

Paul before King Agrippa

ACTS 26:1 *Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself.* We have already discussed that the Apostle Paul knew he would get to speak before kings (ACTS 9:15), and this was his opportunity. No doubt Paul here would speak Greek, the same language he addressed the chief Roman captain in ACTS 21:37. What we don't get a clear picture of here is the tone in which Agrippa spoke to Paul. Was king Agrippa using a condescending tone when he addressed Paul, or did he address Paul with courtesy? Our scripture text doesn't say one way or the other. On the other hand, we know that the Apostle Paul was well prepared to answer king Agrippa. We reference once again COLOSSIANS 4:6 that Paul would later write: *Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.* On top of that the Apostle Paul had the inspiration of the Holy Ghost to guide him, and give him peace in this situation, not to mention the Holy Spirit inspired words to say. We also previously noted that Paul wrote in 1 CORINTHIANS 2:4 *And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:...* . There is no reason to think that any thing would be different in Paul's giving his testimony, and thus preaching before king Agrippa. Furthermore the Apostle Paul would have had years to think about the time he would get to appear before a king, and no doubt he recalled what he had read in PROVERBS 15:28 *The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.* Paul here would rely upon the Holy Ghost to give him the gracious words to speak before this assembly, and king Agrippa. Later the Apostle Paul would write some words of advice in COLOSSIANS 4, which, no doubt, were words he had often used to encourage his prison visitors. COLOSSIANS 4:2 *Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; 3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: 4 That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

This brings up an interesting point or two to consider before we get into the text of Paul speech before king Agrippa. We noted above how that the Apostle Paul knew from the day he met Ananias of Damascus that he would one day bear the name of the Lord Jesus before kings, and also suffer many things for Jesus names sake. One of the sufferings appointed the Apostle Paul was being placed in bonds, and we have previously noted how that Paul would be held prisoner most of the rest of his life after being arrested in Jerusalem back in ACTS 21. Paul himself had even told his followers in ACTS 20:23 of the fact *...that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.* The point here being, the Apostle Paul knew that part of his suffering with Christ was to be as a prisoner, kept in bonds. Thus he requested prayer for himself *...that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak...* as noted in COLOSSIANS 4:2 above. As a prisoner in bonds Paul wrote the Ephesian saints, requesting them in EPHESIANS 6:18-20 to be *...Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.* So once again we see that the Apostle Paul knew he would be an ambassador for Jesus Christ, and he knew he would be an ambassador in bonds for Jesus Christ, however he probably didn't realize that he would make his first appearance before a king while also in bonds. Never the less Paul later wrote this word of encouragement unto the saints of Ephesus in EPHESIANS 4:1, stating: *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,...* . Paul knew he was called to be an Apostle; knew that he was appointed afflictions, and bonds; knew that he would appear before kings to bear the name of Jesus; and knew he was to walk worthy of the vocation where with he was called. Again we note that Paul also had already written this in 1 THESSALONIANS 5:18 *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

So knowing all of this, let's consider things here from the Lord's perspective. Who was the prisoner here as Paul appeared before king Agrippa? From all outside appearances, Paul was the man in bonds here. Yet imagine Paul here viewing this scene from the Lord's perspective, and seeing king Agrippa, and this whole assembly as prisoners of sin! Paul here was in bonds, true, but he was free from sin, and king Agrippa, and those unsaved present in this assembly, were slaves of sin, in other words, in bondage to sin. Thus from the true perspective of the Lord, king Agrippa, and those unsaved at this gathering were really the ones in bonds here.

Jesus Christ set Paul free from the bonds of sin on the road to Damascus. Jesus said: *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed...* JOHN 8:36. The very second a soul asks Jesus into their heart, they are set free from their bonds of sin, and given the gift of eternal life. ROMANS 6:23 explains it like this: *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* ROMANS 8:1 & 2 tells us: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,... 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.* The very second Paul asked Jesus into his heart, the Lord took the man who called himself the chiefest of sinners, and set him on the path that would make him *...not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.* {Study 2 CORINTHIANS 11:5 and 1 TIMOTHY 1:15}. In other words, (paraphrasing from 1 SAMUEL 2:8, ACTS 20:32, and ROMANS 8:21), the Lord took Paul from the dust of the gutter of sin, lifted him up, set him free from sin, delivered him from the bondage of corruption, and placed him on a path that would give him an inheritance among all them which are sanctified in Christ Jesus, even the throne of glory, for according to Jesus words in REVELATION 21:7 *He that overcometh shall inherit all things;...!*

Having then been set free from the bonds of sin, Paul then, according to ACTS 9:6 and ACTS 22:10, asked the Lord, *...Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* With this statement Paul was really requesting to become the Lord Jesus Christ's bond servant! The law of a Hebrew bond servant is explained in EXODUS 21:1-6. There we find the law of a Hebrew master, and a Hebrew servant. If the Hebrew servant plainly stated to the Hebrew master that "I love my master; ...I will not go out free," *Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever....* EXODUS 21:6. Paul clearly gave his ear to the voice of the Master when he said *...Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* In other words Paul was responding to Jesus like the Hebrew servant in EXODUS 21. His heart was crying out "Lord you have my undivided attention, I have an ear to hear what you have to say, I will serve you forever, *...Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" We will find here in ACTS 26:16-18 The Hebrew Master's one sentence answer to Paul's question: *But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

The Hebrew Master, who is Jesus Christ Himself, The Word of God, spoke a Masterpiece in this one sentence. In this one sentence we find Paul given instructions that would take him through every day for the rest of his life. In this one sentence we find Paul made a minister and a witness for Jesus Christ. In this one sentence we find Paul anointed an Apostle! In this one sentence we find Paul is now wanted of the Jews! In this one sentence we find Paul also wanted of the Gentiles. In this one sentence we find Paul delivering others from darkness unto light; opening blind eyes that they may see. In this one sentence we find Paul learning of an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus! In this one sentence we find Paul a changed man forever. In this one sentence we find Paul being taken from the gutter most, to the utter most (as Brother Hill used to like to say). In this one sentence we find The Master giving instruction to His newest bond servant, and Paul gladly followed his Master's leading for the rest of his life!

