might have been expected. The ancient name for this wind is 'The Euroclydon', and the modern name is 'The Levanter'. This awful wind 'seized' the ship in its grasp so that the helmsman could not 'look at the wind'. The suddenness of the storm allowed no time to furl the mainsail, a circumstance which left them no alternative but to scud before the gale.

The island of Clauda lies twenty miles S.W. of Cape Matala, and the fact that the wind drove the vessel towards that island, made the sailors fear lest it should drive them into Syrtis, the quicksands which are off the African coast at this point. Though temporarily protected by the shelter of the island of Clauda, they had 'much work to come by the boat', which, however, was eventually hauled aboard, when more serious operations were demanded.

'They used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven' (27:17).

Note the use of 'we' and 'they'. Luke lent a hand in hauling in the boat, but the operation called 'undergirding' was no work for a landsman to attempt.

The ships of the ancients possessed one large mast and one large sail, with the addition of a few topsails and a small auxiliary mast. It will readily be seen that with such a mast and sail bearing the full force of the wind, a tremendous strain would be thrown upon the ship. Virgil, who describes the loss of ships by various means, says, 'all with fastenings loosened'. Consequently, a ship 'thoroughly furnished' carried tackle called 'Undergirders', which consisted of strong ropes for passing around the hull of the ship to prevent the starting of its timbers. In more recent times this method was called 'Frapping', which Falconer's Marine Dictionary thus describes:

'To frap a ship is to pass four or five turns of a large cable-laid rope round the hull or frame of a ship'.

For the moment the immediate dangers were averted. The boat had been saved, and the ship undergirt. But a great danger still threatened the ship.

What precisely is meant by the words 'strake sail'? The literal translation is 'they lowered the gear', but this is indeterminate. To have scudded before the gale with bare poles would have driven the ship on to the quicksands: to have anchored was impossible, and the only other course open was that known as 'lying to'. This was accomplished by bringing the prow of the vessel round as near to the wind as possible; that is, just enough of the huge mainsail would be left to steady the ship, and, having made all the preparation that circumstances permitted, the ship was left to drift broadside on, at the mercy of wind and wave. All night long the gale continued, and it became necessary to 'lighten the ship', Conybeare and Howson draw attention to the change of tense in verses 18 and 19. 'They began to lighten the ship', or 'kept lightening', whereas on the third day both sailors and passengers united in throwing out all the spare gear into the sea. The ship had now been reduced to a leaky and dismantled hulk.

'And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away' (27:20).

Imagination falters as it tries to picture the physical and mental state of these 300 helpless souls. No fire could be lighted; no cooking done; no relief afforded from the soaking spray; no prospect existed but that of an awful death in a foundering vessel. In all this the apostle and his companions took their share. It is certain that Paul, who in other circumstances had said 'these hands have ministered unto my necessities', would have lent a willing hand in all the work necessitated by the dreadful storm. It has been said that one of the hardest things to do is to refrain from saying 'I told you so', and Paul, before venturing once again to advise his fellow men, had fellowship in prayer with God. In the result, however, Paul, in order to gain the confidence of his hearers, does allude to his advice which had been rejected. Nevertheless he was able to assure them that, although the ship would become a wreck, no life would be lost. The whole ship's company, therefore, owed their safety to the fact that this one Jewish prisoner, by the will of God, must reach Rome.

'Fear not, Paul' (said the angel of God), 'thou must stand before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all who sail with thee' (27:24 Author's translation).

Paul added that he believed God, and that they would be cast upon a certain island.

The rate at which a vessel, which is laid-to, drifts, varies according to the build of the ship and the intensity of the gale. In the circumstances of Acts 27, both James Smith and Admiral Penrose agree that 'a mile and a half in the hour, or thirty-six miles in twenty-four hours, may be taken as a fair average'. After further technicalities the same authorities conclude that the angle of drift would be thirteen points with the direction of the wind. If the wind therefore was E.N.E., the course of the drift would be W. by N., 'and such is nearly the bearing of the North Coast of Malta from the south side of Claudia'. There is no need to make a sinuous line to indicate the track of this doomed vessel; the course would not deviate far from a straight line. 'Adria' (27:27) was the name given to the part of the Mediterranean between Greece, Italy and Africa, and Josephus uses this same name 'Adria' when he was shipwrecked and landed at Puteoli.

At the close of the fourteenth night, the sailors deemed that they drew near to land. Taking soundings they found 'twenty fathoms', and after an interval 'fifteen fathoms' were reported.

'Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day' (27:29).

It is usual for a vessel to anchor from the prow, but there would have been a danger of the ship swinging round and being smashed on the rocks. It is said that 'Lord Nelson, reading this chapter just before the battle of Copenhagen, ordered our vessels to be anchored by the stern'. There was also the ulterior object in view, which was to run the ship ashore as soon as daylight enabled them to select a suitable spot. Modern Greek vessels may still be seen anchoring by the stern in the Golden Horn. There is a painting on the walls of Herculaneum which represents 'a ship so strictly contemporaneous with that of St. Paul, that there is nothing impossible in the supposition that the artist had taken his subject from the very ship, on loosing from the pier at Puteoli'.

Thirteen days had elapsed since the ship started to drift. According to the computation given a little earlier, the ship must, therefore, have covered about 468 miles. Now the distance between Clauda and Malta is less than 480 miles, and there is every reason therefore to believe that the island now known as Malta is the one intended in Acts 28:1, there called Melita.

An attempt of the shipmen to escape was frustrated by the prompt act of the soldiers in cutting the ropes holding the boat, Paul having said, 'Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved'. Exhorting all to take food, adding, 'not a hair shall fall from the head of any of you', Paul thanked God in the presence of them all; and when he had 'broken bread' he began to eat. It seems incredible that any writer, possessed of the ability to write a commentary on the whole of the Scriptures, should be so possessed of the value of the 'sacraments' as to suggest 'that this act may have been connected with a celebration of the Holy Eucharist'.

Even those who retain the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, must exclaim here, 'Save me from my friends!'

'And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust the ship. And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground' (Acts 27:39-41).

The harbour of Valetta was seven miles away and the place where the ship struck was Ras el Koura, which is an iron-bound coast, but the mariners saw that at one extremity the cliffs sank down into a flat beach. To make a tack athwart the wind with a disabled ship was a manoeuvre by no means easy, but it was worth attempting. The anchors were cut away, the ropes falling into the sea (not, as the A.V., 'committed themselves unto the sea'), and the paddle rudders which had been lashed out of the way of the anchors were loosed, and they made for the shore. Again the influence of the apostle was exerted and the lives of the prisoners spared, and at length the whole company, on spars and pieces of wreckage, escaped safely through (*diasothenai*) to land.

We present the remainder of the evidence gathered by Conybeare and Howson for the belief that the island 'Melita' is the modern 'Malta'.

- (1) The presence of breakers, yet without striking the land.
- (2) The direction and distance of the drifting vessel (already indicated).
- (3) The soundings, 20 fathoms, then 15 fathoms.
- (4) The presence, on a rocky coast, of a sandy beach.
- (5) The opening, 'a place between two seas'.
- (6) The fact that the anchors held all night.

Every one of these items find substantiation in the features of the eastern boundary of what today is called St. Paul's Bay, Malta. Even as to the character of the anchorage, the comment on St. Paul's Bay in 'The English Sailing Directions' is, 'While the cables hold, there is no danger, as the anchors will never start'.

Should the reader desire to pursue further the geographical and nautical arguments that demonstrate the accuracy of Luke's narrative, here but touched upon, reference should be made to the authorities cited in the opening paragraph.

### **From Melita to Rome (Acts 28:1-22)**

Before leaving the twenty-seventh chapter of the Acts, we draw attention to the spiritual element that alternates with the narrative of the voyage. The journey from Casarea to Rome occupies chapter 27 to 28:16, and divides into two sections:

- A<sub>1</sub> 27:1-44. CÆSAREA TO MELITA.
- A<sub>2</sub> 28:1-22. MELITA TO ROME.

#### **The subdivision 27:1-44 is as follows:**

- A 27:1. Centurion, Paul and Prisoners.
- B 27:2-5. The Coasting Ship. Sidon to Myra.
- B 27:6-41. The Grain Ship. Myra to Malta.
- A 27:42-44. Centurion, Paul and Prisoners.

#### **Acts 27:6-41 extended.**

- B a 6-8. Myra to Fair Havens.
- b 9,10. *Paul*. Warning. Damage to ship and life.
- a 11-20. Fair Havens to Clauda.
- b 21-26. *Paul*. Exhortation. No loss of life, but of ship.
- a 27-29. Clauda to strange land.
- b 30,31. *Paul*. Warning. Abide ship. Saved.
- a 32. The boat cut adrift.
- b 33-38. *Paul*. Good cheer. Not an hair fall.
- a 39-41. The ship broken up.

The above outline impresses the mind with the fact that, full as this narrative may be of nautical terms and geographical references, there is a spiritual theme running through it, the links of which are the four statements made by Paul. The prominent place which is given to the shipwreck seems to justify the view that it has a spiritual and typical object lesson. Between Paul, Jerusalem, and his past ministry, rolled the wide sea. The ship in which he travelled was broken to pieces, yet the outstanding testimony is that Paul was divinely assured that he must be brought before Cæsar, and, apparently as a consequence, that all in the ship were to be given him.

Returning to the narrative at the opening of Acts 28, we find that upon reaching land the shipwrecked passengers found that it was the island of Melita or, as it is now called, Malta. The idea that the Adriatic island of Meleda is intended is founded upon a series of mistakes, first as to the true locality of 'Adria', then as to the Roman usage of the word 'barbarian', and lastly a misunderstanding as to the presence of 'vipers' in the island. The contention has now been abandoned by most commentators. While the inhabitants of Malta were 'barbarians' in the New Testament sense of the word, in the modern sense they were far from being 'barbaric'. That is to say, they were of Phœnician origin, with a mingling of Greek settlers, but because they could speak neither Latin nor Greek, they were called Barbarians. Luke gratefully records the 'no little kindness' which these islanders showed the suffering, shipwrecked company, 'for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold'.

As here instanced, there are no mock heroics in Luke's story of Paul's life and ministry. Paul is evidently included with the rest of the voyagers in feeling the numbing cold and the fatigue of their experiences. But if there

be no mock heroics, the fact stands out in the narrative, that in times of emergency the man of faith is often the most practical. Perhaps Paul had learned the secret which is beautifully expressed in these lines of a modern hymn,

‘A heart at leisure from itself,  
To soothe and sympathise’.

