

# A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

# THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

## OF THE APOSTLES

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, Associated

*An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely*

### ACTS 5:31-32

*"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."*

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

### Lesson #90

### COMMENTARY ON: 22:1-13

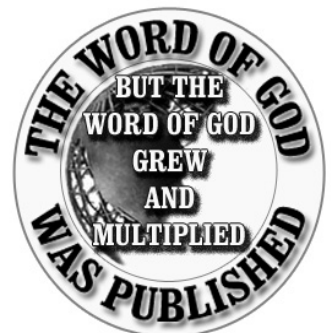
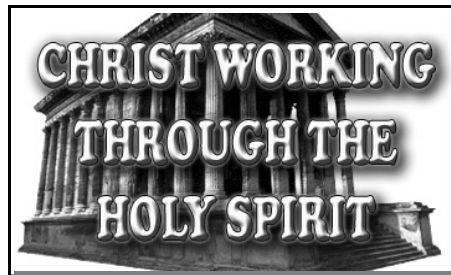
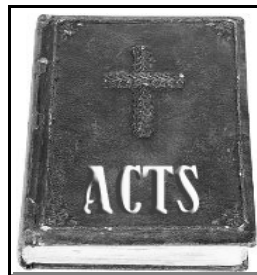
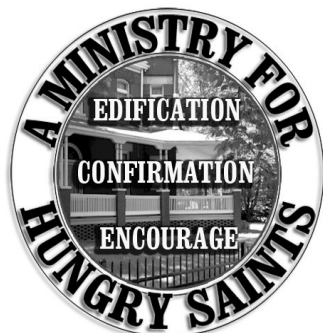
#### PAUL'S DEFENSE TO THE JEWS, #1

In defending himself, Paul is accounting for how he is conducting his life, and for the message he is preaching to the people. He will establish to these Jews that he comes from a zealous background as themselves, and was taught under the most respected Jewish teachers. His words will establish that he is not a mere reactionary, as some have alleged. There was an epoch in his life that altered its course. Although Gamaliel was a peaceable man, a higher authority than Gamaliel had spoken to him. Paul too was known for persecuting this way, which the high priest and elders could confirm. Now, owing to the appearance of "Jesus of Nazareth," he had now embraced the way he once opposed. He simply had not seen it correctly. As a sign to him, a devout man according to the law, who had a good report of all the Jews, came to him and he received the sight that he has lost in the blazing glory of that experience on the road to Damascus.

### ACTS 17:26-27

*"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."*

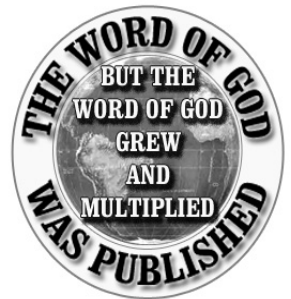
" . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)



Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ

# The Book of Acts

## Lesson Number 90



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED =Amplified Bible (1965), ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV =English Revised Version (1885), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), GNB=Good News (1966), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE= International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV=King James Version (1611), LITV= Literal Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV= Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster=The Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT =

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

# PAUL'S DEFENSE TO THE JEWS, #1

“ 22:1 ”Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you. <sup>2</sup> (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith.) <sup>3</sup> I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. <sup>4</sup> And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. <sup>5</sup> As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. <sup>6</sup> And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. <sup>7</sup> And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? <sup>8</sup> And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. <sup>9</sup> And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. <sup>10</sup> And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. <sup>11</sup> And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. <sup>12</sup> And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, <sup>13</sup> Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.” . . . . . (Acts 22:1-13)

## INTRODUCTION

### A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

In defending himself, Paul is accounting for how he is conducting his life, and for the message he is preaching to the people. He will establish to these Jews that he comes from a zealous background as themselves, and was taught under the most respected Jewish teachers. His words will establish that he is not a mere reactionary, as some have alleged. There was an epoch in

his life that altered its course. Although Gamaliel was a peaceable man, a higher authority than Gamaliel had spoken to Paul. Paul too was known for persecuting this way, which the high priest and elders could confirm. Now, owing to the appearance of “Jesus of Nazareth,” he had embraced the way he once opposed. Formerly, he simply had not seen it correctly. As a sign to him, a devout man according to the law, who had a

good report of all the Jews, came to him and he received the sight that he has lost in the blazing glory of that experience on the road to Damascus.

### THE STRONGEST TESTIMONY IS THAT OF A CHANGED LIFE

By contrasting his present life with his former manner of life, Paul will establish that a significant change has taken place in

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him. With spiritual expertise, he accounts for that change by testifying to the events through which that alteration had been initiated. It is good to remember that those in Christ have experienced a very real change.

- ⇒ **FROM DEATH TO LIFE.** They have passed from death unto life (John 5:24; 1 John 3:14).
- ⇒ **FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.** They have been turned from darkness to light (Acts 26:28a).
- ⇒ **FROM THE POWER OF SATAN TO GOD.** They have been turned from the power of Satan unto God (Acts 26:18b).
- ⇒ **DEAD, BUT MADE ALIVE.** They were dead, but now they are quickened, or made alive (Eph 2:1).
- ⇒ **ENEMIES, BUT RECONCILED.** They once were enemies, but now they are reconciled to God (Rom 5:10).
- ⇒ **ONCE ASTRAY, BUT NOW RETURNED.** They were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls (1 Pet 2:25).
- ⇒ **FROM SERVANTS OF SIN TO FREE FROM SIN.** They were the servants of sin, but are now made free from sin (Rom 6:17-18).
- ⇒ **FROM UNRIGHTEOUS TO JUSTIFIED.** They were once unrighteous, but are

now washed, sanctified, and justified (1 Cor 6:9-11).

- ⇒ **FROM FAR FROM TO NIGH.** They once were “far off,” but have now been “made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13).
- ⇒ **FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.** They once were darkness, but now are light in the Lord (Eph 5:8).
- ⇒ **FROM NOT A PEOPLE TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD.** They once were “not a people,” but are now “the people of God” (1 Pet 2:10a).
- ⇒ **FROM ALIENATED TO RECONCILED.** They once were “alienated and enemies” in their minds, but are not “reconciled” (Col 1:21).
- ⇒ **FROM CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE TO BEING MADE TO SIT TOGETHER WITH CHRIST IN HEAVENLY PLACES.** Once they were vassals of the devil, but now they are sitting with Jesus, and are joint heirs with Him (Eph 2:2-6; Rom 8:17).

It is not that those in Christ ought to change; they **have been** changed, and are **continuing** to be changed by the Spirit of God (2 Cor 3:18). That is the Kingdom norm. Any deviation from that is precisely that – a deviation. **When believers have to be admonished to change, it is because they have retrogressed, and removed themselves from the One who called them into the grace of Christ** (Gal 1:6). When they are not growing, it is because they have not added the various virtues that have been provided for them, and of which they have been apprised (2 Pet 1:5-10).

Paul will set himself forth as an exhibit of what happens when a person is justified – when they have been made a partaker of Christ (Heb 3:14), and have been reconciled to God (Colo 1:20-21).

Elsewhere Paul declared that

**It is not that those in Christ ought to change; they have been changed, and are continuing to be changed by the Spirit of God (2 Cor 3:18). That is the Kingdom norm. Any deviation from that is precisely that – a deviation.**

**he was chosen to be an example, or pattern, of what happens when God shows mercy on a person.** “*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting*” (1 Tim 1:15-16). Paul also provides a sterling example of a person who does not resist the Spirit, or choose the flesh over the Spirit.

The prophets foretold this type of change – one that involved the fundamental altering of man’s basic constitution.

- ⇒ **MOSES SAID GOD WOULD CIRCUMCISE THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE.** This is a circumcision that would result in the people loving God with their whole being. “*And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live*” (Deut 30:6).
- ⇒ **JEREMIAH SAID THE PEOPLE WOULD NOT DEPART FROM HIM.** The people would be united with one heart, and would be faithful. “*And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*” (Jer 32:39-40).
- ⇒ **JEREMIAH SPOKE OF GOD GIVING THE PEOPLE A HEART TO KNOW HIM.** This new heart would induce the people to return to Him with their whole heart. “*And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart*” (Jer 24:7).

⇒ **EZEKIEL SPOKE OF THE PEOPLE RECEIVING A NEW HEART AND SPIRIT.** A new heart and spirit would result in the people walking uprightly. *“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them”* (Ezek 36:16-27).

These days, there is too much attention given to explaining the presence of sin among professing Christians. Actually,

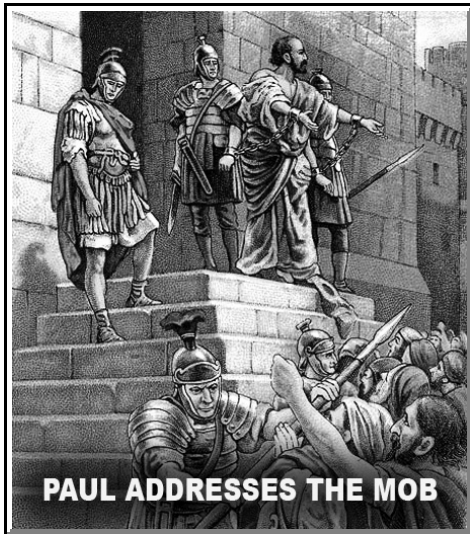
the testimony should be of a people who have been obviously and undeniably changed. If this change is not obvious, a claim of identity with Christ is nothing more than supposition, and a glorifying testimony cannot be given. **Identity with God assumes a lack of identity with sinners.** The only exception to this rule is the testimony of the past, which, as Paul will show, is in sharp conflict with the testimony of the present. That is because a very real and fundamental change has taken place. This change is not merely a new discipline or regimen. It is a change in character in which the new comes, and the old passes away (2

Cor 5:17).

**A religion that is not manifested in an observable change is a fraudulent one.** If this were not the case, Paul’s testimony would carry no weight at all. However, there was a change in his manner of life – **a change that could be attested by observation.** Further weight will be given to his testimony because he came from the same background as those who were opposing him. He was also zealous in his former opposition to Christ and those who believed on Him. The contrast will confirm that a work had been done in him.

