

and is clearly connected, at least initially, with their entering the Land. Eight out of the twelve occurrences of this phrase occur in Deuteronomy, and the series ends in Isaiah 53:10, where the context is the promised 'seed' prolonging their days because of Christ's sacrifice. The proverb, "The fear of the LORD prolongeth days" (Prov. 10:27), seems to be a clear reference not only to Israel entering the Land but also to God's people entering the Kingdom.

The sabbath

When the commandment regarding keeping the sabbath (Ex. 20:10) is repeated in Deuteronomy 5:14, the additional statement, "that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou", is made. This was to emphasise the responsibility that the children of Israel should have towards their servants, remembering that they had been delivered from such service to the Egyptians by God. Whereas God connects the keeping of the sabbath in the Exodus account with His resting on the seventh day after Creation, in Deuteronomy God connects its keeping with the fact that they were servants in Egypt but have now

been redeemed through a 'mighty hand'. Both, of course, are true, but Deuteronomy perhaps takes us a step nearer the consideration of Christ, for their redemption from Egypt is compared and contrasted by Peter with our redemption in Christ (1 Pet. 1:18,19), and as the redeemed we can therefore look forward to "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1:4), in the sabbath rest to come.

Honour thy father and mother

When the command, "Honour thy father and thy mother" (Ex. 20:12) is repeated in Deuteronomy, the words "that it may go well with thee" (5:16) are added. It is this specific phrase that Paul quotes in Ephesians 6:3, and further adds under inspiration that it is the first commandment with promise, causing us to think of the day when 'it might go well with us' in God's promised Kingdom. Jesus, in discourse with the Pharisees, illustrated how 'doing those things that please Him', 'continuing in His Word', 'abiding in the truth' and 'seeking not our own glory' are all examples of how to honour the Father (Jno. 8:29,31,44,50), as demonstrated in his own life (v. 49).

(To be concluded)

"Having shorn his head in Cenchrea"

Malcolm Edwards

THIS INTRIGUING record in Acts 18:18 about the apparent cutting of Paul's hair because of a vow raises several questions:

- 1 Of whom does the passage actually speak, Paul or Aquila, who is also mentioned in the verse?
- 2 Does it refer to the Nazarite vow of Numbers 6:18, or some other vow?
- 3 Why would a disciple of Christ continue to observe the Law of Moses?
- 4 If the passage refers to the Nazarite vow, why was the hair cut in Cenchrea and not at the sanctuary as the Law enjoined?

As to question 1, commentators are divided because of the uncertainty of the Greek text of verse 18. Most are in favour of it referring to Aquila, one view being that having not long been converted, he may have still been under a

vow, and Cenchrea just happened to be the place where it was terminated. Regarding question 2, no other vow involved growing and cutting of hair, so a Nazarite vow seems to apply. If, however, it was Paul and not Aquila who had made the vow (question 3), why would he wish to observe the Law of Moses, whilst carrying instructions from the Council of Jerusalem to instruct believing Gentiles to abstain only from idols, fornication and the eating of carcasses with their blood? Perhaps it was done simply to placate believing Jews, since we learn from Acts 21:20 that there were many who still observed the Law.

But how would one answer question 4? By whose instruction would Nazarite Jews end their vows at places other than the temple? And what was done with the shorn hair? The answer might be that, where Jews lived a distance from



The remains of the ancient harbour at Cenchrea.

Jerusalem, the whole ritual could be done at the local synagogue.

During the period of the Exile, Jews were unable to fulfil many requirements of the Law; it may be that, in later times, Nazarites living in the provinces of the Roman Empire were allowed to forego the sacrificial aspects of the ritual and replace them with a local synagogue ceremony, whilst retaining the other requirements, such as not partaking of the fruit of the vine (Num. 6:3,4) and the cutting off and burning of the hair (v. 18). Thus, if Paul as a leader in Corinth had taken on such a vow, it would have meant that for that particular period he would have been unable to partake of the emblems of Christ's death, which would be another reason for concluding that Aquila, not Paul, is the subject of Acts 18:18.

All this hinges on whether there was a synagogue at Cenchrea. From Romans 16:1 we learn

that later there was an *ecclesia* there, which, as often was the case, could have developed from a synagogue community. Cenchrea was the main port for Corinth, and ports were often places where trading Jewish communities developed. Thus there is a strong likelihood that there was a synagogue at Cenchrea.

The view that it was indeed Paul who had the vow, and that he retained his shorn hair until he reached Jerusalem, where he fulfilled it with the four others, as recorded in Acts 21:26, is a possibility. But this was some time afterwards, and the initiative was actually not his, but that of James and the brethren at Jerusalem (vv. 23,24).

The detail may be of no great importance in the record, but the very fact that the writer records it is just another example of the many incidents in the Acts which testify that he was a dedicated and genuine chronicler.