

"I Went Up to Jerusalem"

In writing to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul described himself as a "Child untimely born," by which he meant he was not one of the original twelve apostles. Chronologically, he was some years later. You remember that he was born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, in Asia Minor, and that he came to Jerusalem and received training under the great teacher, Gamaliel, who was not a believer in Christ. Saul is first mentioned in the Bible after the church had been established. He thought of Christians as heretics and spent many of his productive years persecuting them.

Later on, as you will recall, while on a trip of persecution to Damascus, Saul was blinded by a great light which shone about him and wherein the Lord appeared to him calling him to be one of His apostles. After having become a Christian in the usual way, the apostle Paul spent the first three years of his life as a Christian in Arabia and Damascus. During these three years he conferred not with any of the apostles, but learned the truth of Christ directly from the Lord.

PAUL'S GOSPEL NOT FROM MEN

When writing to the Galatians, he settled the question of where he had learned the gospel by writing these lines recorded in Galatians 1:11-18. "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years **I went up to Jerusalem** to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days."

THE JERUSALEM VISIT

Let us imagine now, that many years have passed and that Paul, nearing the end of his life, is in Rome in prison. Sitting beside him, though not a prisoner, is his traveling companion, the physician Luke. Let us imagine that on this particular occasion the aged apostle Paul says, "Luke, did I ever tell you about the time that I went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter?" When Luke answers, "No". Paul then gives the background that I have just shared with you and then he begins to tell this story.

"When I got to Jerusalem, I met Peter for the first time. As a younger man, while studying under Gamaliel, I had seen Peter, though we had never met. The first few days of my visit in Jerusalem were some of the best days of my life. Peter and I got to know one another real well, and I could not help but tell Peter how Jesus called me to be a Christian, and about the wonderful way the Lord revealed His truth to me. I told Peter and the brethren that he had introduced me to, about the Christians in Damascus, and the progress of the Lord's work in many places. After we had become well acquainted, and after the brethren had really come to know that I was no longer a persecutor of Christians, they received me fully into the circle of the Lord's family at Jerusalem. Luke, it was wonderful for them to be able to call me 'brother Paul.' My heart ached that in times past I had persecuted such devout Christians in many places. I was truly thankful that I had been forgiven and that those days were gone forever.

INCIDENTS AT THE TEMPLE

"Then one afternoon Peter said to me, 'Would you like to go over to the temple with me?' I was rather eager to go to the temple because the temple had played a very great part in my earlier life. I had often worshipped there, I had offered sacrifices there, and although now that I was a Christian, I no longer felt about the temple and the law of Moses as I once felt, so this was an opportunity I welcomed. We walked across from our lodging place to the temple. As we climbed the steps and came to the big broad paved Court of the Gentiles, Peter paused a moment and said, 'I wish you could have been here that day when our Master came into this area and saw it filled with cages of doves, pens of sheep and oxen, and tables of the money changers.

"I wish you could have seen Him, as in righteous indignation, He picked up a few cords from the pavement and wove them into a kind of leash, then suddenly

began walking through the area overturning the tables of the money changers, opening the doors of the cages, and letting down the bars of the pens. The doves took flight and the sheep and the oxen ran everywhere, their owners right after them. It was a period of consternation! Somehow, instead of taking hold of Him as I had expected them to do, those strong, burly men simply fell back. In the midst of it all I heard Him say, 'It is written, my house shall be a house of prayer, and you have made it a den of robbers' (Matthew **21:13**). The people scrambled after their money and chased everywhere after their animals. But when it was finished, the whole area was clear. And for a number of days thereafter those people did not again clutter the temple area.' I remember Peter saying that day the Master was so powerful and convincing. We felt so helpless, but He was so strong.

CAPTIOUS QUESTIONS

"As we walked on, we came to the steps leading to the inner court, and he said, 'Here is where Jesus stood that day, when they dragged in that poor woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They forced her forward and flung her down at the Master's feet. She was so embarrassed and so ashamed, and the people just kept looking at her. The men who had brought her to that public display, did it so they could try to trap the Master by asking what should be done with such a person. I remember so vividly how the Master gave them no answer, but stooped down and began to write on the ground. When they continued asking him, he lifted himself up and said so that all could hear, 'He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her.' And again He stooped down and with his fingers wrote on the ground just here. I do not know what He wrote for I was not standing close enough to see, but He traced out certain letters. 'And they, when they had heard it, went out one by one, beginning with the eldest even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman where she was, in the midst. And Jesus lifted up himself and said unto her. Woman, where are thine accusers? Did no man condemn thee? And she said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way; from henceforth sin no more' (John 8:6-11). Paul, you should have seen the expression on her face when the Lord said that.