## HEAR MY DEFENCE

*“ 22:1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you. 2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith) . . . ”*



**PAUL ADDRESSES THE MOB**

### MEN, BRETHREN, AND FATHERS

*“ . . . Men, brethren, and fathers . . . ”* Other versions read, *“Brethren and fathers,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“brothers and fathers,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“My brothers and fathers,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“men, brethren, and fathers,”*<sup>DARBY/DOUAY/GENEVA/RWB/TNT/WEB/YLT/EMTV/LITV</sup> *“brothers and esteemed fathers,”*<sup>NLT</sup> *“my friends and leaders of our nation,”*<sup>CEV</sup> *“my fellow Jews.”*<sup>GNB</sup> and *“Brethren and fathers [Men, brethren and fathers.”*<sup>WYCLIFEE</sup>

Here is a classic example of the fulfillment of Jesus’ word: *“But I say unto*

*you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”* (Matt 5:44). Notice with what kindness he addresses them – *“brethren, fathers.”* Elsewhere he referred to the Jews in general as, *“my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh”* (Rom 9:3). He also said of himself, *“For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin”* (Rom 11:1).

This identity according to the flesh was not like that of ordinary national or ethnic associations. **This was a fleshly association that was ordained and blessed by God.** Jesus Himself came from Israel *“concerning the flesh”* (Rom 9:5), and was related to David, for example, *“according to the flesh”* (Acts 2:30; Rom 1:3). To be sure, Jesus was not limited to the fleshly lineage, for He was primarily *“the Son of God”* (Mk 1:1; Lk 1:35; John 1:34; Acts 8:37; Rom 1:4; 1 John 5:20). Secondly, however, He was also a *“Jew”* (John 4:9), and Paul also confessed himself to be a *“Jew”* (Acts 21:39; 22:3). Holy men would speak of *“sinners of the Gentiles”* (Gal 2:15), but would speak of the Jews as having a noble lineage (Rom 9:3-5). In this way, they honored the choice of God, as well as the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Being saved involves infinitely more than being the fleshly offspring of Abraham. However, men of God spoke of such associations as blessed ones, even if the people did not handle that association properly. Jesus spoke of a distinction within the Jewish race. *“They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were*

*Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham”* (John 8:39). Paul did the same when he wrote, *“For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel”* (Rom 9:6).

Notwithstanding this distinction, Paul was not ashamed to associate himself generally with the offspring of Abraham – a blessed race indeed.

### HEAR YE

*“ . . . hear ye my defence which I make now unto you . . . ”* Other versions read, *“my defense which I now offer to you,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“listen to my defense,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“the story of my life which I now put before you,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“what I have to say in my defense,”*<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> *“listen as I explain what happened,”*<sup>CEV</sup> and *“listen carefully to what I have to say before you jump to conclusions about me.”*<sup>MESSAGE</sup>

The word *“defense”* comes from the Greek word *ἀπολογία* (apologias). This is word from which we get the term *“apology.”* The primary meaning of this English word is *“something said or written in defense or justification of what appears to others to be wrong or of what may be liable to disapprobation.”*<sup>MERRIAM-WEBSTER</sup> In this case, Paul’s manner, or conduct, appeared to contradict what the Jews who were accusing him thought was proper. Confirming that he had not merely adopted a different earthly philosophy, Paul justifies what he is doing, showing that it was altogether proper. He will confirm that he is acting in perfect harmony with what he has been given to see, and how he has been changed.

In a most powerful manner, he will associate the way he is living with what he

has experienced. That experience will be defined as a confrontation of the Lord Jesus Christ, which confrontation wrought an instant moral change, and inducted a completely different perspective of life.

Of course, all of this would be pointless if a change in his manner of living was not apparent. **This is precisely why it is so wrong for a professing Christian to shape his appearance and life as though he was no different that other than other people.** Such foolish efforts make an apology pointless, for there is no reason for a defense of the faith if the one giving it provides no evidence of the change wrought in regeneration.

### The Purpose of an Apology

Peter referred to this kind of defense when he wrote, *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ”* (1 Pet 3:15-16). All of this postulates a radical change in those who have “received” Christ (John 1:12). The lives of such people are significantly different than those who remain *“alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them”* (Eph 4:18). **It is that stark difference that solicits the inquiry of others, whether it is an amiable one, or one that is hostile, such as is revealed in this text.**

In our time, the definition and purpose of apology has been changed to be harmonious with institutionalism. The study of apologetics is not one that is personal, or accounts for a different manner of life. Now an apology is associated with a purely scholastic defense of the Christian view of things. It may deal with the orderliness of creation, or certain rules of logic – but the personal aspect of giving an apology is not generally known. While there may be some measured value in such an approach, it has no power in it, because it is not undergirded by lives that are being lived by faith.

I would venture to say that giving an answer for the hope that is within a person is virtually unknown in our time. At the very least, it is not common. This is evidence of the perilous nature of the times in which we are living. When the power of God is absent in religion, we have fallen upon

hard times.

### THEY KEPT THE MORE SILENCE

*“(And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)”* Other versions read, *“they kept all the more silent,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“they became even more quiet,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“they became very quiet,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“they settled down more,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“the silence was even greater than before,”*<sup>NJB</sup> *“they became very quiet,”*<sup>IE</sup> *“they granted more silence,”*<sup>EMTV</sup> *“they showed more quietness,”*<sup>LITV</sup> and *“they grew even quieter. No one wanted to miss a word of this.”*<sup>MESSAGE</sup>

Remember, the word that had been spread about Paul was this: *“This is the*

⇨ He had brought Greeks into the Temple, polluting it.

Now, as Paul speaks to his accusers, he speaks in the Hebrew tongue. This so contradicted the charges leveled against him, that it at once caught the attention of the Jews. Although many of them no doubt spoke Greek, it is the opinion of many scholars that they had no heart for it. John Gill writes, “. . . chiefly because the Hellenistic language was not so agreeable to them, nor the Hellenistic Jews, who spoke the Greek language, and used the Greek version of the Bible; and such an one they took Paul to be, besides his being a Christian; wherefore when they heard him speak in the Hebrew tongue, it conciliated their minds more to him, at least engaged their attention the more to what he was about to say.”<sup>JOHN GILL,</sup>

**The Hebrew tongue was the native language of the listeners, and could no doubt be better understood. It was something that contributed to their uniqueness from other peoples. I do not doubt that Paul could also express himself more precisely in this language.**

*man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place”* (Acts 21:28). An additional report had been circulated about him: *“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”* (Acts 21:21). Thus, the following charges had been leveled against Paul.

- ⇨ He taught the Jews who were among the Gentiles to forsake Moses.
- ⇨ He taught the Jews ought not to circumcise their children.
- ⇨ He taught the Jews should not walk after the customs of the Jews.
- ⇨ He taught against *“the people,”* or the Jews.
- ⇨ He taught against the Law.
- ⇨ He taught against the Temple.

### COMMENTARY ON ACTS

The Hebrew tongue was the native language of the listeners, and could no doubt be better understood. It was something that contributed to their uniqueness from other peoples. I do not doubt that Paul could also express himself more precisely in this language.

The point here, however, is that Paul spoke with great wisdom. He went about to diffuse the anger of the people by appealing to their uniqueness. In so doing, he at once cast a veil of suspicion over the charges being brought against him. Here is a marvelous demonstration of knowing *“how ye ought to answer every man”* (Col 4:6).

Today the saints of God should exercise themselves to speak in such a manner as to diffuse erroneous reports and flawed views. Sometimes unwise answers only fuel controversy, bringing no remedial benefits to the listener. There are lawful ways to do this without compromising the truth. It is not comely for those in Christ to come short in this matter, not knowing how they ought to answer those who are critical of them.

**THE KIND OF MAN I AM**

*“<sup>3</sup> I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.”*

By speaking of his heritage, he is

fundamentally unknown. That kind of ignorance is primary, for it hides from the people the kind of Savior Jesus is, and what He actually came to do. Your acquaintance with the Prophets will confirm this to you.

**BROUGHT UP IN JERUSALEM**

*“I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet*

**Redemption enhances the truth, even though it may first have been known only in types and shadows. This is something that is exceedingly difficult for those with a legalistic bent to perceive. Salvation in Christ Jesus does not technically render everything foretold of it obsolete.**

affirming that he is not ashamed of his identity with the Jewish people, or their manner of life. While his conversion required the abandonment of some of his conclusions concerning the Law, it did not require a renunciation of it. Those who come to Christ are never required to renounce any truth they previously embraced. **Redemption enhances the truth, even though it may first have been known only in types and shadows.** This is something that is exceedingly difficult for those with a legalistic bent to perceive. Salvation in Christ Jesus does not technically render everything foretold of it obsolete. There is a vast difference between fulfillment and obsolescence. For example, the Old Covenant itself was ended as a means to righteousness (Rom 10:4). It was in this sense that the Lord Jesus “fulfilled” both the Law and the Prophets. He did not erase them, or render them useless.

In the fulfilling of the Law and the Prophets they are now seen in a different light. They are not eliminated from the Scriptures, but occupy a secondary position – one that is enhanced by the greater glory of the New Covenant. Now, for example, “*the righteousness of the Law*” is fulfilled in those who “*walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*” (Rom 8:4). The Prophets have a special utility in defining Christ and the nature of the salvation He came to effect. The fulfilling of the Prophets really has no relevance to the believer if the Prophets are

*brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel . . .*” Other versions read, “*I had my education in this town,*”<sup>BBE</sup> “*brought up here in this city,*”<sup>NJB</sup> “*brought up and educated here in Jerusalem,*”<sup>NLT</sup> “*grew up in this city of Jerusalem,*”<sup>IE</sup> “*reared in this city,*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> “*brought up here in Jerusalem,*”<sup>GNB</sup> “*having been up-nurtured, reared.*”<sup>INTERLINEAR</sup> The preponderance of versions read “*brought up in*” Jerusalem.

The words “*brought up*” are translated from a Greek word meaning, “to nurse up, nourish up . . . properly of young children . . . nourished to promote their growth,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “nurturing rear, train, educate,”<sup>FRIBERG</sup> “to raise a child to maturity by providing for physical and psychological needs - to raise, to rear, to bring up,”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> and “to bring up, care for, rear.”<sup>GINGRICH</sup>

The clear implication of the text is that Paul was exposed to the Law, and the teachings that surrounded it, from the time he was very young. This is something unique to the Jewish people – a people that were directed and cultured by the Lord. This is why it is so important to behold their manners. While they were certainly not a perfect people, and were prone to wander because of their hard-heartedness, their manner of life provided a context in which the Lord could work.