At any rate we read that it was Paul who gathered a bundle of sticks to help on the fire kindled by the hospitable islanders. Incidentally the word *phruganon*, ‘sticks’, is defined by Theophrastus as ‘furze roots’, which disposes of an objection which has been raised that ‘timber’ would not have been available at St. Paul’s Bay. This kindly activity caused an incident which is of extreme importance in its bearing upon the dispensational position of the Acts of the Apostles. Awakened by the heat, a viper fastened on Paul’s hand. We may well regard this as a malignant attack of the Evil One upon the servant of the Lord, but there is another angle from which it must be considered. That the bite of a viper was fatal was testified by the remarks and attitude of the inhabitants:

‘They said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live ... they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly’ (Acts 28:4-6).

The word ‘vengeance’ is *dike*, the equivalent of the Latin ‘justitia’, an abstract personification, like ‘nemesis’. The words ‘swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly’, give a clear indication of the normal consequences of an attack such as Paul had sustained, and in his escape we have therefore a miracle of the highest rank, and that wrought at the close of the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. Observe also the effect of a miracle upon a people untaught by Scripture. At first they assumed that Paul must be a murderer, but, on observing his exemption from the normal consequences of his wound, they changed their mind and concluded that he must be a god. Similarly, when a miracle was wrought in the presence of other untaught heathen, we find them saying, ‘The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men’ (Acts 14:11).

From this we learn the important lesson that although miracles, when performed before a people enlightened by the Scriptures, constituted a confirmation of truth and evidence that was calculated to bring about repentance and faith (Matt. 11:1-6,20; Heb. 2:3,4), their performance in the presence of untaught people might but deepen their idolatry and superstition.

At the end of Mark’s Gospel we read these words:

‘These signs shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen (Mark 16:17-20).

The fact that a viper, of all noxious creatures, should figure in these closing miracles of the Acts is of itself suggestive. Genesis 3 introduces the Serpent, with his enmity, and Revelation 20 sees his doom. When Moses received the call to leadership, he was given power over a serpent. Thus, also, at the close of the kingdom testimony, Paul picks up the creature which is the symbol of Satan and throws it into the fire, himself remaining unhurt. The ‘falling down suddenly’ which the islanders expected is a symptom of snake bite confirmed by the ancient writer Lucian, and Shakespeare, with his embrative knowledge, says of Charmian, in Antony and Cleopatra, ‘Tremblingly she stood, and on the sudden dropped’ (Ant. and Cleop. Act 5, Scene 2).

Those of our readers who hold that the last twelve verses of Mark 16 do not form a part of inspired Scripture will probably feel that this passage should not be employed; but were we to respect every one’s particular textual objection, it would be necessary to set aside a considerable number of important passages. The reader who has any doubt concerning Mark 16 should consult Appendix 168 of *The Companion Bible*: the evidence of the Manuscript Versions and ‘The Fathers’ there tabulated should be enough to convince any that the verses in question should be retained as found in the A.V. Mark ends on the note, ‘the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following’. The Acts opens with a reference to ‘all that Jesus began both to do and to teach’, and implies that the Acts is a continuation of this ‘doing’, and ‘teaching’, so that we are prepared to find the promise of Mark 16

fulfilled throughout the record. If this be so, the dispensation that was ushered in at Pentecost remained unchanged. Healing, as well as immunity, was promised in Mark 16, and both are found in Acts 28.

Luke's accuracy is again attested, by archeological proof that has been forthcoming, that the title of Publius used, in the narrative, of 'the chief man of the island' was one actually in use at the time. An ancient inscription found at Civita Vecchia uses the title *Protos Melitaion*, even as Luke uses *protos* for the title of Publius.

The Anglo Saxon rendering *dysentery*, for the Greek word *dusenteria*, in the words describing the illness of the father of Publius, viz., 'a fever and of a bloody flux', robs the miracle of something of its power. The hand of Luke the Physician is evident in the narrative. Where other writers use *kausomai* and its derivatives, he had already used the medical term *therme* for 'heat' in verse 3. He now observes that the dysentery from which the father of Publius suffered was 'in an aggravated form', being accompanied by fever. The healing miracles of Scripture are of an evident nature. Always, the person healed was conscious not merely of a strange undiagnosed pain, but was either blind, lame, deaf, or leprous; sometimes even dead. Today it is exceedingly difficult to get first-hand evidence of specific healing of diagnosed disease, but, as the apostle said of the testimony generally, in New Testament times 'these things were not done in a corner'. The miracle then was an undoubted one. Seeing it, others who had diseases, also came, and they, too, were healed. Thus three months went by before the apostle left the island, a period giving full opportunity for the cures to be tested.

Coupled with the persistence of these prominent miracles is the fact that 'the hope of Israel' was still entertained by the apostle (Acts 28:20). These two factors of kingdom witness steadily lead the reader to the conclusion that until this point in the narrative the dispensation had not changed, and the Mystery had not been revealed. This, however, comes before us in full strength in the last section of the Acts, namely at chapter 28:23-31.

We must now resume the narrative of the apostle's journey to Rome. The three months' sojourn in Malta end with the opening of the seas for safe navigation in February, a date confirmed by both Pliny and Vegetius. The centurion found another grain ship, which had wintered in the island, and on this he embarked with his company. This ship was named after the mythical twin sons of Zeus and Leda, and the twin-stars in the constellation Gemini were regarded as the patron deities of sailors. We can readily believe that the name of this ship had been recorded because of the suggestion it conveys that the heathen world was about to be brought into subjection to the gospel by the ministry of the poor Jewish prisoner. The writings of Paul and Luke give evidence that they would not be above remarking upon the appositeness of such a feature. Perhaps having said so much we must say more.

The constellation Gemini, 'The Twins', preserves the ancient Hebrew name *thammim*, which means 'united', a word which occurs in the original of Exodus 26:24, 'coupled together'. The old Coptic name of the constellation *Pi-Mania* conveys the same idea, 'United as in brotherhood'. The apostle, who was being borne by this vessel on his journey to Rome, carried in his message the most marvellous 'coupling together' of those previously divided, that even the Scriptures contained, and, knowing this, we cannot imagine either Luke or Paul to have been so dull-witted as not to perceive the appositeness of the sign, without, of course, endorsing its Pagan associations.

The distance from Malta to Syracuse is less than one hundred miles. Upon arrival, the apostle and his fellows were permitted to land, and they tarried there for three days: 'And from thence we fetched a compass'. The Greek word *perierchomai* occurs in Acts 19:13, where it is translated 'vagabond', and means 'To come or go around'. Here, Lewin remarks:

'As the wind was westerly, and they were under the shelter of the high mountainous range of Etna on their left, they were obliged to stand out to sea in order to fill their sails, and so came to Rhegium by a circuitous sweep, or as it has been translated, "they fetched a compass".'

James Smith's view, that the word *perierchomai* means simply 'beating', in the nautical sense, is probably more correct. At Rhegium, 'The Twins' would have been forced upon the apostle's notice once more, for Castor and Pollux were the patron divinities of the city. Here they tarried but a day. We learn from Josephus that the Emperor Caligula had projected a port here for the protection of Alexandrian corn ships, but had died without bringing it to completion. Mr. Smith computed that these vessels would travel at the rate of seven knots, and this well agrees with the distance covered according to Luke.



The south wind which sprang up after the one day's waiting was the most favourable for their purpose, and setting their course due north, the next day the vessel arrived at Puteoli, a distance of about 182 miles. Fifteen miles from Rhegium the vessel would pass between the famous Scylla and Charybdis, and, once more, we can imagine the apostle and his companions gratefully remembering the snares and pitfalls through which, by grace, they had been safely guided. Puteoli stood in the bay of Naples, and was the great port of the Roman capital. In the apostle's day Vesuvius was a lovely mountain, whose westward slopes were covered with vines (Mart. iv. 44), and no one could have suspected the near approach of the time when the admiral of the fleet would be lost in its fiery eruption, as though the judgment of another Sodom and Gomorrah were about to fall.

The advent of a grain ship made no uncommon stir among the populace of Puteoli. From a letter written by Seneca we learn that upon rounding into the bay all other ships were obliged to strike their top-sail, but the Alexandrian corn-ships were permitted to enter it with all sail set, and thus were instantly recognised. He speaks of the crowds that gathered to welcome these ships, and we can thus picture the scene that met the eye of the apostle as he drew near to land.

Once again the Roman Centurion treated the apostle courteously, and permitted him to spend a week with certain Christian brethren who met him there. This interval gave time for news of the apostle's arrival to reach Rome before him, and so for a company of brethren to be in time to meet him on the Appian Way. From Puteoli to Rome was a distance of about a hundred and forty-one miles. The Appian Way, along which the Centurion and his prisoners travelled to Rome, was described as *Appia - Regina viarum*, 'The Queen of Roads', and was the most crowded approach to the metropolis. Should the reader desire fuller knowledge of this most ancient road, Gell's Topography of Rome and its vicinity, the quotation from it in Lewin's work on the Acts, or the description of the apostle's journey in Conybeare and Howson, should be consulted. Space will not permit of this interesting aside here and so, with the marvellous brevity of the scriptural narrative, we pass over all descriptive matter, and rejoice with the apostle that:

'When the brethren heard of us, 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).

How many pages have been, and could be written, to describe the city to which the apostle drew near! Yet not one word is given by Luke. All he says is, 'And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard'. Just that, and no more. Here was the answer to the apostle's earnest wish, expressed in the words, 'I must see Rome'. Here was the fulfilment of the Lord's promise; a promise that had sustained him alike amid the fury of the fanatical Jews and the fury of the storm. He had entered Damascus blind, and he entered Rome bound, but in both blindness and bondage, the Lord was with him, and the word of the Lord was glorified.

The character of Burrus, who was an honest, bluff, soldier, was such that we might expect that the high opinion which the centurion held of the apostle, together with the character of the charge against him, would allow him to treat his prisoner with humanity. This indulgence is indicated by the words: 'But Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him'. After the lapse of three days the apostle called the chief of the Jews together, the outcome of the interview being that a day was appointed in which the peculiar tenets of the sect of which Paul was the reputed ringleader could be discussed.

As in our next pages we shall want all available space to deal with the great dispensational landmark of Acts 28: 23-31, we will set out here the structure of the section that ends with verse 22 of chapter 28.

