

YOUTH



LEVEL 9

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 6



Paul's Journey to Rome

PAUL'S JOURNEY TO ROME

While at Caesarea, the Apostle Paul had been warned by the prophet Agabus that he would be arrested and bound if he went to Jerusalem. Yet Paul felt it was God's will for him to once again visit the Headquarters Church. So, after a few days, Paul and his companions journeyed on to Jerusalem.

PAUL ARRIVES IN JERUSALEM

Although Paul had been converted for about 23 years, there were some Jewish members in God's Church who still had doubts, fears and apprehensions about him. Rumors circulated that Paul was teaching Jews throughout the Gentile world to forsake the law of Moses and the Jewish customs and traditions.

How was Paul first received by the Church after his arrival in Jerusalem? (Acts 21:17)

The following day, Paul spoke to James and the elders (ministers) of the Church about the many things God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. They were very happy to hear this and glorified God.

After Paul had finished speaking, he was told of the thousands of Jewish converts, all zealous of the law of Moses, who were misinformed about what he was preaching to the Gentile converts.

ABOUT OUR COVER . . .

The "Major Gateway" was once an aqueduct and principal entrance to the city of Rome.

Wide World Photo

In Jerusalem, the church members were continuing to practice many of the Jewish customs and traditions. It was not a sin, for example, to hear the reading of the law in the synagogue, or to worship at the Temple on the holy days. Nor was it a sin to circumcise their boy babies on the eighth day, or to follow many of the traditions which were probably later reflected in the Talmud.

Many of the Jewish church members simply did not understand what Paul was teaching in the Gentile world. Paul had come to see—as had the other apostles—that many of the Jewish customs and traditions were unnecessary, and did not have to be observed.

Hoping to clear up the issue, what was it decided that Paul should do? (Acts 21:22-26, summarize these verses) _____

It was a Jewish custom (never required by God) that when a person made a vow to do something for a specific period of time, to end the vow, he had to go through a ceremony at the Temple. Sacrifices were offered, the men shaved their heads and paid special fees for the priests to conduct the ceremony. This entire process lasted seven days.

There is no indication that Paul was under a vow or needed to go through the purification ceremony himself. But there were four men in Jerusalem who did. James hoped that when the people saw Paul participating in the ceremonies with these men, they would conclude that he was not teaching against the Jewish customs.

ARRESTED AT THE TEMPLE

In addition to frequently being seen in and around the Temple site, Paul was also seen traveling about the city with his companions and friends. Some of these included the Gentile ministers who had come to Jerusalem with him.

What did some of Paul's enemies accuse him of having done? (Acts 21:27-29, summarize these verses) _____

According to Jewish law, there were restrictions as to who could visit certain areas of the Temple. There were certain areas women were not allowed to enter. There was an outer court where Gentiles were allowed—but no further. And then there was an inner court of the Temple in which only Jewish men were allowed. Paul observed these laws and had not taken Trophimus or any other Gentile into any of the restricted areas.

Paul, who before his conversion was a leading Pharisee, was not popular with the Jewish religious leaders because he had rejected his former way of life. Also, the success of Paul's ministry among the Gentiles was well-known to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem.

Even though it was a lie that Paul had taken a Gentile into the Temple, what happened? (Acts 21:30-31) _____

It was reported to the Roman military command that the Jews had taken Paul and were ready to kill him. Immediately the chief captain took a band of soldiers to the Temple where he found Paul being beaten. He demanded to know what was happening. Some shouted one thing and others shouted another. There was such confusion, the captain could not understand what was happening. So he commanded that Paul be taken to the Roman military headquarters, which had been set up in a nearby castle.



It was in the Temple here in Jerusalem that Paul was arrested by the Roman authorities.

The highest ranking military officers among the Romans were well-educated and understood several languages. As earlier lessons have shown, Paul was also well-educated. He shocked the Roman captain by speaking to him in Greek. Who did the chief captain think Paul was? (Acts 21:38) _____

Paul explained who he was, and requested permission to speak to the people. Impressed with Paul and his respectful manner, the chief captain granted him permission.

Through much of Acts 22, Paul rehearses how he was called by God to a knowledge of God's true way. Paul shows how he began his adult life persecuting true Christians, having been personally responsible for the martyrdom of Stephen. Paul tells about being struck down miraculously by Jesus Christ on his way to Damascus, and shows that God had selected him to go to the Gentiles.

