

## **I. ARRESTED IN THE TEMPLE**

### **A. Paul came to Jerusalem in order to meet the church there and to worship in the temple.**

- 1. But when Paul was in the temple some Jews from Ephesus recognized him. They were angry to see him.**
  - a. They had seen Paul in the city with a Gentile Christian from Ephesus and they jumped to the wrong conclusion, *that Paul had brought a Gentile into the temple!* (Read Acts 21:28, "Men of Israel, help!").
  - b. The Jews were filled with anger; and they grabbed hold of Paul, dragged him through the temple, and started to beat him. They wanted to beat him to death or even to stone him. And Paul *would* have died if the Roman soldiers who had a look-out over the temple had not come to his rescue.
  - c. There was a barracks of Roman soldiers overlooking the temple; they saw the fight and rushed down to break it up. Paul was arrested, chained to two soldiers, and the Roman captain demanded an explanation
- 2. Since the Jews could give no reason for their behavior the captain ordered Paul be taken into the castle.**
  - a. The captain assumed that Paul was a dangerous criminal. The soldiers brought Paul toward the stone steps leading up into the castle (barracks). The Jews were furious that Paul was escaping, and they followed him. The soldiers carried Paul beyond their reach because the Jews wanted to tear Paul to pieces!
  - b. When Paul reached the top he asked the captain, "May I speak with thee?" The captain gave Paul permission to speak to the Jews from the top of the stairs, which he did in Hebrew, the Jews' language.
  - c. Paul's speech to the Jews made the Jews even angrier. Paul explained to them who he was, how that Jesus had appeared to him on the Damascus Road and sent him to preach to the Gentiles. When the Jews heard the word "Gentiles" they shouted, took their coats off and threw dust into the air: "Away with such a fellow from the earth for it is not fit that he should live!" (Acts 22:22).
- 3. The reaction of the Jews to Paul's speech (which the chief captain did not understand) surprised the chief captain. What had this man said? Who was he? There was only one way to find out.**
  - a. To question Paul, the soldiers began to tie Paul to two pillars with leather straps. They stripped him of his clothes to reveal his bare back. They were getting ready to scourge him with a cruel whip!
  - b. Paul said to the centurion: "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned?"
  - c. Of course it was not! Paul was spared scourging because of his Roman citizenship and the chief captain treated him with much more respect after that.

### **B. The next day, Paul was taken to stand before the Sanhedrin to answer his accusers.**

- 1. The high priest was Ananias and the trial before him was not a fair one. The Jews wanted Paul dead.**
  - a. As soon as Paul began to speak, the high priests ordered one to slap him on the face! (Acts 23:2).
  - b. Paul understood that the Sanhedrin were a mixture of Sadducees and Pharisees so he said, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee ..." (Acts 23:6). *Remember the difference between Pharisees & Sadducees.*
  - c. Paul's words about the resurrection caused a division in the Sanhedrin, Pharisees against Sadducees, with Paul trapped in the middle. They almost tore Paul in pieces!
  - d. That night the Lord appeared to Paul in a dream: "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).
- 2. But the Jews still wanted to kill Paul so forty men came together to form a plot.**
  - a. So serious were these Jews that they made a promise to God (a vow) that they would eat and drink nothing until they had killed Paul; and they brought their idea to the high priest.
  - b. The plan was this: the chief priest would ask the captain to send Paul to answer some more questions; and on the way these men would kill Paul. He would never reach the Sanhedrin alive!
  - c. But Paul's nephew overheard the plot, told Paul, and then told the chief captain. Since it was no longer safe to keep Paul in Jerusalem the chief captain wrote a letter to Felix the governor in Caesarea and sent Paul to Caesarea by night guarded by 470 soldiers (Acts 23:23). God was looking after Paul!

## **II. IN ROMAN CUSTODY AT CAESAREA**

### **A. When Paul arrived in Caesarea Felix told him that he would listen to his case when his accusers came.**

- 1. Five days later, Ananias, the leaders of the Jews, and a lawyer called Tertullus arrived.**
  - a. The Jews accused Paul of three things: a troublemaker; the leader of a false religion ("the sect of the Nazarenes") and a polluter of the temple.
  - b. Paul answered the three charges: he had caused no trouble (he had only arrived in Jerusalem 12 days earlier; no one had seen him stirring up the people); he was a Christian leader but that was no crime; and he had not polluted the temple. The Jews had no witnesses to bring against him.
  - c. Felix knew Paul was innocent, but to please the Jews he did not release him. He kept Paul under arrest for two years. Paul preached to him (Felix was frightened by Paul's preaching but Felix did not believe, Acts

24:25). Felix also hoped that Paul would pay him money for his release, but Paul gave him nothing. *Paul waited patiently knowing that God had promised him that he would testify in Rome.*

**2. Felix was replaced as governor by Festus. Again, the Jews appeared before Festus to accuse Paul.**

- a. When the Jews could again prove nothing against Paul, Festus asked Paul if he would be willing to stand trial in Jerusalem. Paul saw this as a trap and refused to go.
- b. Paul, a Roman citizen, had one more right which he had not used: he would appeal to Caesar.
- c. But the problem for Festus was: what am I going to write to the Emperor about this prisoner?

