

*Israel.* ACTS 1:26 tells us that Matthias was numbered with the eleven apostles after Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus, meaning that there were still twelve apostles. But note what we read in MATTHEW 10:5 and 6, how that the twelve apostles were sent forth to the Jews, not to the Gentiles. So after Jesus death there were twelve Apostles, which we call kingdom Apostles, all sent for of Jesus to continue preaching unto the Jews.

This leaves those of us who are Gentile's, the non Jew, without an Apostle, except for Jesus.

Now think for a minute of the books of the New Testament written by the twelve Apostles. Only three of them wrote a written record that is included in the New Testament. The Apostle Matthew wrote the book of MATTHEW, also known as The Gospel According to MATTHEW. The Apostle John wrote five books of the New Testament: The Gospel According to JOHN, 1 JOHN, 2 JOHN, 3 JOHN, and the book of REVELATION. The Apostle Peter wrote 1 PETER, and 2 PETER. Eight books of the New Testament then are written by members of the twelve apostles. However there are 27 books found in the New Testament. We are 19 books short of that considering the 8 books we have already mentioned. Two books of the New Testament are written by James and Jude, half Brothers of Jesus. {Study GALATIANS 1:19, MATTHEW 13:55, MARK 6:3, and 1 CORINTHIANS 15:7}. The remaining 17 books of the New Testament are either written by the Apostle Paul, or are strongly influenced by the Apostle Paul. Paul himself wrote 14 of the 27 books of the New Testament; more than half of The New Testament! We make note of this fact to emphasize the importance of Paul's gospel, especially to our lives.

Jesus didn't leave we Gentile's without an Apostle. In fact we once did a study noting that we Gentile's were sent eight church Apostles all totaled, but of the eight only one left a written record that is included in the New Testament, and that, of course, is the Apostle Paul, who himself wrote 14 books of the New Testament. Furthermore the ministry of the Apostle Paul influenced John Mark to write The Gospel According to MARK, and Luke to write The Gospel According to LUKE, and the book that ties the twelve kingdom apostles to the church apostles, the book of ACTS.

We wouldn't have even considered Jesus to be an Apostle had it not been for the Apostle Paul noting this in HEBREWS 3:1 above. We wouldn't know the concept of being a full overcomer without the gospel record of the Apostle Paul. We wouldn't even begin to know what is the hope of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus if it wasn't for the gospel of the Apostle Paul. We wouldn't know what God's best is if it wasn't for the gospel of the Apostle Paul. If it wasn't for Paul's gospel we wouldn't be established, nor even know what that meant. We wouldn't know what a race course runner was except for Paul's gospel. We wouldn't know the great mysteries of scripture if it were not for Paul's gospel. We wouldn't really know anything about this present church age, this age of grace, if it wasn't for Paul's gospel. The things that Paul wrote in his gospel were in the Apostle Peter's own words "*hard to be understood... .*" We will never be able to rule and reign with Christ Jesus without knowing Paul's gospel. This all means that the Bride of Christ will be made up of those who do know Paul's gospel. And the list goes on of the reasons we need to know Paul's gospel. So it certainly doesn't hurt to learn a little about the Apostle Paul and how it was he became an Apostle in the first place.

## Personal Background of the Apostle Paul (Saul of Tarsus)

The Apostle Paul never set out to be an Apostle in the first place, nor did any of the other Apostles, except Jesus. Paul was born sometime after Jesus, and lived during the time of Christ, but was probably no more than a youth during the time of Jesus ministry. In ROMANS 11:1 Paul writes: *...I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.* Paul states in ACTS 22:3 *I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia... .* Further in PHILIPPIANS 3:5 Paul writes that he was: *Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee.* In ACTS 23:6 Paul states: *...I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee... .*

So we see Paul was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. Let me try to explain what this means. The word Pharisee comes from an Aramaic word meaning "separated." This means that the Pharisee chose a manner of life different from the general Jewish

public. They stood for the strict rigid observances of the letter and forms of the law of Moses. The Pharisee's were a society of men zealous for religion, who were further resolved not to eat any unclean thing, choosing rather to die, that they might not be defiled. In choosing this kind of separated life style they felt like they were on a higher plane than everyone else. The Pharisee sought for distinction and praise of men for their perceived rituals and so called good works. Josephus notes that there were a little more than 6000 Pharisee's. Josephus also noted that the Pharisee lived frugally, like the Stoics, and hence had so much weight with the multitude that if they said ought against the king or the high priest it was immediately believed.

Jesus also noted the action of the Pharisees especially in MATTHEW 23.

MATTHEW 23:1 *Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, 2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: (or they speak with the authority of Moses) 3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. 4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. 5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, (phylacteries were small strips of parchment on which were written the following passages of the law of Moses, EXODUS 13:1-10, 11-16; DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9, 11:13-21, and which, enclosed in small cases, they were accustomed when engaged in prayer to wear fastened by a leather strap to the forehead and to the left arm over against the heart, in order that they might thus be solemnly reminded of the duty of keeping the commands of God in the head and in the heart, according to the directions given in EXODUS 13:16, DEUTERONOMY 6:8, 11:18; These scrolls were thought to have the power, like amulets, to avert various evils and to drive away demons. The Pharisees were accustomed to widen, make broad, their phylacteries, that they might render them more conspicuous and show themselves to be more eager than the majority to be reminded of the law of God.) and enlarge the borders of their garments, 6 And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. (Teacher, Teacher) 8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. 9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. 11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. 13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. 14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. 15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, (convert) and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. 16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! 17 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? 18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. 19 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? 20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. 21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. 22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon. 23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, (all small seeds) and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. 25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. 26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. 27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, (white washed tombs) which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. 28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but*

within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. 29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, 30 And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. 31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. 32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. 33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? 34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: 35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. 36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. 37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! 38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. 39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

As strict as the Pharisees were in following the law, and after reading Jesus rebuke of the Pharisees in MATTHEW 23, it seems most remarkable to me that any of the Pharisee's ever got saved, but some did! We will mention this again later in this study and give some further detail at that time.