When Paul began talking about God sending him to the Gentiles, the crowd became uncontrollable. The people screamed for Paul's life, saying, "Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live" (Acts 22:22). They tore their clothing and threw dust in the air. The chief captain commanded that Paul be brought inside the castle and scourged (severely beaten or whipped) to determine if he was telling the truth.

As the soldiers were binding Paul, getting him ready for the scourging, what did he say to the Roman centurion who stood nearby? (Acts 22:25) _____

Alarmed that Paul was a Roman citizen and uncondemned, the centurion immediately went to the chief captain and warned him to be careful.

The chief captain himself had become a Roman citizen. It had cost him a great deal of money to buy this privilege. But how had Paul obtained his citizenship? (Acts 22:28, last part of the verse) _____

After finding that Paul was a freeborn Roman citizen, he was treated more carefully. On the following day, the Roman military leader assembled the Jewish high council, the Sanhedrin, and brought Paul before it.

PAUL'S COURTROOM STRATEGY

As was the custom, when a person was brought before the Sanhedrin, he was permitted to speak in his own defense. As soon as Paul began his defense, he realized he would not receive a fair trial.

What did the high priest Ananias command those standing near Paul to do? (Acts 23:2) _____

When the high priest ordered Paul to be struck, he was transgressing the Jewish law. Did Paul speak out against this unlawful conduct? (Verse 3) _____

In the courtroom were Pharisees and Sadducees—two of the leading sects of Judaism. A major difference between them was that the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead; the Sadducees did not.

Having been brought up a Pharisee, Paul well knew these doctrinal differences and used this knowledge to his advantage. He cried out in the council, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and *resurrection of the dead* I am called in question" (Acts 23:6).

As a result, the Sanhedrin was split in two; and in the violent argument that followed, Paul was nearly torn in pieces. To save him from the violence, the chief captain of the Roman soldiers had to take Paul back to the Roman garrison.

God was allowing these events to happen for a purpose. What message from God did Paul receive the following night? (Acts 23:11) _____

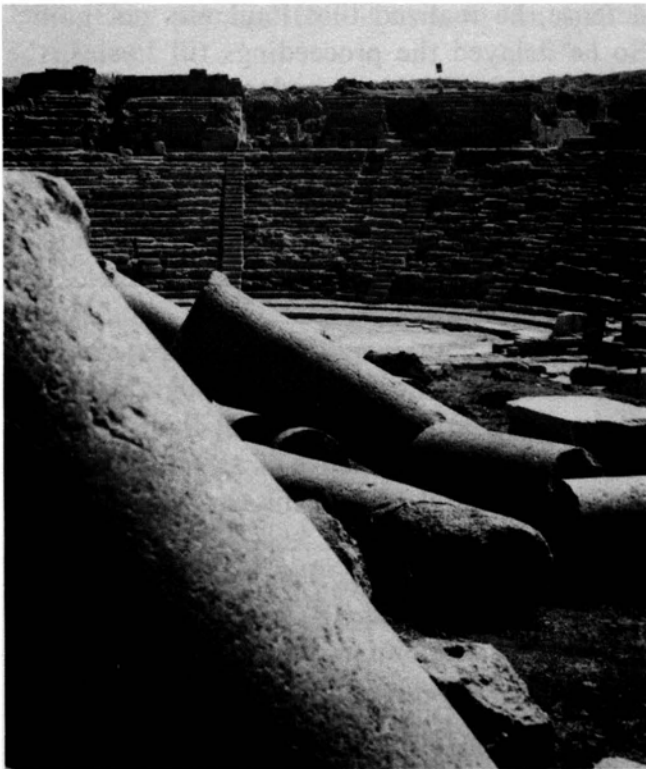


Photo by P. Gross

Ruins of a Roman amphitheater in Caesarea. Paul was brought to this city to appear before Felix, the Roman governor of Judea.

God did not explain to Paul *how* he would get to Rome—just that he *would* get there!

PAUL TAKEN TO CAESAREA

Hearing of a plot by forty Jews to kill Paul, the chief captain commanded two of his centurions (a centurion is over one hundred soldiers) to make ready two hundred foot soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen. This was a total guard of four hundred and seventy armed and trained soldiers! (Acts 23:23.)

During the night, they were to take Paul to Caesarea, where he would later be tried in the Roman court under Felix, the Roman governor of Judea.

