



ACM BIBLE STUDIES

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Record of the Beginning of Jesus' Reign

Chapter Twenty-One

INTRODUCTION

WE HAVE followed Paul on three excursions beginning from Antioch, Syria and going into Asia Minor. The purpose of these excursions was to carry the good news of Christ's Reign to Israelites in the nations. On the last two excursions he went beyond Asia Minor and visited Macedonia and Greece as well.

As we begin chapter 21, Paul is returning from his third trip. His ship will land him at Caesarea, and from there he will go on to Jerusalem. He wants to be there when the Judeans hold their Feast of Pentecost. Many Jews from surrounding nations would be there, and some would be the Israelites to whom Paul was commissioned to take the good news of Christ's Reign. Paul had been commissioned to take the gospel to Israel in the nations as well as in Judea and Samaria.

He had another motive as well for going back to Jerusalem. He knew that the ecclesia there was suffering persecution from the Jewish establishment. He needed to be there to encourage and help his brethren in the mounting crisis.

As we pick up with chapter 21, Paul is working his way from Asia Minor southward and eastward toward the Syrian/Palestinian/Phoenician coast.

NOTE: Anyone who has experienced prejudice and persecution from established religion will relate to Paul's struggles with the Jews in this chapter.

The most persistent and vengeful persecution of Christ has always come from religious establishments.

Churches and preachers are the greatest threats to truth ... because people are prone to think of them as good and godly ... when the truth is they are just the opposite. They defraud simple minds and twist Holy Scripture ... all in the name of God.

ACTS 21:1-7 PAUL SAILS FROM MILETUS

After taking our leave of them, we came with a straight course to Cos, and the following day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara:

And finding a ship crossing over into Phoenicia, we went aboard and set out.

After coming in sight of Cyprus

we left it behind on the left hand and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unload her cargo.

And finding the disciples, we remained there seven days. But they were telling Paul, through the spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

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.

And when we had taken leave of one another,

we boarded the ship and they returned to their own home.

And when we had finished sailing from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and having greeted the brethren we stayed one day with them.

PATARA was on the southwest tip of Asia Minor. From Patara Paul sailed across the Mediterranean to Cyprus, an island between Asia Minor and Phoenicia. After a brief stop in Cyprus, he and his traveling companions went on to Syria where they landed at the seaport city of

Tyre.

Paul wasn't the only one who sensed danger ahead in Jerusalem. The disciples who met him at Tyre knew the political atmosphere in Jerusalem, and they implored him not to continue on into what they foresaw as sure trouble.

Yet Paul, after kneeling on the

ocean shore and praying with them, continued aboard a ship bound for Caesarea. And so, he sailed southward, stopping at Ptolemais for one day, and then continued down to Caesarea.

ACTS 21:8-14 MORE PREDICTIONS OF TROUBLE

The next day we departed, and came to Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.

And this man had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

And as we stayed there many more days, there came down from Judea a prophet named Agabus.

And he came to us, and taking Paul's belt he bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus says the holy spirit, The Jews at Jerusalem will bind in this manner the man who owns this belt, and shall deliver him into the hands of the nationals (Romans).

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

Then Paul answered, What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

And when he would not be dissuaded, we ceased, and said, The will of the Lord be done.

IN VERSE EIGHT, Philip is called "the evangelist." This was not Philip the apostle, but a different Philip.

The word "evangelist" is a literal translation of the Greek "evangelistoo": from "ev" (good) and "angelos"

(messenger). Philip was "a messenger of good." Not only was Philip a messenger of good, he was also "one of the seven" as mentioned in chapter six:

1. *And in those days, when the number of the disciples*

was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

2. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reasonable that we should leave the word of God to keep books.

3. Wherefore, brethren, select among you seven men of honest report, full of holy spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

Acts 6:1-3

The King James Version says, “...*It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.*” As we pointed out in chapter six, those “tables” were not for food. Rather, they were tables for recording finances. They were books, in the form of tablets. The “tables” were “bookkeeping tablets.”