#### **Melita to Rome (Acts 28:1-22)**

A <sub>1</sub> 28:1-10. BARBARIANS. AT MELITA.	<b>a</b> 1,2. Arrival. No little kindness.
	<b>b</b> 3-6. Evidential miracle. The viper.
	<b>c</b> 7. Courteous reception by Publius.
	<b>b</b> 8,9. Compassionate miracles. Dysentery, etc.
	<b>a</b> 10. Departure. Honours.

A <sub>2</sub> 28:11-17. BRETHREN ON THE ROUTE TO ROME.	<b>d</b> 11-13. After three months. Departure. <b>e</b> 14. Brethren found at Puteoli. <b>e</b> 15. Brethren met at Appii forum. <b>d</b> 16,17. After three days Arrival.
A <sub>3</sub> 28:17-22. JEWS AT ROME.	<b>f</b> 17. Chief of Jews called. <i>Sunkaleo</i> . <b>g</b> 17. Laws and customs of people and fathers. <b>h</b> 18. Romans found no cause of death. <b>i</b> 19. Paul spoken against. ( <i>Antilego</i> ). <b>f</b> 20. Cause shown why Jews called ( <i>Parakaleo</i> ). <b>g</b> 20. Hope of Israel. <b>h</b> 21. Jews showed no harm. <b>i</b> 22. This sect spoken against ( <i>Antilego</i> ).

#### Paul's relation with Israel during the whole period of the Acts attested (Acts 28:17-22)

It will be remembered that when writing the epistle to the Romans, the apostle expressed his great longing to meet them (Rom. 1:10-12), telling them that when he did come he would come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ (Rom. 15:29). It is of great importance therefore to notice, that when at last the opportunity is presented, those whom the apostle first actually saw, by his own request, were the 'chief of the Jews' (Acts 28:17). The apostle's primary object in so doing is on the surface. He knew by bitter experience what an influence the Jew, in his fanatical obstinacy and religious pride, had even over temperate and just Roman rulers, and the character of the Emperor before whose tribunal he was to appear made it imperative that the Jews in Rome should not be permitted to weight the scales of justice. The apostle did not cover this very human purpose under a cloak of false piety, but manfully told these Jewish leaders his object:

'Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of' (Acts 28:17-19).

Let us observe the following features:

Paul still addressed the chief of the Jews as 'Men and brethren', a title which, as he explains in Romans 9, belonged to Israel according to the flesh. The great change wherein 'the twain' were created 'one new man' had not yet been announced, and Israel as a nation still stood before God. From Acts 13:15 it is clear that this form of address was not necessarily a Christian one, for it was used by the ruler of the synagogue. When Paul used it for the first time in the Acts, he added, by way of explanation, 'children of the stock of Abraham' (Acts 13:26); the added words, 'and whosoever among you feareth God', is not an expansion, but addressed to a secondary company. So, in Acts 13:38, 'Men and brethren' is the mode of address to those who in verse 41 were to be called 'despisers' and, as verse 42 makes clear, were 'Jews' as distinct from 'Gentiles'. We find Peter and James using the same form of address at the council at Jerusalem, where none but Hebrew Christians were present. We meet the expression no more until Paul addresses the Jews in Acts 22:1; 23:1, and for the last time in 28:17. To those who have learned to love and appreciate the hidden beauties of the Scriptures, it is no surprise to discover that this form of address occurs in the Acts just twelve times, twelve being most evidently the number of Israel.

The apostle declared that he had committed nothing against 'the people' or the customs of the fathers. Who, in Paul's estimate, were 'the people'? There is but one answer; Israel. In the same verse where we found the ruler of

the synagogue using the title 'Men and brethren' we find the first occurrence in the Pauline section of the Acts of the term 'the people'. When the appellation is first used by Paul he expands it, as he did the other title. He says, 'The God of this people of Israel', and, with the exception of two references, namely Acts 15:14 and 18:10, every one of the remaining occurrences, twelve in number, refers exclusively to Israel. In Acts 28 the references are pointed:

'Nothing against the people' (Acts 28:17).

'Go unto this people' (Acts 28:26).

'For the heart of this people' (Acts 28:27).

What of 'the customs'? *Ethos*, 'customs', occurs in the Acts seven times. In Acts 16:21 and 25:16 it is the 'custom' or 'manner' of the Romans that is intended, but in the remaining passages it is used of the peculiar customs of Israel.

It is of great interest to realize that the first occurrence of *ethos* in the Acts is found in the charge which brought about the stoning of Stephen, to which Paul had consented:

'That this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us' (Acts 6:14).

The apostle makes it clear in more passages than one, that those dreadful, persecuting, days of his earlier life never left his memory, and it would be with humbled heart that he now defended himself against the very charge that had been laid against the man to whose death he had consented years before. That the *ethos* of the fathers was not to be confined to superficial customs is made clear from its use in Acts 15:1, where circumcision 'after the *manner* of Moses' is in view. Paul's present imprisonment had been brought about because he had sought to rebut the charge made against him that he taught:

'the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs' (Acts 21:21).

and Paul acted as he did, so that all might know that, as the elders said to him, 'those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself walkest orderly, and keepest the law' (Acts 21:24). These most explicit statements reduce the issue to two heads. Either Paul did walk orderly and kept the law, or he did not. If he did, then the truth of the Mystery could not have been made known during the period of the Acts. If he did not, then his statements are false and we are of all men the most miserable.

'*The fathers*'. *To whom do these words refer?* Again, and for the third time, we return to the synagogue at Antioch and hear the apostle speak.

'We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled' (Acts 13:32,33).

His own written testimony in the epistle to the Romans is conclusive, 'My brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites ... whose are the fathers' (Rom. 9:3,5). In Acts 28, immediately before he said 'this people', the apostle exclaims, 'Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers' (Acts 28:25). Further on in his statement to the chief of the Jews the apostle used another expression, 'My nation' (Acts 28:19). The word translated 'nation' is *ethnos*, and is frequently rendered 'Gentiles', when found in the plural, as it is in Acts 28:28. Paul mostly uses the word to designate the Gentiles, but when he said:

'I came to bring alms to my *nation*' (Acts 24:17).

'*My own nation* at Jerusalem' (Acts 26:4),

it is evident that he speaks of Israel, 'the nation', as distinct from the rest of the 'nations'. At Acts 28:19, *Israel* was still Paul's *nation*.

Up to this point, however, what has been brought forward is negative in character: e.g., Paul had committed *nothing against* this people or its customs. But lest his testimony should be misconstrued he recapitulates, introducing a positive note.

‘For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that *for the hope of Israel* I am bound with this chain’ (Acts 28:20).

In his defence before Agrippa, who was expert in all ‘customs’ of the Jews and who therefore would be able to appreciate the apostle’s definite avowal, he said:

‘And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come’ (Acts 26:6,7).

This was none other than the promise which formed the burden of the apostles’ question in Acts 1:

‘When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’ (Acts 1:6).

It was to this Peter referred when he said that the times of restitution of all things, which God by the mouth of all his holy prophets had spoken, would commence upon the repentance of Israel (Acts 3:19-26). Moreover, the apostle could have shown these Jews his own written statement in the letter he had sent to the church at Rome touching their hope, that it was the hope of Israel:

‘There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles trust (hope, *elpizo*). Now the God of (that) hope (*elpis*) fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost’ (Rom. 15:12,13).

Once we admit that these are the words of truth and soberness, we must also admit that the hope of the church up till the writing of the epistle to the Romans was the hope of the Kingdom, for what other meaning can attach to the words ‘reign over the Gentiles’? It is, moreover, the hope of Israel, for if not, why introduce the title ‘The root of Jesse’? and why say ‘reign over’ the Gentiles? If any should object to this translation of *archo*, let them turn to Mark 10:42. Moreover, this hope was associated with the power of the Holy Ghost.

It is therefore impossible to dissociate the hope of the early church from the hope of Israel, without impugning the veracity of the apostle Paul, or denying the inspiration of Romans 15.

From the first chapter of the Acts one hope is before the church right on to the moment when Israel were set aside. But then, for the very sufficient reason that a new calling had been revealed, it became necessary to pray that the church might perceive ‘what is the hope of His calling’ (Eph. 1:18).

#### ‘This sect’ (Acts 28:22)

There are three sects mentioned in the Acts:

- (i) The sect of the SADDUCEES (Acts 5:17).
- (ii) The sect of the PHARISEES (Acts 15:5).
- (iii) The sect of the NAZARENES (Acts 24:5).

The apostle refers to this sect of the Nazarenes, saying:

‘But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy (*airesis*, "sect"), so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets’ (Acts 24:14).

The Sadducees worshipped the God of their fathers after the way that men called ‘a sect’, but they did not believe all that was written in the law and the prophets, for they particularly denied the hope of the resurrection. The Pharisees, too, worshipped the God of their fathers after the way that men called ‘a sect’, believing, at least professedly, all that was written, and definitely including the hope of resurrection in their creed, yet they overloaded the written word with an accumulation of tradition so great that it was made of none effect.

The Christian Church began, as a movement of the Spirit of God, *within the ranks of the Jews*: it grew up as a minority that still worshipped in synagogue: it was augmented by believing Gentiles, who were blessed under the New covenant, and were accounted children of Abraham and heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:29), but the

Church was never divorced from Israel, its hope, its promises or its covenants, until Israel itself became 'lo-ammi' at Acts 28:25.

It is because of the extreme importance of this chapter dispensationally, that it has figured so prominently in our ministry throughout the thirty years in which we have sought to fulfil the sacred trust committed to us.

To return to the momentous meeting at Rome, the chief of the Jews concluded the first interview by saying: 'We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest', and accordingly a day was appointed.

What the apostle 'thought', the way he presented his argument, the crisis that was reached in that 'lodging' in Rome, must be the subject of our next chapter.

## CHAPTER 18

### The Dispensational Landmark (Acts 28:23-31)

#### 'The Kingdom of God ... concerning Jesus' (Acts 28:1-23)

It is common knowledge that the Acts and the Gospel according to Luke come from the same writer, and that the last chapter of Luke's Gospel is briefly summarized in the opening verses of Acts 1, before the new story commences. Consequently, we must remember that the words of Acts 1:3, 'Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God', are Luke's own summary of several verses found in Luke 24, where, with fuller detail, he had given the character and subject-matter of that wonderful teaching. As we draw near to the closing testimony of the Acts, it will help us if we refresh our memory as to the nature of this teaching of the Lord. Where Acts 1:3 summarizes without detail, Luke 24:27 and 44 are more explicit:

'And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself'.

'All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me'.

