

PAUL'S JOURNEY TO ROME WAS ENTIRELY PILOTED BY THE LORD!

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If we just thoughtlessly browse through the story of Paul being taken to Rome in chains – starting in Jerusalem around 57-58 A.D. – we may not catch on to the whole point and the actions taken by the Lord, by having Paul sent there. In short: The entire journey as it were, was piloted, arranged and properly overseen by the Lord, in person!

Nothing happened which was not in the plans of Christ for Paul.

We shall have a closer look at these details, and it is of the utmost importance to us who believes on Jesus Christ, that we can get the Bible truths told us as it once happened. God wants us to have the right 'picture' of all of this.

It has come clear to me that the purpose of sending Paul to Rome (*the real purpose*) – was not just to have him stand before Emperor Nero. No, the real agenda was Christ's merciful and tender care for *His covenant people, Israel*.

That is why Jesus *did not* tell Paul to finally visit the Messianic assembly there, to whom he had written the epistle to the Romans (57 AD as he was in Ephesus). Isn't this a peculiar situation, sending Paul that long distance over the stormy Mediterranean Ocean to Rome, just to meet with the Sanhedrin there, the eleven priest and leaders of the synagogues?

Paul was sent *as an agent, a religious Diplomat if you will*, to have the whole nation's future staked out, in that the Lord would have Israel's leaderships response to the Kingdom-Gospel to be settled, either with a "Yes" or a "No" regarding their standing before God. "Will you believe on Jesus Christ – or will you not?" If yes, Christ would have come down from heaven to establish the millennial Kingdom in Jerusalem; if they answered no! then the Lord would have cut all contact with Israel, leaving them over to destruction. Paul's task at Rome was to bring to Israel the very Ultimatum of choices.

It brings my thoughts right on to Moses in Deut. 28 as he made clear to them that they had to choose between the 'Blessing' and the 'Curse'.

And so, Paul was sent with a similar message to Israel, *choose between Jesus Christ - and the destruction from the angry Roman Army.*

IT ALL STARTED AT JERUSALEM IN 58 AD

Most Bible students have learnt of Paul and his confrontation with the angry mob in the temple site. This turmoil and hardships did not take Paul by surprise.

Paul and his travel companions were staying a few days with Philip, the evangelist, at Caesarea – on his way to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Weeks, Pentecost. Then something happened – God sent him a prophet!

In Acts 21:10-14 we learn of Agabus, the prophet, warning Paul of what to come:

“..a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11: And coming to see us, he took Paul’s belt and with it bound his own feet and hands and said, Thus says the Holy Spirit: The Jews at Jerusalem shall bind like this the man who owns this belt, and they shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles (heathen). 12: When we heard this both we and the residents of that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13: Then Paul replied, What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart like this? For I hold myself in readiness not only to be arrested and bound and imprisoned at Jerusalem, but also (even) to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14: And when he would not yield to our persuading, we stopped urging and imploring him, saying,

The Lord’s will be done!”

Paul just knew in his innermost mind that he should go up there, no matter what this may cost him! He trusted entirely in the hand of the Lord upon him (for protection and guidance) – for he had experienced again and again in later years how Christ saved him through the utmost trials and hardships and sufferings he met.

(See the article of Dr. Donny M. Barnes here in my web “The Sufferings of Paul”)

It looks to me as if Acts 21:14 as a matter of fact says that this really was God’s will for him...***The Lord’s will be done.*** Actually as it was already calculated in God’s plan for the entire journey to Rome. It had to come through a confrontation ***first*** at Jerusalem with Sanhedrin there. Jesus was about to overthrow Israel into the judgement prophesied against them (see Matt. 22:7 and also Luke 13, of the barren fig tree). The priesthood/Pharisees at Jerusalem had persecuted the assembly there for decades, and it was going downhill for Israel, for sure.

But Jesus Christ and God His Father decided to let Israel have one more chance, just this one only: The Sanhedrin at Rome would have to make the choice on behalf of the entire nation, whether to accept Jesus as their rightful Messiah King!



