

## Acts 21:16-Acts 23:22

### Back to Jerusalem

The original apostles had left Jerusalem in the mid 40's due to the persecution instituted by Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great (the ruler when Jesus was born). His persecution began with the laity and proceeded to the leaders of the church when James, the brother of John, was martyred by decapitation on his order in 44 A.D. When he saw that it pleased the people, he had Peter imprisoned (see Acts 12:1). After Peter's miraculous escape from prison, he fled Jerusalem for other mission fields and left the leadership of the new church to James, a kinsman of Jesus.

The church historian, Eusebius, puts Peter in Rome in 42 A.D. and Luke puts him in Jerusalem in 49 A.D. for the first council of the church (Acts 15). Paul's letter to the Galatians (2:12) puts Peter in Antioch of Syria shortly after the council. Tradition relates that Peter subsequently traveled to Rome and was martyred by crucifixion there in the mid 60's A.D.

- The narrative opens with Paul and his companions returning from their third missionary journey with monies for the relief of the saints in Jerusalem. He reports to James and the elders of the church all the things God had done among the Gentiles in Asia Minor and Greece. Vs. 21:16-19
- James is concerned about the rumors that had reached Jerusalem that Paul is forbidding Jewish Christians to practice their Mosaic traditions and takes the report to be false. He asks Paul to make a public display of his reverence for the Mosaic customs by a sacred vow (as he had in Acts 18:18). James recalls the letter sent out to the churches after the Council of Jerusalem concerning the Gentile converts. \*see footnote on the Nazarite vow on pp.243. (According to the Council of Florence in 1442, rites of the Mosaic Law could still be observed in the earliest days of the church as long as they were not considered necessary requirements of salvation.) Vs. 21:20-26
- After the completion of their vow and offerings in the Temple, Jews from Asia, who had seen him in there, stirred up the people because they thought he had let Gentiles enter the inner courts reserved only for Jews. The whole city was aroused and they laid hands on Paul and dragged him out of the Temple and tried to kill him. Claudius Lysius, the Roman commander, got wind of the tumult and arrested Paul. The mob was so violent they had to carry Paul to the Roman barracks. Vs.21:27-36
- The tribune mistook Paul for an Egyptian insurrectionist until he spoke to him in Greek. Paul begged to be allowed speak to the mob. Vs.21:37-4

- Paul begins his defense citing his heritage and education, birthright , language, and the zeal of his previous persecution of “the Way”. Vs.22:1-5
- He gives his testimony of conversion and his call to preach to the Gentiles. Vs.22:6-21
- Until this point they had listened to him, then they demanded his death! The tribune decides to “examine” Paul by scourging at which point Paul pulls the ace out of his sleeve-Roman citizenship. \* The three ways you could be a citizen was by inheritance, gift of the emperor for outstanding service or patriotism, or by purchase. Paul was a citizen by birth, the tribune by “a large sum”. At this point they ceased the scourging. Vs.22:22-29
- The next day the tribune commands the Sanhedrin to meet in order to understand why they accused Paul. Vs.22:30
- As Paul begins his defense they strike him and he turns their law back on them. \* The high priest at the time is Ananias, son of Nedebaeus, an evil, greedy and violent man so unpopular that he was eventually assassinated in 66 A.D. Vs.23:1-5
- Before he begins to speak he realizes that the council was made up of Pharisees and Saducees, so he palms another ace by declaring his membership in the Pharisee sect and a believer in the resurrection. Of course it causes a violent dissention and Paul is removed by the soldiers to the barracks for protection. Vs.23:6-10
- The following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, for as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also at Rome.” Vs.23:11  
\*This is the fourth time mentioned in Acts that Paul had seen Jesus. Acts 9:3-6, 18:9, 22:17-18
- The next day more than 40 fanatical Jews vowed to murder Paul. They conspired with the council to have him brought to court for his case to be determined and would then kill him. Vs. 23:12-15
- The plot is foiled when Paul’s nephew overhears the conspirators and tells Paul about it. He sends the boy to the tribune and the tribune takes him aside privately to hear what he has to say and then tells him to keep it quiet. Vs.23:16-23