We now see that Acts 1:1-15 and Acts 28:23-31 present this comparison. In both there is given a careful exposition of the Old Testament Scriptures, and the leaders of Israel in Rome are given the same testimony as the disciples received in the land of Palestine. Alas! the *results* of the testimony were not comparable but, in many points, there is correspondence between Luke 24 and Acts 28. Let us acquaint ourselves with this important fact.

- (1) THE THEME in both passages is 'concerning Jesus'.

The Greek word *peri* occurs in Luke 24:4,14,19,27 and 44; and in Acts 28:21,23 and 31.

'As they were much perplexed *thereabout*'.

'And they talked together *of* all these things which had happened'.

'And He said ... What things? And they said ... *Concerning* Jesus of Nazareth'.

'He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things *concerning* Himself'.

'All things must be fulfilled, which were written ... *concerning* Me'.

'We neither received letters out of Judaea *concerning* thee (Paul)'.

'Persuading them *concerning* Jesus'.

'Teaching those things which *concern* the Lord Jesus Christ'.

(We shall have to deal later with the titles of the Lord here used, but for the moment we will continue the comparison of Luke 24 with Acts 28).

- (2) THIS THEME relates to 'Hope'.

‘We trusted (*elpizo*) that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel’ (Luke 24:21).

‘For the hope (*elpis*) of Israel I am bound with this chain’ (Acts 28:20).

(3) THE BASIS of this teaching and hope was the Old Testament Scriptures.

‘All that the prophets have spoken’ (Luke 24:25).

‘And beginning at Moses and all the prophets’ (Luke 24:27).

‘In the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms’ (Luke 24:44).

‘Both ... the law of Moses and ... the Prophets’ (Acts 28:23).

(4) THE METHOD was that of exposition.

‘He *expounded* unto them in all the Scriptures’ (Luke 24:27).

‘He *opened* to us the Scriptures’ (Luke 24:32).

‘He *expounded* and *testified*’ (Acts 28:23).

(5) THE OBJECT was persuasion with the view to belief and understanding.

‘O fools, and slow of heart to *believe*’ (Luke 24:25).

‘Did not our heart *burn within us*’ (Luke 24:32).

‘Then *opened* He their *understanding*’ (Luke 24:45).

‘*Persuading* them concerning Jesus’ (Acts 28:23).

‘Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not *understand*’ (Acts 28:26).

To these close parallels there are added others, more incidental, yet nevertheless having some weight, such as the ‘lodging’ and the ‘hired house’ of the apostle (Acts 28:23 and 30), and the invitation to abide with the disciples, as it was toward evening (Luke 24:29). Again, the word ‘slow’ in the phrase ‘slow of heart to believe’ (Luke 24:25) is *bradus*, while the word ‘dull’ in the phrase ‘dull of hearing’ (Acts 28:27) is *bareos*, both words being derived from *baros*, ‘a weight’. The eyes of the two who walked to Emmaus ‘were opened’ (Luke 24:31), but of the eyes of the Jews in Rome it is written, ‘their eyes have they closed’ (Acts 28:27). The rebuke ‘O fools’ follows the words, ‘they saw not’ (Luke 24:24), and this same word ‘to see’ and ‘to perceive’ occurs in Acts 28:26 and 27. The fact that there occurs in both passages, ‘the evening’, ‘the third day’ or ‘after three days’, might also be noted. Also that while the name ‘Moses’ has three or four different spellings in the New Testament, in Luke 24 and Acts 28 the spelling is the same. These, however, are but incidental, the five items first noted being sufficient for our purpose.

We have established two important points.

- (1) In the preceding pages, from the apostle’s own testimony, the close relationship which his witness, even among the Gentiles, had with the hope of Israel.
- (2) A link between the testimony of the Lord Himself ‘in the land’ with that of the apostle ‘in Rome’.

What we have not discovered is any statement or allusion to a distinct, high, and heavenly calling for the believing Gentile, independently of Israel, the promises made unto the fathers, or the covenants. We are on the very verge of this revelation, but until the crisis is actually reached and Israel set aside ‘the mystery’ was ‘hid in God’.

Let us now return to Acts 28 and give the record of this interesting and critical day our closest attention.

The Chief of the Jews appointed a day and the apostle occupied the time ‘from morning till evening’ ‘expounding and testifying the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the Prophets’, and we can well believe that that all-day exposition would have made the heart of any believer to ‘burn within’ him, even as in the case of the disciples when they listened to the Lord on the way to Emmaus. It may not be given to us to expound the Scriptures as did the apostle, but we can and do point out that which the Lord has shown us, and pray that it may find a lodging in the heart of many a true ‘Berean’.

Paul ‘expounded’ and ‘testified’. What do these two words mean and what do they teach us?

The word translated 'expound' is *ektithemi*, literally, 'to put out'. The first occurrence of the word is in Acts 7:21, where it speaks of Moses when he was 'cast out'. In English, 'to expound' is rarely used in this primitive sense, although Butler in 1678 wrote, 'First, he *expounded* both his pockets', and an Exposition is the name that has been given to an Exhibition, as in 1868. While what we usually intend by 'expound' or 'exposition', is the art of setting forth an argument, a commentary or a detailed explanation, we should remember that in both the Greek and English words, the primitive meaning is never quite lost sight of.

There are only two other occurrences of *ektithemi* in the New Testament and they all come in the Acts:

'Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and *expounded* it by order unto them' (Acts 11:4).

Here the expansion of the act is illuminative. The rehearsal was 'from the beginning', while the exposition was 'by order', a word used geographically in Acts 18:23, and so giving a good idea of what exposition involves:

'Aquila and Priscilla ... *expounded* unto him the way of God more perfectly' (Acts 18:26).

Again, the word *akribos*, 'perfectly', reveals another aspect of the faculty of exposition, in which not only is item added to item, in order, as did Peter, but there is advance from the lower to the higher, as was the case with Apollos under this fruitful type of teaching. This was one part of the apostle's method of teaching. There was another, which supplemented it and made the exposition live. He 'testified' (*diamarturomai*). This is the ordinary word 'to bear witness', *marturomai*, with *dia* added, as though to indicate 'a thorough witness', *dia* meaning 'through', and in composition not always so translated, but giving added emphasis.

The Lord had appeared to Paul in a vision and had said:

'As thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome' (Acts 23:11).

Here, in the next occurrence of the word, we find the fulfilment of the promise. 'Witness' differs from 'exposition'. It is conceivable that an unbeliever might be able to expose the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures concerning their prophetic utterances and the fulfilment of the same. With certain reservations, he may even be able to compare the 'more perfect' way of the gospel with that of the law, but it would be an academic effort and lifeless; he would not be able to add his personal testimony. Paul not only gave a masterly analysis of the Old Testament in that characteristic manner of his, 'confounded the Jews ... proving that this is (the) very Christ' (Acts 9:22), but he would go over his life from his youth, speak of his conversion, his commission, and of the grace that had been granted him. He would speak of 'The Son of God Who loved me, and gave Himself for me'.

This exposition and testimony was twofold. It was 'the kingdom of God', and it was 'concerning Jesus'. Whatever we may think is the meaning of the phrase 'the kingdom of God', we must remember that:

- (1) It was found in the law of Moses and the Prophets.
- (2) It was something most intimately connected with the hope of Israel.
- (3) It was also closely associated with the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures concerning Jesus.

Before we proceed, two or three observations are necessary. Where Matthew uses the term, 'The kingdom of heaven' (as for example in Matt. 3:2; 4:17), Mark uses 'the kingdom of God' (Mark. 1:14,15). In Mark 1:15, the kingdom of God is said to be 'at hand' and 'the time' is said to be fulfilled.

Turning to the Acts of the Apostles we find that the Lord's teaching in the days after His resurrection is summarized as, 'Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God' (Acts 1:3), and as a direct outcome of this teaching (as indicated by the word 'therefore' in verse 6), the apostles seize the first opportunity to ask whether the restoration of the kingdom again to Israel would take place at that time.

Paul had before 'disputed and persuaded' concerning the kingdom of God, notably in the synagogue of Ephesus (Acts 19:8), and summed up his ministry during the Acts as 'preaching the kingdom of God', in other words, 'testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ' and as a declaration to them of 'all the counsel of God' (Acts 20:21,25,27).

It is apparent, therefore, that if the apostle could honestly say that his teaching was ‘none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come’ (Acts 26:22), we must so interpret his use of the term, the kingdom of God, as to include the restoration again of the earthly kingdom which constituted part of the hope of Israel. The term, however, is much wider than anything found in the Gospels, the Acts, or the early Epistles. We find it used after Israel were set aside, and when Luke would describe Paul’s prison ministry he wrote, ‘Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him’ (Acts 28:31). The revelation of the mystery therefore must be included in the kingdom of God, and Colossians 4:11 does not hesitate to use the term to define the goal of Paul and his fellow-workers. It would appear, therefore, that we must understand the kingdom of God to refer to that all-embracing sovereignty which includes all spheres of blessing, all callings and all inheritances, and that dispensational truth, seeking to observe the sub-divisions in that all-embracing kingdom, speaks of the Church, of Israel, and of the Bride, as the case may be. The direct object of Paul’s exposition and testimony was the kingdom of God; the direct object of his persuasion was concerning Jesus (Acts 28:23). In the next verse the word translated ‘persuade’, *peitho*, is rendered ‘believe’. It is the word used by Agrippa and by those who charged the apostle with having ‘persuaded and turned away much people’ at Ephesus. The way in which the word is used of the centurion in Acts 27:11, ‘The centurion *believed* the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul’, is rather a foreshadowing of the attitude of Paul’s own people, the Jews, in Rome, for it is recorded of them that ‘some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not’.

One further item of truth must detain us at verse 23. Paul persuaded them concerning ‘Jesus’. When the apostle refers to the Saviour in his Epistles, it is his general practice to give Him His title, ‘Jesus Christ’, ‘Christ Jesus’, ‘Jesus Christ the Lord’, etc., but, on occasion, he uses simply the name ‘Jesus’. This he does in Hebrews eight times, and in 1 Thessalonians and 2 Corinthians, where the name occurs eight times, the subject concerned being associated with the resurrection. Romans and 1 Corinthians contain one occurrence each, and in the seven Epistles written after Acts 28, Paul uses the name ‘Jesus’ but twice. When we compare Acts 28:23 with verse 31 we are struck by two things.

- (1) To the Jews, before their rejection, Paul used the name ‘Jesus’.
- (2) After their rejection the name is changed. While the kingdom of God is retained, the teaching is concerning ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’.