Having now examined MATTHEW 23, we can see a little of the manner of life of a Pharisee. So we note again that Paul was a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee, (ACTS 23:6). Imagine the pressure of being the son of a Pharisee. First of all you are the son of one of only about 6000 men who ever chose this kind of life. From day one Paul was taught the manner of the life of a Pharisee. You can just hear his father saying: "No son, you can't do that, you can't touch this, you aren't allowed to eat that, no you aren't doing this thing right, now you need to wash after touching that," and the list goes on and on of the things this kind of Pharisee strictness forbids one do. The list also goes on and on of the things the son of a Pharisee must endure, and could he ever attain perfection according to the law? Could he ever attain perfection according to his Pharisee father? It is a wonder that the son of a Pharisee could ever do anything right to please his father. But having endured such upbringing, and going on yourself to become a Pharisee would put you one step ahead of the rest of the Pharisee's. This was then Paul's status and frame of mind from his youth. It would be a feather in Paul's cap (so to speak) to tell other Jews that he was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. Paul was proud to be a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee before he got saved. And the Jews understood this far better than we undisciplined Gentiles.

In ACTS 26:4 & 5 we read: *My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; 5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.* Take note of those two words "most straitest," which is really only one word in the Greek. It is used only this one time in scripture, and it means to be exact, or precise, and goes even on beyond that to mean: to go to the extreme limit, or uttermost bounds in practicing and observing even the more minute precepts of the law and tradition of the Mosaic law. Paul lived and practiced from his youth the strictest and most precise precepts of the law down to minute detail. It was of such precise and strict observance of even the smallest detail that Jesus referenced in MATTHEW 23:23 when He said: *...ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin.* Paul lived after the strictest sect of even the Pharisee's. What this tells us is that he was trained from childhood to live a well disciplined life. He was taught to exhibit self-control is another way of saying this, and as he grew older he mastered this kind of behavior. There was no horsing around with Paul. He was all business, Pharisee business, and he knew his business well. After getting saved Paul was able to channel this kind of self restraint in the proper direction towards Christ, and wrote positive things about this kind of discipline in 1 CORINTHIANS 9. 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24 *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 25 And every man that striveth for the mastery* (to strive for the mastery requires discipline, the kind of discipline that Paul

was familiar with in being a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee) is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. The word "temperate" speaks of this kind of discipline, as does the Greek word translated "subjection" in verse 27. "Subjection" as used here only this one time in scripture is number 1396 in the Strong's Greek Concordance, and means: subject to stern and rigid discipline. Knowing this we can then paraphrase ACTS 26:4 & 5 this way: My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; 5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most stern and rigid disciplined sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee, practicing to the extreme limit, minute and exact precepts of the law.

Digest all of this in your mind for a minute, and realize what a proud man Paul must have been before getting saved. And he had every worldly right to be proud of his accomplishments of being raised by a Pharisee, and pursuing this kind of life for himself. But this isn't all Paul could be proud of himself for, which will become evident as we progress with this study.

Further more Paul states in ACTS 22:3 *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... .* Gamaliel was a famous teacher in Paul's day, one of only seven men ever honored with the title "Rabban," meaning Doctor of the law. Recall that ACTS 5:34 tells us the same thing when Peter and John were brought before the Jewish Sanhedrin. ACTS 5:34 *Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space.* Paul himself may have been in training at the feet of Gamaliel to be a future Rabban, or Doctor of the law (of Moses). Gamaliel had a reputation, and Paul himself, in time, had a reputation among all the people, as we will learn when we look at ACTS 9:13 and see Ananias saying *"I have heard by many of this man... ."* The perfect manner of the law referenced in ACTS 22:3 further shows the exactness that was to be followed in accordance with Mosaic law. Being a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee, and having been taught by Gamaliel according to the perfect manner of the law would have elevated Paul to the highest position that a Pharisee could achieve in Jewish Religion. Paul was on a pedestal, and all the Jews that knew him, knew he was on this pedestal.

The heart and center piece of Jewish Religion is "the law." Over one hundred times in scripture the Apostle Paul references "the law." Paul was an expert in "the law." Few if any have ever known "the law" like Paul knew "the law." Again ACTS 22:3 tells us that Paul was brought up *...at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law*. Again I dare say that no one on earth was more expert on "the law" than Paul, this proud young Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. "The law" indeed was the life of the Pharisee. Paul's knowledge of "the law," and his further learning "the law" from Gamaliel is what placed him on this pedestal. One would think that all of this training in "the law" would have gone to waste after Paul got saved, and knocked off of his pedestal (so to speak), but that is simply not the case. Jesus took all of this knowledge that Paul had learned about "the law," and revealed more of Himself to Paul through "the law" he knew so well. No wonder then that the Apostle Paul references "the law" more than a hundred times in scripture. In ACTS 13:38 & 39 Paul preached a sermon to those in Antioch in Pisidia, and said this concerning Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour: *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.* In ROMANS 2:12 the Apostle Paul writes: *For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.* Again in ROMANS 3:20 Paul writes: *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* In ROMANS 7:7 Paul writes: *...Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law.* Going to GALATIANS we read in 2:21 these

words of Paul: *I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.* Again Paul writes concerning "the law" in GALATIANS 3:11 *But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.* In GALATIANS 3:21 Paul informs us: *...if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.* Then in HEBREWS 9:22 Paul emphasizes: *And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.* Going back to ROMANS 8:2 Paul writes: *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.* Thank God for having Paul explain to us the purpose of the law, and showing us that we are not under law, but under grace. ROMANS 6:14 *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

So we see that Paul, this Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, was expert in "the law" of sin and death, but Jesus freed him from "the law." One song writer expressed it like this in our Grace and Glory song book: "Free from the law, O, happy condition, Jesus hath bled, and there is remission, Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall, Grace hath redeemed us once for all." This song writer knew Paul's gospel, which Jesus Christ had given him, and had learned such statements as found in GALATIANS 3:13 written again by Paul, which reads: *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.* Jesus used Paul's knowledge of "the law" to reveal Himself unto Paul, who in turn taught us the purpose and place of "the law."

Not only was Paul born a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee, but he also had this to his pedigree: he was a Roman citizen. Study ACTS 22:25-29 and see that Paul was a free born Roman citizen. ACTS 22:25 *And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? 26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. 27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. 28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born. 29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.* This Roman citizenship afforded Paul two "freedoms" which a non Roman citizen didn't have: (1) a Roman citizen was not to be bound by the Romans, and (2) a Roman citizen was not to be beaten by the Romans.

