

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 57

Sha'ul's Secondary Missionary Journey ~ Part 13

Note: To examine the graphics in this series, click on them for a pop-up version.

As I mentioned in my last post, we return to the **Book of Acts**. The historical record continues with **Sha'ul** being persecuted in Corinthian, beginning in Acts 18:12.

Charges Before Gallio

¹² But when Gallio became the Roman governor of Achaia, the unbelieving Jews made a concerted attack on Sha'ul and took him to court,

Gallio was proconsul¹ of **Achaia** between 51 and 53 CE, according to an inscription from **Delphi**; this is an essential factual landmark in determining the chronology of **Sha'ul's** travels.

¹³ saying, "This man is trying to persuade people to worship God in ways that violate the Torah."

It seems that **Jewish** complainants believed **Sha'ul** was violating the **Torah**; moreover, **Gallio** takes it this way and acts accordingly (v. 15).

¹⁴ Sha'ul was just about to open his mouth when Gallio said to the Jews, "Listen, you Jews if this were a case of inflicted injury or a serious crime, I could reasonably be expected to hear you out patiently. ¹⁵ But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law, then you must deal with it yourselves. I flatly refuse to judge such matters."¹⁶ ***And he had them ejected from the court. ¹⁷ They all grabbed Sosthenes, the president of the synagogue, and gave him a beating in full view of the bench, but Gallio showed no concern whatever.***

Gallio seemed both perceptive (***I flatly refuse to judge such matters***) and negligent (the beating of **Sosthenes** did not concern him). Keeping order in a multi-ethnic provincial town heavily involved in trade and travel was difficult. **Gallio** preferred the hands-off approach.

Sosthenes, the **synagogue president**, was probably the new president after **Crispus**, the former president, became a **Messianic Jew** (Acts 18:8). But it is not impossible that **Crispus** and **Sosthenes** were both "synagogue rulers," two among several, and that **Crispus** continued to hold office even after becoming **Messianic**. This **Sosthenes** may be the same as the one in 1 Corinthians 1:1 - which would mean that he later became **Messianic** himself, perhaps because of this incident.

Return to Antioch

¹⁸ Sha'ul remained for some time, then said goodbye to the brothers and sailed off to Syria after having his hair cut short in Cenchrea because he had taken a vow; with him were Priscilla and Aquila.

Sha'ul remained for some time. Except where his life was in immediate peril, **Sha'ul** never left during a crisis or under duress. ***Having his hair cut short in Cenchrea because he had taken a vow, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila.*** **Priscilla** is mentioned first; she may have been the more notable of the couple.

¹ The chief Roman government official in a senatorial province who presided over Roman court hearings.

Yeshua rules out oaths for **Messianic Believers** (Mattityahu 5:33–37) but not **vows**, although the distinction between them is unclear. The Greek word for **vow** occurs only here and at 21:23. What kind of **vow** did **Sha'ul** take, and what did cutting his hair have to do with it? Nothing is said of what he vowed to do, but Numbers 6:1–21 describes the **Nazirite vow**, which involves allowing the hair to grow during the days of the **vow**. However, this cannot have been a **Nazirite vow**, for if it had been, **Sha'ul** would not have been shaved in **Cenchrea** but would have waited till he arrived in **Yerushalayim** (v. 22) to shave his head and offer the obligatory sacrifice at the **Temple** (compare Acts 21:23–24).

No matter the details of **Sha'ul's** vow, this verse proves that he did not abandon the **Torah**; on the contrary, even when he became a **"Gentile" among Gentiles**, he continued to observe **Jewish** practices.

¹⁹ They came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and held dialogue with the Jews. ²⁰ When they asked him to stay with them longer, he declined; ²¹ however, in his farewell, he said, "God willing, I will come back to you." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

Sha'ul promises to return to **Ephesus** if **God** wills, as indeed he did (Acts 19:1). **Sha'ul** saw his ministry and life as being in **God's** service and control.

²² After landing at Caesarea, he went up to Yerushalayim and greeted the Messianic community. Then he came down to Antioch. ²

We know it was the **Yerushalayim** church that **Sha'ul** greeted since he went **down** from there (**Yerushalayim** is at a higher elevation) to **Antioch**. His arrival back in **Antioch** marks the completion of his second missionary journey.

In our next post, we will begin to explore **Sha'ul's Third Missionary Journey** beginning in Acts 18:23.

² Acts 18:18–22.