Acts 21:17-26 learn of how Paul at his arrival was persuaded by Jacob and the Elders to take upon him the traditional Nazarite Vow, of shaving his head and having four witnesses – and for seven days come before the Lord in the temple. See Num. chapter 6ff. This to try to calm the Jews so they would see that Paul was upholding/obeying the Law of Moses, contrary to the lying rumors. But to no avail. The 'Tiger' had already been teased and made angry! And suddenly an angry mob of Asian Jews stood forth accusing Paul of having brought with him an unclean Gentile, a hound, into the temple site! A blaspheming sin in Jewry, and against their temple traditions. They violently took hold of Paul and started to beat him up. IMAGE: Paul rescued by Captain Claudius Lysias, the Roman officer at the Antonia Fortress. The officer in a Blue coat. The artist who painted this artwork, missed out of a little detail: Paul has hair on his head, but in the real life-story, Paul had raked off his hair for that Nazarene Rite.

Acts 21:28-30 tells us:

"Shouting, Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everybody everywhere against the people and the Law and this (temple) place! Moreover, he has also brought Greeks into the temple; he has desecrated and polluted this holy place! 29: For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and they supposed that he had brought the man into the temple (into the inner court forbidden to Gentiles). 30: **Then the whole city was aroused and thrown into confusion,** and the people rushed together, they laid hands on Paul and dragged him outside the temple, and immediately the gates were closed."

Now, before we go through the case at hand, let me take a little side-step – for there are two peculiar 'incidents' which I would like to bring to your attention.

For the first: This was at Pentecost in 58 AD and Paul was in town. It was a lot of visiting Jews there, just as in Pentecost in Acts 2 when the Holy Ghost and signs and tongues created a lot of turmoil and disturbance in the feast. At that time, we recall that Peter several times used a particular expression, which we easily recognize: **"Men of Israel!"**

Doesn't this ring a bell?

To me it does, for in many of my articles I have explained that at Pentecost in Acts 2 there were no regular Gentiles

present in the temple site – they were forbidden. Only Jews were present there, and they had come from most of the Roman Provinces in the Empire. We count 13-14 different languages in Acts 2:5 proving that. And in spite of such hard evidence, we find that the Pentecostal Movement says against this, and hold that Gentiles were present, and that this day was the birthday of the Church. They couldn't be in more error!

For what is Eph. 2:14, 15 tell us of the Church? It says clearly that the 'Wall of Partition' between Jew and Gentiles was torn down, and so making the two into 'One new Man' – the body of Christ, and so making peace. The Law of Moses was thus abolished for that purpose. Gentiles and Jews have by faith in Christ been made equal in standing, and there was no longer "Jews first, then Greek" (Rom. 1, 16). It is quite impossible that the Church was born at Pentecost in Acts 2 (28 AD). There were no Gentiles there, and this is a proven fact!

Then Peter addressed the huge congregation saying "Men of Israel" – simply because that was the ethnicity of the entire multitude. Gentiles were forbidden.

And here, back in 58 AD, thirty years later at Jerusalem, this had NOT CHANGED. It was the very same order regarding who could enter the temple site. Jews only!

It took but one single Gentile – by rumors rather than as facts – to upset an angry Jewish mob, causing the whole city to enter total rage and turmoil with violence so the Roman forces in the Antonia Fortress stormed the place.

Try to imagine what would have happened at Pentecost in Acts 2, 28 AD, if we should believe what the Pentecostals are saying, of Gentiles present in the audience when the Holy Spirit fell on the believers. Not just one Gentile, as with Paul together with Trophimus, a Greek, but hundreds of Gentiles. It would have turned the whole city into a fierce battleground and everything would go sideways with death casualties and what not. Mass arresting, and troops all over the place.

Shouldn't it be time for the Pentecostal camp to reconsider their theories of Pentecost as the birthday of the Church? Is it so hard to admit that they made a real blunder back in Azusa Street 1906-1913 when this heresy was introduced?

Our loyalty must be with the Bible, the Word of God, and not with denominations and manmade theologies!

That is why we read that the mob trying to kill Paul in 58 AD in the temple site, shouted – not on just anybody – but they addressed those who were present there: Men of Israel, help!

The second issue: There had been formed a Messianic assembly at Rome, as a result from the Pentecost in Acts 2 in 28 AD. Visitors from Rome are listed in Acts 2:5. To whom Paul later wrote his Roman epistle. Historians hold that Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans when he stayed at Ephesus, 56-57 AD. There might be some slight

dispute yet, but I agree to this.