One more feather in Paul's self-righteous cap (so to speak) was the fact that he was born in Tarsus. Tarsus was made a free city by Caesar Augustus for siding with him during the Roman civil wars. This may have been one reason that Paul was a free born Roman citizen. Tarsus was also famous for it's rich Greek culture, and had a school in it famous for Greek literature and philosophy. Some of the tutors of the Caesar's came from Tarsus. It was in Tarsus that Paul also learned some Greek literature and philosophy, and the Greek language. In ACTS 21:37 we find that Paul spoke Greek, and in ACTS 17:22-31 Paul preached to the Greeks in Athens, reasoning with them by quoting from their own poets, things which he no doubt had learned in his youth.

Another of the things Paul learned from his Pharisee father was the trade of being a tent maker. ACTS 18:3 tells us that Paul was a tent maker. No doubt these tents were made of the highest quality and standards, for one would not expect to find fault in the workmanship of a Pharisee tent maker. Remember that he was trained to be well disciplined, and held to higher standards than just your average every day run of the mill Pharisee.

Paul was born in Tarsus as we noted in ACTS 22:3, but he was not born with the name of Paul, but rather was born with the name of Saul. Saul means "desired," or "requested," or "asked for." Saul of Tarsus was named after King Saul, the first King of Israel that the children of Israel had "desired," or "requested," or "asked for" in 1 SAMUEL 8. Thus we see that Saul was a highly regarded name for a Jew. We find Paul called "Saul" twenty-five times in scripture, all in the book of ACTS. Twenty-five is the product of five times five; GRACE times GRACE. The meaning of the number twenty-five we learned in our numbers study is THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. Saul of Tarsus, the



Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee needed THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS just as all men need THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. JOHN 3:16 contains twenty-five words, and all who in their own heart have believed these twenty-five words have received THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. Again I remind you of ACTS 13:38 & 39 quoted above from Paul's sermon, which reads: *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man (Jesus) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

Grace was a concept not taught in the law. Yet the grace of God became one of the main themes of the Apostle Paul. What a transformation that had to take place in the heart of Paul to learn this grace message! We will examine this transformation later in this study, but for now let's note that Paul mentions the word "grace" over a hundred times in his writings. Again "grace" was not something he learned as a Pharisee or the son of a Pharisee, nor at the feet of Gamaliel. Let me give a couple of scriptures from ROMANS that Paul the Apostle wrote unto us after he himself received, and learned the grace message from Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, which help explain his great appreciation of grace, and how it contrasts with the law. Probably no other portion of scripture sums up the contrast between law and grace better than this portion from ROMANS 3. ROMANS 3:19 *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (an appeasing sacrifice) through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* Again Paul didn't learn this lesson from his Pharisee father, nor was he taught this by that great teacher of the law, Gamaliel. These facts were learned after Paul himself was shown the extreme limits of the grace of God on the road to Damascus, but we will get to that part of Paul's life later in this study. In ROMANS 5:1 & 2 we read: *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* Later in ROMANS 5 Paul wrote: *8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. 11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. 12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: 13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. 15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 16 And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. 17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) 18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. 20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: 21 That as sin hath reigned unto*

death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

By this point in the study we have noted the origins of some of Paul's doctrines, and how he learned these things from his youth. Whenever someone is born again it doesn't change what they learned before they got saved; it doesn't change one's personality; but it does change one's sinful heart into a clean heart, (see PSALMS 51:10). What Paul learned in his youth became an important foundation for the things Jesus Christ Himself revealed unto Paul after he got saved. Study GALATIANS 1:11 & 12 to start to get a better appreciation of the gospel of the Apostle Paul and it's origins.

One thing we haven't mentioned up to this point is the fact that Paul, being a good son of a Pharisee, would have attended weekly the Jewish Sabbath day services. We have learned in previous Sunday School studies in lessons past, that a typical Jewish synagogue sabbath day service consisted in part of the reading of the law and the prophets. {Study LUKE 4:16-20; ACTS 13:27 and ACTS 15:21 for starters}. Matthew Henry's Commentary states that in the synagogues they had seven readers every sabbath, the first a priest, the second a Levite, and the other five Israelites of that synagogue. The first order of the service was *...the reading of the law and the prophets...*. This was a very important part of a Jewish worship service as copies of the Scripture were in that day very rare. The reading of the law and the reading of the prophets was divided each Sabbath day service so as to be read over entirely once every year. This would mean that on each Sabbath day two portions of scripture would be read, in course, one from the five books of Moses (the law), and one from the other books of the Old Testament (the prophets). The PSALMS we also incorporated into each of these services, probably as songs. By the time Paul was sent to Jerusalem from Tarsus as a youth to be taught by one of the greatest teachers of the law named Gamaliel, Paul would have heard the Old Testament scriptures read over as many times as years he was old. The teachings of the law of Moses, and the writings of the prophets would have begun to have been ingrained in his mind, and the more so for him, since he was being trained to himself be a Pharisee during this time period. Few men ever had the knowledge of the law, and the writings of the prophets as Paul did. Of course this was head knowledge, not the heart knowledge of a believer. Again after Paul got saved the Lord Jesus Christ used this knowledge Paul had of the Old Testament scriptures to reveal Himself fully to Paul, thus inspiring Paul's gospel record we have in the New Testament. We Gentiles can not fully receive or appreciate many facts found in the Old Testament without the magnifying glass of Paul's gospel. The Lord used Paul as a magnifying glass (so to speak) for we Gentiles. Paul himself nearly states as much in ROMANS 11:13 when he writes: *For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.*

In ACTS 5 we learned that Gamaliel was a part of the Jewish council, which at that particular time were taking council to slay the Apostles Peter and John. This council was the Jewish Sanhedrin, though never called by this name in scripture. The Sanhedrin is thought to have originated in the third century before Christ, and was the recognized headship of the Jewish people in the days of Christ and the Apostles. This Sanhedrin council consisted of Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests and elders, and numbered somewhere between 70 and 72 men. In the Sanhedrin council it was the usual custom to have one High Priest named as it's president. During a Sanhedrin council vote, one of the Scribes would keep a register of the votes for acquittal, while another Scribe would register the votes of condemnation. They tried cases of idolatry and false prophets. Their authority only extended over the Jews. We find the Sanhedrin mentioned as council in twenty different New Testament scriptures. In scripture we find the Sanhedrin council against Jesus in MATTHEW 26:59; MARK 14:55 and 15:1; LUKE 22:66; and JOHN 11:47. We find the Sanhedrin council against Peter and John in ACTS 4:15; 5:21; 5:27; 5:34; and 5:41. We find the Jewish Sanhedrin council against Stephen in ACTS 6:12 and 15, and Stephen's sermon of ACTS 7 was addressed specifically to those of the Sanhedrin council, whom Stephen respectfully addressed. And in time we find the Sanhedrin council against the Apostle Paul in ACTS 22:30; 23:1-10; 23:15; 23:20; 23:28; and 24:20.