There are a number of Scriptural references to the teaching of children

⇨ Abraham’s children (Gen 18:19). Abraham faithfully passed the promises of God along to his own children. That manner was also passed to the children’s children, as is evidence by Joseph’s understanding of the promise of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt (Gen 50:25).

⇨ About the Passover (Ex 12:26-27). The meaning of the Passover feast was to be faithfully explained to the children. When the things related to the Passover were carried out, it was to be before the children.

⇨ Redeeming a lamb (Ex 13:13-15). When the firstling of an ass was redeemed, a certain procedure was put in place. It was to be done before the children, so that when they inquired about the meaning of what was done, an explanation of their deliverance from Egypt and the consecration of the firstborn might be given.

⇨ Under the Law (Deut 4:9-10; 6:2,7; 11:19). Under the Law, the children were to be taught the specifics of the Law, as well as the details of how it was given to Israel.

⇨ Samuel (1 Sam 2:18; 3:1). As soon as Samuel was weaned, he was raised by Eli, ministering in the Tabernacle, and learning the routines of sacred service.

⇨ The Psalmist (Psa 78:4). True Israelites pledged to make known the praises of the Lord to generations, His strength, and the wonderful works that He had done.

⇨ Ahab’s children (2 Kgs 10:1). Ahab had seventy sons. As wicked as he was, he arranged for them to be brought up. When Jehu wrote letters to those in Samaria, he made sure the teachers of the children of Ahab got copies.

⇨ Jeremiah (Jer 1:5-7). Jeremiah was separated from the womb unto the Lord. The Lord apparently directed to him at a very young age, for Jeremiah told the Lord he was only a child. The Lord commanded him not to say that, but to rather do what he was commanded.

- ⇒ John the Baptist (Lk 1:15,80). John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb. As he grew, he eventually went into the desert, remaining there until he was made known to Israel to announce the coming of the Savior.
- ⇒ Jesus (Lk 2:40,46-47,52). Jesus was raised diligently by Joseph and Mary, so that at the age of twelve he was conversant with the things of God.
- ⇒ Timothy (2 Tim 3:15). Timothy was knowledgeable of the Scriptures from the time of his youth, being faithfully taught by his mother and grandmother.
- ⇒ Christian fathers (Eph 6:4). In the body of Christ, fathers are told to raise their children *"in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* Other versions read, *"training and admonition,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *disciple and instruction,* <sup>NASB</sup> and *"training and discipline and the counsel and admonition."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> That includes more than abbreviated Bible stories, and simplistic Christian songs.

**The failure of many Christians to communicate the truth of future events to their children is seen in the near-total absence of understanding among the younger generation concerning the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, the day of judgment, and an eternal inheritance.** Children should be taught more than to be kind and share their toys. They are capable of profiting from direct statements of scripture and sound explanations of the Word of the living God.

I have observed over the years that some people wait until it is too late to educate their children in the ways of the Lord. Of course, with nurseries, children's church, and preschool provisions this is easy to do. But that does not make it right.

Training in the home is essential, but it is not enough! Paul was a Jew, brought up in Jerusalem, even though his father was a Pharisee. He was not brought up under the teaching of a nanny, or a children's pastor, but at the feet of Gamaliel, who was an astute teacher of the Law. **Likewise today, in addition to godly parents, children need to be exposed to the best teachers available.**

Under the Law, the children were

with their parents when the Law was publicly read (Josh 8:35; 2 Chron 20:13; Ezra 10:1; Neh 8:3).

During the ministry of Jesus, *"children"* were brought with their parents to hear Him (Matt 14:21; 15:38; 18:2). Jesus told His disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him. It was the *"children"* who cried out *"Hosanna to the Son of David,"* when Jesus triumphantly rode into Jerusalem (Matt 21:15). When Paul spent seven days in Tyre, and departed, whole families accompanied him to the ship, including their children (Acts 21:5).

lending her son to the Lord for as long as he lived (1 Sam 1:27-28). Eli also viewed her action in this way (1 Sam 2:20). The very idea of such a decision is strange to the American Christian. However, that is only because few people see raising children in the Lord as something to actually be done.

**ZEALOUS TOWARD GOD**

*"... and was zealous toward God..."*  
 Other versions read, *"being zealous for God,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"given up to the cause of God with all my heart,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"I was a zealot for God,"* <sup>CJB</sup> *"devoted to God,"* <sup>GWN</sup> *"full of duty towards God,"* <sup>NJB</sup> *"very zealous to honor God in*

**The failure of many Christians to communicate the truth of future events to their children is seen in the near-total absence of understanding among the younger generation concerning the coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, the day of judgment, and an eternal inheritance.**

As confirmed in our text, this was a Jewish manner. It is not the manner in the churches of our day. Someone needs to ask those promoting the separation of children from the adults the basis for such an action.

**THE PERFECT MANNER OF THE LAW**

*"... and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers..."* Other versions read, *"the strictness of our father's law,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"strictly according to the law,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"thoroughly trained in the law,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"educated strictly according to our ancestral law,"* <sup>NRSV</sup> *"trained in the keeping of every detail of the law,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"according to the exactness of the law,"* <sup>DARBY</sup> *"My education was in the strict rules handed down by our ancestors,"* <sup>GWN</sup> and *"according to the strictest care in the law."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

It is clear that young Saul of Tarsus was not raised with a childish version of the law. He was rather exposed to its meticulous details.

Paul's training probably included the traditions that had been developed by the leaders of Israel. Both the Law and the traditions surrounding it were very exact and precise. Yet, Paul's parents saw fit for him to be reared in Jerusalem by Gamaliel, one who was an expert in that law. This is the same kind of decision Hannah made in sending young Samuel to Eli. Hannah viewed that as

*everything I did,"* <sup>NLT</sup> *"fervent minded to Godward,"* <sup>TNT</sup> *"very anxious to honor God in everything I did,"* <sup>LIVING</sup> *"very serious about serving God,"* <sup>IE</sup> *"ardent for God,"* <sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> and *"being ardent [even a zealot] for God."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

This is a most intriguing phrase: *"zealous toward God."* **It is an expression that reveals the conscience of Paul, and his singular devotion to God Himself.** In his epistle to the Galatians he wrote of formerly *"being more exceedingly zealous of the tradition of my fathers"* (Gal 1:14). It does not appear that this was referring to the *"tradition of the elders,"* which was soundly denounced by the Lord Jesus (Matt 15:2-6). The manner in which Paul speaks here indicates that he was speaking of traditions that he saw as based solidly on Scripture – else he would not have said he was *"zealous toward God."* I gather that he had a spirit during those times that was close to that of David, who lived with a more lively awareness of God than of men.

Add to that this was a zeal produced by Paul being taught according to *"the perfect manner of the Law."* He was not moved by youthful hype, or some week-end of distraction with other youths. It was his exposure to the teaching of Gamaliel, who taught the youth, but was himself not a youth-teacher, for he also taught the leaders of the Jewish community, for he himself was

**It is exceedingly difficult to parallel Paul's former life with the sectarian posture of many today. The difference is that those who have embraced mere human tradition claim to be followers of Christ. Also, they do not have enough of an understanding of Scripture to be zealous toward God, for their view of Him is not conducive to such a committal.**

a Pharisee (Acts 5:34). The very thought of today's youth ministers teaching the adults, elders, deacons, etc, is a frightening one! If that is the case, it should also be a disconcerting thought to ponder them teaching our children!

**AS YE ALL ARE**

“. . . as ye all are this day.” Other versions read, “just as you all are today,”<sup>NASB</sup> and “as any of you are today.”<sup>NIV</sup>

Paul does not see the attack of these people as a purely personal one. **They have acted out of a misapprehension of**

**God Himself – just as he did when he persecuted the church.**

There is a gem of truth hidden in this that is not at all apparent to the modern church. The Jews were cultured to live for God. That was their whole reason for being. Behind the scenes, **Satan raised up false prophets and teachers among them to convert that zeal. He made attempts through the efforts of idolatrous nations, but eventually that failed – particularly after the Babylonian captivity.** With the removal of outward idolatry from the Jewish community, there

was only one way for the devil to corrupt their understanding. That was through an erroneous view of God Himself. In particular, the purpose of God concerning the whole world was hidden from them, and they became ingrown.

In the case of Paul, he did not see God as having an only begotten Son through whom grace and truth had come. He rather thought within himself that he ought to “do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 26:9). However, once he saw Jesus correctly, his zeal for God included the proclaiming and exaltation of the name of Jesus.

**It is exceedingly difficult to parallel Paul's former life with the sectarian posture of many today.** The difference is that those who have embraced mere human tradition claim to be followers of Christ. Also, they do not have enough of an understanding of Scripture to be zealous toward God, for their view of Him is not conducive to such a committal. Zeal without knowledge is not good (Rom 120:2).

**I PERSECUTED THIS WAY**

**“<sup>4</sup> And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.”**

Paul proceeds to account for the change in his life – something of which the Asian Jews were probably not aware. Christians had heard of Paul's transformation (Acts 9:13), but there is no record of the Jews circulating such information. Believing Jews had heard that Paul was preaching against Jewry (Acts 21:21), but apparently had not been apprised of his former life.

**I PERSECUTED THIS WAY**

“And I persecuted this way. . .” Other versions read, “I persecuted the followers of this Way,”<sup>NIV</sup> “I made attacks on this Way,”<sup>BBE</sup> “people who followed the way of Christ,”<sup>GWN</sup> “the Christians,”<sup>LIVING</sup> “this new faith,”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and “I harassed (troubled, molested, and persecuted) this Way [of the Lord]”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The text **does not** say that Paul persecuted people, as the NIV/CJB/NIB/NLT (“followers”), GWN/GNB (“people”), Message (“anyone connected with”), and Living Bible

(“the Christians”) read.

