

have seen that Paul did indeed make it to Jerusalem, and that bonds did await him there, but he never wavered from preaching and testifying about the grace of God. Paul knew the facts of HEBREWS 13:8 *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.* Even though circumstances change from day to day, the fact still remains *...Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.* Here in Jerusalem in ACTS 22, with Paul now in the custody of the Roman empire we find that Paul's heart attitude still echoes this same theme: *...none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.* And if Paul was allowed to speak once again unto his traveling companions he would tell them the same thing he told the Ephesian elders in ACTS 20:32 *And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*

ACTS 22:29 *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.* With these words ends a most eventful day in the life of Paul. This day had started out back in ACTS 21:26. He has been accused of bringing Gentiles into the temple, almost killed by the riotous Jews, violently "rescued" by the Roman soldiers, arrested, bound with two chains, hauled off into the castle known as Fort Antonia, where as many as 10,000 Roman soldiers may have been stationed. On his way into the Fort Paul was given liberty to speak unto the Jews, giving his testimony in Hebrew, where he set off another uproar after using the word "Gentiles," and afterwards was taken into the Fort where he was about to be scourged until he announced he was a Roman citizen. Which brings us to this verse, which essentially ends this most eventful day. ACTS 22:29 *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.* Paul started out this day as a free man, and ended with him being taken into custody of the Roman Empire, who will hold him for the next five years.

Paul brought before the Jewish Sanhedrin Council

Claudius Lysias, the Roman chief captain, still is unclear as to whom Paul was, and what he was accused of doing by the Jews. Since he couldn't legally beat this information out of Paul, because of Roman law, and since water boarding had not yet been invented, Lysias decided that Paul should the next day appear before the Jewish Sanhedrin council of Sadducees and Pharisees, and their chief priests, with the hope of finding out who Paul was, and what he had done to create such an uproar. After all Claudius Lysias was the Roman soldier in charge of keeping peace at Jerusalem, and there certainly had been much disturbance created here in Jerusalem because of Paul. ACTS 22:30 records it like this: *On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.*

This verse contains several things to consider. Let's start with the fact that Paul was loosed from his bands. Obviously Lysias believed Paul's story of the fact that he was a Roman citizen. For Claudius Lysias to leave Paul bound would have meant serious consequences for Lysias himself, which we noted above included such penalties as death, and the confiscation of his own property, and loss of citizenship for the rest of his family. So Claudius Lysias loosed Paul from his bands, yet retained custody of him, not yet knowing who he was, nor what he had done. To get to the bottom of this topic, Lysias was relying on the Jewish Sanhedrin council for help.

The Jewish Sanhedrin council had power to judge Jewish matters, but were supposedly powerless to decide between life and death. Life and death judgments were the responsibility of the Roman governor. Scripture records several instances of where Christians were brought before this Jewish Sanhedrin council, and in most instances they received unjust treatment. Let's trace these accounts in scripture.

Jesus was pursued by this same council. MATTHEW 26 records: 59 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; 60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. MARK 14:55 & 56 records: And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. 56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. So we see here that this Jewish Sanhedrin council was at best corrupt, and very much against Jesus Christ, thus they aligned themselves against Christians. JOHN 18 records some more detail on how this council worked, and on how they further mistreated Jesus. JOHN 18:19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. 20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. 21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. 22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? 23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? 24 Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest. ...28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. 29 Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? 30 They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. 31 Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: 32 That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

Here in verse 31 we see a scriptural account of how life and death judgments were the responsibility of the Roman governor, who in this case was Pilate. Let's here review a little of what we know about the Jewish Sanhedrin council.

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, but as noted in JOHN 18:31 above, their statement was: ...It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.

Thus in JOHN 18 the Jewish Sanhedrin council then convinced Pilate that Jesus made himself a king against Caesar, which was an act of treason for which Jesus could be put to death under Roman law. Pilate quizzed Jesus about this as we continue to read from JOHN 18. JOHN 18:33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? 34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? 35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? 36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. 37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. 38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

We see here that Pilate questioned Jesus on "What is truth," pondering in his heart what Jesus had told him was the truth, and realizing that the Jewish Sanhedrin council had not been exactly truthful with him. JOHN 19 continues: 1 Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. 2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, 3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands. 4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith

unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. 5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! 6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. 7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. ...12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar. 13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. 14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! 15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. 16 Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. 17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: 18 Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

A few short weeks later Peter spoke about the wickedness of this Jewish Sanhedrin council in his first sermon preached on the day of Pentecost. ACTS 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: 23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: 24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