As you recall, Jesus overturned “tables” in the temple treasury where the bankers or money changers were conducting usurious business. Those “tablets” (tables) were records of money transactions and loans.

Thus, “tables” were books and records. The twelve apostles didn’t think it right for them to turn to bookkeeping. They had been called to be apostles. Thus, they sought out seven men of “good repute” to keep books and to oversee the treasury and the benevolent fund for widows. You can reread the story in Acts six. In verse five Philip was named as one of those seven bookkeepers.

In light of this, we know that Paul’s co-travelers were already acquainted with Philip before they saw him in Caesarea.

In verse eleven, Paul is warned again by his friends to stay out of Jerusalem. In fact, the prophet Agabus gave a graphic demonstration to warn Paul. Agabus took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands to demonstrate what was going to befall Paul at Jerusalem.

Paul’s “girdle,” as the Greek has it, was a large, wide leather belt that men wore around their loins for support. It gave them extra support for physical exertion. When Scripture admonishes us to “gird up our loins” it refers to

this belt. It means we are to strengthen ourselves, our resolve, our mental readiness, for what is ahead.

Agabus predicted that the Jews would seize Paul in Jerusalem. He knew they hated him and would try to kill him, or at least get him arrested.

The events that follow are interesting. They lead into the beginning of the end of Paul’s story in the book of Acts. Before this episode is over, he will be dragged into several courts, and eventually taken to Rome to appear before Caesar.

Agabus warned Paul that the Jews would take him prisoner, binding and delivering him to the nationals (i.e., the Romans). Yet Paul told them that he fully understood what he was doing. He let them know that he was not ignorant of the risks. He was willing to face prison ... and even death if that was God’s will. He knew that he was going into harm’s way.

With much sadness, concluding it to be the Lord’s will, they accepted Paul’s commitment to go to Jerusalem.

QUESTION: If the Jews were the main persecutors of Christ, and of Paul, why did Paul insist on going to them at Jerusalem?

ACTS 21:15-21 DEALING WITH ZEALOTS OF TRADITION

And after those days we stowed our baggage, and proceeded up to Jerusalem.

And some of the disciples from Caesarea came with us to lead us to Mnason, a Cyprian and an early disciple, who was to receive us as visitors.

And when we came to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

And the day following, Paul went in together with us to James, and all the elders were present.

And having greeted them, he

carefully explained everything God had done in the nations through his ministry.

And when they heard it, they glorified God, and said to him, You see, brother, how many myriads there are which believe among the Judeans; and they are all zealots of the law.

But they have heard talk about you, that you teach apostasy from Moses to all Jews in the nations, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, and not to walk after the customs.

ONE cannot help but notice that the writer of these verses wrote from the perspective of “we” ... showing that the writer was not Paul himself, but someone traveling with Paul. He was recording, as in a diary, the events as they happened. It is commonly agreed that Luke traveled with Paul and served as his scribe, penning the book of Acts.

James was the head elder in the Jerusalem ecclesia. He was the remaining patriarch of Jesus’ family. Paul came and talked to the elders, telling them the great things that had happened on his journey into Asia Minor and Europe. They glorified God for these great things. But then they went on to warn Paul that his reputation had preceded him. The local Jewish zealots were of the opinion that Paul had been teaching the nations to abandon Moses and the law.

At first this sounds as if the Jews were keeping the law, and Paul didn’t. This might seem to cast doubt on Paul’s teaching. After all, churches generally teach that Paul was antinomian (against law) and that Jews keep the law.

But in fact Paul was not antinomian. He never taught against God’s law. Here are his words:

... indeed, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Rom. 7:12

So we must ask, what law was in dispute between Paul and the Jews?

If Paul was against some law, which law was it? Did the Pharisees have the same law as Moses? Were the Pharisees’ customs the same as those handed down from Moses?