“The WAY” denotes a certain profession and manner of life. As used here, the word “way” refers to “a course of conduct, a way (i. e. manner) of thinking, feeling, deciding,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “a manner of living and acting way of life, type of conduct,”<sup>FRIBERG</sup> and “way of life, conduct; Way (of the Christian faith and life).”<sup>UBS</sup> What Paul was really attacking was the newness of life in Christ Jesus. He did not oppose people because of their persons, but rather because of the manner in which they lived – and there is a fine distinction in those two things.

The fact of the matter is that those in Christ live differently – noticeably different. They can be distinguished from all other people by **the way** they live. There is such a distinguishable difference in their life that it provokes inquiry concerning “the hope” they possess (1 Pet 3:15). Paul makes a frequent point of this comparison.

- ⇨ Dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God (Rom 6:11).
- ⇨ Servants of sin and made free from sin (Rom 6:17-18).

- ⇨ Servants of sin and servants to God (Rom 6:20-22).
- ⇨ Believers and unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14a).
- ⇨ Righteous and unrighteous (2 Cor 6:14b).
- ⇨ Light with darkness (2 Cor 6:14c, Eph 5:8).
- ⇨ He that believes with an infidel (2 Cor 6:15).
- ⇨ What we were and what we now are (1 Cor 6:11).
- ⇨ Dead in sins and quickened together with Christ (Eph 2:5).
- ⇨ Far off and made nigh (Eph 2:13).

Peter does the same.

- ⇨ Sheep going astray and returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (1 Pet 2:24).
- ⇨ Called out of darkness and called into

His marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9).

⇒ Not a people and the people of God (1 Pet 2:10a).

⇒ Had not obtained mercy and not have obtained mercy (1 Pet 2:10b).

**These are not mere philosophical distinctions. Neither, indeed are the creedal pronouncements.** These descriptions are reflected and confirmed in “the way” people live. That “way,” or manner, is what Paul opposed. In his mind, this involved following Jesus rather than Moses.

In our time, if someone was asked to describe HOW, or the way, a Christian lives, what would they say? How do you describe those who are in Christ Jesus? We have come to a time when such an approach to defining a Christian is virtually unknown. **It has become exceedingly difficult to distinguish professing Christians from the rest of the world.** A Gospel has been preached that has not underscored what actually happens to a person when they are born again. Therefore, Satan has moved men to define Christians in a vague manner. That is why men say things like, “We are all sinners, but Christians are forgiven.” However, that is not the way Saul of Tarsus thought, and it is not how he viewed the community of believers. He perceived them as being on a different “way,” living in a different manner, and motivated by different principles.

When the professing church is required to have recovering ministries, special classes for the divorced, and tailored ministries for young people, its likeness to “this present evil world” is accented. When, in matters of analysis and motivation, it has to borrow its wisdom from the world, it has publicly confessed its likeness to the world. The reality of “the Way” has thus been obscured. Whatever defense may be presented for such a condition, it is a flagrant denial of the reality of the new birth, reconciliation to God, a new creation, and being made to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places.

I seriously doubt that Saul of Tarsus would persecute the nominal church of our day? He would probably perceive it as beneath the dignity of devoted Jews, like himself prior to his change.

#### UNTO THE DEATH

“ . . . unto the death . . . ” Other

versions read, “to the death,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “to their death,”<sup>NIV</sup> “to the point of death,”<sup>NRSV</sup> “until they were executed,”<sup>GWN</sup> and “some of them were killed.”<sup>IE</sup>

**The aggressive stance was the result of devotion to the Law of Moses, which spoke precisely about what to do with false prophets and those who sought to turn the hearts of the people to another god. Death was mandated.**

⇒ Speaking blasphemous words about God (Lev 24:11-16,23).

⇒ Those who prophesied falsely, were to be put to death. If they prophesied something and it came to pass, yet if they called upon the people to follow other gods, the were to be put to death (Deut 13:1-5).

Referring to the manner of this death, we are told, “And they that are Christ’s have **crucified the flesh** with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24). Initially, when we are baptized into Christ, “our old man is **crucified with Him**, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom 6:6). Those in Christ are to keep “the old man” upon the cross, where he will eventually succumb. Paul acknowledged that he was doing this when he wrote, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). He saw this as something in which he could legitimately glory. As it is written, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the

**Oh, that professing Christians would take this mandated death as seriously as Saul of Tarsus and the Asian Jews took the death imposed upon false prophets!**

⇒ A relative that secretly said to follow other gods, was to be put to death (Deut 13:6-9).

⇒ The prophet who presumed to speak a word in the name of the Lord, which God had not commanded him to speak, was to be put to death (Deut 18:20).

Saul of Tarsus took these commandments seriously. He saw early Christians as following a false teacher, worshipping a false god, and promoting a false way. He was wrong in his assessment, yet was seeking to act in strict comportment with the Law of the Lord. This, of course, was the same frame of mind in which the Jews before him were conducting themselves.

#### AN APPLICATION

The New Covenant also demands death – but not after the manner of the Old Covenant. Through the Holy Spirit, we are to “mortify,” or “put to death,”<sup>NIV</sup> “the deeds of the body” (Rom 8:13). Elsewhere it also said, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5).

world” (Gal 6:14).

Oh, that professing Christians would take this mandated death as seriously as Saul of Tarsus and the Asian Jews took the death imposed upon false prophets!

#### BINDING AND DELIVERING

“ . . . binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.” Other versions read, “binding and putting,”<sup>NASB</sup> “Arresting both men and women, and throwing them into prison,”<sup>NIV</sup> “I tied up men and women and put them into prison,”<sup>GWN</sup> and “putting in chains and committing to prison both men and women.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Luke’s record of this initiative in The Acts reads as follows: “As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison” (Acts 8:3). Paul had actually been more zealous than the Jews who were opposing him. He did not merely go after the leaders, but sought out everyone who named the name of Christ. This initial opposition was no doubt within the confines of Jerusalem. However, Paul did not limit his efforts to that central city.

**THE HIGH PRIEST BEARS ME WITNESS**

**“<sup>5</sup> As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.”**

Paul had been an angry Jew, but he had chosen to work within the framework of the Jewish system. **This tells us that he was acting more as a devout Jew than a mere reactionary to those who were following Christ.** His conduct was a testimony of his conscience toward God, and of his persuasion that the Jewish system remained the only valid way of approaching to or serving the God of heaven.

Within the memorable past, there had been some remarkable witnesses in the city of Jerusalem.

- ⇒ The news of the birth of *“the King of the Jews”* – something that had caused all Jerusalem to be *“troubled”* (Matt 2:3).
- ⇒ At the time the infant Jesus was dedicated, the news disseminated by Anna to those who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem (Lk 2:38).
- ⇒ The remarkable ministry of John the Baptist, when the citizenry of Jerusalem went out to hear him (Matt 3:5).
- ⇒ The prodigious ministry of Jesus Himself during which people from Jerusalem followed Him (Matt 4:25).
- ⇒ Jesus feeding the multitudes – 5,000, and also 4,000 men beside women and children (Matt 14:19-21; 15:36-37).
- ⇒ Jesus preaching in the Temple and the surrounding synagogues (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 21:12; 26:55).
- ⇒ The death of Christ that was known throughout the city (Lk 24:18).
- ⇒ The testimony of the saints who rose from the dead when Jesus died, and went into the city to appeared to many after He was risen from the dead (Matt 27:52-53).

- ⇒ The events that took place on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:6).
- ⇒ In Jerusalem, the addition of 5,000 men to the followers of Jesus (Acts 4:4).
- ⇒ Jerusalem was filled with the doctrine of Christ (Acts 5:28).
- ⇒ The testimony and death of Stephen, which initiated the persecution in which Saul became dominant (Act 7:58-8:1).

Ponder the caliber of the witnesses that had been in Jerusalem: The Lord Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, the twelve Apostles, Stephen, and Paul the Apostle. All of their witnesses were consistent, and none of them contradicted what the others had said.

Yet, the glory of these unparalleled reports had faded. This event is estimated to have taken place about 57 AD, only 27 years after the ministry and death of Jesus. **This forgetfulness was so powerful that not a single Jew is said to have come to the defense of Paul.** It even appears that some of the local Jews had joined in the opposition of the Jews from Asia.

No person should be stunned when places once exposed to the good things of God deteriorate into a state where such things can no longer be remembered.

**THE HIGH PRIEST AND ALL THE ESTATE OF THE ELDERS**

*“As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders . . .”* Other versions read, *“all the council of the elders,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“all the Council,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“the whole council of elders,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“all the rulers,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“the whole Sanhedrin,”* <sup>CJB</sup> *“the elderhood,”* <sup>DARBY</sup> *“the ancients,”* <sup>DOUAY</sup> *“company of the elders,”* <sup>GENEVA</sup> *“council of the leaders,”* <sup>GWN</sup> *“the eldership,”* <sup>YLT</sup> *“the whole council of Jewish elders,”* <sup>IE</sup> and *“whole council of elders [Sanhedrin].”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The expression *“estate of the elders”* is translated from a single Greek word (πρεσβυτέριον). The lexical meaning of the word is, *“body of elders, presbytery, senate, council of the Jewish elders,”* <sup>THAYER</sup> *“group of elders functioning with administrative authority body or council of elders; (1) in Jerusalem equivalent to the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court,”* <sup>FRIBERG</sup> and *“the highest council of the Jews (see*

also συνέδριον ‘Sanhedrin, the council of the Jews.’” LOUW-NIDA

This word is found three times in Scripture.

- ⇒ Luke 22:26: *“And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying”* (Luke 22:66).
- ⇒ Acts 22:5: *“As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished”* (Acts 22:5).

**SANHEDRIN QUALIFICATIONS**

The qualifications for membership were both very minute and very numerous. The applicant had to be morally and physically blameless. He had to be middle aged, tall, good looking, wealthy, learned (both in the divine law and diverse branches of profane science, such as medicine, mathematics, astronomy, magic, idolatry, etc.), in order that he might be able to judge in these matters. He was required to know several languages, so that the Sanhedrim might not be dependent upon an interpreter in case any foreigner or foreign question came before them (*Menachoth*, 65 a; *Sanhedrin*, 17 a; Maimonides, *Iad Ha-Chezaka, Hilchoth Sanhedrin*, 2, 1-8). Very old persons, proselytes, eunuchs, and Nethinim were ineligible because of their idiosyncrasies; nor could such candidates be elected as had no children, because they could not sympathize with domestic affairs (*Mishna, Horajoth*, 1, 4; *Sanhedrin*, 36 b); nor those who could not prove that they were the legitimate offspring of a priest, Levite, or Israelite, who played dice, lent money on usury, flew pigeons to entice others, or dealt in produce of the Sabbatical year (*Mishna, Sanhedrin*, 3, 3).