It wasn't too long after this that Peter and John prayed for a lame man in Jesus name, and he was healed on the steps of the temple, which prompted Peter's second sermon. Afterwards the following events took place, which again involved the Jewish Sanhedrin council. ACTS 4:1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, 2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. 4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand. 5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, 6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 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 the above portion of scripture there is a couple of important points to note concerning the Jewish Sanhedrin council that will come into play again in ACTS 23 when Paul goes before them. First the Sadducees didn't like the fact that Peter preached about the resurrection of Jesus. ACTS 23:8 records: *For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit:...* Secondly note that the Jewish Sanhedrin council had here threatened Peter and John not to speak ever again in the name of Jesus, which was an exceedingly foolish thing to do. Note what took place next.

ACTS 4:23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. 24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: 25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? 26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. 27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. 29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, 30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. 31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

What a powerful prayer meeting! This as to be one of the highlights in the book of ACTS. This prayer request was answered mightily for we read in 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.*

These events led to the next encounter with the Jewish Sanhedrin council, which we read about in the following verses. 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, 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. 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. 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.

We see again mentioned in ACTS 5:34 above of Gamaliel, whom the Apostle Paul acknowledged as being his teacher of the law, and the customs of the Jews in ACTS 22:3. Here in ACTS 5:34 we find Gamaliel a spokesman in the Jewish Sanhedrin council. We need to once again note that by the time Stephen was brought before this same Jewish Sanhedrin council, Saul of Tarsus, our Apostle Paul, was closely associated with this group, if not a part of it himself! And after reviewing how this Jewish Sanhedrin council treated Stephen, we will see how they treated Paul, one who used to be closely associated with them.

The most recent account before Paul's going before the Jewish Sanhedrin in ACTS 23, was the account of Stephen going before this very same council in ACTS 6 & 7. The time frame of Stephen appearing before the Jewish Sanhedrin council takes place approximately seven years after Jesus was brought before them. Brother Copley in his study book on ACTS, and Sister Bodie in her study book on DANIEL both go to great lengths to point this time table out. This means that the events from ACTS 1 through ACTS 7 covers seven years. This also means that the Jewish Sanhedrin council that Stephen was brought before probably had a few new faces in it than the council Jesus was brought before. However the majority of the members of the Jewish Sanhedrin council that Stephen appeared before were also the same members that we have read about in the different accounts above.

In total the ministry of Stephen may have lasted as long as five years, after which the following events are recorded.

ACTS 6:8 *And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. 9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. The Libertines were Jews who had previously been imprisoned in Rome, but were now set free, and became freed men in Jerusalem. The Cyrenians were Jews from Cyrene, and the Alexandrians were Jews from Alexandria, Egypt. Also Jews from Cilicia and Asia made up the members of a certain synagogue, which became very much against the truth put forth by Stephen. ACTS 6:10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. 11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. 12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, 13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: 14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. 15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.*

Have you ever wondered what the Jewish Sanhedrin council saw in the face of Stephen to have these words recorded for us in scripture: *...all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel....* ? Would you

know the face of an angel if you seen one? This is quiet a description, isn't it? Let me throw out a couple of thoughts that may enlighten our understanding here. This same Jewish Sanhedrin council had most of these same members in it when Jesus stood before them. Do you suppose His face, being the Son of God, may have appeared different unto them? In other words Jesus demeanor didn't show fear, but rather expressed the peace, and the love of God in a most trying situation. No doubt the council members marveled within as they witnessed Jesus countenance before them. Now Stephen stood before them, and in his face they saw the same thing they witnessed in the face of Jesus. They saw a man full of the Holy Ghost, whose spiritual eyes were fixed on things above. They saw a man whose demeanor didn't show fear, but rather expressed the peace of God, and the love of God in a most trying situation, just like they saw in Jesus. On author notes "that the angelic brightness on Stephen's face might be intended to alarm the judges, for it is possible for a countenance full of spiritual grace to be awful and terrible to those who are full of hate." What ever they saw in Stephen's face, the glow of the love of God, and the calmness of the peace of God, and a heart full of grace, and the Holy Ghost, shined unto them, and kind of haunted them like the face of an angel would. And as Stephen stood before this assembly of the Jewish Sanhedrin council with this eerie look about him we read in ACTS 7:1 *Then said the high priest, Are these things so?*