This change is not accidental.

There is another feature that demands attention, and which arises from an examination of verses 23 and 31.

### **Paul’s use of the Old Testament, and the structure of the section**

We closed our last section with an intimation to the effect that besides the selection by the inspired writer of the name ‘Jesus’, there was another point of nomenclature worth considering in Acts 28:23, as compared with verse 31.

When Paul bore his testimony to the chief of the Jews, the basis of his exposition was the law of Moses and the Prophets. But after Israel were set aside, his testimony is no longer called ‘expounding’ but ‘preaching’ and ‘teaching’, and the Scriptures are unnamed. Now a false argument might be deduced from this absence of reference to the then existing Scriptures, but an examination of Paul’s subsequent ministry shows that he still retained a whole-hearted belief and love for the Word of God. In fact, in his last epistle we find the clearest testimony to the inspiration of ‘*all Scripture*’ (2 Tim. 3:14-17), yet, even so, there still remains to be weighed the fact of the absence of any reference to the Scriptures in the last verse of the Acts, which is set in such pointed contrast with the twenty-third verse.

If we turn the page and look at the first epistle that follows, that to the Romans, we observe that the gospel of God is that ‘Which He had promised afore by His prophets *in the holy Scriptures*’ (Rom. 1:2), and that the very doctrine of justification by faith is ‘*as it is writte*, The just shall live by faith’ (Rom. 1:17). Indeed ‘*What saith the Scripture?*’ (Rom. 4:3) might well be taken as epitomizing Paul’s attitude in these early epistles. Altogether Paul uses the word *graphe*, ‘scripture’, fourteen times. Seven of the occurrences are in Romans, two in 1 Corinthians and



three in Galatians, leaving only two in the epistles written after the setting aside of Israel, namely, 1 Timothy 5:18 and 2 Timothy 3:16. Upon examination we discover that neither of these two latter has anything to do with the teaching of the mystery, for 1 Timothy 5:18 deals with the recognition of service, a matter of practice that is quite inter-dispensational, and 2 Timothy 3:16 is the apostle's testimony to 'All Scripture' which precludes reference to any particular doctrine.

The phrase 'It is written' is used by Paul some forty times in his early epistles, but is entirely absent from the epistles written after Acts 28:25. Let us then examine Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians and see the manner in which the Old Testament Scriptures are used, or referred to, in them.

We read the whole of the first chapter of Ephesians down to the twenty-second verse before we come to a reference, viz., 'And hath put all things under His feet' (Psa. 8:6), but if the reader will compare 'what' are here said to be put under his feet, with what are said to be under His feet in Ephesians 1:21-23, it will be seen that the apostle owed nothing to the Old Testament for what he writes in Ephesians 1:21-23.

We read on through chapter 2, through chapter 3, through chapter 4 to verse 8 before we meet with the next quotation. Again, if the reader will turn to the quoted Psalm 68 it will be seen that while the ascension of Christ is there revealed, not the remotest indication is given as to what were the 'gifts' that He gave to men. For that information we are indebted to the apostle, and he received it by revelation and observation, not by reading Psalm 68.

We therefore continue our quest for one solitary quotation of the Old Testament Scriptures by the apostle in making known the truth of the mystery. In Ephesians 5:30 we read, 'For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones'. The Revisers omit the words 'of His flesh and of His bones' and so do *The Companion Bible* and the *Numeric New Testament*. The passage therefore is too debatable to be admitted. The next verse is a direct quotation from Genesis 2:24, but the words following, 'But I speak concerning Christ and the church' (Eph. 5:32) bring back the subject from the general relationship of man and wife to the particular relationship of Christ and His church, which, though *illustrated* by the quotation is not thereby *revealed*.

In chapter 6 we meet the first direct quotation from Old Testament Scriptures upon which a doctrine or a precept is made to depend:

'Honour thy father and mother ... that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth' (Eph. 6:2,3).

This is addressed, not to members of the Body, but to 'children' who are exhorted to obey their parents in the Lord 'for this is right' - not because they were fellow-members of the Body.

The apparent quotation of Zechariah 8:16 in Ephesians 4:25, 'Speak every man truth with his neighbour' is explained by the fact that Paul's whole phraseology was tinged with Old Testament language, but even if this be included as a direct quotation nothing can be made of Zechariah 8 that constitutes any doctrine connected with the subject-matter, except by general analogy.

Philippians contains not a single quotation from the Old Testament. There is an allusion to Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:11, and it refers to the Person of the Lord, not to the mystery. Colossians uses no reference, and 2 Timothy but one, namely Numbers 16:5 and 26, in chapter 2:19. As we have seen, 1 Timothy uses the law concerning the muzzling of the ox, to which we have already alluded (1 Tim. 5:18); but there is no other quotation. This leaves only Titus and Philemon neither of which makes reference to the Old Testament.

Here then we have seven epistles, and they contain not more than eight quotations from the Old Testament, possibly but seven, and of this number, not one can be said to teach or reveal any doctrine peculiar to the testimony of Paul the prisoner of the Lord.

We come back therefore to Acts 28:23 and 31 and perceive that the emphasis upon the Law and the Prophets in verse 23 and the pointed omission of any reference to the Scriptures in verse 31 entirely harmonizes with the two dispensations that find their 'landmark' in Acts 28:25-28.

Before we go further it may be well to exhibit the structure of this section, which is as follows:

**Acts 28:23-31*****The Dispensational Landmark***

- A **a** 28:23. Chief of the Jews come to Paul's lodging. The day.  
**b** 28:23. Paul 'expounded' the Kingdom of God.  
**c** 28:23. Persuading concerning Jesus.  
**d** 28:23. Out of the law and prophets.  
**e** 28:23. From morning till evening.
- B **f** 28:24,25. They agreed not among themselves.  
**g** 28:24,25. They departed.
- C **h** 28:25. The word of the *Holy Ghost*.  
**i** 28:26. GO unto this people.  
**j** 28:26. Hear ... not understand.
- |   |             |   |                      |  |  |
|---|-------------|---|----------------------|--|--|
| D | Acts 28:27. | { | <b>k<sub>1</sub></b> |  | <b>l<sub>1</sub></b> Hearts waxed gross.<br><b>m</b> Ears dull.<br><b>n</b> Eyes closed. |
|   |             |   |                      |  |  |
|   | Isa. 6:10.  | { | <b>k<sub>2</sub></b> |  | <b>n</b> Eyes see.<br><b>m</b> Ears heard.<br><b>l<sub>1</sub></b> Hearts understand.    |
|   |             |   |                      |  |  |
|   |             |   | <b>k<sub>3</sub></b> |  | <b>l<sub>2</sub></b> Be converted.   |
|   |             |   |                      |  |  |
|   |             |   | <b>k<sub>4</sub></b> |  | <b>l<sub>3</sub></b> I should heal them.   |
- C **h** 28:28. The salvation of *God*  
**i** 28:28. SENT unto the Gentiles.  
**j** 28:28. They will hear it.
- B **g** 28:29. The Jews departed.  
**f** 28:29. Great reasoning among themselves.
- A **a** 28:30. All come to Paul's hired house. The two years.  
**b** 28:31. Paul 'preaches' the kingdom of God.  
**c** 28:31. 'Teaches' concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.  
**d** 28:31. With all confidence. No reference to O.T.  
**e** 28:31. Unhindered.

We draw attention to the way in which this last section of the Acts is a unity, and to the fact that if we detach its last two verses, not only is the perfect correspondence of the structure ruined, but, more seriously still, the intentional contrast between what took place among the Jews in Paul's lodging on one day, and what took place in Paul's hired house during two years, together with the double reference to the Jews 'departure' and their 'agreeing not' and 'reasoning among themselves', are lost.

Then we have the word of the 'Holy Ghost' balanced by the salvation of 'God', the one associated with the verb 'Go', the other with the verb 'Send'; the one connected with 'this people', i.e., the Jews, the other with 'The Gentiles'. The effect of the one was that though the Jew 'heard' he did not understand; the effect of the other that the salvation of God was 'heard' and that believably. And so the structure leads us step by step to the crisis, the quotation of Isaiah 6:10, the Dispensational Landmark of the New Testament.

Our next investigation must be the peculiar place that Isaiah 6:10 occupies in the development of the purpose of the ages, and its association with 'Mystery' and 'Gentile'.

### The critical importance of Isaiah 6:9,10 demonstrated

We have seen that the hope of Israel, with its accompanying evidential miracles, continued throughout the Acts to the last chapter, and that Paul associated himself and the Gentile believers entrusted to his care with that hope and kingdom. What we must keep in mind, however, is that the kingdom of Israel had two phases, one earthly, the other heavenly, and that it is with the heavenly phase that Paul associates the believing Gentile, as Galatians 3:28,29; 4:26; Hebrews 3:1 and 12:22 reveal. That this heavenly phase is, nevertheless, closely linked with the earthly portion of the kingdom Romans 15:12,13 makes clear. We are not now attempting proof of these statements, but simply indicating to the reader that we are fully alive to the fact that the churches under Paul's care were not expecting to participate in the restored kingdom of Israel, even though their own heavenly hope could not materialize until Israel was restored. For this reason the apostle used the wider, all-comprehensive, term 'The kingdom of God', which we have seen from Acts 1:3 and 6 could be used to indicate the kingdom of Israel only, yet is wide enough to include not only the heavenly phase of this kingdom (Acts 28:23), but the mystery itself, when the hope of the lower aspects of the kingdom went into abeyance (Acts 28:31). Again, we remind ourselves and our readers that these fragmentary references cannot be considered as proof, but as our immediate concern is the general teaching of this part of the Acts we pass on to consider the peculiar place which Isaiah 6:9,10 occupies in the dispensational teaching of the New Testament.

The first quotation of this passage in the New Testament is in Matthew 13, and an examination of the context and what leads up to its quotation by our Lord will throw light upon its use by Paul in this great climax of the Acts. The Gospel according to Matthew is purposely limited in its scope. In face of the unambiguous words of Christ in Matthew 10 no one who believes the inspiration of Scripture can deny this:

'Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt. 10:5,6).

This limitation was reaffirmed in Matthew 15 where the Lord said in the hearing of the Syro-phenician woman:

'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt. 15:24).

That a woman of Samaria was nevertheless saved and that this woman of Canaan was nevertheless blessed, does not alter the fact that neither the apostles nor the Lord were, at that time, 'sent' to any other than Israel. This restriction is endorsed by the apostle Paul in Romans 15:8.