No! The Pharisees’ customs came from Babylon. Although they claimed their customs were from Moses and the Scriptures, they weren’t. In Babylon the Pharisees had twisted Moses’ law to fit the teachings of Zoroaster. On the surface it had a slight resemblance to Moses’ law, but it was different. Consequently, when churches teach that Judaism was (and is) the doctrine of the Old Testament they are talking about Babylonianism (Zoroastrianism).

Judaism’s system of law was a mixture of Babylon tradition and a smattering of Old Testament terms. This became known in Judea as “the tradition of the elders.”

They were steeped and rooted in their traditions. When Paul came along and taught God’s laws – which were contrary to the laws of Judaism – it was obvious that Paul followed a different law and a different God than the Jews did. They responded by charging him with blasphemy and sedition.

Churchgoers today often resemble those ancient Jewish zealots. Modern-day church zealots are fanatical about church doctrine, tradition, and ritual. They have new “traditions of the elders.” They ignore scriptural accuracy. They are zealous of erroneous church legacy – the traditions of their fathers and grandfathers. Truth and accuracy

take a back seat. Every church movement has this problem because in order to be a churchgoer one must first be infected with misplaced priorities and motives.

He (Jesus) said to them (the Scribes and Pharisees), Isaiah aptly prophesied about you hypocrites, as it is written, “This people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are held distant from me.”

In vain they worship me, teaching as doctrine the commandments of men.

Rejecting the commandment of God you hold fast the tradition of men.

And he said to them, Aptly you set aside the commandment of God, that you may observe your own tradition.

... Thus you are invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you establish.

Mark 7:6-9, 13

To the Scribes and Pharisees, Paul was a thorn in the flesh. They started rumors about him. The Jewish zealots in Acts 21:20 had heard rumors that Paul was teaching against Moses. Of course, that was incorrect. History is replete with truth seekers who have risked their lives to expose error ... only to be charged with heresy by church zealots. To church/synagogue zealots truth is irrelevant, and any truth which goes against their traditions must be decried as heresy.

This was the case with the Jewish zealots of Paul’s day. It is the proven result of the programming and misinformation implanted from childhood in the minds of churchgoers.

Paul didn’t teach against God’s law, nor did he teach against Moses. He taught against the perverted versions of history and scripture the Jews had carried from Babylon. Judaism twisted and perverted Moses’ writings. They misused the law by mixing it with the Babylonian religion of Zoroaster ...

later codified in the Babylonian/Jewish Talmud. Thus, the “Moses” of Jewish description was not the Moses of the Bible. The Jews had invented an alter ego for “Moses,” and in their minds this other “Moses” replaced the real one. The new model was a mix of reality and idolatry: a super myth. Their claims about their alter “Moses” and his teachings did not match the teachings of the real scriptural Moses. They hated Paul for teaching against their mythical version of Moses.

Paul discredited the Jewish model of Moses. In response, the Jews created a revised model of Paul and cast him as antinomian and anti-Moses. The church world picked up the Jewish propaganda, accepted those lies about Paul, and for centuries have been accessories to the crime of misrepresenting him. This has resulted in most Christians getting a false picture of both Moses and Paul.

We still see this sort of brainwash today. Some things never change. We call ourselves “Christians,” so people tend to equate us with “Judeo-Christians” and Churchgoers. Judeo-Christians and Churchgoers conform to the invented Jewish model of Scripture and history. Thus, they have a deserved reputation for being illogical, errant, superstitious, and mythical. Unfortunately, real Christians get painted with the same brush since we also speak of Moses and Paul. The world assumes that our Jesus is the same Jesus proclaimed in church lore. They assume our Christ is a mythical, long-haired Hindu-type religious wimp who escaped to outer space and left us alone and defenseless here on Earth to go it alone while our enemies enslave us, steal all we have, murder us, and blaspheme God. In other words, the public assumes we are typical churchgoers with the typical church model of Jesus. But we are not.