Stephen was asked, "Are these things so?" The council wanted to hear from Stephen's mouth him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God, and against this holy place meaning the temple, and against the law of Moses. This was the Jewish Sanhedrin councils mind set against Stephen. So Stephen answers these charges under the power and inspiration of the Holy Ghost with words quick and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; words that got right down to the thoughts and intents of the heart of this Jewish Sanhedrin council, {see HEBREWS 4:12}. Without notes Stephen began his address by politely addressing the council, and quickly acknowledging "the God of glory." ACTS 7:2 states Stephen's words like this: *And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,...*

We first see here Stephen respectfully addressing this Jewish Sanhedrin council. Then we find Stephen using the most reverent words to describe God, calling Him *...The God of glory*. In his sermon Stephen calls God, "God" seventeen times; he calls God, "the Lord" five times, and he calls God "the most High" one time, not to mention the many references to God in this sermon using the words, "he," "my," and "I." So we see that not once did Stephen use blasphemous words against God, which we also knew he wouldn't, nor didn't do. He also mentions Jesus "the Just One" once. (The translation of "Jesus" in verse 45 references Joshua.) Even though Stephen was called before the Sanhedrin council to defend himself, we do not find Stephen mentioning himself at all until verse 56, at which point in time he was done with his sermon. The focus of Stephen's sermon was mainly upon God, and what he had done for the children of Israel back to the days of Abraham, and how their fathers and grandfathers, had constantly failed to recognize God's hand in their lives, and how they had continuously failed to trust God, and put their faith in Him. There were exceptions to Israel's general unbelief in examples of some famous faithful lives that Stephen also points out in his sermon. Men such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Joshua, and David. Interestingly these very same men are listed as heroes of faith many years later in the letter Paul writes unto the HEBREWS. Whoever would have thought that some of the inspiration for HEBREWS 11 came from Stephen's sermon, but no doubt it did. In my own mind I imagine that there was never a day that went by when the Apostle Paul didn't think of the words of Stephen's sermon. So powerful was this sermon that we still read it today. So powerful was this sermon that it pricked the heart of old Saul of Tarsus, no doubt causing him many sleepless nights pondering it's haunting truth. So powerful was this sermon that some twenty five to thirty years later Paul was still able to quote it word for word to Luke who left us this record we read in ACTS 7. Let's read Stephen's sermon.

ACTS 7:2 *And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, 3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. 4 Then came he out of the land of the*

Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. 5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. 6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. 7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place. 8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. 9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, 10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. 11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. 13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. 14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. 15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, 16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem. 17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, 18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. 19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. 20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: 21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. 22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. 23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. 24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: 25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. 26 And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? 27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? 29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons. 30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. 31 When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, 32 Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. 33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. 34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. 35 This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. 36 He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. 37 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. {See DEUTERONOMY 18:15-19 & ACTS 3:22.} 38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: 39 To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, 40 Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. 42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye

offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? 43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. 44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. 45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; 46 Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. 47 But Solomon built him an house. 48 Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, 49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? {Study ISAIAH 66:1 & 1 JOHN 4:15.} 50 Hath not my hand made all these things? 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.

What the Holy Ghost inspired Stephen to do in this sermon was to show that he deeply revered, and was very familiar with the whole history of Israel, of how they came into being a nation, and how they were given certain customs, such as circumcision, and the law, and how they eventually built the temple in the days of Solomon. Stephen did not use blasphemous words against Moses, or the law, or the temple either for that matter. The Holy Ghost inspired Stephen to quickly go through the history of Israel starting with Abraham, and show how God dealt with Israel all throughout their history down to the present time when Stephen stood before them. As Stephen goes through this history of the children of Israel, he points out numerous examples of how "the fathers" before them had refused to believe God, and had mistreated and resisted God's faithful servants all along the way. "The fathers" had mistreated Joseph, and Moses, and numerous other prophets down through their history, and neglected to fully keep the law of Moses, and even worshipped other gods, contrary to the law of Moses, as noted in verses 39 & 40 above.

In this sermon the Holy Ghost inspired Stephen to mention the angel of the Lord three times, (ACTS 7:30; 7:35; and 7:38), which infuriated the Sadducees of the Sanhedrin council, who didn't believe in angels. Recall that ACTS 23:8 records: *For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit:...* . Then under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost Stephen notes that this very same Jewish Sanhedrin council were just like their unbelieving fathers before them, stating in ACTS 7:51-53: *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.* This last mention of angels once again in verse 53 no doubt pushed the Sadducees in attendance to the brink of committing murder.