Now again we know that Paul was taught according to the perfect manner of the law at the feet of Gamaliel as noted in ACTS 22:3. This means that Paul was in touch with members of the Sanhedrin council, for Gamaliel himself was a member. Paul, being the excellent student he was, may have been a part of this same Sanhedrin council in time, and if he wasn't, he certainly was closely connected to it. We find Paul, then known as Saul, in attendance and hearing Stephen's sermon of ACTS 7. Those that stoned Stephen laid down there clothes at a young man's feet named Saul in ACTS 7:58. {Compare also ACTS 22:20}. In ACTS 8:1 we find that Saul was consenting, like a vote of approval, unto Stephen's death, a fact that Paul also admits to in ACTS 22:20. ACTS 22:20 *And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.* In ACTS 26:10 we read: *Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.* Paul's giving his voice against them meant that he voted against them. Where would such a vote count? In the Sanhedrin council. My whole reason for mentioning any of this in the first place is to show how closely Paul was connected to the Jewish Sanhedrin before he was saved, and he may have even been a part of it. In the least he operated with their approval. ACTS 22:5 tells us as much, and reads: *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.*

We have mentioned and looked at Jesus rebuke of the Scribes and Pharisee's in MATTHEW 23, and have, in passing, referenced Stephen's sermon of ACTS 7. There is a connecting thought between these two portions of scripture that is worth noting, especially in this part of the study, for, no doubt, members of this same Sanhedrin, Scribes and Pharisee's, personally heard both Jesus and Stephen speak these same words that are recorded for us in scripture. First we will recall Jesus words to the Pharisee's found in MATTHEW 23. MATTHEW 23:31 *Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.* 32 *Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.* 33 *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?* 34 *Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:* 35 *That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.* 36 *Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.* 37 *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!* Of course we know the Greatest Prophet that these same Scribe's and Pharisee's soon there after killed was Jesus. Stephen addressed the Sanhedrin in ACTS 7, and he used similar words to Jesus in ACTS 7:51-53. ACTS 7:51 *Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.* 52 *Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:* 53 *Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.*

We know that Paul, known as Saul of Tarsus, heard the sermon of Stephen, and we know in the least that Gamaliel heard for himself, or at least heard of the rebuke of Jesus, and no doubt discussed these same thoughts with his close associates, and probably his students, Saul of Tarsus being one of them. Who in scripture persecuted from city to city Christians who spread the gospel? Saul of Tarsus! We read ACTS 22:5 above, which is just one example of how old Saul of Tarsus persecuted from city to city Christians: *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.* (Jerusalem to Damascus = city to city). ACTS 8:3 tells us: *As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.* ACTS 26:11 in part reads: *...I persecuted them even unto strange cities.* (Strange cities = city to city). In 1



CORINTHIANS 15:9 Paul writes: *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* (Implied here is from city to city). In GALATIANS 1:13 & 14 Paul writes: *For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, (implied here also is from city to city) and wasted it: 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.*

One more thing we should have noted in the scriptures concerning Paul that we have already looked at is his leadership qualities. He was brought up a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, and was looked upon with high regard by all of the Jews because he was a Pharisee, a fact that put him in a place of leadership anyway, but furthermore Paul was a leader among the Pharisee's. The school of Gamaliel would have been, in part, for this purpose; that is to teach leadership qualities. We find in ACTS 7:58 and 22:20 Paul in the place of leadership as a Pharisee, for both of these scriptures tell of the murder of Stephen, and how those that murdered Stephen laid their raiment at the feet of Paul, who was then known as Saul of Tarsus. The reason they did this was because he was looked up to, partly because he was a Pharisee, and partly for his leadership qualities. Let's read some scriptures from ACTS 9. ACTS 9:1 *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,* 2 *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. ...13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.* Why was the high priest, and chief priests so willing to give Saul of Tarsus such authority? Because he was already a responsible leader, though still a young man, and had by this time earned the respect of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin, whom we already noted Paul was closely connected too, were looked up to as the leaders of the Jews religion. Again examine GALATIANS 1:13 & 14, which reads: *For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation,* *being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.* Note here that Paul profited in the Jews' religion above many of his piers. One translator records verse 14 this way: "I was one of the most religious Jews of my own age in the whole country, and tried as hard as I possibly could to follow all the old, traditional rules of my religion." Such zealousness was achieved because Paul was an over achiever, and looked up too; that is he was a super star in his realm of endeavor, and, as such, he was looked up too for his leadership qualities. All leaders have followers. Paul did too. Those who cast their clothes at Paul's feet during the stoning of Stephen were such followers. Those that traveled with Paul when he went from city to city persecuting Christians were such followers.

Such leadership qualities brought Paul to the place that he became the chiefest of sinners! What a statement. What a lofty place of leadership, the chiefest of sinners! Wow! Nobody, especially a self righteous Pharisee, would want this title of leadership, and yet the Apostle Paul himself knew that he had, as a sinner, attained this title of leadership, "the chiefest of sinners!" Paul writes in 1 TIMOTHY 1:15 *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.* Why did Paul label himself with such a title? Because of his extreme zealousness in persecuting Christians in the name of Jewish tradition. Paul also noted the reason he attained this title of leadership, "the chiefest of sinners", in 1 TIMOTHY 1:13, which in part reads: *Who was before (being saved) a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious:...* This is why Paul also wrote of himself in GALATIANS 1:13 noted above: *For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:...* And again in PHILIPPIANS 3:6 Paul wrote of himself: *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