Our Christ is not a myth, and we are not slaves. Our Christ is King, with all authority in heaven and earth (Mtt. 28:18). We are members of his Kingship, and we are his army in the great struggle for truth and freedom.

Our King is not languishing in limbo somewhere in outer space; He is present with us!

The people who have wrongly stereotyped Jesus as a mythical wimp might be surprised to know the powerful and amazing things He has planned for them.

Perspective can greatly affect a man’s view of reality. From basic reality, two people can perceive two widely varying models ... paradigms ... each with different causes, effects, and goals. For instance, Paul and his disciples were jailed, persecuted by the establishment, banished from cities, stoned, etc. That being the case, one man may view Paul as an inveterate criminal. Another man might view him as a hero being persecuted by a godless system of society and government. Both models constitute a perceived “reality.” Although there is only one true reality, there are two different perceived “realities” to these two men.

By the same token, a churchgoer’s model of reality may lead him to perceive Jesus as weak and absent, and his flock as abandoned and on their own. Another man’s model of reality may see Jesus as present and strong, and the problem as ours (not Jesus’), and that we, as a people, are in trouble not because Jesus is weak or absent but because we are failing to acknowledge Him as King. Thus, men can develop mental models of reality based on their personal perspectives and prejudices. These models of “reality” seem real for them ... in their minds.

Therefore, it behooves us – indeed it is imperative – to accuratize our own perceived models of “reality.” In essence, true reality needs to be seen from Jesus’ perspective. We should strive to live in Jesus’ paradigm, to see reality through His eyes, not the eyes of men confused by church and state. Thus we should pray for “eyes to see, and ears to hear.”

We live in a society whose models of “reality” are upside down and backward. We experience persecution today ... not only in the fact that the government system is

contrary to freedom and everything good and wholesome, but also because most people hate anyone who finds fault with that system. This is due to their twisted mental models of reality. This is a form of insanity which, as in Paul’s day, explains why people tend to oppose good men and side with the wicked and the powerful ... regardless of the obvious evidence before them.

The churches teach that Jesus will return from outer space and change everything in a moment at a given future date, and all they are supposed to do is wait and be good citizens.

But they are wrong. Jesus is not returning, because He never left. His Kingship was neither postponed nor abdicated as the churches teach. The law of God never lost its viability. Men merely lost view of it because they lost their spiritual vision.

The problem is NOT with Christ and his law! The problem is with the people! They’ve adopted mythical models of reality and planted bad seed, and are now reaping the fruits. We suffer the plagues of the heathen because we’ve become like the heathen; like Babylonians. Since Americans act like Babylonians, it is fitting that they suffer the plagues and confusion of Babylon.

4. Come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.

Rev. 18:4

By today’s standards, Paul would have been considered an outlaw; a bad guy. In fact, that is basically what the Jews thought of him. Furthermore, that is what churchgoers today think of anyone who follows the TRUE Jesus. This should make each of us ask ourselves, “How does modern society look upon me?” If you are looked upon favorably by the system ... what is that telling you?

The point is that the accusations of the Jews against Paul, which confused the people, were false and off-point just like the accusations made against real Christians today.

QUESTION: There is a lot to be said for tradition. Certain truths are established and passed on to successive generations. How can we have any stability in our beliefs if you advocate that we dismiss tradition? Isn't this akin to being tossed to and fro with every whim of doctrine? Wouldn't people "fall away" from the established truths after a while?

ACTS 21:22-26 PAUL ACCEPTS BAD COUNSEL

What is it therefore? They will, by all means, hear that you have come.

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

Take them, and purify yourself together with them, and sponsor them financially, that they may cut their hair, and all may know that those things rumored about you are nothing; but that you walk orderly, and are zealous for the law.