No doubt some of these same Jewish Sanhedrin council members had once before heard Jesus tell 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.*

Now they had once more heard a similar decree, this time by Stephen, and their fury exploded into murder, as ACTS 7:54-60 tells of the death of Stephen. ACTS 7:54 *When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. 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. 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 killing Stephen we find this Jewish Sanhedrin council in violation of their own law, which we read in JOHN 18:31 *...It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.* This is the last record we have of any Christian being brought before the Jewish Sanhedrin council until the time frame we are now studying about in the life of Paul. Approximately twenty five years have passed since Stephen was brought before this Sanhedrin council, which means that there would be many new faces in this group that Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, was once associated with. The possibility exists that some of Paul's old associates, maybe even some of his old school mates, who learned the law from the teaching of Gamaliel, were now members of the Jewish Sanhedrin council. Paul suspected that this would be the case, thus when in ACTS 22:30 Claudius Lysias *...commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them...* we expect Paul's following reaction, noted in ACTS 23:1 *And Paul, earnestly beholding the council...*

The Greek word translated "beholding" here is *atenizo* (number 816 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), which is only used fourteen times in New Testament scripture, and shows a look of undivided attention, or a look that expects to see more than is visible with the naked eye. I suspect that Paul here with his poor eyesight is trying to see some old familiar faces, now aged by twenty plus years. Recall in GALATIANS 6:11 we have noted this statement of Paul's: (from Conybeare's translation) "Observe the size of the characters in which I write to you with my own hand." This is thought to be a reference to the size of the characters that Paul wrote with his own hand due to the fact of the weakness of his eyes. This would also explain the statement that Paul makes in GALATIANS 4:13-15 -- *Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. 14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.* We will see in ACTS 23:3-5 that Paul didn't recognize the high priest, only observing him as a "whited wall." Obviously the Apostle Paul could not see well enough to differentiate the characters that were before him, only being able to see the color of the clothes they wore. Thus as Paul was "beholding" the members of this Jewish Sanhedrin council, everyone looked blurry to him. How thankful he must have been for the clear spiritual vision he had, his eyes clearly focused upon Jesus.

I imagine also that Paul probably has a thought or two pass before his mind on how he used to be a part of this very same council, and how thankful he was to no longer be caught up in the legality of religion. How thankful he was for knowing Christ as his Saviour. How thankful he was for the liberty he now had in Christ Jesus. How thankful he was to be free from the law. How thankful he was for being full of the Holy Ghost, and being lead of the Holy Ghost. How thankful he was for Christ putting him into the ministry. How thankful he was for the victory he had in Christ Jesus. How thankful he was to no longer be a part of this Jewish Sanhedrin council, and how sad he was for those whom he now faced.

ACTS 23:1 *And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren,...* . We earlier saw that Stephen addressed the Jewish Sanhedrin council with these words: *Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken...* ACTS 7:2. Paul the day before had addressed the multitude gathered in Jerusalem with these words: *Men, brethren, and fathers...* ACTS 22:1. Note in ACTS 23:1 that Paul didn't address the council as *Men, brethren, and fathers*, only as *Men and brethren...* . The reason Paul addressed them as *Men and brethren*, was because Paul considered himself as their equal. And in reality he was their equal, having been trained himself to be one of them. Thus Paul's addressing the Jewish Sanhedrin council as *Men and brethren* was appropriate, and not out of line at all.

ACTS 23:1 continues: *I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.* This is quite a contrast to Stephen's defence speech, for as we noted in Stephen's

sermon, Stephen did not mention himself once. But there is a big difference here with Paul. Paul has already addressed the whole assembly of the Jews the day before in ACTS 22, and, no doubt, these very same Sanhedrin members heard every word of his speech. Paul even in ACTS 22:5 acknowledged that the high priest, and all the estate of the elders, doth bear him witness, meaning they knew who he was. So there was no need in Paul going over again his personal history. Furthermore these men in the Sanhedrin council already knew who he was, and what he had been accused of doing. Paul, with a clear conscience, was just stating a fact here in verse 1 when he says, (from a different translation): "All my life I have behaved myself with full loyalty of conscience towards God." Realize that this was a true statement. Even when Paul was a sinner, he was doing his best to live in all good conscience before God. It wasn't until that day on the road to Damascus that Paul realized his self righteous efforts were not what brings salvation. *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. {ROMANS 10:10}. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. {ROMANS 10:9}.* Paul later wrote to Timothy the following statement, which showed how Paul's eyes were opened after he was saved: 1 TIMOTHY 1:12 *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; 13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 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. 16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. 17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Paul explained his reasoning of what he stated here in ACTS 23:1 in a statement he made 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.* The word blameless translates into this statement in ACTS 23:1 *I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.* After being saved on the road to Damascus we know that the Apostle Paul *...lived in all good conscience before God...* letting the Lord daily answer his cry, which he made on the road to Damascus "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" {ACTS 9:6}. I imagine that there wasn't a day go by for the rest of his life where Paul didn't ask the Lord, Lord, what wilt thou have me do today? We all should have such a heart attitude. It is with this attitude of heart that Paul can clearly say unto the Jewish Sanhedrin council here in ACTS 23:1 *...I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.*