So, if it had been Paul's private choice to go to Rome, wouldn't you think that he would go to visit those Romans to whom he wrote his epistle? I do.

But, no, this was not the reason God sent him to Rome. It was rather ultra-important and urgent to have Paul sent to the Sanhedrin at Rome, to present to them God's ultimatum to choose Christ or to reject Christ. They would have to make one important choice on behalf of the whole nation and its future.

Paul was taken into constant custody with guards and in chains, to protect him against persecutors, to secure his meeting with the Sanhedrin, in God's plan for this enterprise.

I have always wondered why we cannot find any specific word or clue in the Bible of Paul visiting the Messianic assembly at Rome. But seeing that God's plan was for Paul to meet up with Sanhedrin in the cause of Israel's future, I think this is the correct answer. I have stopped wondering now.

A theory will be that he may have found an opportunity to visit them after his first imprisonment, before his second one. It could have happened, but there are no written documents to prove it. Let us read what Paul told the Romans, in Rom. 1:9-13 – which will give us some perspective over this:

"For God is my witness. Whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel and in the good news of His Son, how incessantly I always mention you when at my prayers. 10: I keep pleading that somehow by God's will I may now at last prosper and come to you. 11: For I am yearning to see you, that I may impart and share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen and establish you. 12: That is, that we may be mutually strengthened and encouraged and comforted by each other's faith, both yours and mine. 13: I want you to know, brethren, that many times I have planned and intended to come to you, though thus far I have been hindered and prevented, in order that I might have some fruit among you, as I have among the rest of the Gentiles."

Then we can proceed in what happened to Paul furthermore at the temple site in 58 AD. They were about to kill him!

Acts 21:31-34 informs us:

"Now while they were trying to kill him, word came to the commandant of the regular Roman garrison that the whole of Jerusalem was in a state of ferment. 32: So immediately he took soldiers and centurions and hurried down among them; and when the people saw the commandant and the troops, they stopped beating Paul. 33: Then the commandant approached and arrested Paul and ordered that he be secured with two chains. He then inquired who he was and what he had done. 34: Some in the crowd kept shouting back one thing and others something else, and since he could not ascertain the facts because of the furor, he ordered that Paul be removed to the barracks."

To make this narrative a bit shorter, Paul was allowed by Captain Claudius Lysias to address the accusing mob in his defense, as the guards kept him secure.

When Paul, in his speech, told what Jesus had said to him in a vision when he was in prayer in the temple, which happened in Acts 9 (36-37 AD) – the Jewish mob stopped listening to him, and became furious and wild tearing up their garments and casting dust up in the air with rage. What was it that Paul said, and which set the raging mob at fire?

Paul mentioned an ethnic group, which was not allowed to enter the temple site, nor having any close fellowship with Jews: The Gentiles! This was in the Pentecostal Holidays in 58 AD. Thirty years after the Acts 2-Pentecost. Paul had just innocently said:

Acts 22: 21: *“And the Lord said to me, Go, for I will send you far away unto the Gentiles!”*

The wild mob responded, Acts 22: 22, 23 – no, they exploded in fury:

“..now they raised their voices and shouted, Away with such a fellow from the earth! He is not fit to live! 23:And they were shouting and tossing and waving their garments and throwing dust into the air.”

God saw to it that Paul hereafter was constantly guarded and protected by the Roman guards anywhere he arrived.

In the middle of the night he was transferred to Caesarea via a short stop at *Antiparis* for rest, about 43 kilometers from Jerusalem towards the coast. Rome afforded that dramatic night, a force of 470 armed soldiers in this heavy posse to ensure that Paul would be out of harm's way. The force had 200 foot soldiers, 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen. Can you imagine this escort on its way? They had big torches which lit up the road for them. The next day Paul was delivered over to Governor Felix at Caesarea (Acts 23:19-33).

The vast bureaucracy apparatus of Rome started to turn its wheels...it would take some years to have Paul cleared.