As for the believers in the nations, we have sent our conclusions, that they guard themselves from idol sacrifice, and blood, and things strangled, and from lewdness.

Then Paul took the men, and the next day purified himself with them, and entered into the temple, giving notice of the accomplishment of the days of purification, until the offering was offered over each one of them.

THE elders in the ecclesia at Jerusalem came up with a plan for Paul, and things began to get interesting. You'd think Paul and the elders would have had better sense. But as we shall see, they were just men – like us – and capable of error.

The elders told Paul that because of his reputation the crowds will have already heard about him. Then they told Paul that he should demonstrate that he was "zealous of the law" by imitating four local men who had taken an oath. The four men had let their hair grow as a demonstration of some religious vow.

Here, again, we see an idiomatic term ("shave their heads") which probably did not mean what it now seems in modern English. "Shaving" one's head in old Judea only meant getting a hair cut.

Some have surmised this was a Nazarite vow since a Nazarite's hair was left to grow long with NO razor touching it until the days of the vow were fulfilled. (See side bar)

THE NAZARITE VOW

In Numbers chapter six we find the definition of the original Nazarite vow:

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying,

Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves to Yahweh:

He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried.

All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk.

All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled in which he separates himself to Yahweh, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.

Numbers 6:1-5

An exception to cutting the hair is found in verse nine where it says that if the Nazarite becomes defiled by contact with a dead man, then he is to shave (or cut) his hair on the seventh day of his cleansing. Further, he must start his days of separation all over again.

The most famous Nazarite in the Bible was Samson, of whom it was prophesied that he would be a Nazarite for life. The messenger of Yahweh appeared to Samson's mother and said:

For, lo, you shall conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

The elders convinced Paul that if he would cut his hair like these four men who had been in a vow, and give the appearance of respecting Jewish laws and customs, it might gain him better access to the locals. This was an unwise move, and it gives us insight into the religious and political pressures that were upon Paul and the elders of the ecclesia in Jerusalem. Their intentions were good, but acquiescing to local customs doesn't usually help ... plus it comes across as hypocrisy.

It is surprising that Paul didn't dismiss their proposal out of hand. But, he didn't. Maybe he thought there was a purpose to this idea and some good would come of it. Maybe he thought the Jews wouldn't fight him if he took on this disguise. Or maybe he thought this would give him more time before they turned against him. It's hard to say what he was thinking. We must remember

that it had only been a short time since Paul was a Pharisee so their thinking would have been familiar to him at that point.

Still, it is disheartening that the elders resorted to this tactic ... especially in light of verse 25 where their admonition to the brethren in Asia Minor and Europe was to avoid such traditions.

We aren't given an explanation why Paul agreed to this strategy. The results brought him more trouble than he already had. The Jews saw and resented it. They became violent and stirred up the people. Maybe the lesson we're to learn from this is to avoid hypocrisy, and give no quarter to old religious baggage.

QUESTION: Does this move on Paul's part, to pretend to honor Jewish tradition, show that he was a secret Pharisee? Was he trying to be "all things to all people" (something he writes about in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23)?

ACTS 21:27-40 THE MADNESS OF CROWDS

And when the seven days were nearly concluded, the Jews from Asia saw him in the temple, and stirred up the crowd, and laid their hands on him,

Crying out, Men of Israel, help us! This is the man, the one who teaches everybody everywhere against the people and the law, and this place. Furthermore, he brought Greeks into the temple, and has defiled this holy place.

(For they had previously seen him in the city together with Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that

Paul had brought into the temple.)

And all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together: and having laid hold of Paul, they dragged him outside the temple, and immediately they shut the gates.

Meanwhile, information came to the chief captain of the band, of their seeking to kill him, and that all Jerusalem was in confusion.

Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and charged down upon them: and when they saw the chief

captain and the soldiers, they ceased beating Paul.

Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded that he be bound with two chains. And he inquired who he might be, and what he had done.