As we get to ACTS 23:2, Brother Copley rightfully notes: "The satanic hatred of the Jewish officers was terrific. Paul began his address by saying that he had lived in all good conscience before God, which they knew that they had not done." {End of quoting Brother Copley}. ACTS 23:2 *And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.*

Realize that this Jewish Sanhedrin council were programmed to the "kill" mode when it came to the Apostle Paul. Paul knew this, having had this mind set himself when he was a part of this group before getting saved. So it was probably only a little surprise to Paul that they gave him a blow on the mouth. Realize also that at this point in time Paul didn't know it was the high priest Ananias who had ordered Paul to be struck, for ACTS 23:5 tells us *...I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest....*

Let's note a little about the high priest Ananias. There is quiet a bit of history behind this Ananias, who is only now remembered because of his treatment to the Apostle Paul here in ACTS 23 & 24. This high priest Ananias was previously sent to Rome as a prisoner because of a quarrel between the Jews and the Samaritans. While in Rome Ananias was found innocent of any charges brought against him, and in time he returned to Jerusalem, where he eventually attained to the office of high priest.

Apparently he had a violent temper, for he immediately commanded them that stood by Paul to smite him on the mouth when he disagreed with what Paul had said.

Recall that Jesus received similar treatment when brought before the Sanhedrin back in JOHN 18. JOHN 18:19 *The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. 20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. 21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. 22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? 23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?*

The Apostle Paul quickly responded to Ananias, still not knowing he was the high priest, saying in ACTS 23:3 *...God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?* Let me read another translation from C. H. Rieu of this verse here. "It's you that God will strike, you specious fraud. Do you use the Law to sit in judgment on me, yet abuse the Law by ordering me to be struck?" (The word specious means: showy, not genuine). One translation renders "whited wall" as "painted pig pen." The Greek word translated "whited" here is *koniao* {kon-ee-ah'-o}, number 2867 in the Strong Greek New Testament dictionary, meaning: to white wash, or cover over, and is a term applied to a hypocrite who conceals his malice under an outward assumption of piety, as do most religiously clothed leaders. The word *koniao* {kon-ee-ah'-o} is only used twice in scripture. Once is here in ACTS 23:3, and the other time is in MATTHEW 23:27 where Jesus chided such religious hypocrisy, stating: *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited <2867> sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*

The question arises, were these words of Paul in ACTS 23:3 an outburst of emotion, or were they Holy Ghost inspired words speaking a word of knowledge? Since "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" according to 2 TIMOTHY 3:16, and since ACTS 23:3 is now part of "all scripture," the answer to our question is that these were Holy Ghost inspired words. This may seem to simple of an answer, so let's examine ACTS 23:3 a little closer.

ACTS 23:3 *Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?* Paul's statement in ACTS 23:3 consists of two related parts, part one being Paul's reaction to the councils' action, and part two being instructions to the Sanhedrin council of how they were supposed to conduct their business according to the law of Moses. Remember no one knew the law of Moses any better than the Apostle Paul, so it would be a simple thing for him to note that he had be smitten contrary to the law.

Part one of Paul's statement in ACTS 23:3 says: *God shall smite thee, thou whited wall.* Let's read some words Paul has already penned in ROMANS 12:14-21, and see how the Holy Ghost was working Paul's own scripture into his life at this point in time of ACTS 23:3. ROMANS 12:14 *Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. 15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. 16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. 17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: (leave room for God's anger) for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.* The statement Paul quoted in ROMANS 12:19 *...avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord,*... which comes from DEUTERONOMY 32:35 where the Lord notes: *To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence;*... and is again later quoted in Paul's future letter unto the HEBREWS, where he will write in HEBREWS 10:30 *For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord.* And again,

The Lord shall judge his people. This statement of Paul's in ACTS 23:3 God shall smite thee, thou whited wall... equates to ...Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Having Paul smitten on the mouth was a very dangerous thing for Ananias to do in the sight of God, for the Apostle Paul was really anointed of the Lord to be an Apostle. 2 CORINTHIANS 1:21 tells us: *Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.* David knew better to stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed. Sometime read 1 SAMUEL 24 and see how David had his chance to kill King Saul, but he didn't, *...And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.* {1 SAMUEL 24:6}. Read also 2 SAMUEL 1 and see how an Amalekite came and told David he had killed Saul. David mourned the death of Saul, and had the Amalekite killed saying in 2 SAMUEL 1:16 *...Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD'S anointed.*

History records that about five years after the time frame of ACTS 23 was the beginning of the war between the Jews and the Romans. This very same high priest Ananias was murdered by assassins in Jerusalem when robbers, called Sicarii, found Ananias hiding in a conduit of an aqueduct. Thus we see that Paul's statement *...God shall smite thee, thou whited wall...* was indeed prophecy.