"As we walked on we came to another area of the temple, and Peter said, 'Wait, here is where He stood the day they came to ask him those difficult questions. You remember?' And then he told about how the Pharisees and the Herodians had come to ask, 'Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?'

"If He had said yes, they would have made it an issue which the Jews resent. Had He had said no, they would have immediately told it to the Romans, and He would have been in trouble with them. As we stood there almost holding our breath, wondering how he could possibly answer their question, we heard Him say, 'Give me a denarius'. Someone standing about here handed Him one and he held it up and said, 'Whose image and superscription?' They answered, 'Caesar's'. The He tossed the coin back to the one who had given it, and said, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's' (Mark 12:14-17). There was quiet after that.

"As we looked about the temple, my mind was flooded with the memories of the times when I had worshipped there. I could not help but contrast the legalism of Moses' law with the beauty and the liberty and the wonderfulness of the law of Christ that I had lately come to know. After a while we left the temple area.

A VISIT TO BETHANY

"We were walking down the steps toward the northeast when Peter said to me, 'Would you like to go out to Bethany and visit Mary and Martha and Lazarus?' I said, 'I would very much like to go and meet them.' So, we went on in the direction we were going until we passed through the valley of Kidron and went up on the road which leads around the southern brow of the Mount of Olives. Just as we crossed the top we could see the houses of Bethany. As we came closer, he led me down one street and then another until he said, 'This is where they live.' I was a little nervous as we went in. There was Lazarus. He was an older man, still in reasonably good health. There was also Mary and Martha, younger sisters. What a wonderful experience it was to visit with these who had known the Lord and who had often had him in this very house to visit.

"After a while, Martha said, 'Brother Paul, we want you to stay for supper'. Then she laughingly said, 'In my younger years I used to think food was more important than I do now, for I realize now that the real bread is the Word of God. 'But', she said, 'We will have something'. A few minutes later a modest but adequate meal was set before us. It was thrilling to sit across from Lazarus.

"When our visit was finished, Peter and I started back toward Jerusalem. On the way he showed me the tomb where Lazarus had been buried. As we stood directly in front of it, he described that day in the long ago, saying, 'Paul, I wish you could have been here that day when Jesus, weeping because of His love for Lazarus, stood just where you are standing and said, 'Take ye away the stone'. Martha cried out, 'Oh, no Lord, he has been dead already four days'. But they

continued to take away the stone and then after the Master had prayed, he commanded with a loud voice which everyone could hear, 'Lazarus, come forth'. The crowd grew silent. Down in the darkness of the lower part of the tomb, we saw him move, and then come forth. He stood there in the doorway for a moment and then stepped out into the light. The crowd began to murmur among themselves. Then Jesus said, 'Loose him, and let him go' (**John 11:43**). What a wonderful rejoicing there was, for everybody in the village loved Lazarus. Many who had heard of Jesus and had not yet believed, now believed because of Lazarus. As Peter described that day I tried as best that I could to picture it in my own mind. I too, began to feel tears in my eyes because I had met both the Lord and Lazarus.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

"Returning to the city, we walked down the same road and through the Kidron Valley. Peter pointed out that the road on which we were walking was the road on which Jesus had entered the city that first day of the week before He was crucified. He told of the great crowds who came out to meet them and how that Jesus rode a colt on which no man had ever ridden before. He continued by telling how the people shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest'. (Matthew 21:9). They even put down their coats and branches from the trees for the colt to walk upon.

"As we neared the city again, I took hold of Peter's arm and stopped him for a moment. I said, 'Peter, do you see that knoll of ground? That is where they stoned Stephen'. He said, 'Yes, I know'. And then I said, 'That is where I held the garments of those who did the stoning'. He said, 'Yes, I know'. He put his arm around me. We walked on.

THE UPPER ROOM

"It was the next afternoon when he said, 'Would you like to walk with me again?' We left our lodgings and went over to a place where he showed me a house and said, 'There is an upper room in this house where we ate the last Passover with the Lord. We knocked on the door and the caretaker came and showed us the upper chamber. He left us there to be alone while Peter began to describe the last night that Jesus was on the earth before His death.

"He told me how he and John had been sent on the day before to make arrangements for the room and to buy a lamb and to get the unleavened bread

and bitter herbs for the Passover. Later the others came. He described the Passover. Later the others came. He described the arrangement of the table and the order in which they were seated. He said that they were all shocked to learn that one of their group was to betray the Master. He described the impatience of Judas Iscariot during the time before he left. Then after a while, he told me how that Jesus took unleavened bread and said, "This is my body, which is for you, this do in remembrance of me". And then he told how He also reached for the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant of my blood, this do as often as ye drink of it in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye proclaim the Lord's death until he come" (I Corinthians 11:24,26). This was the very room, the very table where the Lord's Supper had begun.