(Find Caesarea on the map on page 9, then trace the route of Paul's voyage to Rome as you learn about his journey.)

Paul was safely brought to Caesarea and

taken to the governor, who after reading the letter of Claudius Lysias (the chief captain who had Paul delivered to Felix) decided to hear the case. Felix sent word to Jerusalem for the accusers to come for the trial. Meanwhile, Paul was placed under house arrest in Herod's judgment hall.

The enraged Jewish leaders arranged for their most prominent lawyer and orator of the day, Tertullus, to plead the case before Felix.

ACCUSED OF SEDITION BEFORE FELIX

Read the speech of Tertullus as recorded in Acts 24:2-8. Notice his opening remarks. "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*. . . ." Tertullus, an eloquent orator, was using insincere courtroom rhetoric.

Notice, in verse 5, that Paul was accused of being ". . . a _____ of _____ among all the _____ the _____, and a _____ of the sect of the _____."

Of course, Paul was not "a mover of sedition," a rebel who stirred up rebellion and civil disorder among the people. He was a called and chosen apostle of Jesus Christ whose commission it was to preach the good news of the coming Kingdom of God to the world.

Also notice that the New Testament Church was called "the sect of the *Nazarenes*."

Why would members of the New Testament Church be called Nazarenes? You will understand if you know where Jesus grew up and spent most of His life before He began His ministry.

It was in the northern part of the present-day land of Israel in a city called Nazareth. People who lived in Nazareth were called Nazarenes. It is much like people today who grow up in Texas are called Texans. People from Australia are called Australians and people who live in Germany are called Germans. In the same way, Jesus, who had

grown up in the city of Nazareth, was called a Nazarene.

Most of the original twelve apostles who followed Jesus were also from Nazareth. But, primarily because of the notoriety of Jesus during His ministry, the followers of Jesus became known as Nazarenes.

A future lesson will cover the development of the New Testament Church after the time of Paul and Peter. It will show how the nickname Nazarene helps us locate where true Christians were and some of the doctrines they believed.

After Tertullus' attempt to convince Felix that Paul should be turned over to the Jews for execution, Paul was allowed to speak for himself. As a Roman citizen, Paul had certain rights. In a court of law, an accused person always had the right to present a defense, and could do so on his own behalf.

Read Paul's defense, found in Acts 24:10-21, and notice the contrast between Paul's words and those of Tertullus. Tertullus lied and tried to appeal to Felix's vanity. But the Apostle Paul answered in a simple and straight-forward manner. He was also very respectful.

It seems evident after Felix heard the speeches of both the prosecution and the

defense, he realized that Paul was not guilty. So he delayed the proceedings till Lysias, the chief captain, could come down and give a full report of the matter.

In the meantime, what did Felix hope Paul would do in order to gain his freedom? (Acts 24:26)

Of course, Paul would not participate in such unlawful and illegal conduct. Rather than paying a bribe for his freedom, Paul patiently endured the inconvenience of arrest. He waited for God to fulfill His promise of bringing him to Rome.

During this time, Paul was permitted liberties which made it possible for church members to visit him and take care of his needs (Acts 24:23).

PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR

After two years, Felix was replaced as the Roman governor of Judea by Porcius Festus. Soon after his appointment, Festus was informed by the Jews about Paul who was still being held a prisoner in Caesarea. They asked that Paul be brought back to Jerusalem for



Photo by P. Gross

The city of Nazareth from which the term "Nazarene" originated. In Paul's day, followers of Jesus were commonly called Nazarenes.

trial. They planned to kill him on the way to Jerusalem.

However, God had other plans for Paul and inspired Festus to keep him in Caesarea. A few days later, Paul was called to the courtroom in Caesarea where he was once again falsely accused by the Jews. This was now two years after Paul was arrested in Jerusalem.

Can you imagine how exaggerated the charges must have been in the courtroom before Porcius Festus that day? Could the Jews prove their charges? (Acts 25:7, last part of the verse) _____

Even though the Roman government was completely in charge throughout the empire, it had a policy of peace and containment in the conquered nations. The appointed government officials from Rome tried to keep local residents and local political officials as happy as possible. With that in mind, Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, asked Paul if he would go to Jerusalem and be tried according to Jewish law.

Paul was well aware of the danger of going to Jerusalem. Knowing that the Jewish leaders were out to kill him, he realized there was little chance of being given a fair trial. Chances were he would be condemned to death.