**B. At that time King Herod (Agrippa II) arrived with his wife Bernice. Festus asked Agrippa's advice.**

**1. This King Herod is the fourth Herod we have seen in the NT**

- a. The first King Herod, Herod the Great, murdered the babies of Bethlehem and tried to kill Jesus.
- b. The second King Herod, Herod Antipas, married to Herodias, put John the Baptist to death.
- c. The third King Herod, Herod Agrippa I, put James to death, imprisoned Peter & was eaten by worms.
- d. This fourth King Herod, Herod Agrippa II, married to Bernice, heard Paul's case before Festus.

**2. Paul was pleased to have opportunity to testify before both Herod Agrippa II and Festus**

- a. But when Paul gave his defence, and especially when he spoke of the resurrection, Festus shouted out, "Paul, thou art beside thyself: much learning doth make thee mad!" (Acts 26:24).
- b. Paul even appealed to Herod: Herod knew the prophets. But Herod was not persuaded, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28).
- c. Both Herod & Festus were wicked and unbelieving. But Paul had testified to them. They had no excuse.

**III. TRANSPORTED AS A PRISONER TO ROME**

**A. Once it was decided that Paul would travel to Rome he was placed into the care of a centurion called Julius.**

**1. Paul was placed in ship with other prisoners and they sailed close to the coast (past Cyprus; see map).**

- a. Julius the centurion treated Paul well, probably because Paul was a Roman citizen and Paul was on his way to appeal to Caesar (not proved to be a criminal).
- b. Sailing was very slow because the wind was against them, but they made it to the island of Crete. But the time of year was now dangerous for sailing (ships did not sail between November and March).
- c. At Crete, when they landed in "Fair Havens" Paul advised them to go no further (Acts 27:10) but the centurion did not listen to Paul. They only had to go a little bit along the coast to Phenice (Phoenix) and there they could spend the winter. When the winds looked favourable they set sail once again, staying as close to the coast as they could.

**2. But when they left Fair Havens the wind changed and a violent storm blew the ship off course.**

- a. The ship was tossed about in the middle of the sea. The winds blew violently, the waves crashed against the little ship and it seemed that it would sink. They would all die! But remember the Lord had promised to Paul that he would testify in Rome.
- b. To make the ship lighter the sailors threw the cargo overboard, but the storm continued for 14 days (v. 27). The people on the ship had no idea where they were. The sky was dark and they could see neither the sun nor the stars to help them determine their direction. All hope was lost!
- c. Paul stood up in the midst, "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me" (Acts 27:22ff). *God had promised that, although the ship would be lost, none of the people on the ship would die.*

**B. Soon the sailors on board detected the presence of some land. There was an island nearby.**

**1. As Paul had promised the ship was destroyed but the people were saved.**

- a. The sailors tried to escape on the lifeboat, but when Paul said to Julius & the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved" (Acts 27:31), the soldiers cut the ropes and let the lifeboat fall into the sea.
- b. Then the soldiers, thinking that their prisoners would escape, wanted to kill them, but Julius wanted to save Paul, so he stopped the soldiers.
- c. The storm smashed the ship into pieces, but everybody on the ship, some swimming, others clinging to pieces of the ship, made it safe to the island, 276 people.

**2. On the island – Melita or Malta – the people received the shipwrecked strangers kindly.**

- a. Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake. The people thought that he must be a wicked man, but when Paul did not die they concluded that he was a god. Paul even healed the father of the chief man of the island whose name was Publius, and he healed others on the island (Acts 28:4-6, 7-9).
- b. After three months Paul and the others left the island on a ship which had wintered there. The ship brought Paul to Rome; and *there the book of Acts and NT history ends*. Paul was kept in a private house for two years guarded by a soldier. We do not know what happened to him. But we can guess by reading his letters. Compare Philemon 22 with II Timothy 4:6-7. History tells us that Paul was eventually beheaded in Rome as a faithful martyr of Jesus Christ but only after he had finished serving the church.