"After a while of meditating in that upper room, we walked slowly out, passing down through the eastern gate, and down through the Kidron Valley and over to the garden of Gethsemane. As we went, Peter became very quiet. Just inside the garden he paused and said, 'here is where we stopped. Then Jesus called James and John and me and took us deeper into the garden. Paul, He said to us, 'Sit ye here while I go yonder and pray. My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death, abide ye here and watch with me'. He went forward a little, and He fell on His face and prayed. Somehow his prayer was different from the others we had heard Him pray. We heard the Master pray often. That night, we could hear Him as He said, 'My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass away from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as thy wilt'.

"It had been a tiring day for all of us and it was now during the darkness of that Thursday night. We were so tired that we began to doze off while sitting and waiting for the Master to finish His prayer. The next thing I knew, the Master had taken hold of my shoulder and, as He awakened me, He said, 'What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation, the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak'. A second time He went away to pray, and again, to our shame, we fell asleep again. Again, He awakened us and went away to pray. Finally, after the third time, he came back and said, 'Sleep on now, take your rest. Behold the hour is at hand when the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners' (Matthew **26:36-41**, 45).

"Sure enough, almost before He had finished speaking, we could see the torches and mob procession with Judas as its head moving down from the city into the Kidron Valley, and then straight into the garden where we were. Before we could realize what was happening, Judas came forward and kissed the Master. I was so angered by this that I drew my sword and struck off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest. I was so angry, I felt I could defeat the

whole mob. Jesus looked at me and said, 'Put up thy sword again into its place, for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword' (Matthew 26:52). Then He stooped down and picked up the ear of Malchus and placed it again in its place on Malchus' head and it was completely healed.

"I was so confused that night, and when they led Him off to the trial, I followed away back in the crowd, ashamed and confused, and wondering. They took him to Annas, then to Caiphas, then to the Sanhedrin, and then on to Pilate. They beat Him time and time again. Many did spit in His face.

THE TRIALS

"Peter described the way that as the evening wore on and the trials advanced, he followed and stood in the outer court by the fire. He told, how, to his shame, that he had denied the Master, not once, but three times. He denied even having known Him. He said that every time he hears a cock crow, he thinks of that dreadful night long ago. I remember Peter describing what happened following the third denial. It was a tragic moment when a path through the crowd opened and he saw Jesus looking at him. Peter said to me as he was moved to tears, 'Brother Paul, I went out into the night and wept bitterly' (Luke 22:62). I put my arm around him and we walked back to our lodging place having spent an afternoon that I shall never forget.

CALVARY AND THE CROSS

"The next morning before dawn, we left our lodging and walked out north of the city, and Peter showed me Golgotha. There in the place of the skull he described the happenings of that fearful day when the Son of God was crucified. He told how the crowds had shouted 'Crucify him, crucify him.' They released Barabbas, but they kept the Master. They scourged him until his back was torn terribly, and when they brought Him out to give Him His cross, they had placed a thorn-made-crown on His head. His back was still bleeding somewhat, and His head also was bleeding from the sharpness of the thorns. Upon His sore back and shoulders, they placed that heavy cross. The crowds loved that, they were getting what they had asked for from Pilate. While most were shouting their approval, some were weeping bitterly. It was hard, but He began to move slowly, dragging the cross on which he was soon to die. It was so heavy, and He was so weak and tired from not having slept in such a long time, and also suffering from

His wounds, that they finally had to get another man to carry the cross for Him. They got Simon of Cyrene to do it.

"He told about the men driving the spikes through the Lord's hands and feet so that He would be firmly nailed to the cross. He told about the agony of the Lord as they placed the cross in the ground. He also told about the pitiful little band of disciples huddled at the foot of the cross. Mary was there, and the other women. And John and some of the others were also there. He told how the sun was darkened during the day, and how the rocks and the temple veil rent and how the earth shook and the graves were opened.

"Then he described how as they stood there beneath the cross they heard Jesus speak. He was weak and dying, but He managed to speak a few words as the afternoon wore on. When He had been hanging on the cross for a

while we heard him say, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). Paul, that was just like Him, He was always so forgiving. Later the two thieves began to talk. One of them joined in with the crowd and demanded that Jesus prove Himself by coming down from the cross and taking him with Him. The other one rebuked him and then asked the Master to remember him. The Lord, even in His dying, always had time for the needs of others, and so he said to the one who asked to be remembered, 'Today shalt thou be with me in paradise' (Luke 23:43). While Jesus was considerate of the one who had asked for mercy, He was still conscious of His pain and suffering which was becoming more and more intense. The expressions on His face said that He was hurting more than we could ever realize in that we had never been on a cross. Later, the pain became so great that He cried out, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachtiani, my God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' (Matthew 27:46). This was at about the ninth hour of the day, and Paul, you don't know how those words caused us to tremble and weep so much the more. At times the Master would try to look at those gathered around. On one of those occasions, He looked straight at His weeping mother, and said, 'Woman, behold thy son!' and then He looked at John and said, 'Behold thy mother!' (John 19:26-27). John nodded his head and embraced Mary. He understood.