And some in the crowd cried one thing, some another. But, due to the tumult he was unable to determine the cause, so he commanded him to be taken into the fortress.

And when he mounted the steps up, being carried by the soldiers on account of the

violence of the crowd;

For the multitude of the people was following,
crying, Kill him;

And as Paul was about to be led into the fortress,
he said to the chief captain, Is it permitted for me
to say something to you? He replied, do you
know Greek?

Are you not really that Egyptian who previously
had stirred up sedition, and led four thousand
men, assassins, in the desert?

But Paul said, I am a Judean of Tarsus, a city in
Cilicia, and a citizen of no small city: I beseech
you, permit me to speak to the people.

When he gave permission, Paul stood on the
steps, and beckoned with his hand to the people.
And a great silence fell as he spoke to them in
the Hebrew tongue, saying,

THE local religious establishment was accusing Paul of apostasy, and of teaching against “the people” (the Jews), against “the law” (traditions of the elders), and against “the place” (Jerusalem and the temple). Today, speaking out against Jews, their traditions, and their temples would be called bigotry and anti-Semitism.

Of course, Paul was no anti-Semite. Nonetheless, the Jews did have cause to worry because Paul was against Judaism. Today, some might call this anti-Semitism, but it isn't. It is anti-Judaism. “Semitism” and “Judaism” are far from being the same. They aren't even similar. Semitism is a racial distinction, and Judaism is a religious/cultural distinction.

Paul was not against Semites. He himself was a Semite. Neither was he against Moses and the Law, although he was accused of it. Paul was hated because of the King he chose to serve. He was hated in the same way as true Christians today are hated by those who venerate Church and State. They made false charges against Paul the same as they invent false charges against true Christians today.

Crowds, incited by riot-mongers, are never concerned about the particulars of any situation. They jump to conclusions, and follow their programming.

There was an additional false charge leveled against Paul. The Jewish crowd also falsely accused Paul of bringing Greeks into the temple to pollute their holy place. Apparently, the mob assumed that the other four men were Greeks. However, they weren't Greeks, but former Judeans

like Paul. Uncircumcised Greeks were not allowed inside the Jews' temple. In verse 29 it says that they had seen Paul in the company of a Greek (Trophimus, an Ephesian), and assumed that he had taken this man into the temple to defile it. He hadn't, but the mob mentality was at work.

Word of the riot reached the “chief captain of the band,” and just as the rioters were about to finish Paul, the officer arrived with his policemen. The term “chief captain” comes from the Greek word “chiliarch” which means “chief over a thousand.” He was the military chief in charge of the Roman forces in Jerusalem.

The chiliarch did not want riots in his district. He knew that it would jeopardize his political career if reports of it reached Caesar in Rome. He was the appointed officer charged with keeping order in his district, and if his district was plagued with riots he would get in trouble with the boss. Caesar didn't like Jewish riots. So the chief captain jumped into his chariot, rushed to the scene, and ordered his police to quell the riot!

The Jews were beating Paul when the Roman policemen arrived to break it up. They probably saved Paul's life. For Paul, being in the hands of the Romans was less dangerous than being in the hands of the Jews.

The power of suggestion led the chief captain to assume that Paul had done something bad, otherwise all those Jews would not have had cause to beat him. Paul was automatically assumed to be a criminal. After all, the majority (i.e., mob) carries political clout.

The Romans bound Paul with chains ... in fulfillment of prophecy. A day or two earlier Paul's friend, Agabus, had predicted that he would be bound hand-and-foot in Jerusalem. He even illustrated this by winding a belt around his hands and feet. Furthermore, Agabus had prophesied that Paul would be turned over to the nationals (Romans).

Paul was on trial for his life ... again. This time, the trial will take him on a long journey ... all the way to Rome. Most of the rest of the book of Acts will be dealing with this journey, and with Paul's attempts to defend himself in the Roman courts against the charges made by the Jews.