The Lord's public ministry was heralded by a great succession of miracles which were witnessed throughout the land from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem and Judæa to beyond Jordan. The Divine purpose of these miracles is indicated in the lament of Matthew 11:20: 'Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not'. It is obvious that the repentance of the people was the prime object before the Lord in these miracles, and in this they failed. In Matthew 12 the shadow of rejection deepens: One 'greater than the temple', 'greater than Jonah', 'greater than Solomon' was in their midst and they knew Him not (Matt. 12:6,41,42). Here we see the growing rejection of Christ as Prophet (Jonah), Priest (Temple) and King (Solomon). Then comes parable, mystery, and the quotation of Isaiah 6:9,10 in Matthew 13:14,15.

The disciples were struck with the new form of teaching which the Lord adopted. Until then 'He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes' but now His symbolic language was contrasted with His former plainness of speech by both apostles and people. He had used the symbol of a Shepherd, and the people said: 'If Thou be the Christ, tell us *plainly*' (John 10:24). He had said to the grieving disciples, 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth', but upon their evident misunderstanding of his words 'Then said Jesus unto them *plainly*, Lazarus is dead' (John 11:11,14), and in John 16:29, the disciples say: 'Now speakest Thou *plainly*, and speakest no proverb'.

The word translated 'proverb' here is translated 'parable' in John 10:6, where the people first ask for plainness of speech. Upon hearing the parable of the Sower, the apostles asked the Lord the question: 'Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?' (Matt. 13:10). The Lord's answer (partly postponed until verse 35, when Matthew adds his own

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\* This has a bearing upon the absence of the figure 'sleep', for death, in the epistles of the mystery.

inspired comment) introduces *for the first time in the New Testament* the words (1) Mystery, (2) The foundation of the world, and of (3) Isaiah 6:9,10. In answer to the question, the Lord replied:

‘Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given ... Therefore speak I to them in parables ... and in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; etc’ (Matt. 13:11,13,14)

and in verses 34 and 35 the added explanation is given:

‘All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world’ (Matt. 13:34,35).

The parables were spoken ‘unto them’ (13:10,11,13,34), ‘in them’ (13:14), ‘this people’ (13:15), and to him that ‘hath not’ (13:12), referring to the multitude in contrast with the disciples, who are referred to in the passages which say, ‘It is given unto you to know’ (13:11), ‘whosoever hath’ (13:12), ‘blessed are your eyes ... ears’ (13:16). The disciples are even compared favourably with ‘prophets and righteous men’ (13:17).

The ‘mysteries’ of the kingdom of heaven were not revealed until it became evident that Israel were going to reject their King, and that the manifest, open, course of the kingdom would be suspended while a secret aspect, hitherto unknown, would operate. The ‘secret’ phase of the kingdom of the heavens has its effect upon Gentile dominion which was also running its course. By the time our Lord came to Bethlehem, the prophetic period of 490 years (Daniel 9) was well-nigh exhausted. The fourth kingdom was ruling the habitable earth and would have easily produced the Monster with which Gentile rule will close (Rev. 13), if Israel had accepted their King. Tiberius, Caligula and Nero had all the making of the Beast, and Herod (Acts 12) exhibited characteristics that could easily have become the Antichrist. The Lord had definitely said, ‘The time is fulfilled’ (Mark 1:15), and Peter declared that if Israel would but repent the times of refreshing and restitution would begin which had been the theme of all the holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:19-26). It is impossible to think that had Israel repented, God would have failed to respond. Israel did not repent, however, and the kingdom, in all its phases, including Nebuchadnezzar’s line and successors, entered on its ‘mystery’ phase.

A parallel difficulty may be found in the case of John the Baptist, but the difficulty also provides a principle which can be applied to the matter before us. Was John the Baptist Elijah? No (John 1:21). Yes (Matt. 11:14, and 17:12). It would be as easy to create a faction concerning this problem as to create controversy over the question whether Rome was or was not the Fourth Beast. The presence of the word ‘if’ in our Lord’s answer in Matthew 11:14 provides the answer to the question concerning the mystery of the kingdom, and the Fourth Beast. Was Rome the Fourth Beast? Yes, for the time was fulfilled. Yes, *‘if’* Israel had repented. Will there be another Beast at the time of the end, after the gap in prophetic times which ‘our eyes have seen’ but which was hidden till the time of the Lord’s rejection? Yes, for the kingdom has entered into its mystery phase and Babylon, at the end, is called ‘Mystery, Babylon’ (Rev. 17:5), and when, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, the ‘mystery’ of God shall be finished (Rev. 10:7; 11:15).

The reader will have noticed where the statement comes which introduces the problem about Elijah. It is in Matthew 11:15, at the moment when the rejection of the Lord becomes evident. It takes its place as a part of the mystery of the kingdom with which Matthew 11,12 and 13 are connected.

Associated with these mysteries of the kingdom of heaven is the time period, ‘The foundation of the world’. The full expression, ‘From the foundation of the world’, occurs seven times in the New Testament and is associated with the following items of truth.

Matthew 13:35. The secret, associated with the parables of Matthew 13.

Matthew 25:34. The kingdom, prepared for those of the nations who were kind to the Lord’s brethren, even though not consciously acting as unto Him.

Luke 11:50. The blood of the prophets, shed for the truth’s sake, commences with that of Abel, and so the expression, ‘From the foundation of the world’, goes back at least to the days of Adam.

- Hebrews 4:3. Speaks of the institution of the Sabbath and its fulfilment, and the finishing of the work of God in connection with this period.
- Hebrews 9:26. An argument is used in which this period is introduced in order to show the folly of the reasoning in question in the passage.
- Revelation 13:8. The book of life of the Lamb slain which had been written from the foundation of the world.
- Revelation 17:8. Names not written in this book of life.

The first time in Matthew that the Gentiles are mentioned with approbation (see Matt. 4:15; 6:32; 10:5,18), is in Matthew 12, that is upon the Lord's rejection.

'Then the Pharisees went out, and held a counsel against Him, how they might destroy Him ... should not make Him known: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying ... He shall show judgment to the Gentiles ... and in His name shall the Gentiles trust' (Matt. 12:14-21).

In the immediate context of the first quotation of Isaiah 6:9,10 in the New Testament we have, therefore, the following suggestive features:

- (1) The rejection of Christ as Israel's Messiah and King.
- (2) The introduction of the 'if' into the problem of John the Baptist.
- (3) The first occurrence of the word 'mystery'.
- (4) The first occurrence of the phrase 'From the foundation of the world'.
- (5) The first reference to the Gentile as an object of blessing (In Matthew 10 the word was 'Go *not* unto the Gentiles').

The reader who has already entered into the blessedness of the dispensation of the mystery made known through Paul, the Lord's prisoner, will need no lengthy exposition of the close parallel that exists between Matthew 13, and Acts 28. At the latter:

- (1) Israel, who reject the Lord, are rejected.
- (2) 'The mystery' is made manifest for the first time in those epistles written by Paul from prison.
- (3) Those thus blessed are 'Gentiles', particularly (Eph 3:1-13).
- (4) And they were chosen in Christ '*before* the foundation of the world'.

The two passages are parallel, but they deal with vastly different parts of the great kingdom of God: the one with the mystery phase of the kingdom of the heavens, the other with the dispensation of the mystery, which has its sphere 'far above all' where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Just as Christ turned from the multitude and began to speak of secrets to His disciples, secrets which had been kept since the foundation of the world, so Paul, the servant of Christ, no longer free and therefore unable to speak openly to the multitude, made known to the saints secrets that were hid in God from before the foundation of the world.

We therefore appreciate the aptness with which Isaiah 6:9,10 was quoted by the apostle at this great moment of Israel's rejection.

We do not believe that the reader who has pondered these things will need any argument by us to justify our sub-heading:

*'The Dispensational Landmark'*

Israel, as in Matthew 13, did not hear. The Gentiles, who, up till then, had been kept outside ('Go not' 'Aliens', 'Strangers'), now become the object of grace.

At the moment when the apostle could utter the words, 'The salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles', then, the dispensation of the mystery began and, then, Israel became *lo-ammi*, 'Not My people'.

When this day of matchless grace shall close, with every member of the Body safely brought into living relation with the exalted Head, then the thread of prophetic truth shall once more be taken up by God. Israel will look upon Him Whom they pierced, the Day of the Lord will set in, the purpose of the kingdom, including that of Gentile dominion, will finish its course, all Israel shall be saved, and the two aspects of the kingdom be realized, on the earth, and in the heavenly city.

There are further items of truth in Acts 28 that must be dealt with before we have covered the ground of its teaching.

### **The Quotation of Crisis (Isaiah 6:9,10)**

In the preceding section we spent the whole of our time examining the close correspondence that exists between Matthew 13 and Acts 28, and established the fact that in both cases 'mystery' follows 'rejection', although in the one the mystery was that of the kingdom, and in the other it was the mystery of the present dispensation.

We were, however, unable to consider the passage itself, quoted from Isaiah 6. Because of its importance, this we must now do.

'And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word' (Acts 28:25).

This 'one word' constituted Israel's solemn dismissal, for the word translated 'they departed' is in the passive and should be translated 'They were dismissed'. *Apoluo*, which is the word used in the original, not only means 'to send away' in a general sense, but in a good sense, 'to release', as in Hebrews 13:23, and, in a bad sense, 'to divorce' a wife, as in Matthew 1:19; 5:31,32 (twice), the first four occurrences of the verb. *It is this figure* that must be kept in mind when considering Israel's rejection in Acts 28 for, throughout their history, Israel's relationship with the Lord has been construed in terms of marriage.

'*They agreed not*'. - The word thus translated is *asumphonos*, which is derived from *sumphoneo*, the origin of our 'symphony'. It is used once in connection with the marriage relationship (1 Cor. 7:5) where husband and wife 'agree' to temporary separation for the Lord's sake. The separation of Israel from their Lord, however, was not by consent, but because there was no 'concord' that could make the relationship possible, although there will be when the repentance of Israel is brought about by grace.

This 'divorce' of Israel, which had cast its shadow even over the Gospels, and is anticipated in the first miracle of Acts 13, is now pronounced, and the word used to seal the dreadful dismissal is that quoted from Isaiah 6.