Part two of Paul's statement in ACTS 23:3 states: *for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?* Unrighteous judgment is what we are seeing here. The following passage from LEVITICUS explains what Paul was talking about further. LEVITICUS 19:15 *Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.* 16 *Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.* 17 *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.* 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.* ...35 *Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure.*

Previously Jesus asks the following question in JOHN 7:51 *Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?* Then again in JOHN 18:19-23 we read the following discourse when Jesus was brought before the Jewish Sanhedrin council: *The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.* 20 *Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.* 21 *Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.* 22 *And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?* 23 *Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?* What we notice in the above scriptures is a pattern of the Jewish Sanhedrin council not following their own law, the law of Moses, whom they had set themselves over as administrators. *Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment...* LEVITICUS 19:15 & 35.

Paul's outburst didn't impress the council, for we read this in ACTS 23:4 *And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?* This is the only question asked by members of the Jewish Sanhedrin council of Paul, *...Revilest thou God's high priest?* Meaning "is that any way to talk to God's high priest?" PROVERBS 15:28 states: *The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.* The Apostle Paul was full of the Holy Ghost, and within seconds the Holy Ghost brought the correct words to use here to the mouth of the Apostle Paul. Later Paul would write in COLOSSIANS 4:6 *Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*

Paul's gracious response is found in ACTS 23:5 *Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.* This comes from EXODUS 22:28, which reads: *Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.* Notice that the Apostle Paul didn't further "bad mouth" the high priest, but did acknowledge with scripture not to speak evil of the ruler of the people. Notice here also that Paul did not acknowledge Ananias as his ruler, or as his

high priest, for Paul knew Jesus Christ was his High Priest, as we will see in the following discussion.

Let's consider for a moment the office of the high priest in the history of Israel. EXODUS 28 & 29 explain about the office of the priest's and high priest without really calling it such until LEVITICUS 21. Everything pertaining to the high priest's office pointed to Christ. Interestingly the Apostle Paul makes no mention of the high priest in his letters until he writes HEBREWS, where he rightfully points out again how everything pertaining to the high priest's office pointed to Christ. In HEBREWS Paul mentions "high priest" sixteen times, and the number sixteen references LOVE. God is love, and the epitome of God's love is found in Jesus Christ, whom God sent into the world because He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. {1 JOHN 4:10}. In HEBREWS 3:1 & 2 Paul writes: *Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; 2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.* Again in HEBREWS 4:15 Paul again writes of our High Priest Jesus Christ, and states: *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* Again in HEBREWS 6:20 Paul writes: *Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.* HEBREWS 9:11 & 12 gives yet another example of how Jesus Christ is our High Priest, stating: *But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; 12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

So back to ACTS 23:5 where Paul says: *...I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.* We see here that Paul was not acknowledging Ananias as the high priest, for Paul knew Jesus Christ was the One and true High Priest, but rather he was acknowledging Ananias as being a ruler of the Jews. It is suggested by Albert Barnes notes on the Bible that the Apostle Paul's meaning here was to state: "I do not regard or acknowledge him as the high priest, or address him as such, since that is not his true character. Had he been truly the high priest, even if he had thus been guilty of manifest injustice, I would not have used the language which I did. The office, if not the man, would have claimed respect. But as he is not truly and properly clothed with that office, and as he was guilty of manifest injustice, I did not believe that he was to be shielded in his injustice by the Law which commands me to show respect to the proper ruler of the people." Brother Copley adds this commentary. "The Apostle no longer recognized Ananias as the high priest, because his priesthood ended when Christ's priesthood began. Jesus Christ was the only real High Priest." (End of quoting Brother Copley.)

Remember there was a day back in ACTS 9:1 & 2 where Paul, then known as Saul of Tarsus, recognized the Jewish high priest as the authority in charge. 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.* During this current time frame of ACTS 23 when Paul is brought before the Jewish Sanhedrin council, there is still a debate going on whether or not Ananias was the rightful chief priest, or if he just assumed that office until another chief priest was appointed. In any case, the Apostle Paul still did not acknowledge Ananias as his chief priest.

