

## ~TARSUS (109) (Tar'sus)

- The principal city and capital of the Roman province of Cilicia, birthplace of the apostle Paul.
- The Lord said to him; Rise, go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man named Saul, from **Tarsus**. For, look! He is praying. (**Acts of Apostles 9:11**)
- I am a Jew, born in **Tarsus** of Cilicia, but educated in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strictness of the ancestral Law, being zealous for God just as all of you are this day. (**Acts of Apostles 22:3**)
- Ruins of the ancient town remain in the modern settlement of the same name, situated about 16 kilometers (10 miles) from the mouth of the Cydnus River, which empties into the eastern Mediterranean about 130 kilometers (80 miles) North of the eastern tip of Cyprus.
- No one knows when **Tarsus** was first settled or by whom, for it is a city of great antiquity. First mentioned in secular history as being captured by the Assyrians, it was never a strongly fortified city, **Tarsus** was thereafter in servitude and paid tribute much of the time to the successive powers of Assyria, Persia, Greece, then to the Seleucid kings, and finally to Rome.
- **Tarsus** was situated in a fertile coastal area where flax was raised, and this, in turn, supported flourishing industries such as the weaving of linens and the making of tents.
- Fabrics woven of goats hair and called *cilicium* also found special use in the making of tents. A more important factor, however, contributing to Tarsus fame and wealth was its excellent harbor strategically located along a prime East-West overland trade route.
- Running eastward, it led to Syria and Babylon, leading to the northern and western sections of Asia Minor, this route threaded itself through the Cilician Gates, a narrow gorge in the **Taurus** Mountains about 50 kilometers (30 miles) to the North of the city.

- During its history a number of noted personalities visited **Tarsus**, including Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, and Cleopatra, as well as several emperors.
- Cicero was the city's governor from **51 B.C.E. to 50 B.C.E.** **Tarsus** was also famous as a seat of learning in the **First Century C.E.**, and according to the Greek geographer Strabo, as such it outranked even Athens and Alexandria. **[Geography, 14, V, 13]**
- So, for these several reasons, Paul could well describe **Tarsus** as **no obscure city**. He said this when informing a military commander that he was a citizen of **Tarsus**, not an Egyptian.
- And as he was about to be led into the soldiers quarters, Paul said to the military commander; Am I allowed to say something to you? He said; Can you speak Greek? **(Acts of Apostles 21:37)**
- Are you not really the Egyptian who before these days stirred up a sedition and led the four thousand dagger men out into the wilderness? **(Acts of Apostles 21:38)**
- Then Paul said; I am, in fact, a Jew, of **Tarsus** in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city. So I beg you, permit me to speak to the people. **(Acts of Apostles 21:39)**
- From time to time in the course of his ministry, Paul returned to his hometown of **Tarsus**.
- And he was talking and disputing with the Greek-speaking Jews. But these made attempts to do away with him. **(Acts of Apostles 9:29)**
- When the brothers detected this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to **Tarsus**. **(Acts of Apostles 9:30)**
- So he went off to **Tarsus** to make a thorough search for Saul **(Acts of Apostles 11:25)**
- And, after he found him, he brought him to Antioch. It thus came about that for a whole year they gathered together with them in the congregation and taught quite a crowd, and it was first in Antioch that the disciples were by divine providence called Christians. **(Acts of Apostles 11:26)**

- **And no doubt he passed through there on some of his missionary journeys.**
- **And by their hand they wrote; The apostles and the older men, brothers, to those brothers in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the nations, Greetings! ([Acts of Apostles 15:23](#))**
- **But he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the congregations. ([Acts of Apostles 15:41](#))**
- **And came down to Caesarea. And he went up and greeted the congregation, and went down to Antioch. ([Acts of Apostles 18:22](#))**
- **And when he had passed some time there he departed and went from place to place through the country of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. ([Acts of Apostles 18:23](#))**