In Acts 23:11 he receives a vision at night, and the Lord entered his room:

*“And that following night (after he had stood before Sanhedrin of Jerusalem) the Lord stood beside Paul and said, Take courage, Paul, for as you have borne faithful witness concerning Me at Jerusalem, **so you must also bear witness at Rome.**”*

Here we will have to stop for a deeper reflection: What had happened the day before? The day before, Paul had stood court before Sanhedrin at the temple site, before High Priest Ananias II and his counsel. Acts 23 has all about this. Captain Claudius Lysias had allowed him to do so (Acts 22:30) – that is, he actually took initiative to this hearing, for he wanted to learn the real reason for all this calamity and fury with Jewry.

Here we are told straight forward that Jesus had planned to send Paul, NOT to the Messianic assembly at Rome, but to the

Sanhedrin – Israel's religious leaders at Rome.

Just like Paul now had witnessed before the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, likewise should he now be sent to Rome to bear witness to the Sanhedrin there!

Thus we can conclude in truth: That trip to Rome was for the sake of Israel's future as a nation. If they would repent to Jesus, God would have spared Israel and sent Jesus down from heaven. But if they refused, then the destruction would fall upon them. Paul was to bring them the final ultimate call, and the point of no return.

That is also why Paul told the Sanhedrin at Rome, Acts 28:20:

"...it is because of the Hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain."

But first Paul had gone through the bureaucracy of Rome, first the corrupted Governor Felix, the following Governor Festus, and finally King Agrippa II, as we learn from Acts 24-26. And as he told Festus, Paul appealed his case to Caesar (Nero) □□□□ Acts 25:11, 12.

To Rome he should go, said Festus.

Here I just want to take one more side-step: Regarding the discussion of the twelve Tribes of Israel.

Paul, in an indirect manner, □□ confirmed their existence in his own time, as we read Acts 26:7: □□ (It was 58 AD) -

*"Which hope (of the Messiah and the resurrection) □□ **our twelve tribes confidently expect to realize** □□ □□ as they fervently worship (without ceasing) night and day. And for that hope, O king, I am accused by Jews and considered a criminal!"*

James 1:1 falls in with Paul's saying likewise:

*"James, a servant of God and of the the Lord Jesus Christ, □□ **to the twelve tribes scattered abroad** □□ (among the Gentiles in the dispersion), Greetings."*

Peters epistle no. 1:1 mention the very same addressees, by the Provinces in which they lived – Jews in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia.

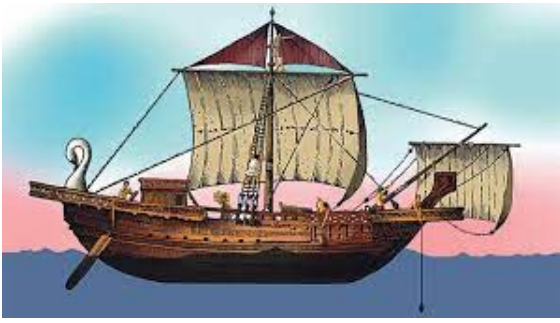
So it is evident in the New Testament around 58 AD that all the tribes of Israel existed. They never disappeared, the ten tribes of Northern Israel. I just like to throw this piece of information in here. □□

Back to the case of Paul going to Rome.

In Acts 27 we are told of that stormy and dangerous sea voyage on board of a Roman cargo vessel.

Yours truly has himself sailed the Mediterranean more than once. Luckily, it was when the weather was sunny and bright, and no rough seas. I remember so clearly, when I was 18 in 1964 I liked to stand in the fore near the bough, to watch the playful Dolphins speeding just ahead of the ship, which held 12 knots. Up to three, four Dolphins at a time...they could keep on this play for twenty minutes before they disappeared. I visited Cyprus and the town of Famagusta, and Libya and the town of Tripoli, before Gadhafi took over the rule. The ship came in from the Red Sea through the Suez

Canal and into the Med.