Well aware of his danger, what was Paul's reply to Festus? (Acts 25:10) _____

Once again, Paul used the privileges he had as a Roman citizen. If a Roman citizen felt he was not getting justice in a court of law, he had the right to appeal direct to the Emperor in Rome. Only if the man was a murderer, a pirate, or bandit caught in the act, was the appeal invalid.

Today, the situation is much the same as a citizen of the United States appealing to the Supreme Court. Paul, in essence was saying, "I have violated no part of Jewish law. If I am going to be kept in prison and tried, I will have to be tried according to Roman law."

Of course, Paul had broken no Roman law either. But he knew he had a better chance of receiving justice at the judgment seat of Caesar. So, he made his appeal.

Since Paul was a Roman citizen, there was nothing else Festus could do but wait for the opportune time to send Paul to Rome.

PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA

Before Paul was sent to Rome, Agrippa, and his wife Bernice, came to Caesarea to visit Festus. Agrippa was king of the area situated in the north and northeast of Palestine. He had been put there by the Romans and had little, if any, real political power. After hearing Festus tell about the case against Paul, Agrippa became interested in hearing Paul speak in person. So, Festus promised to bring Paul before him the following day.

God was working out events so that Paul would be brought before various government leaders to proclaim the truth of God. He was now to appear before King Agrippa.

Part of the commission God gave His Church was to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world as a witness. This often involves reaching the leadership of a territory, or nation.

Today, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God, is able to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God throughout the world on radio and television, and by sending out millions of pieces of literature which proclaim the truth of God.

In some countries, it is not possible to preach the Gospel over television or radio—and in some cases it is not even possible to send printed literature. In many nations of the world, God has led Mr. Armstrong to speak with Emperors, Presidents and Prime Ministers, in addition to educational and political leaders.

Paul was brought before government leaders in the Roman Empire. Now King Agrippa wanted to see him. He had heard about Paul

and his preaching. He had heard about the miracles being performed in the New Testament Church. Agrippa wanted to hear Paul himself, and perhaps thought he might see a miracle performed.

So, Paul was permitted to speak before the king. He rehearsed the whole story of his conversion and the work God had called him to do. You can read the story in the 26th chapter of the book of Acts.

One of the things we might note about the Apostle Paul, is his knowledge of people, politics and world affairs. He knew the Roman governmental system and took full advantage of its laws and his own Roman citizenship. Paul was well-versed in Greek and Roman literature and could quote freely from the poets and philosophers. He spoke at least three languages.

Paul personally knew the background of Agrippa. He knew Agrippa believed in God and in many things taught by the prophets of the Old Testament. When Paul spoke with Agrippa, he spoke with knowledge and with persuasiveness.

How did Agrippa react to Paul's speech that day? (Acts 26:28) _____

After the meeting with Paul, it was decided that Paul had done nothing worthy of death, and might have been set at liberty but for his appeal to Caesar (Acts 26:31-32).

It was God's intent for Paul to preach the Gospel in Rome—even though it was being brought about by a most unusual set of circumstances. Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and kept prisoner for more than two years in Caesarea before the appeal to appear before Caesar was made. Once the appeal had been filed, it could not be reversed. So Paul would go to Rome!

THE VOYAGE TO ROME BEGINS

At the earliest opportunity, the Roman government made arrangements for Paul and other prisoners to be sent by ship to Italy. It

was then early fall and the autumn winds had begun to blow on the Mediterranean Sea.

Paul and the prisoners were put under the care of the Roman centurion Julius during the trip to Rome. They sailed from the coast of Judea, passing to the north of Cyprus, and stopped at the port city of Myra, on the southern shores of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).

In Myra they found a ship bound for Italy. They once again set sail, but the winds coming from the north were so strong that they were unable to sail north of the island of Crete. In order to continue westward on their way to Italy, they had to swing around to the south side of the island. They stopped along the way at a little port called *Fair Havens*.

The fall holy days, occurring during this time of the year, were kept by Paul on his journey to Rome. Which particular Holy Day is specifically mentioned? (Acts 27:9)

The Holy Day which comes only five days before the Feast of Tabernacles is called the Day of Atonement. What do God's people do on that day? (Leviticus 23:27-29) _____

Afflicting the soul means to go without food and water—to fast. Sometimes, the Day of Atonement was simply called "the fast."