McCLINTOK & STRONG'S

- ⇒ 1 Timothy 4:4; *“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery”* (1 Tim 4:14).

It is generally understood that this is a reference is to the Sanhedrin, a term that is not found in the Authorized Version. The New International Version uses it nineteen times (Matt 5:22; 26:59; Mk 14:55; 15:1; John 11:47; Acts 4:15; 5:21,27,34,41;



6:12,15; 22:30; 23:1,6,15,20,28; 24:20). The word “Sanhedrin” is a transliteration of the Greek word συνέδριον (sun-he-drion). It is translated “council” KJV (Matt 5:22; 26:59; Mk 14:55; 15:1; John 11:47; Acts 4:15; 5:21,27, 34,41; 6:12,15; 22:30; 23:1,6,15,20,28; 24:20).

The custom of the Sanhedrin is traced back to the time of Moses, when seventy men were chosen to be judges of the people with Moses. When the Law was given, there were “seventy elders of Israel” who were allowed to come up Mount Sinai – but not as far as Moses (Ex 24:1,9-10). Later, “seventy men of the elders of Israel” were ordained by God to assist Moses. He took

“some of the spirit” that was upon Moses, “and put it upon them,” so Moses would not have to bear the burden of the people “alone” (Num 11:16-17). These were probably “the judges” that are referenced prior to the time of individual Judges who were over Israel (Num 25:5; Deut 19:17,18).

These men were charged with applying the Law to circumstances, and using their seasoned wisdom to do so in a proper manner.

Now, Paul says he not only received authority from the high priest to arrest and bind believers in Damascus, but that “the elders” also concurred with that mission, giving him the authority to fulfill his purpose in the persecuting of believers.

Behold the aggressiveness of Saul of Tarsus! Damascus was about one hundred miles north of Jerusalem. He was not content to merely arrest and bind those in Jerusalem, but pursued believers into Damascus of Syria – all the while supposing that he was serving God.

**I RECEIVED LETTERS UNTO THE BRETHREN**

“ . . . from whom also I received letters unto the brethren . . . ” The word “brethren” refers to Jewish brethren, not those in Christ Jesus. The account of this is given in the ninth chapter of Acts. “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem” (Acts 9:1-2). Saul, then, was not commissioned by the

high priest. He himself was on the initiative to obtain letters that would permit him to make arrests in the synagogues of Damascus.

We learn from this that believers were continuing to meet in the synagogues, which provided a forum to proclaim and discuss the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. It makes perfect sense for them to do this, for all of the prophecies concerning the coming of Christ were in the Jewish Scriptures. There is no known prophecy issued by a Gentile of the coming Savior, or of the salvation that He would effect.

As confirmed throughout the book of Acts, there was a consistent effort to open the truth of the Gospel to those who had been exposed to Moses and the Prophets. Even when Gentiles heard the Gospel, they generally had already been exposed to Moses and the Prophets among the Jews and in the synagogues (Acts 8:27-28; 10:1-2; 13:42; 17:4,12; 18:4).

**TO BRING THEM BOUND TO JERUSALEM TO BE PUNISHED**

“ . . . and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.”

The word “punished,” together with the fact that these believers were found in the synagogues, suggests that Paul was targeting Jewish believers. They were being punished because they were perceived as defecting from the one true God. Jerusalem was the place where this could be done officially under the authority of the leaders. What a commentary that is on the unvarnished faith of those early brethren!

**A GREAT LIGHT FROM HEAVEN**

“<sup>6</sup> And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.”

There are three accounts of this event in the book of Acts: 9:3-19; 22:6-21; 26:12-18. It is obviously a pivotal event in the life of Paul. The report of it will emphasize certain things with which the Jews were familiar.

⇒ **DIVINE COMMUNICATION.** Through

the Scriptures, the Jews were familiar with the true God communicating to Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and the prophets. The whole body of the people heard the communication of the Law. He communicated it verbally, by dreams, through holy angels, and by visions. Other nations did not have communicating gods.

⇒ **DIVINE DIRECTION.** Other nations were not directed by a living god. God directed Noah, Abraham, Moses, Israel,

and the Prophets.

⇒ **SUPERNATURAL MANIFESTATIONS.** Supernatural manifestations were not common in the heathen nations. Other nations did not have directing gods. The Jews knew of the flood, the scattering of the people at the tower of Babel, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the ten plagues of judgment against Egypt, the manifestations of Sinai, and all manner of Divine workings in military victories, supernatural sustenance, and miraculous judgments.

No heathen gods wrought such things.

⇒ **THE WILL OF GOD.** Israel was made knowledge of the will of God through Moses and the Law, and the prophets. The will of heathen gods was largely unknown.

⇒ **THE INVOLVEMENT OF THOSE TO WHOM THE LORD APPEARS.** Israel was knowledgeable of those who personally participated in the will of God: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Israel, and the prophets. The involvement of heathen peoples with their gods was not a known practice. Only in folklore did such things occur.

Others gods did not conduct themselves in such a manner. Some of the false gods referenced in Scripture include the following.

⇒ Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians (1 Kgs 11:33a).

⇒ Baal, god of Phoenicia and Canaanitish tribes (Num 22:41).

⇒ Baal-peor, a god of the Moabites (Num 25:3).

⇒ Chemosh, the god of the Moabites (Judges 10:6c; 1 Kgs 11:33b).

⇒ Dagon, a god of the Philistines (Judges 16:23).

⇒ Diana, a goddess of the Ephesians (Acts 19:24).

⇒ Jupiter, or Hermes, a Greek and Roman god (Acts 14:12a)

⇒ Mercurius, or Zeus, a Greek and Roman god (Acts 14:12b).

⇒ Milcom, the god of the children of Ammon (Judges 10:6d; 1 Kgs 11:33c).

⇒ Molech, Moloch, or Milcom, a god of the Ammonites (Lev 18:21).

⇒ The gods of the Amorites (Josh 24:15).

⇒ The gods of Syria (Judges 10:6a).

⇒ The gods of Zidon (Judges 10:6b).

⇒ The gods of the Philistines (Judges 10:6e).

⇒ The gods of the nations (2 Kgs 18:33).

⇒ The gods of the countries (2 Kgs 18:35).

⇒ The gods of the people (1 Chron 5:25).

⇒ The gods of the children of Seir (2 Chron 25:14).

⇒ The gods of other lands (2 Chron 32:17).

⇒ The gods of the Egyptians (Ex 12:23; Jer 43:13).

**AS I MADE MY JOURNEY**

*“And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus. . .”* Other versions read, *“as I made my journey,”*<sup>NASB</sup> and *“while I was on my way.”*<sup>NRSV</sup>

It is as Paul was carrying out his initiative against the believers that this event occurred. He was not seeking the Lord at this time. He was not engaged in a quest to understand Jesus Christ. **This was a Divine intervention concerning which**

as that of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar.

The doctrines of men that represent God as never doing such a thing, but always deferring to the will of men could not be further from the truth. Jesus forced Himself into the dialog of Cleopas and his companion. Following His resurrection, He forced Himself into a gathering of His disciples who were lamenting because they thought their hopes had been dashed to the ground.

So the Lord interrupted Saul’s plans, **while he was in the process of carrying them out.** In this case, it was not for cursing, but for blessing. The time had come for him to be called, and even though the circumstances were unfavorable, the call was issued and he was drawn to Jesus.

**THERE SHONE FROM HEAVEN**

*“ . . . about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.”* Other versions read, *“about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all*

**This was not a light that lit up the sky, as the sun does. It was rather a vastly superior light that was focused upon Saul of Tarsus. It was pinpointed, so to speak, on him. That light was to the day what the sunlight is to the blackness of midnight.**

**Paul had no advance information.**

Here is an example of the Lord forcing His way into a person’s life, interrupting their course, halting the fulfillment of their purpose, and making them consider Him. Whatever a person may think about God doing such a thing, here is a factual account of Him forcibly bringing a halt to evil intentions. It is an example of God coercing a person to think about Him.

God interrupted the activities of Adam and Eve in the Garden. He interrupted the activities throughout the whole earth in the judgment of the flood. He forced the building of the tower of Babel and its attending city to halt. He halted the moral mayhem of Sodom and Gomorrah. He interrupted Moses by the burning bush. He abruptly ended king Herod’s gloating, as well

*around me,”*<sup>NASB</sup> and *“About noon . . . suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me.”*<sup>NIV</sup>

At noon – the time when the sun is at its highest – a brighter light *“shone from heaven.”* The word *“shone”* is translated from a word that means, *“to flash about, shine around,”*<sup>THAYER</sup> *“to shine around someone,”*<sup>FRIBERG</sup> *“to shine very brightly on an area surrounding an object - to shine brightly around, to flash around”*<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup>

This was not a light that lit up the sky, as the sun does. It was rather a vastly superior light that was focused upon Saul of Tarsus. It was pinpointed, so to speak, on him. That light was to the day what the sunlight is to the blackness of midnight. It was the kind of light that was commanded to shine in the beginning, that pierced through darkness and defined the meaning of day

(Gen 1:3). Paul says of that original light that God “commanded the light to shine out of darkness” (2 Cor 4:6a). In this case, it was commanded to shine on a person – a person flesh would not have suspected to be the target of such illumination.