I want to here note that when Paul got saved, the Lord Jesus Christ channeled these leadership qualities of Paul in the proper direction, which was a leader in the

following of Jesus Christ. After he was saved Paul who claimed the title of "the chiefest of sinners" became "the very chiefest apostle!" Paul himself writes of this in two places: 2 CORINTHIANS 11:5 and 12:11. 2 CORINTHIANS 11:5 *For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.* 2 CORINTHIANS 12:11 *I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.* Jesus Christ the leader of all leaders, the King of King and Lord of Lords changed Paul from "the chiefest of sinners" to "the very chiefest apostle!" If He can do that for one man's life, what can he do in your (or my) life? Possibly could He that raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, set them high among the princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory? {See 1 SAMUEL 2:8}. Obviously yes! And to achieve such lofty heights our Apostle Paul encourages us twice to be followers of him. 1 CORINTHIANS 11:1 *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.* 1 CORINTHIANS 4:16 *Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.* Great leaders have followers. Jesus Christ made Paul, the former leader with the title of "the chiefest of sinners;" Jesus made him "the very chiefest apostle!" So we get another glimpse of how it is that Jesus uses attributes that we already have before getting saved, and channels them into something useful for Himself. Saul of Tarsus was a leader, and the Apostle Paul was a leader.

One of the qualities of Paul before he got saved that you may have noticed in the scriptures we have read so far concerning him is his zealousness towards God, which literally translates to his zealousness of God. The word "zealous" means: ardently devoted to a purpose; fervent; enthusiastic. It references one's zealousness of the law of Moses. There was a zealous sect of the Pharisee's in Josephus' day that was bitterly antagonistic to the Romans who were called "Zealots." Paul's zealously, as Saul of Tarsus, channeled this antagonistic bitterness toward Christians. The following two portions of scripture once again point out Paul's zealousness of God: ACTS 22:3 *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.* 4 *And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.* 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.* GALATIANS 1:13 *For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.*

The Apostle Paul himself later in the book of ROMANS was able to explain this kind of Zealously. ROMANS 10:1 *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* 2 *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.* 3 *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* 4 *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

Zealously does not necessarily translate to love, as the above portions of scripture points out. Paul's zealousness towards God translated to the death of an untold number of Christians! Paul zealously pursued Christians, and zealously had them killed. Paul, before he got saved, zealously followed every letter of the law. In fact he was so good at following every letter of the law, being a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee, that he was confidently able to write that he was "blameless," according to the law. Here is how Paul later wrote this fact in PHILIPPIANS 3. PHILIPPIANS 3:4 *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.* Paul also later wrote concerning his following every letter of the law, and noted in 2 CORINTHIANS 3:6 *...for the letter killeth...* . The "letter" referenced here is the law, which Paul sometimes calls "the letter." {See also ROMANS 7 and the verses surrounding

verse 6}. Paul zealously followed every letter of the law, and persecuted Christians unto death. There was no love of God manifested in this kind of zealously.

This then begs the question: where is the love of God found in the law? Paul zealously followed the law, yet there was no love of God manifested in his life before he got saved. Think of all of the Scribes and Pharisees in scripture, and the Sanhedrin council, whose members closely followed the law, and you won't find one example from them where they manifest the love of God. Again recall the scriptures where Jesus spoke unto the scribes and Pharisee's, and where Stephen spoke unto the Sanhedrin council, and see how these very religious and legal men persecuted and murdered the believers. There was no love of God manifest in these believers of the law. There was only murder and hate in their zealous hearts. Jesus told the Scribes and Pharisee's in MATTHEW 23:34 & 35 --Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: 35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. And Stephen, just before he himself was murdered by the Sanhedrin council, said this unto them in ACTS 7:51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. 52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: 53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. Murder was in their hearts, not the love of God, not the grace of God, not the mercy of God. Think of all the legalists out there in the world today, and notice in their life the lack of God's love manifest in their lives.

The other side of the coin of the law looks like this. The law was given unto the children of Israel by God in a large part to reveal His love and mercy toward them. In EXODUS 2 we read: 23 And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. 24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them. And as we read through EXODUS we find that God delivered the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. Then in EXODUS 19 we read these words of the Lord God spoken unto Moses: 3 ...Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; 4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. 5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. In EXODUS 20 God gave the children of Israel these simple instructions, known as the law. EXODUS 20:1 And God spake all these words, saying, 2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; 6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. 7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. 8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. 12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. 13 Thou shalt not kill. 14 Thou shalt not commit adultery. 15 Thou shalt not steal.

16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. 17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Further clarifications of "the law" were given as time went along, and this included instructions concerning love. For example consider the following scriptures: LEVITICUS 19:18 *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD. ...19:34 But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. DEUTERONOMY 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. ...11:1 Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway.*

Then in DEUTERONOMY 7 Moses explains the love of God that was manifest unto the children of Israel, and how it was that they were to keep His commandments. DEUTERONOMY 7:6 *For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. 7 The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: 8 But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; 10 And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face. 11 Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.*

Here is another interesting contrast between what Paul was taught as a youth, and what the Lord revealed unto him. We find the word "love" referenced a little over 30 times in the writings of Moses, and the law. We find the word "love" written in one form or another around 165 times in Paul's gospel, nearly five times as much as in the law. One of the biggest reasons why we find love so prominently mentioned in Paul's gospel is because the grace of God was a main theme of Paul's gospel, a point we have already mentioned. Thus the subject of "love" and "the love of God" became another underlying theme of Paul's gospel; one of the main trunks off of the tree of grace (so to speak).

Contrarily this lack of love that was manifest in the hearts of those who followed the law also became a main underlying theme of Paul's gospel. The book of GALATIANS was written by the Apostle Paul in a large part to correct legality. Paul made the following points to the Galatians: GALATIANS 2:16 *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* Again to the Galatians Paul wrote: GALATIANS 5:14 *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Paul wrote this statement to the Galatians to prove unto them the fact that they didn't really follow the writings of the law either, for if they did, they would do as the law taught, and love their neighbor as themselves. Paul wrote similar statements unto those at Rome referencing the law. ROMANS 3:20 *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* ROMANS 7:7 in part reads: *...Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* Then Paul wrote the Romans concerning love. ROMANS 13:8 *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. 9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