The charges were false and politically motivated: 1. They alleged that he violated the rules of the Temple by taking Greeks into it. But he hadn't. 2. They alleged that he was teaching against Moses and the law. But he wasn't.

Paul was not charged with violating Roman law. The Jews were accusing him of violating their law.

It is ironic. Paul had survived three missions through foreign lands. But his most urgent desire was to help his people in Jerusalem. There he was apprehended by the Zionists who hated him most.

From this story, and from experience, we know the frustration of trying to help brethren who are still in mental bondage to wrong thinking. Those whom we love the most are often the ones through whom we are brought down. Like stupefied horses who refuse to leave a burning barn, the stupified Judeans acted according to their programming.

As we progress through the next few chapters, we'll follow Paul and these trumped up charges as they are processed through bureaucracy and protocol all the way from Jerusalem to Rome.

It is good for us to be aware of how this works, because someday some of us may be forced to defend ourselves against false charges like these: lies waged against us by religious bureaucrats and government hirelings. We can learn some valuable points from observing and understanding Paul's struggles.

Paul will be dragged from court to court - not because he trusted them; not because he thinks he can outsmart the judges and lawyers by using court procedures (like modern patriots). None of that nonsense. He was in court because he had no choice. And, since he couldn't get out of it, he had no choice but to defend himself the best he could in each situation. He went in the name of Christ before rulers and courts, witnessing of Christ's Reign.

From Jerusalem, all the way to Rome, in all of his trials and imprisonments, Paul kept witnessing and teaching the Reign of Christ.

After the Roman military commander stopped the Jews from beating Paul, and had taken him prisoner, verse 33 says he demanded the crowd tell him who Paul was and what he had done. He quickly found this was a mistake. In typical Jewish mob fashion, they ranted and raved, some crying one thing and some another thing, until finally the commander realized he was getting nowhere.

Above the din of the rioters the soldiers were ordered to conduct Paul into the military headquarters building. These soldiers actually had to carry Paul along to protect him from this rabid, spitting, clamoring mob of Jews!

In verse 36, in the Greek text, the Jews were shouting "Lift him up." "Lift him up" was an idiomatic expression of that day which meant "hang him" or "crucify him" ... which was reminiscent of a few years earlier when a similar Jewish mob was shouting "lift him up" when Jesus stood at trial before them. They were at it again, this time with Paul. It is a pattern that continues today.

Then Paul spoke up and asked the commander if he could speak to him. If you had been there, you would have seen the look of surprise across the commander's face. He had been so influenced and distracted by the accusations shouted at him by the mob, he had concluded that Paul might be a certain fugitive Egyptian who had caused some trouble earlier. So, it came as a surprise when Paul began speaking in the Greek tongue.

Paul told him that he was a citizen of an important Roman city. He said, in essence, "Look, I'm a citizen of Rome. I have a right to present a defense."

So the Roman commander let Paul speak, and when the tumult of the crowd subsided, Paul began to speak in the Hebrew tongue. Paul knew Hebrew and Greek. He grew up a Judean, and had been taught Greek as well. He was a well-traveled and educated man in the Roman world.

The speech he is about to give to the now silent mob starts in chapter 22, which we will cover in detail in the next issue. He will tell the story of how he persecuted the followers of The Way, and how he was changed by the presence of Christ on the road to Damascus.

QUESTION: Are you saying that if someone hates Jews he is not anti-Semitic?

QUESTION: You emphasize the idea that things in the political arena occur the same way now as they did in Paul's time. But aren't things different today in America? The Jews didn't have our Constitution and our Republican form of government.

END OF CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

FOR ANSWERS AND NOTES, SEE ENCLOSED "ANSWER SECTION."

These lessons are produced by ACM, PO BOX 740, GRANGEVILLE, IDAHO 83530.