This account is a revelation of the manner of the kingdom. In order for man to obtain spiritual vision or understanding, a greater light than that of nature must shine upon him. This was involved in Peter having it revealed to him that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16-17). It is what is involved in the new birth, as written in Second Corinthians: “For God,

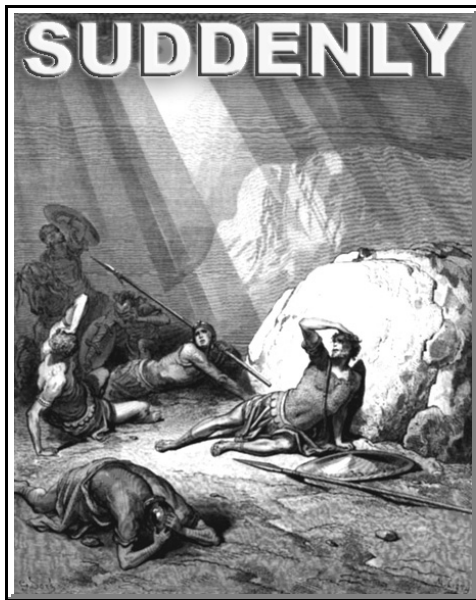
who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, **hath shined in our hearts**, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6). This is the illumination to which Hebrews 10:32 refers: “But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were **illuminated**, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.” It is the enlightenment mentioned in Hebrews 6:5: “For it is impossible for those who were once **enlightened**, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.”

The position that states there is no heavenly involvement or intervention **prior**

to being in Christ is most absurd. In order to get into Christ, something superior to nature must be brought to bear upon man. That is precisely why believers are referred to as “a new creation” <sup>NKJV</sup> (2 Cor 5:17), and “the workmanship of God” (Eph 2:10). This is illustrated in this very text. A “new creation” refers to something Deity does, for only Deity can create. Further, a “new creation” is not a work that consists of something man has done together with God, or that God has done together with man. There are things that men do, but they are a response that requires strength and wisdom that are not resident in nature.

## I FELL TO THE GROUND AND HEARD A VOICE

“<sup>7</sup> And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? <sup>8</sup> And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And He said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.”



The weight of glory is greater than that of nature (2 Cor 4:17). Strictly speaking, the reaction here described did not proceed from the human will, as one that falls down to worship. Before Saul had any idea of the source of this blazing light, he was rendered helpless. He could not remain on his feet.

### I FELL TO THE GROUND

“And I fell unto the ground . . .”

Other versions read, “went down on the earth,” <sup>BBE</sup> and “falling on the ground.” <sup>DOUAY</sup> As used here, the word from which “fell” is translated means, “to be prostrated, fall prostrate; of those overcome by terror or astonishment or grief,” <sup>THAYER</sup> “as coming down forcefully from a higher to lower level fall, drop.” <sup>FRIBERG</sup>

When soldiers from the high priest came to arrest Jesus in the Garden, as soon as He identified Himself, “they went backward and fell to the ground” (John 18:6). Moses confessed that he “fell down before the Lord” (Deut 9:25). Ezekiel said when he saw the glory of the Lord, “I fell on my face” (Ezek 3:23). When Daniel saw a great vision from the Lord, he retained no strength – it was too great for his natural capacities (Dan 10:8,16,17). When John saw the glorified Christ, he “fell at His feet as dead” (Rev 1:17).

### I HEARD A VOICE

“ . . . and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? . . .”

Other versions read, “why are you persecuting Me?” <sup>NASB</sup> “Why do you persecute Me?” <sup>NIV</sup> “why are you attacking me so cruelly?” <sup>BBE</sup> “Why do you keep persecuting Me?” <sup>CJB</sup> and “why do you persecute Me [harass and trouble and molest Me]?” <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “why are you out to get me?” <sup>MESSAGE</sup>

The account in Acts twenty six adds these words of Jesus to Saul: “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks,” or “goads” <sup>NASB</sup> (Acts 26:14). This indicates that the Lord

had been preparing the heart of Saul for this confrontation. How long he had endured a pricking conscience, we do not know.

The lexical meaning of the word “persecute” is as follows: “to make to run or flee, put to flight, drive away . . . to run swiftly in order to catch some person or thing, to run after . . . to pursue in a hostile manner . . . in any way whatever to harass, trouble, molest one; to persecute,” <sup>THAYER</sup> “of hostile pursuit persecute,” <sup>FRIBERG</sup> “to chase, hunt” <sup>LIDDELL-SCOTT</sup>

Paul was aggressive in his attempts to rid the land of the influence of those who were of “the way” of Christ. He hounded them, chasing them down like wild animal in order that he might bind them and haul them off to Jerusalem to be punished – even by death.

Unknown to Saul, the Lord Jesus was monitoring his entire crusade. He had taken Saul’s initiative personally, and now He confronts the persecutor as the persecuted One.

In saying this, Paul was also drawing attention to the activities of the persecuting Jews. Perhaps they would see the parallel of Paul’s former actions with their own.

### I ANSWERED

“And I answered, Who art thou, Lord?” Other versions read, “Who are you, sir?” <sup>GWN/NAB/LIVING</sup> and “Who are you Master?” <sup>MESSAGE</sup>

Saul did not know who this was – only that it was someone infinitely greater than himself. There are accounts of men

calling angelic messengers “Lord.” Gideon called an angel “Lord” (Judges 6:12,13). Daniel also called an angel “Lord” (Dan 10:16,17,19). Cornelius also referred to an angel as “Lord” (Acts 10:4).

The Greek word here translated “Lord” is κύριε. It is used no less than 747 times from Matthew through Revelation. Several times (KJV) it is translated “Sir.” (Matt 13:27; 21:30; 27:63; John 4:11,15,19 49; 5:7; 12:21; 20:15; Rev 7:14). Some of them are expressions spoken to an earthly master (Matt 13:27; 21:30). One was addressed to Pilate (Matt 27:63). Some were addressed to Jesus, but without the knowledge of who He really was (John 4:11,15,19,49; 5:7; 12:21; 20:15). One was addressed to a holy angel (Rev 7:14). Sometimes it is translated “Lord,” but is applied to an earthly master (i.e. Matt 25:24). Jesus also spoke of those who called Him “Lord,” yet did not do what He said (Matt 7:22).

Thus we see that this term is not always used by those who have recognized Jesus for who He really is. At this point, Saul does not use it in that sense either. He only knows that he is dealing with someone vastly superior to himself.

**I AM JESUS OF NAZARETH**

“And He said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth , , , ”

From Matthew through Acts, the expression “Jesus of Nazareth” is used (Matt 26:71; Mk 1:24; 10:47; 14:67; 16:6; Lk 4:34; 18:37; 24:19; John 1:45; 18:5,7; 19:19; Acts 2:22; 6:14; 10:38; 22:8; 26:9).

- ⇒ Christ’s enemies referred to Him in this manner (Matt 26:71; Mk 14:67).
- ⇒ Demons also referred to Jesus in this way (Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34).
- ⇒ This is how blind Bartimaeus knew him (Mk 10:47; Lk 18:37).
- ⇒ Holy angels identified Him with these words (Mk 16:6).
- ⇒ The two on the road to Emmaus used this expression (Lk 24:19).
- ⇒ Philip told Nathanael they had found the One of whom Moses prophesied, referring to “Jesus of Nazareth” (John 1:45).

- ⇒ Those arresting Jesus in the Garden used this expression (John 18:5,7).
- ⇒ Pilate wrote these words on a sign, and put it on the cross: “JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KIND OF THE JEWS” (John 19:19).
- ⇒ On the day of Pentecost, this is how Peter first referred to Jesus (Acts 2:22).
- ⇒ The false witnesses who rose up against Stephen referred to Jesus in this way (Acts 6:14).
- ⇒ When Peter preached at the house of Cornelius, he referred to Jesus in this manner (Acts 10:38).
- ⇒ In describing his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul also used this expression (Acts 22:8; 26:9).

**The Name Jesus Was Not Unique**

The name “Jesus” is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, and is so used in Hebrews: “For if *Jesus* had given them rest, then would he not afterward have

distinguished from other men bearing this name by associating Him with Nazareth, that is not what distinguishes Him to the saved. Nazareth distinguished Jesus prior to the commencement of His ministry. He did not remain there after He began His work.

Nazareth was not a good place to be raised. When Philip told Nathanael they had found the Prophet foretold by Moses, saying it was “Jesus of Nazareth,” Nathanael replied, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). According to the flesh, this was not a good city in which to raise the Son of God. Some might object that during His formative years, this would be a great liability. However, Joseph and Mary were faithful in raising young Jesus, so that it is said of Him, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

Jesus once referred to angels as having a special care for the “little ones.” He said, “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat

**The angels surely did not leave Him after He was born. We know that they warned Joseph of the aggression of Herod, and told him when and where to escape his wrath. Their ministry no doubt continued in the behalf of the young child.**

spoken of another day” (Heb 4:8). Later versions read “Joshua” in this verse.

Paul also refers to a man named “Jesus” in his letter to the Colossians. He was distinguished from the Lord Jesus by referring to him as “Justus” – “And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me” (Col 4:11).

**The Savior Sanctified the Name**

The Lord Jesus sanctified this name. Of the 983 times it is used from Matthew through Revelation, 981 of the references are to the Son of God.

Although the Lord was

18:10). **I do not doubt that they were especially diligent in the care of young Jesus.** It is written, “when He bringeth in the firstborn into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him” (Heb 1:6). The angels surely did not leave Him after He was born. We know that they warned Joseph of the aggression of Herod, and told him when and where to escape his wrath (Matt 2:13,19-20). Their ministry no doubt continued in the behalf of the young child.

After He had commenced preaching, Jesus returned to Nazareth, and ministered in the synagogue. The people of His home town became so angry, that it is written, “And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of

the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong” (Luke 4:28-29).

**WHOM THOU PERSECUTEST**  
 “. . . whom thou persecutest.”

Notice how closely aligned the Lord Jesus is with His people. What is done to them, is said to be done to Him – whether for good or for evil. Jesus spoke specifically to this matter in Matthew 25:40,45). The eternal destiny of men will be directly impacted by how men have treated Christ’s brethren – for Jesus is described as “the firstborn of many brethren” (Rom 8:29). Furthermore, He is not ashamed to call them “brethren” because they are “all of One.” That is, they have been begotten by God by virtue of their new birth. Jesus is the “Firstbegotten,” but not the last begotten, although He was begotten uniquely. As to the manner in which He was begotten, He is “the only begotten” (John 1:14,18; 3:16,18; 1 John 4:9).

It is written, “But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor 6:17). The record of conversions includes this description, “and believers were the more added to the Lord” (Acts 5:14). Those who are born again are appropriately said to be “in Christ” (2 Cor 5:17), and Christ dwells in their hearts by faith (Eph 3:17). They are made “partakers of Christ” (Heb 3:14), and are said to be “members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Eph 5:30).