Obviously, on Paul's journey to Rome, he was still keeping God's holy days—even under difficult circumstances!

PAUL'S WARNING IGNORED

Sailing had now become particularly dangerous on the Mediterranean. Shippers considered it unsafe to travel from late fall to early spring.

Paul warned that it would be perilous to continue the voyage. But the Roman centurion Julius, following the advice of the ship's owner



Map by Bill Wilson

Paul's Journey to Rome

and crew, decided to set sail anyway. They wanted to reach Phoenice, a larger port city in Crete with a better harbor. There they hoped to spend the winter.

When the weather seemed favorable, the ship set sail. Before reaching Phoenice, however, it got caught in a fierce and sudden storm. What was such a storm called in Paul's day? (Acts 27:14) _____ The storm raged with unabated fury for days. The crew began to fast hoping to please their pagan gods.

When the crew lost all hope of being saved, Paul reminded them about what he had earlier advised. "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me," he said, "and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss" (Acts 27:21).

Nevertheless, Paul exhorted them to be of good cheer. He told them that the night before, an angel had appeared to him and said, "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar:

and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee" (Acts 27:24). The ship, however, would be lost—it would not complete the voyage!

After fourteen days in the violent storm, the ship was driven toward the shores of a small island in the Mediterranean. It was now midnight and the ship's crew cast the anchors, hoping to prevent the ship from being dashed against the rocks. Many of the shipmen rushed for the small boats and were going to abandon ship. However, Paul calmly stepped forward and said, "Unless these men stay in the ship, they will not be saved."

By now the crew was listening to Paul, whose earlier advice not to leave Crete they should have followed. Paul told them to begin eating and if they kept calm and did what they were told, they would all be spared. How many, including crew and prisoners, were there on board the ship? (Acts 27:37) _____

SHIPWRECKED ON MALTA

When it was day, land still could not be seen because of the poor weather. But from the current flow, the crew was able to determine that they were close to shore. They cut the anchors, hoisted up the mainsail and headed the boat toward shore, running it aground in the shallows. The violence of the waves soon began to break up the ship.

The crew and prisoners were frightened. The Roman centurion commanded everyone who could swim to jump into the sea and swim for shore. The others, holding on to the boards and broken planks, finally made their way to the shore of the small island called Malta (Meleta).

The people of Malta were friendly, and welcomed everyone to the island. They offered shelter and fire to help warm the shipwrecked victims.

Paul pitched in to help the party build a fire. As he was putting a bundle of sticks on the fire, what happened? (Acts 28:3) _____

Seeing the poisonous snake fastened on his hand, the islanders thought Paul must have been a criminal, and the vengeance of the gods was now upon him.

But what did Paul do? (Acts 28:5) _____

The natives were astounded! Paul should have fallen to the ground writhing in pain, screaming in agony. In a minute or two, he should have been dead.

But nothing happened. Paul didn't get sick. He didn't fall to the ground and die. There was no pain.

Deeply impressed with Paul's shaking off the viper, what did the islanders now believe him to be? (Acts 28:6, last part of the verse) _____

After this miracle, Publius, the leader of the island, asked Paul to help his father who was very sick.

What did Paul do? (Acts 28:8, last part of verse) _____

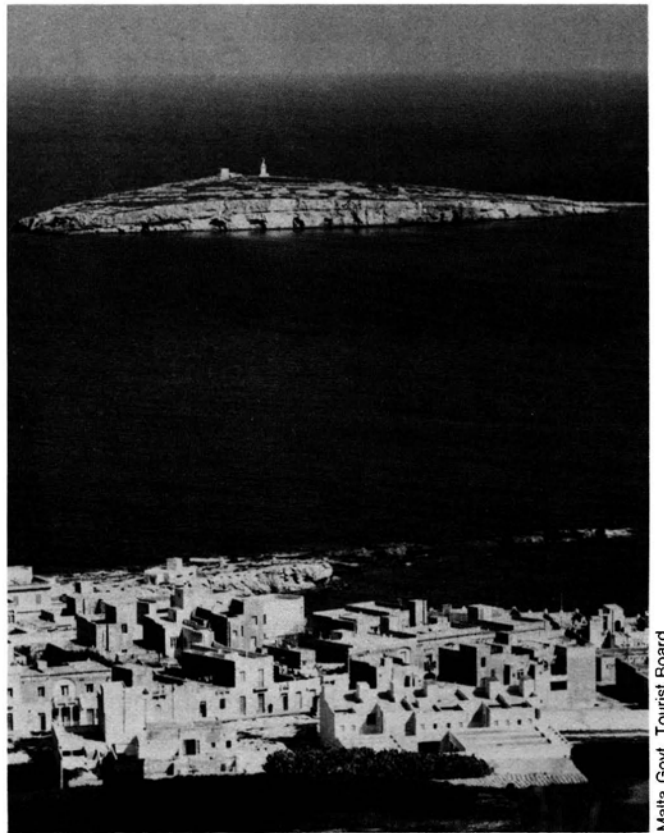
Paul was brought to the man and there prayed for him, laying his hands on him. God answered Paul's prayer and healed the man.