The place that chapter 6 occupies in the prophecy of Isaiah, its structure and other important details, will be found in *The Berean Expositor* Vol. 30, pp. 169-176; 195-200, in the series entitled *Fundamentals of Dispensational Truth*. But we draw attention here to the testimony of the closing verses, viz., the answer to the cry of the prophet, 'Lord, how long?' which speaks of cities wasted and land forsaken, with but a remnant that shall return and which shall constitute the holy seed. We cannot now stay to expound these verses, but must concentrate upon the passage quoted. To the apostle, this prophecy was the word spoken by the Holy Ghost: 'Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet unto your fathers' (Acts 28:25 R.V.).

An early testimony against Israel in the Acts accuses them of 'resisting the Holy Ghost' even as their fathers did (Acts 7:51). This resistance was accompanied by an uncircumcised condition of 'heart and ears', and is linked with the word spoken by angels, namely the giving of the law.

The reader will perceive that Stephen's initial testimony is brought to its full conclusion by the man who, in his ignorance and misdirected zeal, was found 'consenting unto his death'. In both passages the Holy Ghost is associated with the Word of God. 'Heart and ears' are involved, and just as Stephen says 'your fathers' not 'our fathers' so the revised text (also L.T. Tr. A.) of Acts 28:25 reads 'your' fathers. Here is a far-off echo of that pronouncement, '*Your house is left unto you desolate*' (Matt. 23:38).

When the apostle would impress his Hebrew hearers with the solemnity of their position, he wrote, 'Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith' (Heb. 3:7), not merely, 'Wherefore as it is found in Psalm 95'. It is a misconception that limits the doctrine of the Holy Ghost either to supernatural gifts or to the New Testament. It is true that the Holy Ghost was manifested at and after Pentecost as never before and that His office of *Paraklete* was new, but there are many references to the Spirit of God in the Old Testament that indicate the Person just as surely as the New Testament, and the fact that Paul, when speaking to unsaved Jews, could attribute the authorship of the prophecy of Isaiah to the Holy Ghost, teaches the same lesson:

'Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive' (Acts 28:26).

Earlier in the Acts than the witness of Stephen, already alluded to, comes the testimony of Peter:

'Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people' (Acts 3:22,23).

Israel had 'heard' the words of the Lord, but not in the spiritual sense, and the record of Paul's conversion in the Acts supplies a good illustration of the double meaning of both seeing and hearing:

'And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man' (Acts 9:7).

'And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him That spake to me' (Acts 22:9).

Here men who *heard*, 'heard not', and who *saw*, 'saw not'. They heard a 'sound', *phone*, and they saw a 'light', *phos*, but they saw 'no man' and they heard no intelligible words, but, like the multitude in John 12:29, for all they knew, it might have been thunder.

Israel 'heard', but they did not 'understand'; they 'saw' but they did not 'perceive', and the seat of the trouble was not in the eye or the ear, but in the heart:

'For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed' (Acts 28:27).

*Pachunomai*, 'waxed gross', occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in Matthew 13:15. The word is used as early as the prophetic song of Moses, when he described the very symptoms and disease from which Israel ultimately suffered. He spoke of the way in which the Lord had found Israel in a waste and howling wilderness and how He had kept him as the apple of His eye:

'But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation' (Deut. 32:15).

Derived from *pachunomai* is *pachne*, 'frost', and *pachnoo*, 'to freeze', and *pachos*, 'thick', a condition that described Israel at this time. To describe a specially dull-witted fellow, we use the modern expression, 'He has a skin as thick as an elephant'; thus we can realize that such a 'thick skinned' animal is a 'pachyderm', and that the modern figure and the ancient ascription are therefore akin.

The heart having 'waxed gross' the ear became 'dull'. *Bareos*, the word translated 'dull', is derived from *barus*, a weight or burden, and when used metaphorically indicates the hardening of the heart (Exod. 8:15,32; 9:7,34; 10:1). Being used of Pharaoh in Exodus it provided a dreadful object lesson for Israel as they heard the word of the Holy Ghost. Isaiah uses the word in a good sense when he speaks of one who 'stoppeh his ears from hearing of blood' (Isa. 33:15). He uses it also in the statement, 'Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear' (Isa. 59:1). Had Israel heard with understanding and seen with perception they would have been 'converted' and 'healed'. Where Paul, quoting Isaiah, said 'hear' and 'see', Peter said, 'Repent ye therefore, and be *converted*' (Acts 3:19), and if the reader will consult the section dealing with the healing of the lame man and its prophetic import (Acts 3 and 4, in pages 80-84) it will be seen that this repentance and conversion is spoken of as 'the healing' (Acts 4:12), as the word translated 'salvation' actually means. When we remember the

many miracles of 'healing' wrought by the Lord to bring Israel to repentance (*see* Matt. 11) the close association of these different elements of witness and Israel's failure to understand and perceive becomes the more tragic.

The repentance, the conversion, the healing of Israel, was the threefold goal of the ministry both of our Lord during His earthly life and of the apostles after His ascension. That goal has never been completely set aside. Temporarily, Israel are not God's people, but at last 'All Israel shall be saved'; they shall look upon Him Whom they pierced and mourn for Him, and at this repentance their conversion will become a fact, and the time of restitution will have come. But that day is 'not yet'. A new dispensation has taken the place of that which obtained through the Acts which, it is important to remember, covered the period of the early epistles of Paul, and that new dispensation is ushered in by the epoch-making words: '*The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it*' (Acts 28:28).

Since the days of Abraham there is no record of any Gentile being 'saved' *independently of Israel!* We say advisedly 'There is no record'. We do not limit the Holy One of Israel, but we are rightly and necessarily limited by the written word. The apostle in Galatians 1:8 made a staggering statement. Having made it he still seemed to fear that it would not be taken literally, so he repeated it; 'As we said before, so say I now again' (Gal. 1:9). We have just made the statement, 'Since the days of Abraham there is no record of any Gentile being *saved independently of Israel*' and lest the reader should miss the challenge to orthodoxy that such a statement makes, we ask for one reference from the Old Testament or the New Testament to disprove it. If it cannot be disproved, then we must perforce acknowledge the great change indicated in Acts 28:28.

In Acts 13, at the commencement of his separate ministry, the apostle introduced the great doctrine of justification by faith, without works of law, with the words, 'Be it known unto you therefore' (Acts 13:38). At the commencement of his new and separate ministry (that of the mystery) he introduced the key thought once again with the self-same words, 'Be it known therefore unto you' (Acts 28:28, *exactly the same Greek as in* Acts 13:38). In Acts 13, moreover, we have a warning, 'Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets' (Acts 13:40). In Acts 28:23-27 that warning is fulfilled.

On the ground that Paul had earlier announced that he was turning away from the Jews to the Gentiles, there are some who refuse to admit that Acts 28:28 marks a dispensational crisis. Before Acts 28:28 can be proved to be THE CRISIS, the passages which record this turning to the Gentiles must therefore be considered. After Paul had spoken in the synagogue at Antioch, the Gentiles who were attached desired that they might hear the message the following Sabbath. This however provoked the envy of the Jews, and they spoke against the testimony of Paul and Barnabas, who then boldly said:

'It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles' (Acts 13:46).

But this was merely a local action, as is proved by continuing our reading until we come to the words, 'And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews', (Acts 14:1). Again, the Jews assaulted the apostles and, again, they turned to the Gentiles, for in Lystra his hearers were idolaters. Here also the nature of their action was as local as at Antioch. When the apostle returned to Antioch in Syria, he did not report the setting aside of the Jew and the introduction of a new dispensation for the Gentile, but 'rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles' (Acts 14:27). This is the inspired interpretation of Acts 13 and 14.

A perusal of Acts 15 will clearly show the relative ascendancy in the church at that time of the Jew over the Gentile, and in Acts 16, while neither synagogue nor Jew is mentioned, the fact that Paul and his companion joined the women gathered together on the Sabbath day for prayer is proof enough that those women were Jewesses. In Acts 17, 'Paul, *as his manner was*', went into the synagogue. How could Luke say that, if Paul had turned to the Gentiles? Even at Athens, it is the Jews in the synagogue who are mentioned before the philosophers (Acts 17:17,18), and upon his arrival at Corinth, Paul went at once to the Jewish quarter and found a certain Jew, and once again we read: 'He reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks' (Acts 18:4). But here, too, the Jews resented the teaching of the apostle, calling forth his condemnation in the words, 'Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles' (Acts 18:6).



It may not have particular significance, or it may be typical, that the next verse tells us that he entered into a house which was 'hard to (by) the synagogue' and that Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue believed on the Lord, and from 1 Corinthians 1:1, we gather his successor, Sosthenes (18:17) also. But the objector may say that Paul's words in 18:6 are final, 'from henceforth'. Yet we have only to read on to verse 19 to find him once again in the synagogue and reasoning with the Jews.

After his visit to Jerusalem we once more find the apostle speaking boldly in the synagogue, occupying the space of three months in this public ministry (Acts 19:8). Again his testimony was followed by opposition, and for two years he conducted his ministry among the disciples in the school of one Tyrannus (verse 9), where both Jews and Greeks heard the word of the Lord Jesus.

Still the opposition of the Jews persisted, for it is found again in Acts 20:3; and, in verse 22, the apostle's testimony as a free man draws to an end. His own summary of it says nothing of any turning from the Jews to the Gentiles, but, on the contrary, his own words are, 'Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks'.

No valid opposition can be discovered in the record of the Acts to the position we have reached, namely, that at Acts 28:28 a door was opened to the Gentiles *that had never been opened before* and that there the dispensation of the mystery was given to the imprisoned apostle; there the high glories of heavenly places were, for the first time, revealed. Acts 28:28 is the dispensational landmark.

### **The Testimony of the Lord's Prisoner (Acts 28:30,31)**

'And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him' (Acts 28:30,31).

With these words the narrative of the Acts ends. 'The hired house' is in correspondence with 'the lodging' of verse 23, but the words used differ, *xenia*, from *xenos*, a stranger or foreigner, and indicating 'a lodging' being used in verse 23, but *misthoma*, 'a hired house' derived from *misthos*, 'hire' or 'reward', being used in verse 30.

Not accused of any definite transgression against Roman law, Paul was permitted to hire a house, but he was never without the Roman soldier to whom he was chained wrist to wrist. While, as was the case in his second imprisonment (2 Tim. 2:9), he was not treated as a 'malefactor', his words, 'remember my bonds' (Col. 4:18), reveal how keenly were felt the conditions under which these 'two whole years' were passed. Nevertheless the apostle was free to receive all that came to him and fulfilled his obligation 'to enlighten all as to what is the dispensation of the mystery'.