It is no wonder, therefore, that Jesus says He was really the One who was persecuted by Saul of Tarsus. That circumstance has not changed. Jesus still takes persecution personally. It may not have appeared that way to those believers who were arrested, bound, delivered to Jerusalem, and eventually killed. Men may not be able to reason out why such things happen. However, it will help to consider that this world was not meant to be the arena in which all difficulties are resolved, all

injustices aborted, and all inhumanities judged. **There is a day of judgment that has been appointed for every injustice to be exposed and judged, and for the vindication of all who have lived unto the Lord.** That day will eventually arrive, and all things will be settled for the glory of God and the benefit of the saints.

Paul’s account of this event in the twenty-sixth chapter adds the following details. “But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee **for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me**” (Acts 26:16-18).

**THEY THAT WERE WITH ME**

**“<sup>9</sup> And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.”**

Paul was traveling with a band of men – perhaps soldiers from the high priest. They were not merely on a spying mission, but fully intended to do something of consequence when any believers were found. Those who were with Paul would prove to be witnesses that something of an epochal nature occurred that day as they headed for Damascus.

**THEY SAW THE LIGHT**

“And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid . . .” Other versions read, “beheld the light, to be sure,” NASB “saw verily a light,” PNT “the light did see.” YLT

This, then, was not a personal vision or dream that was only apparent to Saul. **It was a demonstration in nature that was visible to all who were with Paul.** The event belongs to the class of revelations such as the giving of the Law at Sinai, when the glory of God was seen (Ex 24:10-11). Then there were flashes of lightning that were more intense than can be produced by nature itself (Psa 144:6). A similar light occurred when an angel was

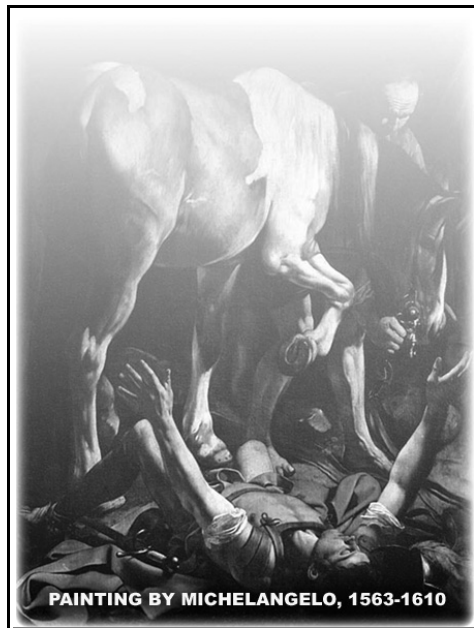
sent to release Peter, and “a light shined into the prison” (Acts 12:7).

This light was actually the glory of the exalted Christ, who was appearing to Saul to call him into the ministry. It is the appearance to which Paul referred in his first letter to the Corinthians: “And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due

time” (1 Cor 15:8).

An introduction to this glory was seen by Peter, James, and John, when Jesus was transfigured before their eyes, and “His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as light” (Matt 17:1-3).

The fulness of this glory will appear when Jesus comes the second time. He will come like a flash of lightning that flashes from one end of the earth to the other (Matt 24:27). Jesus will appear, or be made visible, “in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him” (Matt 25:31). He will also appear in the Father’s glory, as well as the glory of the holy angels (Lk 9:26). According to Mark’s record, Jesus will “come in the clouds with great power and glory,” at which time He will “send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven” (Mark 13:27). Matthew says “all the tribes of the earth” will mourn when they see “the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,” at which time He “shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matt 24:31).



PAINTING BY MICHELANGELO, 1563-1610

Paul presents his defense to the Jews, speaking in the Hebrew tongue, which caused them to give the greater attention to him – by Given O. Blakely

That will no more be a secret coming than Christ's appearance to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. Those who speak of a secret rapture in which the Lord will gather all of the saints, wafting them away from the earth without anyone knowing it, have betrayed an inexcusable level of ignorance. Aside from that, they have reproached the Lord of glory, as though His magnificent glory could be concealed as He comes within the proximity of the earth. Even the Psalmist, living in a period of lesser light, said, *"The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the people see His glory"* (Psa 97:6).

**THEY HEARD NOT THE VOICE**

*"... but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me."* Other versions read, *"did not understand the voice,"* <sup>NASB</sup> and *"they did not hear [the sound of the uttered words of] the voice of the One Who was speaking to me [so that they could understand it]."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

As it is used here, the word "hear" is translated from a Greek word that means, "to understand, perceive the sense of what is said," <sup>THAYER</sup> and "of inner comprehension understand, be aware of, listen to." <sup>FRIBERG</sup> This agrees with the statement made in the ninth chapter concerning this event: *"And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing*

*a voice, but seeing no man"* (Acts 9:7). Although the same Greek word is used, it is in a different sense. The ninth chapter speaks of hearing the sound of a voice. Our text speaks of discerning what the voice said.

This perspective of hearing is addressed in a word Jesus delivered to a

**but from the comprehension of what has been said.**

Here was a private message delivered in a public setting – something like the word delivered to Archippus in a public letter: *"And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the*

**Here was a private message delivered in a public setting – something like the word delivered to Archippus in a public letter: "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" (Col 4:17). Archippus would know the meaning of the exhortation, while others who heard these words might not.**

group of doubters: *"Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word"* (John 8:43). Paul spoke of the same circumstance in his letter to the Romans: *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world"* (Rom 10:17-18). **Faith does not come from exposure to the sound of God's Word,**

*Lord, that thou fulfil it"* (Col 4:17). Archippus would know the meaning of the exhortation, while others who heard these words might not.

So it is that Saul of Tarsus was able to respond to Jesus because he understood, or comprehended, what He had said. This could not be said of those who were traveling with him, even though they technically heard the same voice.

**WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?**

***"<sup>10</sup> And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do."***

The immediacy of Saul's response, as well as its nature, is worthy of focused attention. This is the kind of reaction that consistently takes place when the word of the Lord is understood.

**WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD**

*"And I said, What shall I do, Lord? ..."* Other versions read, *"What am I to do, Lord?"* <sup>NRSV</sup> *"What have I to do?"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"What should I do?"* <sup>CJB</sup> *"What do you want me to do, Lord?"* <sup>GWN</sup> and *"What must I do?"* <sup>MRD</sup>

Recognition of Jesus as "Lord" was the first thing Paul recognized. It was that cognition that prompted him to ask what he ought to do. The concept of a Lord that does

not require a person to do something is wholly erroneous. There is no such things as a "Lord" who does not have a will to which His subjects are subservient.

This is the kind of response the hearers had to Peter's message on the day of Pentecost: *"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37). It is how the Philippian jailer responded to Paul and Silas: *"And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* (Acts 16:30).

This is not the manner of perception being confessed today, and it is of great personal concern to me. People who say they are followers of Jesus are not asking what they ought to do. This suggests that they have not yet seen Jesus as "Lord," which is a most serious circumstance.

**IT SHALL BE TOLD THEE ALL THINGS WHICH ARE APPOINTED**

*"And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do."* Other versions read, *"all that has been appointed for you to do,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"all that you have been assigned to do,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"it will be made clear to you what you have to do,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"everything that has been laid out for you to do,"* <sup>CJB</sup> *"it shall be told thee of all things that thou must do,"* <sup>DOUAY</sup> *"everything I've arranged for you to do,"* <sup>GWN</sup> *"all that it is commanded thee to do,"* <sup>MRD</sup> *"everything that you have been designated to do,"* <sup>NET</sup> and *"all that it is destined and appointed for you to do."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The meaning of the word translated "appointed" is, "to put in place, top station, to place in a certain order . . . to arrange, to assign a place, to appoint . . . to assign (appoint) a thing to one," <sup>THAYER</sup> "be instituted, be appointed, be established ,"

FRIBERG “appoint, designate, set aside; command, order, direct,” UBS “to give a task to,” NIDA “to appoint one to do a thing,” LIDDELL-SCOTT and “to prescribe.” LEH

The various translations accent the strength of this word: “assigned,” NIV “have to do,” BBE “laid out for you to do,” CJB “must do,” DOUAY “commanded,” MRD “designated,” NET and “destined and appointed.” AMPLIFIED

Jesus did not know anything about a “you-don’t-have-to-do-anything” religion. He certainly did not leave Saul with the impression that everything had been already done. We understand that the basis for salvation had, indeed, been done, and the foundation laid. **But participation is quite another thing, and until men participate in what Jesus has done, it has no benefit for them.**

Jesus once asked, “*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*” (Luke 6:46). That is a telling question that must be asked of this generation.

**It also ought to be noted that what Jesus commands is compulsory.** Men are not free to disobey Jesus, or fail to carry out His demands. If He says men are to pick up their cross and follow Him, then that is what they are required to do (Lk 9:23). If He says to “*forsake all,*” then that is what men are obliged to do (Lk 14:33). This has to do with initially following Christ, as well as being a functioning member of His body – and both will be required of Saul.

I do not believe this perspective is being proclaimed by the professing church of our time. There is too much disobedience in

the nominal church, and that is undeniable evidence of unbelief and hard-heartedness. **Make no mistake about this, “an evil heart of unbelief” will disqualify a person from glory.**

### Jesus Did Not Spell Out the Details

Now that Jesus is exalted, no communication or direction from Jesus is so personal that it excludes the members of His body from involvement. Here is a most unusual apostle, and he is being called to a most unusual work. He will be given insight into unusual things. **But in order to begin his race, he must come into contact with someone else who has been joined to the Lord.** A member of Christ’s body would tell him what to do in order to enter the Kingdom of God.

## THE GLORY OF THAT LIGHT

**“<sup>11</sup> And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.”**

Paul now reports the immediate effects of the blazing light that he had seen – a light that confirmed the presence of the Lord.