We have thus far in this study considered the background and upbringing of Paul. Some facts we have covered so far have emphasized the things Paul was taught

from the time of his childhood concerning the keeping of the law, and his perspective of being a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee. These kinds of legal teachings had influenced his personality. Down deep in his heart we must realize that Paul from his youth was always trying to be pleasing unto God, but being a keeper of the law, he was doing so by his own self righteous efforts, which we know were never pleasing unto God. We have also noted that these things Paul learned in becoming an expert in the law of Moses didn't include the concepts of the grace of God, or the love of God. Neither was Paul taught by reputable Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, anything about Jesus Christ or His resurrection, or the fact that there is none other name under heaven given among men but Jesus Christ of Nazareth whereby men must be saved. In fact it was this kind of teaching that had Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, in such an uproar against the believers in Jesus Christ, and that is why he made havock of the church, and destroyed as many believers as he could. {Study ACTS 8:1-3; ACTS 9:1,2 and 21}. We have noted that as a young man Paul was closely connected to the Jewish Sanhedrin, the group who was collectively looked up to as the rulers of the Jews. As far as God was concerned, all of Paul's learning had been channeled in the wrong direction, thus the statement found in ISAIAH 64:6 certainly applied to Paul: *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

A review of ACTS chapters 3, 4, and 5 reveal the thinking, and some of the teachings of the Sanhedrin against the Apostles Peter and John, and the followers of Jesus Christ. In ACTS 3 we find Peter and John together in Jerusalem, at the temple, and in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth healing a man lame from birth. This was the first miracle attributed to the Apostle Peter and John, and, to say the least, it was a high profile healing; front page news. So much commotion around Jerusalem was raised over the healing of this lame man, that Peter and John were taken custody by the Sanhedrin. This is found in ACTS 4. It was during this time that Peter and John, but mainly Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, powerfully and instantly preached a sermon unto the Sanhedrin, which stunned them to the point in ACTS 5 that the Sanhedrin was ready to slay both Peter and John. Gamaliel, Paul's teacher, heard with his own ears the words of Peter, and John, and no doubt this led to great discussions in his school, which Paul attended. In time it was these events which stirred up Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, to the point he vigorously pursued and persecuted Christians. As we review some verses from ACTS chapters 3 through 5, note especially how the teaching of Peter concerning salvation was rejected by these Jewish rulers of the Sanhedrin. And the reason salvation in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth was rejected by these rulers, was because they didn't believe that He was the Messiah, their Saviour. They were looking to their following the works of the law of Moses for their salvation. They didn't understand the love of God, or the grace of God, nor did they believe about the salvation of God through Jesus Christ. These doctrines of grace, and love, and salvation by Jesus Christ were main elements lacking in Paul's Pharisee upbringing. As we review the following scriptures, note the perspective of the Sanhedrin. This was Paul's view point at that time in his life.

ACTS 3 tells of the healing of the lame man at the temple by Peter and John. ACTS 3:6-8 reads: *Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. 7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. 8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.* I mentioned above that this was a high profile healing, and verses 9 and 10 explain that everyone in Jerusalem knew this man, because they saw him every time they went to the temple. And now they saw the lame man healed, and wondered in amazement what had happened to him. As the people wondered, Peter full of the Holy Ghost, preached an impromptu sermon inspired of the Holy Ghost, which also got the attention of the Sanhedrin.

ACTS 3:11 *And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. 12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? 13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the*



presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. 14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. 16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. 19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; 20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: 21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. 23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. 24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. 25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. 26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

The preaching of this magnificent truth was a grief unto this same Sanhedrin who had Jesus killed. {See ACTS 4:2}. Yet ACTS 4:4 tells us that about five thousand men became believers that day having heard Peter's sermon! The next day after this lame man was healed, and after Peter had preached this sermon where about five thousand men were save, Peter and John were called before the Sanhedrin. ACTS 4:7-22 explains what took place next.

ACTS 4:7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this? 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, 9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; 10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. 13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. 14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. 17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. 18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done. 22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

In this portion of scripture that we just read from ACTS 4 we need to note the perspective of the Sanhedrin, who Paul at this time in his life was closely associated with. They noted the miracle of the healing of the lame man, but they refused to believe in the name of Jesus. They heard that there was not salvation by any other name than Jesus Christ of Nazareth, but refused to believe ...there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. So they threatened Peter and John, and for the time being let them go. Note that the overall spirit of the Sanhedrin was against the preaching of Christ, and Paul at this time of his life agreed with such teaching.

Salvation in the name of Jesus was not something Paul learned from his highly educated teachers.

ACTS 5 witnesses of the fact that Peter and John and the rest of the Apostles continued preaching of the salvation of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and that many more became believers. This again got the attention of the Sanhedrin, who once again laid their hands on the Apostles, who were perceived by the Sanhedrin to be *...unlearned and ignorant men*. These unlearned and ignorant Apostles continued to put their trust in the Lord, and by the power of the Holy Ghost continued to do the unexplainable.

Let's read a few verses from ACTS 5. ACTS 5:12 *And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. 13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. 14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) 15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one. 17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,...*

We really haven't said much concerning the Sadducees in this study so far, so let me address some facts concerning the Sadducees. The Sadducees were part of the Sanhedrin council, a fact we have mentioned. They are thought to have originated about the same time as the Pharisees, which was the 3rd century B.C. The Sadducees doctrine was that the soul and body perish together. They did not believe in angels nor did they believe in the resurrection. ACTS 23:8 summarizes their doctrine this way: *For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both*. This doctrine had few followers, but those that were of this sect were also of the highest rank in Jewish society for they were very wealthy and influential. They believed parts of the written law of Moses, but only the parts that agreed with their doctrine, and they denied the oral law of Moses, which the Scribes and Pharisees passed on from one generation to another. They were a priestly clique, but at the same time avowedly irreligious, and most certainly worldly minded. Because of their wealth they controlled the Sanhedrin.

Those of Jesus day were most familiar with the Sadducees, who were flourishing at that time, but faded off the scene within a hundred years of the time of Christ. Jesus addressed them in His infinite wisdom in MATTHEW 22, where the Sadducees asked Him a hypothetical question concerning the resurrection, which we now know they didn't believe in either. In Jesus answer to them Jesus assures them of the fact of resurrection, and of the fact of the existence of angels, thus silencing them, for a time. MATTHEW 22:23 *The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, 24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. 27 And last of all the woman died also. 28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. 31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. 33 And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.* MARK 12 and LUKE 20 also record the same story.