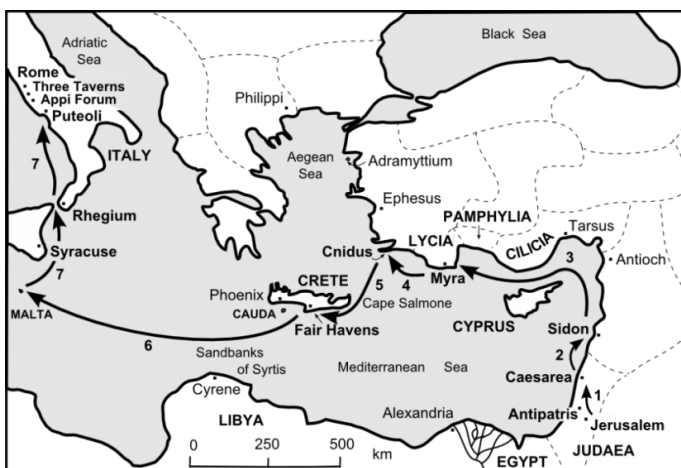


Paul had no such bright and sunny experience – on the contrary – not long after they went to sea; and they met winds blowing against them from north-west which was not so favorable to say the least. They sailed past Cyprus on the south-side for that reason. As they reached Myra in Lycia, the Roman leader transferred them over to another ship which was sailing to Italy, and from Alexandria (Egypt). Myra was a town near the modern resort of Antalya in our time, southern Turkey. IMAGE: A Roman cargo ship – not much different than the one Paul was onboard...but Paul's had longer hull.

But when they came from the western coast of Crete they were taken with harsh north-eastern winds – and it was already early October 59 AD. Eventually they lost control of the vessel. They had been floating around in the Adriatic for 14 days at the mercy of wind and tall waves, when they finally stranded at Malta.

Onboard the ship, as it drifted in the storm, an angel of God comes to Paul and tells him that they all will be rescued, and be stranding on an island, Acts 27:23-26:

"For this very night there stood by my side an angel of the God to Whom I belong and Whom I serve and worship. 24: And he said, Do not be frightened, Paul! It is necessary for you to stand before Caesar (Paul's appeal case); and behold, God has given you all those who are sailing with you. 25: So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as it was told me. 26: But we shall have to be stranded on some island."



They stranded at Malta, as we know.

From Acts 28:1-11 we are told how Paul, by the power of the Holy Spirit, healed miraculously a number of sick people there. They stayed for three months, and late spring/early summer 60 AD, they managed to get onboard an Egyptian vessel to take them to Rome. It had the name of "Gemini" the twins, which was called Castor and Pollux with the Romans. It was on Malta

that we find the final report of people getting healing miracles by an apostle of Christ. After that, we cannot find healing miracles in the Bible. Heaven went all silent, and remains so to this day.

Acts 28:24 shows us the eleven Sanhedrin members at Rome, coming to Paul's lodging, and they were much in doubt of his message of Christ.

"And some were convinced and believed what he said, and others did not believe."

Acts 28:25-28 is telling of Jewry/Israel as those who now will have the 'final nail' hammered into their coffin:

"And as they disagreed among themselves, they began to leave, but not before Paul had added one statement more: The Holy Spirit was right in saying through Isaiah (Chap. 6) the prophet to your forefathers: 26: Go to this people and say to them, You will indeed hear and hear with your ears but will not understand, and you will indeed look and look with your eyes but will not see. 27: For the heart of this people has grown dull, and their ears are heavy and hard of hearing and they have shut tight their eyes, so that they may not perceive and have knowledge and become acquainted with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their souls and turn to Me and be converted, that I may heal them. 28: So let it be understood by you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!"

In verse 29 Sanhedrin went away arguing and disputing among them. And God took this response as a clear "No Thanks!" in regard to Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, and has considered the nation as fallen away from that moment on.

In 66 AD the rebellion against Rome started, and it ended with Israel's total destruction in 70 AD. Thousands of war prisoners were sent with slave vessels to Alexandria to be sold, but no one was buying, Deut. 28:68.

CONCLUSION

Everything with Paul and his travel to Rome seems to have been planned by the Lord in detail. He piloted the entire operation, until Paul finally could bring the message to the Sanhedrin at Rome to have a final ultimate decision from Israel as a nation. Their choice was bad, and ended in tragedy for Israel.

But this sad event caused God to reveal to His servant Paul, the free Grace Gospel as we can read the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. But Jewry – a vast majority – is still fallen from God. They have only 15 000 Messianic Jews in Israel believing on Jesus. And the next dealing which God shall have with this people, will be when He send down His

two prophets Elijah and Moses to start the end time 'Great Tribulation' in Israel. This will be the method for God to elect a new nation for Him on earth.

The visible 'sign' (if you will) will be when we can see that Israel start building the Third Temple in Jerusalem. Then we will really be in the end time. Rev. 11.

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