### I COULD NOT SEE

“*And when I could not see for the glory of that light . . .*” Other versions read,

supernaturally bright – that it blinded Paul. Furthermore, the blindness was not momentary. This confirms the inability of the flesh to stand in the glory of the risen Christ. The afterglow of Divine glory caused Moses’ face to shine so brightly the people could not look upon it. It must have been like the noonday sun before the people. Paul says the people “*could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance*” (2 Cor 3:7; Ex 34:29-35). That was, so to speak, a filtered glory. First, it was the effect of the afterglow, or “*hinder part,*”

the glory of Christ – and what was revealed to him on the road to Damascus was not the full glory of Christ! It was a subdued glory, else the heavens and earth would have fled away, as they will when the fulness of His glory is made known (Rev 20:11). In an even more subdued manifestation of Divine glory, the children of Israel could not behold the reflected afterglow of Divine glory in the face of Moses, requiring that he wear a veil when speaking with them.

Yet, even though these things are recorded for our learning and admonition, some insist on teaching that the glorified Christ will return to sit on a throne in Jerusalem, and that He will be accessible to all the people in the world. Those who have embraced such a heresy appear willingly ignorant of the greatness of the glory of Jesus. We are expressly told that His arch-enemy will be destroyed by the “*brightness of His coming*” (2 Thess 2:3). Yet, men have the glorified Christ leading flesh and blood armies to fight flesh and blood foes. They even imagine that, in the mythical rapture, He will gather His elect without anyone knowing what has happened. All of this betrays a serious ignorance of Christ Himself. Once God “*shows*” Him in all of His glory (1 Tim 6:15-16), there will be no doubt who He is, and the passing of the fleshly order will have to occur before that glory is manifested – even though it will be “*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*” (1 Cor 15:52).

**In the flesh, Saul could not endure the glory of Christ – and what was revealed to him on the road to Damascus was not the full glory of Christ! It was a subdued glory, else the heavens and earth would have fled away, as they will when the fulness of His glory is made known**

“*because of the brightness of the light,*” NASB “*because of the brilliance,*” NIV “*because the light had been so bright,*” GWN “*had been so dazzling that I was blind,*” NJB “*by the intense light,*” NLT “*because of the dazzling sheen of that light,*” WILLIAMS and “*because [of the dazzlingly glorious intensity] of the brightness of that light.*” AMPLIFIED

This glory was so bright –

of divine glory, and not the full force of it (Ex 33:21-23). Second, the glory was reflected in the skin of Moses – a kind of second-hand glory (Ex 34:29-30,35). Third, it was a fading glory, for with the passing of but a short time, the skin of Moses’ face no longer glowed (2 Cor 3:13).

### A Carnal View of Jesus Return to Earth

In the flesh, Saul could not endure

**I CAME INTO DAMASCUS**

*“ . . . being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.”* Other versions read, *“my companions led me by the hand,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“those who were with me took my hand and led me,”*<sup>NRSV</sup> and *“I was led by the hand by those who were with me.”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Since Saul’s companions did not understand what Jesus said to him, Saul must have told them that Jesus had commanded him to *“go into Damascus.”* That is the city to which they were going to arrest and bind those who were believers. Now, however, that city would prove to be the place where he would be illuminated concerning what he must initially do, and of the vocation he would now pursue.

Although Paul does not recount

this here, he remained three days in that city, blind and without any communication concerning what he was supposed to do. Of that time it is written, *“And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink”* (Acts 9:9). What thoughts he must have had during that time! His repentance had to be significant, for now he saw his entire life from a new perspective. Anxiously he must have waited for the instructions that Jesus promised would be given to him. During this time, his faith would be tested.

In the ninth chapter of Acts we are told that Saul was praying during this time, and was given a vision to enable him to tarry until the appointed time. Jesus told Ananias, who would instruct Saul, *“Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and*

*inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight”* (Acts 9:10-12).

Behold the details orchestrated in heaven.

- ⇨ Saul was located in a house on the street called *“Straight.”*
- ⇨ Saul was in the house of Judas.
- ⇨ Saul was praying.
- ⇨ Saul had been given a vision in which the name of *“Ananias”* was specified, and what he would do was revealed.

**RECEIVE THY SIGHT**

*“<sup>12</sup> And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,<sup>13</sup> Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.”*

Here we will see how the Lord uses clean vessels to do His appointed work of blessing. There are judgments in which He uses the wicked to punish His people – like Nebuchadnezzar, God’s *“servant”* (Jer 27:6) Then there was Cyrus, raised up to assist in the building of the Temple. God referred to this Persian heathen as *“My shepherd”* (Isa 44:28).

However, when it comes to the Lord’s Christ, the announcement of the Gospel, and the promotion of the Kingdom of God, God uses holy people! In the case of Jesus there was Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds, Simeon, Anna, John the Baptist, the Apostles, the seventy, Paul, and others. The more significant the cause, and the more bearing it has upon eternity, the more particular are Divine choices concerning those who are involved.

Now, notice what is said of Ananias.

**ANANIAS, A DEVOUT MAN**

*“And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of*

*all the Jews which dwelt there . . .”* Other versions read, *“devout by the standard of the Law,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“devout observer of the Law,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“a God-fearing man who kept the Law,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“a pious man according to the Law,”*<sup>DARBY</sup> *“a godly man as pertaining to the Law,”*<sup>GENEVA</sup> *“a devout man who followed Moses’*

Notice how the text specifies that Ananias’ devoutness was *“according to the Law.”* That is, *“the righteousness of the Law”* was fulfilled in him, as stated in Romans 8:4: *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful*

**The words “devout,” “pious,” and “upright” have to do with human conduct. It is how a truly spiritual life is lived out. No person who lives in an outwardly sloppy manner is devote or pious. Also, some people who appear devoted are not really devoted – like the scribes and Pharisees .**

*teachings,”*<sup>GWN</sup> *“upright according to the Law,”*<sup>MRD</sup> *“a devout observer of the Law,”*<sup>NAB</sup> *“a godly man, deeply devoted to the Law,”*<sup>NLT</sup> *“a perfect man, and as pertaining to the Law,”*<sup>TNT</sup> *“as godly a man as you could find for obeying the Law,”*<sup>LIVING</sup> and *“a man devout in strict accordance with the law.”*<sup>WILLIAMS</sup>

The words *“devout,” “pious,”* and *“upright”* have to do with human conduct. It is how a truly spiritual life is lived out. **No person who lives in an outwardly sloppy manner is devote or pious.** Also, some people who appear devoted are not really devoted – like the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 23:27-28).

*flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”* (Rom 8:3-4).

While we are not justified by the deeds of the Law, neither do the followers of Christ live in contradiction of that Law. The summation of the Law was being lived out in Ananias: *“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the*

*prophets*” (Mat 22:37-40). Knowing that Saul lived in all good conscience before the Lord, it certainly would have been counter-productive, to say the least, to have a person tell him what he should do who himself was walking in contradiction of the Law. In our time, there is not a lot of lucidity among church folk on this matter.

Ananias also was of good report among all of the Jews in the area of Damascus. This no doubt had to do with the Jews in general, both those in Christ and

*sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written*” (Rom 2:21-24). These days, there is a deplorable absence of rebuke leveled at professing Christians who are living beneath the requirements of the Lord.

**BROTHER SAUL**

*“ . . . Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight . . . ”*

the visit of Ananias.

Ananias said to Saul, “Receive thy sight.” The ninth chapter of Acts records Ananias saying, “*Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost*” (Acts 9:17). Jesus had told Ananias that Saul had seen him in a vision: “*And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight*” (Acts 9:12). Thus, in obedience to the Lord, Ananias fulfilled that word.

**Ananias also was of good report among all of the Jews in the area of Damascus. This no doubt had to do with the Jews in general, both those in Christ and those who were not. His holy life caused them to hold Ananias in high regard. It ought to be noted that a professing Christian who is unholy causes the name of the Lord to be reproached.**

**THE SAME HOUR I LOOKED UPON HIM**

*“ . . . And the same hour I looked up upon him. ”* Other versions read, “*I looked up at him, .*”<sup>NASB</sup> “*And at that very moment I was able to see him, .*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*I regained my sight and saw him, .*”<sup>NRSV</sup> and “*And in that very instant I [recovered my sight and] looking up saw him. .*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

those who were not. His holy life caused them to hold Ananias in high regard. **It ought to be noted that a professing Christian who is unholy causes the name of the Lord to be reproached.** As Paul said to some pretentious people in Rome, “*Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit*

Acts 9:17 reads, “*And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul.*” He was not addressing Saul as a fellow Jew, but as one who had believed on Christ. He had not yet been baptized into Christ, but he had believed and repented, and only needed to be told what to do. As pointed out in Acts 26:16-18, the intentions of Jesus had already been revealed to Saul, giving him something to ponder with focused attention over the three days that preceded

Acts 9:18 provides some additional details. “*And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized*” (Acts 9:18).

The only categorical accounts of the healing of the blind occur during and after the ministry of Jesus (Matt 9:27-30; 11:5; 12:22; 21:14; Acts 22:13). Isaiah prophesied of such a work (Isa 29:15; 35:5; 42:7). What happened to Saul in his body also took place in his heart and soul.

**CONCLUSION**

Thus, through a series of remarkable events, we behold the working of the Lord. He carries out His purpose in the midst of what appeared to be impossible circumstances. The Lord aborts a hostile mission. He forces Himself into the life of Saul of Tarsus. He announces that Saul has been wrestling with a condemning conscience for some time. He declares Saul is a chosen vessel, even though he appeared to be nothing more than an aggressive enemy. **Thus, as with Joshua the high priest, the Lord**

**snatches him from the fire** (Zech 3:2). He calls him to a work for which he has been in preparation from a youth, even though he was not aware of it.

In relating this whole series of events, Paul is speaking of things with which the Jews were familiar, His experience dovetailed perfectly with the declaration of Scripture concerning God turning hearts (Prov 21:1), alluring people into a place where he could speak more comfortably to

them (Hos 2:14), and frustrating evil intentions against His people (Isa 44:25). It also confirmed the reality of a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 36:26). How unsearchable are His ways! Paul’s life is a commentary in the circumcision of Christ (Col 2:11-12).

We have a sterling example here of God working all things together for the good of those who love Him, and are called according to His purpose.

**Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 1/1/10. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The ninety-first lesson will cover verses 14 through 22 of the twenty-second chapter: “PAUL’S DEFENSE TO THE JEWS, #2.”**