Something changed in Paul's perception of this Jewish Sanhedrin council as he answered their question in ACTS 23:5. It appears from reading ACTS 23:6-9, which we will do shortly, that Paul got a clearer picture of the composition of this Jewish Sanhedrin council. ACTS 23:6-9 speaks of Sadducees, Scribes and Pharisees. Recall that ACTS 5:17 told us: *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,...* . Apparently Ananias was of the sect of the Sadducees, or at least was perceived by Paul to be a Sadducee, but at the same time Paul also perceived a number of Pharisees present in this assembly also. So Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, makes a simple statement that raises a dissension between the members of the Jewish Sanhedrin council.

ACTS 23:6 *But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. 7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. 9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.*

To help us better understand what took place here, let's review some facts, which Luke also explains here, that become an important part in understanding some New Testament scripture, especially when it comes to Scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees. Let's start with the Scribes, who sided with Paul in the above portion of scripture. The Scribes were copyists of the Old Testament scripture, a vocation of great importance before the days of printing. Because the Scribes copied the law of Moses, they were well aquatinted with the law of Moses, and became recognized as authorities of the law, and were even sometimes called "lawyers." The Scribes also taught the law, and were known as "the men of the great synagogue, the true successors of the prophets." Their aim was to write nothing of themselves, but to let the sacred word speak alone. If they were asked to interpret the law, they would only do so orally, never putting their interpretation to paper, or parchment. The Scribes were considered naturally qualified to teach in the Jewish Synagogues. The decisions of the leading Scribes became oral law or "tradition." The function of the Scribes regarding the Law of Moses was to teach it, develop it, and use it in connection with the Sanhedrin, and in various local courts. The Scribes were interpreters of the law, independent from the priest. The Scribes never held political power, but became leaders of the Jewish people. As lawyers, fees were paid to them for arbitration's, writing bills of divorcements, covenants of espousals, etc.

The Pharisees Paul was most familiar with, being raised a Pharisee himself. In ACTS 23:6 above Paul states: *...Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee...* . The word Pharisee comes from an Aramaic word "perushim" signifying to separate, owing to a different manner of life from that of the general common Jew. The Pharisees were a society of men zealous for religion, who were resolved fully not to eat any unclean thing, choosing rather to die, that they might not be defiled and profane the law of Moses. The Apostle Paul himself has gotten beyond his religious roots, realizing after being save the following facts. ROMANS 14:14 *I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.* 1 CORINTHIANS 6:12 *All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.* As for the Pharisees, they were strict legalists in that they stood for the rigid observance of the letter and forms of the law. The Pharisees were known for their covetousness, self-righteousness and hypocrisy. 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.

The Sadducees 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.* MATTHEW 22:23 and MARK 12:18 both verify the same thing, stating in part: *...the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection...* . 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. The Sadducees denied the following doctrines: the resurrection of the body; the immortality of the soul; the existence of spirits and angels; and divine predestination. They were a priestly

clique, but at the same time avowedly irreligious, and most certainly worldly minded. Because of their wealth, they, to a great extent, controlled the Sanhedrin. The Sadducees basically were a rotten bunch, and the high priest Ananias was a part of this group. Recall ACTS 5:17 tells us: *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,...* Obviously the Sadducees were still filled with indignation here in ACTS 23 when the Apostle Paul was brought before them.

With this background information in mind concerning the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees, let's read again our text. ACTS 23:6 *But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.* 7 *And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.* 8 *For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.* We see here that the main subject brought up here by the Apostle Paul concerned the resurrection, and the topic of the resurrection is a big one to discuss. And Paul has been down this road before, and was an expert in the subject of the resurrection, so let's review some thoughts concerning the resurrection.

The first sermon we have recorded of Paul's is in ACTS 13:16-41, which is a pattern of the sermons he preached when he first visited a city. Note how Paul preached the resurrection of Jesus in this sermon as we read ACTS 13:26-39. ACTS 13:26 *Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.* 27 *For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.* 28 *And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.* 29 *And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.* 30 *But God raised him from the dead:* 31 *And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.* 32 *And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,* 33 *God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again;* as it is also written in the second psalm, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* 34 *And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead,* now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, *I will give you the sure mercies of David.* 35 *Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* 36 *For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:* 37 *But he, whom God raised again,* saw no corruption. 38 *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.*