In order to appreciate the ministry of this hired house, let us travel back in thought to the days of the apostle and wend our way to the house of a believer in one of the towns or cities - say Ephesus - and there assemble with the church. Upon entering the little assembly we are conscious of a strange atmosphere. Gloom, or perhaps perplexity, takes the place of joy and certainty. Where, before, 'one had a psalm, another a doctrine, another a tongue, a revelation, or an interpretation', now there is silence. Miraculous gifts seem to have ceased, the gift of healing appears to have been withdrawn, and yet, no new-found grace or privilege appears to have taken their place. Turning to one of the brethren, we ask what might be the cause of this brooding silence, and the following is intended to give a fairly accurate idea of the resultant conversation and happy sequel.

*Alpha.*- No, we have no uncertainty regarding our salvation, brother; we are still in the blessed state of justification by faith. No condemnation and no separation is ours, thank God, by indefeasible grace, but what troubles us is that a change has come over our assembly. With as bright a faith as yesterday, brethren now find themselves unable to produce the 'signs following'. Where even a 'handkerchief' sent from the apostle would at one time effect a cure, we are bewildered to discover that some have even been advised 'to take a little wine' to help alleviate bodily weakness.

*Beta.*- There are strange rumours travelling round the churches. Some say that Paul at Rome has announced a dispensational crisis, and that Israel as a people have been set aside, and their hope suspended.

*Gamma.*- But, brethren, even though Israel be set aside, and even though we rightly sorrow at such a tragic happening, why should that plunge us into gloom for ourselves? We were not saved by Israel, but by Israel's Lord.

*Alpha.*- True, brother, Christ and Christ alone is our rock foundation; upon Him, and upon Him alone, we rest for our salvation. That is not our problem. It is this. We learned from the apostle to discriminate between 'doctrine' and 'dispensation', between that salvation which is 'in Christ' and the dispensational position and privilege which was 'with faithful Abraham'. While we were told we were justified by faith and had peace and access, yet we were also reminded that we were nevertheless 'wild olives' grafted into the Olive Tree of Israel. While that Olive Tree stood our dispensational position was known and accepted. But the disquieting news that we have received of Israel's rejection, together with the cessation of many evidential signs and miracles, seem to indicate that we can no longer be joined to Israel, nor partakers of the fatness of the Olive Tree. Our problem is not, Are we still saved? but, Who or what are we? Are we a distinct company? If so, what is our basis? We possess the Scriptures, and have searched Moses and the Prophets, and we rejoiced to perceive, that although Israel may fail and be temporarily set aside, a blessed day of restoration is sure, because God will keep His covenant with Abraham. But, though we have searched diligently, we can find no word to tell us what God would do, should Israel not repent, or what position the Gentile believer would occupy if Israel and its hope be set aside. Therefore unless there be granted to Paul or to some of us a new revelation, we can have no intelligent conception of either our calling or our hope.

*Beta.*- Brethren, if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God; we can at least pray, we still have access there, and surely it will be well-pleasing to the Lord that we enquire of Him for light in our present darkness.

We will not transcribe the prayer that followed, but will give the sequel. As Daniel experienced, so did this little assembly. 'While I was speaking in prayer', said Daniel, the angel came, and while this little company confessed their ignorance and desired illumination, an 'angel', or a 'messenger', arrived with a blessed and full answer of peace. Into the little assembly entered a travel-stained man. His steps were weary, but his heart was light. He was the harbinger of tidings the equal of which mortal ears had never heard.

*Angelos* (The Messenger) speaks: Brethren, lift up your heads! Listen to the tidings I bring! Grace has indeed super-abounded, blessings beyond our dreams have been revealed as ours! The apostle Paul has indeed pronounced the doom of Israel, and, with their setting aside, the hope and promises belonging to them must go as well. You must be prepared to lose that you may gain. You must be emptied that you may be filled. Brethren, never again will the apostle speak to you of Abraham; never again will he minister the New Covenant; never again will his hands bring healing to the sick or life to the dead. These things you must be prepared to forego, but I will not dwell upon the negative side - let me advance to my real message. God has revealed to Paul that he is now 'The prisoner of Jesus Christ *for you Gentiles*'; that to him in that new capacity God has granted a new dispensation! This dispensation is concerned with a secret, a secret *not discoverable in the Scriptures*, because it has been '*hid in God*' since the ages. Now, since the setting aside of Israel, God has made manifest this secret purpose, and I bring you the glad message, that God chose, before the overthrow of the world, Gentile believers to be associated with Christ, as members of His body, and to be seated with Him where He now sits at the right hand of God, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places!

But, beloved, I will not stand between you and the real message I bring; here is an epistle sent by the apostle to the assemblies, and to be read and interchanged with the epistle to Laodicea, which I also am entrusted to deliver.

At this, Angeles produced a letter, the letter which we now call 'The Epistle to the Ephesians', which gives us the basis of the teaching that Paul dispensed in his own house throughout the two years of his imprisonment.

Five epistles bear the mark of prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and 2 Timothy. When, however, we think of the new revelation and its conveyance to ourselves in the New Testament, we speak of the 'Four Prison Epistles'.

In verse 23 of Acts 28 neither 'preaching' nor 'teaching' is mentioned, but 'exposition', 'testimony' and 'persuasion'; in verse 31, however, we have 'preaching' and 'teaching'.

A number of words are translated 'preach' but the two chief are *euaggelizo* and *kerusso*. So far as Acts is concerned, *euaggelizo* occurs sixteen times, and *kerusso* eight, but, looking at the New Testament as a whole, the two words occur almost an equal number of times, so that we must be careful before drawing inferences. The word used in Acts 28:31 is *kerusso*, which is allied with *kerux*, a herald, a word not used in the early epistles of Paul, but which is found in 1 Timothy 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:11, where the apostle solemnly asseverates that he was 'appointed a preacher (*kerux*), and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles'. This is therefore a reason why the 'preaching' of Acts 28:31 should be a 'heralding' rather than an 'evangelizing', and this harmonizes with the making known of the new phase of the kingdom of God that included, for the first time, the dispensation of the mystery.

*Didasko*, 'teaching' is one of five Greek words so translated. The other words are: *Kataggello*, 'to teach', but only so translated once (Acts 16:21). This need not detain us here, for it so obviously means 'to announce tidings' as to need no proof. *Katecheo*, 'to instruct', *Matheteuo*, 'to disciple', and *Paideuo*, 'to chasten' or 'train, as a child', while having their place, would be out of place in Acts 28:31.

*Didasko*, the word used, is associated with *didache* and *didaskalia*, 'doctrine', and is used to denote the new revelation of grace which constitutes the mystery. Specific teaching was necessary on many important subjects. When the apostle wrote to Timothy: 'Thou hast fully known my doctrine' (2 Tim. 3:10), he presupposes that some definite teaching had been given. The word *didaskalos* is used in 1 Timothy 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:11, passages already referred to in connection with *kerux*. Paul *heralded* the kingdom of God, and *taught* those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.

The nature of his witness in verse 23 necessitated a stress upon the name 'Jesus', and, equally, the nature of the witness of verse 31 necessitated a stress upon the full title, 'The Lord Jesus Christ'. The peculiar revelation of the epistles of the mystery demand emphasis upon the ascension and the seating of Christ at the right hand of God, in the heavenly places, and consequently the full title of the Saviour is given. Moreover it should never be forgotten that if we know and teach the distinctive association which Christ holds with any part of the purpose of the ages, we know and teach the most important part. For example, it would be unintelligible had Paul stressed membership of the BODY before stressing the HEADSHIP of Christ; he must of necessity 'teach' the things that concern the Lord Jesus Christ first. How could any saved Gentile contemplate a seat in the highest heavens, until and unless he had received instruction concerning the ascension and seating of the Lord.

The word 'concerning' should not be passed over without comment. *Peri*, the word so translated, means, in composition, 'round about', and it is a splendid conception of teaching, preaching and witness, when Christ is seen to be at the centre, and that all teaching and preaching revolves around Him. This at least was gloriously true of the apostle's teaching, for it is not possible to imagine a Pauline epistle without a central and glorious Christ.

The closing words of the Acts are suggestive, 'With all confidence, unforbidden'.

*Parrhesia* is variously translated 'openly', 'freely', 'plainly', as well as 'confidence', but there is never absent from the word the thought of freedom of speech; *rhesis* means 'a speaking'. The words of the A.V., 'No man forbidding him', represents one word in the original - *Akolutos*. While this is the only occurrence of the word in the New Testament, the positive form of the verb, *koluo*, 'to forbid' or 'to hinder', occurs many times. Paul had been 'forbidden' of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia (Acts 16:6); and admitted to the Roman saints that he had been 'let' in his endeavours to visit them (Rom. 1:13). He had been 'forbidden' by the Jews to speak to the Gentiles (1 Thess. 2:16). Now, Satan hindered no longer (1 Thess. 2:18), for, although we can well believe that the enemy of all truth had moved the opposition that had eventually led to the curtailment of the bodily liberty of the apostle, upon the revelation itself, he had not, blessed be God, been able to put bonds. Prison did not hinder the apostle in his ministry. The Jews had 'forbidden' him to speak to the Gentiles, but their enmity had but placed him in a sphere where their hatred was inoperative. He could preach and teach with gyves<sup>\*</sup> on his wrist but with liberty in his heart. Once he had been forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, but the Holy Ghost forbade no longer, for

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\* gyve = fetter, shackle, or chain.

he was in the very centre of God's purpose: it was a Gentile dispensation and therefore neither Antioch nor Jerusalem was so fitting a centre as Rome.

Commentators have advanced many ingenious reasons for the 'unfinished' character of the Acts. We, however, can well believe that it accomplished the Divine purpose for which it was undertaken, and that it was not the intention of the writer to go beyond the arrival at Rome. How Paul fared before Nero; how many times he was heard; whether Poppaea had any influence over Nero at the time, and the thousand and one points to which the imagination and enquiring mind seek an answer, these are apparently no concern of the inspired historian and consequently should be no concern of ours. Let us be glad of that concluding phrase, 'With all confidence, unforbidden, unhindered' and rejoice that during that confident and unhindered period of his bondage, the apostle was moved to pen those immortal epistles, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians.

It is with great joy, yet with reluctance, that we bring this book to a close. We are confident that whoever approaches the Acts of the Apostles with a clear eye for its dispensational teaching will realize the importance of Acts 28 in the development of the purpose of the ages. For the testimony of Luke, the beloved physician and faithful minister with the apostle to the Gentiles, every believer should give thanks, for, without the Acts of the Apostles, we should have little or no historic background for the ministry of the ascended Christ.

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