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. For more than twenty years, and during three excursions into Asia Minor, Paul had followed his commission to take the Gospel of the Kingship to his scattered Israelite brethren. He had nearly expended himself. But he had one more job he felt he must do. He had to return to Jerusalem to complete his work. However, in Jerusalem Paul found that God had one more excursion planned for him. He would make his final excursion to the nations not as a free man, but as a prisoner. This excursion, which we will read about starting in chapter 22, will take him to Rome.

2. Paul had made a reputation for himself. His brethren warned him that the Jews in Jerusalem were determined to stop him. But Paul's life was not his own. He did what he believed was his duty regardless of the danger. Thus, in spite of warnings from his friends, he returned to Jerusalem to try to reach more lost Israelites.

3. In Jerusalem, Paul made some bad decisions which got him into worse trouble with the local Jewish zealots. Paul was not infallible. He made bad decisions at times. But he was not guilty of the charges waged at him by the Jews.

4. The Jews accused Paul of teaching against Moses and the law. Later, churchmen would pick it up from the Jews and continue the lie. Today, churches train their preachers to believe that Paul was anti-law. At the same time they teach that Jews keep the laws of Moses. Both points are wrong, resulting in escalating confusion in church doctrine.

5. Judaism is based on falsified doctrines built upon perverted and mythical legends. These myths were invented mostly in Babylon where Judaism was born and bred, and then exported to Jerusalem. The false "Moses" and the "law" of Jewish tradition were myths. They were not

the Moses and Law of Scripture.

6. Jesus personally tutored Paul in the truth. Paul learned that Jewish law was not the same as God's law. When Paul began teaching God's true laws, it put him at odds against Judean/Babylonian laws and tradition (usually called Judaism or Pharisaism). This made the Jews hate Paul.

7. What happened to Paul after he learned the error of Judaism was very much like what happens to us today when we learn the error of Church and State. Religious zealots and patriots hate us in the same way Jews hated Paul.

8. Roman intervention saved Paul from death at the hands of Jews in Jerusalem. God had yet another plan for Paul, and the Romans would play a part in that plan.

9. As bad as the Romans were, they were not as wicked and hateful as the Jews. The Romans took Paul prisoner and delivered him out of the hands of the Jews. Thus, Paul's life was spared to complete more work for Christ's Kingship.

ANSWERS:

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Paul was not going to Jerusalem for the "Jews" per se. He was going for the ecclesiastics there. Like rescuing lambs from among wolves, Paul went into the dragon's lair to try and help the remnant: the ecclesia.

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Tradition can be good or bad. The "tradition of the elders" was bad. Truth cannot be taken for granted ... especially if it is "approved" by a central power. Reality must be analyzed continually and perceived from God's perspective, not the

State's. History is full of examples where established churches and states persecuted the truth and those who sought it. Tradition without truth is destructive.

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No. It only proves that Paul was not infallible. His statement in I Cor. 9, about being "all things to all people," did not infer a compromise of his faith. Paul strived to understand (not support) various cultures in order to build strategies to communicate with the lost Israelites in them.

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a) "Semite" is a term designating genetic descent from Shem, Noah's son. This includes many Middle Easterners, Europeans, Americans, and various white folks around the world. Interestingly, most "Jews" are NOT semitic.

Some think the term "Jew" designates a race. The truth is that a "Jew" is anyone who claims to be one. Therefore, it cannot be a racial designation. It can only be a religious/cultural designation.

Whether one hates "Jews," or loves "Jews," it has nothing to do with "Semitism" one way or the other. "Semite" is a racial designation for someone belonging to the Semitic race. On the other hand, "Jew" is a religious/cultural designation referring to someone of the Jewish faith and/or culture.

The term "Jew" does not mean "Semite." If someone hates Jews he is "anti-Jewish," not "anti-Semitic."

b) The Constitution and the American government – also called Democracy – are modern adaptations of Babylonian, Jewish, and Roman centralized government. The operating principles of the Beast System are still the same.