As we read the above portion from ACTS 13, note how Paul quoted from Old Testament scripture, yet we don't find the word "resurrection" until the New Testament. Not once is the word "resurrection" found in the Old Testament. However the concept of the resurrection from the dead is found in the Old Testament in several places. For example, did not Abraham himself believe in the resurrection from the dead when he was about to slay his son of promise, Isaac, in GENESIS 22? Sure he did. Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead in GENESIS 22, and would have slain him had not the angel of the Lord stopped him. The most touching, and far reaching part of that story to me is when Abraham told Isaac in GENESIS 22:8 *...My son, God will provide himself a lamb,...* and that Lamb God provided for me, and you, was the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ Himself, who was slain on the altar of Calvary, and raised to live again on the third day, and is become the firstfruits of the dead. {See 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20}. God counted the faith of Abraham for righteousness because he believed God, and in the process he became the father of the faithful. {Study ROMANS 4}. Brother Hill noted that the book of JOB was probably the oldest book of the Old Testament. Job himself believed in the resurrection of the dead, and wrote in JOB 19:23 - 27: *Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! 24 That they were graven with an iron pen*

and lead in the rock for ever! 25 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: 26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: 27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. PSALMS 16 is a prayer of David's, and in verse 10 we read: For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. This was the scripture referenced in JOHN 20:9 after Jesus resurrection, which states: For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Fifty days later Peter preaches his first sermon, and quotes PSALMS 16:10, which we can read in ACTS 2:27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. The Apostle Paul quoted PSALMS 16:10 in his sermon mentioned above to those of Antioch in Pisidia, stating in ACTS 13:35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. So we note that the subject of the resurrection from the dead is taught in the Old Testament, and the Scribes, and Pharisees believed in the resurrection even though the Sadducees did not.

Recall also back in ACTS 17 when Paul first came to Athens, Greece that we read in ACTS 17:18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. So they took Paul up to Mars hill where he preached unto them an impromptu sermon, which ended with these words recorded for us in ACTS 17:30 & 31 -- And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Of course Paul was preaching unto them about Jesus, ...the first fruits of them that slept.... 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20.

The 15th chapter of 1 CORINTHIANS is known to us the resurrection chapter, which was written after Paul's visit to Athens. Let's go to 1 CORINTHIANS 15, and read a few verses concerning the resurrection, and as we do keep in mind that the Apostle Paul himself never had a problem with the concept of the resurrection, especially since he first saw our resurrected Saviour Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. After many years of following Jesus Christ, and the leading of the Holy Ghost, the Apostle Paul wrote in PHILIPPIANS 3:10 & 11 -- That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Here is some of what Paul wrote back in 1 CORINTHIANS 15. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. 8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. 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. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 11 Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. 12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. 20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be

made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Paul wrote many more things concerning the resurrection, which you can review on your own, but for now just keep in mind that the Apostle Paul was an expert on the subject of the resurrection, and in ACTS 23 the unbelieving Sadducees were no match for him on this topic. Jesus Himself had an episode with the Sadducees concerning the resurrection, where they brought up the subject to Him. Keep in mind as we review this in MATTHEW 22 that the...*Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit...* ACTS 23:8. In MATTHEW 22 the Sadducees asked Jesus 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, where LUKE 20 tells that afterwards they didn't ask Him any more questions.

Back to ACTS 23 we find that the Jewish Sanhedrin council didn't ask Paul any further questions either, nor did Paul make any more statements unto them. However the same subject of the resurrection came up twice again when Paul appeared before the governor Felix in ACTS 24, and when Paul was brought before King Agrippa in ACTS 26. In ACTS 24 Paul said to governor Felix before members of the Sanhedrin council: 20 *Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, 21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.* Before King Agrippa in ACTS 26 Paul said: 22 *Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: 23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.*

ACTS 23:9 *And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.* In ACTS 5:39 we found Gamaliel encouraging the Jewish Sanhedrin council not to fight against God, and apparently some of Gamaliels' students were now a part of this same council that Paul was before who now were stating: *...We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.* Notice also the verdict that the Scribes gave Paul: *We find no evil in this man:...* . This verdict, along with Paul's questioning them about the resurrection caused the following reaction found in ACTS 23:10.

ACTS 23:10 *And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.* There arose a great dissension among the members of the Jewish Sanhedrin Council, and for the third time in two days Paul was about to be pulled in pieces by conflicting parties. Once again Claudius Lysias comes to Paul's rescue, still not sure who he is, or what he has done. And we see here that the Roman soldiers had *...to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.* The castle is Fort Antonia, which is the place where the Roman soldiers were headquartered.