Word quickly spread among the islanders about the healing of Publius' father. Others on the island who had diseases came to Paul and were also healed.

Throughout the New Testament, God shows that it is His will to heal those who are sick. What does God instruct us to do when we are sick? (James 5:14) _____

ARRIVAL AT ROME

After three months on the island, they boarded a ship, which had wintered there at



Saint Paul's Bay in Malta (background) is the traditional area where Paul was shipwrecked during his journey to Rome.

Malta, and sailed northward along the western coast of Italy. They landed at the port city of Puteoli, south of Rome.

There were a few church members in this part of Italy. They met Paul and his party, and let them lodge there with them for a week. Paul and his party then headed on to Rome, taking the land route the rest of the way. After finally reaching Rome, the centurion delivered Paul and the prisoners over to the captain of the Roman guard to await trial.

Because of the nature of the charges against Paul, and because God was with him, he was not thrown into prison. He was placed under house arrest with only one soldier as a bodyguard.

As Paul's custom was when he came to a new area, he preached first to the Jews, giving them the opportunity to understand and hear the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Three days after his arrival, Paul called the leaders of the Jews in Rome together and explained the story of what happened to him. They were very interested in what Paul had to say, and determined to meet with him again at a later time.

What was the message Paul preached to the Jews who came to hear him? (Acts 28:23) _____

Were there some who believed and others who did not? (verse 24) _____

_____. As was the case in other areas where Paul traveled, not everyone believed.

A Church had already been raised up in Rome years earlier. Sometime before his imprisonment, Paul had written a letter to the Church in Rome to help establish it and strengthen the members. That epistle is called the book of Romans, and is found in the New Testament.

While a prisoner in Rome, Paul spoke firsthand with the brethren who were there and to all who would listen. What did he preach about during the time he was in Rome? (Acts 28:31) _____

The Apostle Paul continued to faithfully preach the same message which Jesus brought—the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

After two years, according to Roman law, Paul had to be set free. (Two years was the maximum imprisonment prescribed by a Roman “statute of limitations” since in the meantime no accusers had appeared against him—Acts 28:30, 31.) Paul's release probably occurred in 62 A.D.

The remaining events of Paul's life are not recorded in the book of Acts. It is not known for sure, but there are reasons to believe that he may have gone on to preach the Gospel in other areas of Italy, and then traveled back through some of the territories where he had raised up Churches throughout the Gentile world.

Paul was again arrested about five or six years later, and taken back to Rome as a prisoner. This time he was tried and condemned to death.

A merciless persecution by the Roman government was by this time being waged against Christians. Christianity was a growing religious force which the Romans wanted to stamp out of existence.

Before his execution, Paul wrote his final epistle, the book of II Timothy. It was Paul's final instruction to his beloved friend and fellow minister.

According to Roman law, citizens of the empire who were condemned to die were executed in the most merciful way possible. They were beheaded. So, Paul was put to death by orders of the Roman Emperor Nero, probably in the spring of 68 A.D. Thus ended the life of one of the truly great servants of God.

In a future lesson, we will learn about God's Sabbath day, when and why it was founded, what it pictures, and how it is to be kept today.


EDITOR IN CHIEF: **Herbert W. Armstrong**

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BIBLE MEMORY I Corinthians 12:12-20

MESSAGE SEARCH

Beginning at "START," find a message which will fit in the blanks at the bottom of the page, to reveal your assignment. The words of the message may be found vertically or horizontally, and will spell out two complete sentences, ending at "FINISH." The first three words are done for you as an example.

START 

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 FINISH

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