

# PAUL'S ARREST AT JERUSALEM

BIBLE TEXT : Acts 21:1-40; 22:1-30; 23:1-35.

LESSON 370 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Timothy 1:7).

## BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

### **Acts 21:1-40**

1 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:

2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till *we were* out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

7 And when we had finished *our* course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and abode with him.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

10 And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 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.

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 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

## Bible References:

### **I Paul Journeys Toward Jerusalem**

1. Paul and his companions tarried seven days at Tyre, Acts 21:1-4.

2. At Tyre the disciples said to Paul through the Spirit, that bonds and afflictions awaited him at Jerusalem, Acts 21:4-7.

3. At Caesarea Paul was again warned by the Spirit of God that the Jews would bind him at Jerusalem, Acts 21:8-14;

#### **Acts 20:22**

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

#### **Acts 20:23**

23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

### **II Paul's Arrival at Jerusalem**

1. Paul gave a report of his ministry to James and the elders of the church, Acts 21:15-20.

2. Paul was asked by the elders to take a vow with four other men to appease the Jews, which he did, Acts 21:20-26

3. Paul was seized by an angry mob of Jews and was saved from bodily harm only by the intervention of the Romans, Acts 21:27-37.

### **III Paul's Testimony and Imprisonment**

1. Paul is given liberty to speak to the Jews, Acts 21:38-40; 22:1-21.

2. Paul was held by the Romans till the morrow, at which time he again gave his testimony to the high priest and the council, and before the Romans, Act 22:22-30; 23:1.

3. The Jews attempted to kill Paul, whereupon he was taken by an armed guard to Felix the Governor for further questioning, Acts 23:2-35.

## Notes:

### **Paul the Man**

The last eight chapters of the Book of Acts relate the events of the closing days of the life of Paul the Apostle. Paul was a man whose abiding passion in life was to preach Christ to the masses who knew nothing of Him. Paul was wholeheartedly devoted to the service of God; and that intense devotion and burning zeal, coupled with his untiring labour for the work of the Lord, caused the Holy Spirit to inspire many pages of the Bible, recording this man's life and deeds for the inspiration of other generations. Paul made his love for God mightily felt in his own day; and because of the record of his life in the Bible, his life was continued to be an influence ever since; and he, like Abel, being dead, yet speaks.

### **Journey of Destiny**

Paul felt the leading of the Spirit to go to Jerusalem again. He ended that trip by standing before the highest court of the Roman empire, that of Caesar.

Warned in every city, by the Spirit of God, of the trouble that awaited him in Jerusalem at the hands of the Jews, Paul was not

at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

16 There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

18 And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

20 And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

21 And 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.

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

24 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.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written *and* concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all *men* every

deterred from going. Paul had been called of God to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, but his heart burned continually for the salvation of his countrymen, the Jews. He felt keenly his desire to go again to Jerusalem and testify to the Jews of the great things that Christ had done for him, and would do for them if they would but believe on His name. Paul was determined to give his testimony to them despite any hazard in so doing. Paul had a proper estimate of the value of the testimony of a Blood-washed sinner, and he knew from experience that those who hear such testimonies are not unaffected. Nothing is more positive than the testimony of men and women who know for a certainty that they have passed from darkness into everlasting light. Such testimonies are sermons of authority, anointed and approved by the Holy Spirit of God, and cannot be easily forgotten by those who hear them.

Paul's conversion had dealt Judaism such a blow that its followers never forgave him. To lose one of their chief champions to the cause of Christ was unbearable to the Jews, and they sought his life for his "heresy." To place himself within their grasp in order to testify to them again was indeed a risky thing. Despite such risks Paul loved his countrymen enough that he was willing to give his life if he must (which indeed he was forced to do), in the hope that they might be saved. On an earlier occasion Paul had said, regarding his countrymen's salvation: "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:3). And he said again, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1). Paul proved by giving his life for the Gospel that such statements were not idle talk but were statements from a heart burning with the desire to see his people brought to a saving knowledge of Christ.

While Paul's journey to Jerusalem, which resulted in his imprisonment and death, might seem foolhardy to some, we know from the Scriptures that God supported him throughout his ordeal and gave him a mighty victory; and in the end took him home to Himself.

Paul trusted implicitly in God's providential care over him; and while he did not say it in the same words as Job said it, the essence of his faith in God was the same: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15).

### Testimony and Victory

Jesus said: "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). He also said: "They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist" (Luke 21:12-15).

That was a stern warning, perhaps, for the many who would have to face the things of which Jesus spoke, but they were promised glorious victory by the help and grace of God. Jesus said he was not alone, but the Father was always with Him; and it is true of His followers, that they are not alone. Jesus said the world would be the enemy of the Christian, but He told His disciples not to fear, because He had overcome the world.

When John the Beloved, on the Isle of Patmos, had that great vision of the last days, he saw those of whom it was said: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death"

where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

39 But Paul said, 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.

40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto *them* in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

#### **Acts 22:1-30**

1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence *which I make* now unto you.

2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

3 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.

(Revelation 12:11). It pleased the Lord that Paul would be one of that great numbers, who sealed their testimony and fidelity to their Lord with their life's blood.

Paul had told the great story of Jesus and His love throughout the civilised world; and in the closing hours of his life he was to testify again before kings and rulers. They had rejected the King of Glory, and they would also reject Paul; but God is ever faithful, and His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. Once again he was sending one of His own to tell the story that men might repent of their sins and receive eternal life. None who had heard Paul would be able to say that they had not heard of the Gospel. Though it would be a repetition of previous times when they had said, in word and deed, that they would not have this man (Christ) to rule over them, yet He ever abideth faithful, and wills not that any be lost, but that all should have eternal life through Jesus Christ the Lord.

#### **QUESTIONS**

1. How did Paul know that bonds and afflictions awaited him at Jerusalem?
2. What was Paul's decision regarding his trip to Jerusalem?
3. Why did the elders of the church at Jerusalem desire Paul to take a vow?
4. Why did Paul do so?
5. Why did the Jews attempt to kill Paul?
6. How was Paul saved from harm?
7. Why was Paul taken to Felix for questioning?

4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9 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.

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*,

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

17 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;

18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 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.

21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

22 And 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.

23 And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air,

24 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.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

26 When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free* born.

29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

30 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 23:1-35**

1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou* whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

7 And when he had so said, there arose a

dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes *that were* of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring *him* into the castle.

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto *him*, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

18 So he took him, and brought *him* to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto *him*, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went *with him* aside privately, and asked *him*, What is that thou hast to tell me?

20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly.

21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves

with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

22 So the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged *him*, *See thou* tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me.

23 And he called unto *him* two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;

24 And provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor.

25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:

26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix *sendeth* greeting.

27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.

28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:

29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.

30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what *they had* against him. Farewell.

31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris.

32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:

33 Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

34 And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of Cilicia;

35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.