Now back to our reading in ACTS 5:17 *Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, 18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. 19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them*

forth, and said, 20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. 21 And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, (again verse 17 tells us that "they that were with him" were the Sadducees) and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, 23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. 24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. 25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

Imagine the bewilderment and the indignation of the Sanhedrin concerning these events. Such an uproar in Jerusalem was being caused by the Apostles, that many were getting saved, believing that salvation was through the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The unbelieving Sanhedrin wouldn't tolerate such doctrine, for after all, they were educated, and the Apostles were to them unlearned and ignorant men. Thus the Sanhedrin once again had the Apostles arrested.

ACTS 5:26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, 28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. 29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

Imagine how these words infuriated the Sadducees especially, and the rest of the Sanhedrin. Here again note that the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ was preached unto this same Sanhedrin by the Apostles. Yet the Sanhedrin refused to believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour, nor did they wish to have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Paul, being closely connected to the Sanhedrin and the teaching of Gamaliel by this time in his life, went right along with the Sanhedrin crowd in his unbelief of Jesus Christ. The teaching of salvation through the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth once again brought the Sanhedrin council to the edge of murder. Here is how ACTS 5 continues to record these events.

ACTS 5:33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them. 34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; 35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. 36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. 37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. 38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: 39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. 40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Now imagine the debate that went on after this time in the school of Gamaliel concerning the doctrine of the Apostles. Gamaliel it seems, being older in years, remained calm enough concerning these events to acknowledge that there was a small chance that the doctrine of the Apostles was correct. They all agreed that some

unexplainable things had happened concerning the Apostle's and their teaching, yet the majority of the Sanhedrin were willing to do away with the Apostles all together. No doubt Paul, a student of Gamaliel, heard these debates, and cast his vote for doing away with the followers of Christ. That is why as Saul of Tarsus he was so feared.

This kind of thinking was a far cry from the things recorded for us later in his Epistle to the Galatians, where Paul wrote the following in chapter 3: GALATIANS 3:21 *Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. 22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. 26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* Thus we see under the law there was no justification by faith, and it was this lack of faith in Jesus Christ that had those of the Sanhedrin, and such like, in such an uproar over the teachings of the Apostles in ACTS chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Some time passes, and as it does the number of the disciples was multiplied, ACTS 6:1 tells us, meaning that many more were believing in the salvation that can only come by believing on Jesus. This is the justification by faith mentioned in GALATIANS 3:24 above. This was not the doctrine of the Pharisee's, nor was it the kind of teaching that Paul was taught as a youth. As a Pharisee Paul was taught that there were certain things he had to do, and justification by faith and believing in Jesus Christ as his own personal Saviour was not one of them. We read in ACTS 15:5 of a certain sect of Pharisee's who did believe that Jesus was their Saviour, which, if you think about it was a wonderful almost miraculous thing in itself, yet they also strongly held on to keeping the law of Moses. And it wasn't just the Pharisee's who held on to keeping the law of Moses, for in ACTS 21:20 we find this statement: *... many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law.* Thus we get a little better glimpse how hard it was for a Pharisee, such as Saul of Tarsus, to fully latch on to the concept of the grace of God without the works of the law. Once Paul himself realized this fact he made a great effort to hammer this point home. One example of this is in ROMANS 3:28 where Paul writes: *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* Another example of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith is found in GALATIANS 2:16 *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

We have noted in this portion how that Paul at this point in his life attached himself to the part of the Sanhedrin who was ready and willing to persecute believers. And the believers were multiplying daily. Men full of the Holy Ghost besides the Apostles were coming on the scene. ACTS 6 tells of seven such men. These seven men were helpers to the Apostles, and helped in various ways. The most prominent of all of them was Stephen.

Stephen is mentioned by name in seven scriptures, all in ACTS. Seven is the number of SPIRITUAL COMPLETION or SPIRITUAL PERFECTION. Stephen's name means: "a crown", or "crowned." Stephen is an example to us of a full overcomer, yet not necessarily a New Testament full overcomer in the sense that he was not offered a place in the Bride of Christ. The bridal message hadn't been preached yet. Paul's gospel wasn't revealed yet. Stephen was not an Old Testament Saint either, but rather was part of those Saints who lived during the transition time between the dispensation of the law, and the present grace age, also called the church age in which we are still living. HEBREWS 11 tells us essentially that a full overcomer is one who puts their faith wholly in God, trusting Him for seemingly impossible things. We find in ACTS 6:5 that Stephen is noted to be *...a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.* ACTS 6:8 records this of Stephen: *And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.* We also find something else about Stephen in ACTS 7, which further reveals his overcoming heart attitude; facts which we will cover in a moment, but let's first consider the following as back ground for what we will say concerning Stephen.

We know that Jesus was the ultimate full overcomer in all aspects. In JOHN 16:33 Jesus says: *I have overcome the world.* As a full overcomer Jesus ...*came into the world to save sinners...* 1 TIMOTHY 1:15 tells us. Jesus Christ knew no sin, but 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21 tells us that God ...*made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* 1 PETER 2:22 tells us also that Jesus ...*did no sin, neither was guile (evil speaking) found in his mouth.* 1 JOHN 3:5 further informs us that Jesus ...*was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.* It was with this overcoming sinless heart attitude that Jesus was able to cry out at Calvary in LUKE 23:34 and say: ...*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

Stephen displays a similar full overcoming heart attitude at his death, for we read in ACTS 7:60 that after being stoned by the Sanhedrin that Stephen ...*kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

Stephen in his impromptu sermon of ACTS 7 becomes the main channel through which the Holy Ghost pricks the heart of Saul of Tarsus. This is not to say that there were not others used of the Holy Ghost to speak words of truth to Saul of Tarsus, for I am sure there were, however the scripture records only the words of Stephen, which were then embedded in the heart and conscience of Saul of Tarsus.