"As the minutes seemed to pass so slowly as we stood there in the darkness, but at a time when the sun should have been shining at its brightest, the Master said, 'I thirst'. (John 19:28). Oh Paul, we were so helpless to ease His suffering even though we wanted to. Finally, someone ran and dipped a sponge in vinegar and gave it to Him upon a hyssop, and He drank it (John 19:29). After He had drunk the vinegar, we heard Him say, 'It is finished' (John 19:30). Having said

this, we knew that the end must be near, and then He bowed His head and said, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit' (Luke 23:46). Then he hanged lifeless, and we knew that he was dead. There were many outbreaks of weeping when those around who loved Him realized that there was no more life left in the Master's body. Paul, I shall never forget the picture in my mind of the Saviour hanging lifeless on that cross with the sign above Him with writing in three languages, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. The sign read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews' (John 19:19). There was a Centurion standing close by, and we heard him say, 'Truly this man was the Son of God' (Mark 15:39).

"When permission had been given by Pilate, we took Him down from the cross and placed Him in the tomb of Jospheh of Arimathea. Joseph loved the Lord but kept his devotion secret because of the people. It was so kind of him to give his tomb for the Lord's burial. After we had put him in the new tomb, the Romans sealed it with the official seal, and we went home to try to forget.

THE RESURRECTION

"In the city, we tried to forget, but found it hard not to talk about it. Some of us thought it was all over and began to wonder what we would do for the rest of our lives. That night passed, and the Sabbath day also. Then early on the first day of the week, some of the women decided to go to the tomb and anoint the Master's body. We were content to stay in the city and continue to discuss the future while at the same time we could not escape from the past and especially from the events of the past week. We were carrying on such a discussion when Mary Magdalene came running into the room, saying, 'He is not there, He is risen'. John and I ran breathlessly to the tomb. John was younger than I and did outrun me, but he waited at the door of the tomb. I arrived and brushed past him and went inside, and sure enough the slab on which His body had lain was empty. Also, there were the folded garments. Then, the angels told us that He had been raised from the dead. We were so happy, but at the same time we were confused at what all of this meant. We then returned to be with the others to see if they knew.

"Later that same day, we were gathered in the upper room, and the Master appeared to us. We rejoiced greatly when we realized that Jesus was actually alive and standing before us. A week later we saw Him again. We saw Him again a number of times during the next forty days, for He taught us the things concerning His kingdom. We began to understand things that before we never knew.

"Then there came that beautiful sunlit morning when He led us out to the Mount of Olives, and said good-bye to each of us. Then He gave us the charge: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all things what ever I commanded you: and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world' (Matthew 28:19-20). And we watched, His body ascended upward until finally He was lost to our sight. However, some angels came and gave us assurance that He would come again at a later time.

THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH

"Some days later, we were in the upper room in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit descended upon us. We all spoke in languages that we had not studied, and we realized that it was by mouth that God chose for the gospel to be preached. I don't understand why I was chosen to speak before the crowds that day, but I was. Paul, I wish you could have been there that day and seen that crowd. People covered the whole temple area, as thick as men could crowd in. I stood there on the promontory toward the steps and preached about Jesus, and at the end of the sermon, 3,000 people wanted to be Christians. They said, 'What shall we do?' And I answered and said, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:38).

"Some of us went over to the pool of Hezekiah and baptized there. Others walked down to the pools of Solomon. All day long we were baptizing people who believed in Christ and who wanted to be His disciples. This was the beginning of the church.

"When Peter had finished his narration, there was a period of quiet. A few days passed and I bade him goodbye, not to see him again for fourteen years. He and I have so much in common. Each of us has something we wish we could forget; my persecution of Christians, and his denial of the Lord. But we also have in common our faith that Christ is the Son of God. Yes, I went up to Jerusalem, I stayed fifteen days, and in those fifteen days I saw the story of how it all happened. Now, more than ever, I can say, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day' (2 Timothy 1:12).

CONCLUSION

It is my desire that the events of our Lord's life may be very real to each of us. I want us all to be able to feel the power that is in the story of Christ. May we ever share it with others in the hope that they, too, will obey the gospel of Christ.

P.S.

I recommend that you read these pages of "I Went Up to Jerusalem" carefully before departing for your trip to Israel, then read them again when you return, its meaningfulness will grow once you have visited many of these places in Jerusalem.

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