

# INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

## FIRST QUARTER: THREE MONTHS' STUDIES IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

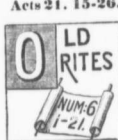
A. D. 28.]

### LESSON V. PAUL AT JERUSALEM.

[Feb. 1.

Acts 21, 15-26.

[Commit to memory verses 17-19.]



15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Cesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law.

21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest

all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

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

24 These take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from strangled, and from fornication.

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

### General Statement.

And now at last Paul is at the goal of his journey, the city which to every Jew was holy as the dwelling-place of God. The apostle enters its gate surrounded by companions, and within its walls is welcomed by friends, yet he sees on every hand lowering faces, and knows full well that dangers are impending. Beneath the roof of the stanch old Mnason the apostolic company spend an evening listening to memories of the early days, and the next morning are ushered into the presence of "the Lord's brother," James the Just, saintly and stern head of the elders of the mother Church, many of whom, doubtless, had looked upon the face of Christ, and some of whom may have seen him on the cross. Here Paul recounts the wonders of the grace wrought among the Gentiles, and shows that the same gifts of the Spirit have been poured out upon them as on the Jewish believers. They listen, and rejoice at

the mercy of God, and for themselves are satisfied. But they remember the thousands of Jews, who, though Christians in name, are yet in the bonds of a narrow belief, and they give to Paul counsel which, if followed, may conciliate them, and turn them from enemies to friends. As the report has gone abroad that Paul is an apostate from the Jewish law, and an enemy to its customs, they recommend him to join with four Nazarenes in an act of consecration in the temple, thereby to show that he is loyal to the traditions of the fathers. Another man would have stood upon his right of freedom, and refused to submit to the unnecessary yoke, but Paul was willing to deny himself to the very dust, if need be, to save one soul. He assented, and we see him standing in the Nazarene's room in the temple, with short head, performing the ceremonial of one who was under a vow.

### Explanatory and Practical Notes.

**Verse 15.** After those days. The time spent at Cesarea, from five to seven days. Took up our carriages. Rev. Ver., "Our baggage." The word means "the things to be carried." Went up. From Cesarea on the sea-coast to Jerusalem among the mountains, a journey of three days, as they go on foot.

**16. Went with us certain.** Paul's party had now grown to large proportions, giving safety to his person and dignity to his errand. They were to present to the jealous Jewish Christians of Jerusalem the offerings of the Gentiles, as a token of fellowship. Brought with them. The text may be translated either "bringing us to Mnason," that is, taking the apostolic company to the house of Mnason, or as it is in our translation, and also in the Rev. Ver., indicating that Mnason went to Cesarea to meet his guests. One Mnason. Nothing else is known concerning this brave old disciple who was willing to receive into his house the man most hated in the Jewish world. An old disciple. Not necessarily an aged man, but, as in Rev. Ver., "an early disciple," either one of those converted on the day of Pentecost, or perhaps a follower of Christ during his earthly life. It may be that from him Luke obtained some facts in his Gospel and the earlier chapters of Acts. With whom we should lodge. Since the city was crowded at the feast of Pentecost, such an arrangement was necessary. (1) Let us welcome the disciples of Christ to our homes. (2) How beautiful the sight of an old and experienced disciple!

**17. Come to Jerusalem.** This was Paul's fifth visit since his conversion, and his last, for he left it a few years later a prisoner in chains. The brethren. The Church in Jerusalem was mainly Jewish, and intolerant of Gentile Christianity; but there was in its membership a section of broad-minded, progressive believers, who appreciated Paul and his work, and these gave him a welcome which was all the more encouraging because of premonitions of danger.

**18. The day following.** Wherever Paul goes, whether as pilgrim or apostle, he is ever prompt in his errands. Paul went in with us. Luke and the seven European brethren (Acts 20, 4) were present at this interview. From the epistles, we learn that one of its objects was to present the gifts of the Gentile Christians. Unto James. Called "the Lord's brother," for he was the son of Mary and Joseph. He was not one of the original twelve apostles, but was the pastor or "bishop" of the Church in Jerusalem. At this time the apostles had scattered from their mission to various lands. James was the recognized leader of Jewish Christianity, yet he had given the most cordial indorsement to Paul's work among the Gentiles. All the elders. The leading members of the Church, called by seniority or ability to positions of influence. Were present. Showing that this was a formal and appointed meeting.

**19. Saluted them.** Probably, according to the Oriental manner, by embracing with a kiss upon the cheek. He declared. This statement was made to show the believing Jews that the hand of God had been in the spread of the Gospel among the Gentiles. It was not in any sense a report to the Church in Jerusalem as from one who was subordinate to them. Particularly. Rev. Ver., "one by one." What things God had wrought. Laying stress, not on his own labors, but on the divine working, the salvation of souls, the gifts of the Spirit on Gentile believers, and the evidences that God owned the work. By his ministry. The original word is that from which "deacon" is derived, meaning "service." (3) Let God have all the glory in our work, for he gives all the success.

**20. They glorified the Lord.** Plainly a full indorsement of the apostle and his course. I see no evidence of a strife among the leaders of the Church, whatever may have been the parties innocent, its members. Yet these elders recognize the necessity of