If you will take the time to read ACTS 6 and 7 you will find that Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin council on false pretenses, saying he was against the customs of Moses. In ACTS 7:1 we find this question: *Then said the high priest, Are these things so?* Recall in ACTS 5:17 that the high priest was associated with, and probably a part of the sect of the Sadducees, which again hold to the following beliefs summarized best in ACTS 23:8 *For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit...* . Stephen kindly and respectfully answers them in ACTS 7:2 through 53, proving to them that he wasn't against the customs of Moses. Stephen mentions Moses nine times in his sermon. Nine is the number of FINALITY or DIVINE COMPLETENESS. The final touches of Stephen were completed after his giving this sermon. Keep in mind while studying this sermon on your own that Stephen was a man full of faith, and power, and of the Holy Ghost. Stephen then goes into a summary of the history of the children of Israel, which all Jews were familiar with. We find an abstract reference to resurrection in ACTS 7:37, which reads: *This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.* The Holy Ghost also has Stephen mention the angel of the Lord three times, which no doubt further infuriated the Sadducees of the Sanhedrin council. Stephen mentions the angel of the Lord, or references him in ACTS 7:30; 7:35; and 7:38. Stephen then concludes his sermon with these words: ACTS 7:51 *Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. 52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: 53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.* Again we see the reference to angels, which the Sadducees didn't believe in. Thus we read their reaction in verse 54: *When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.* If these words sound somewhat familiar it is because this same Sanhedrin council had in ACTS 5:33 been cut to the heart by the words of Peter and the other Apostles. ACTS 5:33 *When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.* What saved the Sanhedrin council from their irrational exuberance in ACTS 5 was the rational wisdom of Gamaliel who subdued their violence. Gamaliel didn't step in here in ACTS 7, and he probably wasn't given the chance. We find that Stephen spoke up next, and as he does recall that ACTS 6:15 records: *And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.* The Sadducees didn't believe in angels or the resurrection either, as we have noted previously, so we can see how this next statement of Stephen further instantly stirred them up. ACTS 7:55 *But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, 56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.* In other words Stephen was pointing out to them that he was seeing the resurrected Jesus standing on the right hand of God.



ACTS 7:57 *Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, 58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. 59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

In these last few verse of ACTS 7 we find two loud voices. In ACTS 7:57 we find the loud voice of an unbelieving mob of religious zealots, known as the Sanhedrin, who stopped their ears from hearing the truth of the gospel inspired by the Holy Ghost. In ACTS 7:60 we find the loud voice of a man full of the Holy Ghost, and full of grace and mercy, pleading to the Lord for forgiveness for the individual members of this same Sanhedrin. How these words of the loud voice of Stephen pricked the conscience of one Saul of Tarsus. Grace and mercy later became underlying themes of the Apostle Paul's gospel.

Years later the Apostle Paul recalls the day Stephen was stoned. We find this in ACTS 22. These are Paul's own words found in ACTS 22:19 *And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: 20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.* There probably wasn't a day that went by the rest of Paul's life when the memory of Stephen and his powerful Holy Ghost inspired words didn't flash through his mind. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 CORINTHIANS 15:9 *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* And again in GALATIANS 1:13 *For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:...* No doubt Stephen's memory also flashed through Paul's mind we he wrote words like we find in ROMANS 5:8 *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* Again Stephen's memory was probably flashing through Paul's mind when he wrote this to the Ephesians. EPHESIANS 2:1 *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

Though it did seem at the time like any got saved as a result of Stephen's sermon, we know that indirectly untold millions did get saved because of Paul's gospel. Again Stephen sermon strongly pricked the heart of one Saul of Tarsus, who later became the Apostle Paul.

Things changed in the Christian world after the death of Stephen. Up until the time of Stephen's sermon in ACTS 7 we find the disciples of the Lord preaching and teaching exclusively at Jerusalem. Study ACTS chapters 1 through 7 to find this statement true for yourself. In ACTS 1:8 Jesus told his disciples: *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: 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.* So far we find the disciples of the Lord still in Jerusalem. But up to this point in time they had not ventured out *...in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* However after the death of Stephen we read in ACTS 8:1 *And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. 3 As for Saul, he made havock of the*

*church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.*

There are three important facts that I want to note in these verses. The first fact is that there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and a great number of the believers were scattered about throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria. So far we don't read of any being witnesses unto the uttermost part of the earth. It would take more time for that to happen.

Fact number two found in ACTS 8:1-3 is that the Apostles stayed in Jerusalem. The Kingdom Apostles did not reach out themselves *...in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* Again it would take more time for that to happen. And it did happen in their lifetime, for we read of Peter himself writing unto the disciples *...scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,*... in 1 PETER 1:1. Peter most likely visited all of these places during his life. We read of Peter being known unto the Corinthians in 1 CORINTHIANS 1:12; 3:22; 9:5 and 15:5. We find that Peter came to Antioch, Syria in GALATIANS 2:11. And ACTS 9:32 through ACTS 12 tells of Peter preaching outside the regions of Jerusalem.

Fact number three of note in ACTS 8:1-3 is that Saul of Tarsus was very much a part of the reason that *...they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.* ACTS 8:3 again tells us: *As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.* Implied in this statement is that Saul of Tarsus also stayed in Jerusalem at this time persecuting the Christians, but shortly that also would change, because as we read in ACTS 8:1 *...they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria...* . By the time of ACTS 9:1 & 2 we read this of Saul of Tarsus: *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 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.* Damascus was about 136 miles from Jerusalem. ACTS 26:11 in part reads: *...I persecuted them even unto strange cities.* Strange cities means cities other than Jerusalem. ACTS 9:21 further reveals Saul of Tarsus persecutions outside the limits of Jerusalem: *...Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?* Also ACTS 22:4 tells us again like ACTS 8:3 does, that Saul's persecution of Christians wasn't just limited to the male sex, for we read there: *And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.*

So we see that the Christians were scattered abroad after the persecution of Stephen, and that Saul of Tarsus was one main reason that the Christians scattered. All this did was start the spreading of the word of God throughout the world. ACTS 8:4 records it like this: *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.* The rest of the 8th chapter of ACTS records the spreading of the word of God, and how the Holy Ghost used devout Spirit filled men for this purpose. The Apostles Peter and John then began to minister away from Jerusalem also, for ACTS 8:14 and 15 tells us: *Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.*

## **The Salvation of Saul of Tarsus**

Meanwhile Saul of Tarsus continued his persecution against Christians. No one could stop him. Then Jesus came.

(Have you ever taken the time to notice in scripture that when Jesus came upon the scene of whatever situation, how that things changed, and changed for the better? Let me review just a few quick examples from scripture. In JOHN 2 Jesus came to a wedding where they ran out of wine. There Jesus performed His first miracle, and changed the water into wine, thus changing things for the better for those at this wedding. In JOHN 4 Jesus came to a city of Samaria and at the well changed the life of the Samaritan women for the better forever. She believed on Him and became a testimony unto many of the Samaritans, who also believed. {Study JOHN 4, especially