One example of Paul calling himself a bond servant of Jesus Christ is found in ROMANS 1:1, where he writes: *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle,*

separated unto the gospel of God,... . Look up the word “servant” used here, and find it to be number 1401 in The Strong’s Greek Concordance, *doulos* {doo'-los}, which according to Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, means: that Paul had formerly been a bond slave of Satan, and that, having been bought by the precious shed blood of Jesus Christ, he was now a willing slave, bound to his new Master. PHILIPPIANS 2:13 comes to mind: *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* The same word Greek word “*doulos*” is used 127 times in New Testament scripture, and is found translated six times as “servants” in the following portion of ROMANS 6. ROMANS 6:17 *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. 19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. 20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. 21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. 22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. 23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Now back to our original question: Who was the prisoner here as Paul appeared before king Agrippa? Obviously from all outward appearances it was Paul who was in bonds here. But what men couldn’t see here was the fact that Paul was appearing before them as the bond servant of Jesus Christ. Nor could they yet see themselves as servants unto sin, in bondage to sin. Thus from the true perspective of the Lord, king Agrippa, and those unsaved at this gathering were really the ones in bonds here, as we noted above.

With this perspective in mind, let’s move on here in ACTS 26. ACTS 26:1 *Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: 2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: 3 Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.*

As we examine these verses notice that “...Paul stretched forth the hand.” Paul was not trying to add to the drama here by stretching forth his hand, but rather this was one of his mannerisms we have seen before in our studies of Paul’s life. In ACTS 13:16 we noted that *...Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand...* . Again in ACTS 21:40 we see that *...Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people.* Here in ACTS 26:1 by stretching forth his hand, Paul was engaging the attention of his hearers as well as expressing his own earnestness, and requesting silence from the listeners.

Consider the hand for a moment. It has been noted that the hand is a symbol of skill, energy, power and action, so to be in the hand of any one is to be in his power. The most powerful hands ever imagined created the heavens and the earth! GENESIS 1:1 tells us: *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* JOHN 1:1-3 further expounds: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.* JOHN 1:14 further explains that *...the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,...* . Paul in COLOSSIANS 1 continues explaining about the creative hands of the Master, stating: *16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.* On the cross of Calvary these most powerful creative hands of Jesus extended in the greatest action of love ever expressed to man as He took upon Himself the sins of all mankind! PHILIPPIANS 2:8 tells: *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* Yes Jesus stretched forth His hands on the cross of Calvary as He, who knew no sin, became sin for us,...*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And*

having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it... ..that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.... (COLOSSIANS 2:14 & 15, and 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21). What a manifestation of His mighty power!!! JOHN 17:1-3 reveals some more of His Mighty power, stating: *These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* What endless power we find in the hands of Jesus, for in His hands is forgiveness of sins, power over disease, power over the grave, power over death, power over Satan, and power over all defeating obstacles, including Red Seas, and flooding Jordan's! Thank God for the mighty hand of Jesus, whose hand by faith we hold as He leads us through life's journey. The phrase "mighty hand" is found in seventeen scriptures, always referencing the "mighty hand" of the Lord. Seventeen is the number having to do with VICTORY IN CHRIST JESUS.

Back here in ACTS 26:1 the Apostle Paul had VICTORY IN CHRIST JESUS as he stretched forth his hand in a beckoning gesture toward king Agrippa. As "...Paul stretched forth the hand..." perhaps the words of PROVERBS 21:1 came to his mind: *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.* It is also possible here that the Apostle Paul may have been chained by hand to the centurion in charge of him. But Paul wasn't really in the power of the centurion's hand, rather Paul's hand was really holding the Lord's hand, the strongest hand anyone could ever symbolically hold, as we noted above. Enoch walked with God, figuratively hand in hand, and God one day, having the strong upper hand, just pulled Enoch up to Him in a swift act of translation. All full overcomers walk hand in hand with God, figuratively speaking, totally relying on His Almighty strong creative hand to guide and direct their fore ordained paths. PROVERBS 3:6 tells us: *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

JAMES 5:17 tells us this concerning Elijah: *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.* The account of this is found in 1 KINGS 17 & 18. 1 KINGS 17:1 *And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.* Elijah could only state this because he walked hand in hand with the Lord. 1 KINGS 18:1 records: *And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.* By this time the brooks had dried up, and there was a great famine in the land. Many other events also took place in 1 KINGS 18 before it rained, and Elijah believed the word of the Lord that it would again rain, and sent his servant out seven times to look and see if he could see the rain coming. 1 KINGS 18:44 & 45 tells us: *And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. 45 And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain.*

We read this of the children of Israel in EXODUS 13:14 *By strength of hand* the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage. (A similar statement is also made in EXODUS 13:3 and 16). In JEREMIAH 31:10 we read this prophecy: *Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. 11 For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.* HEBREWS 8:8 *...Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they*

shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

The point we need to see here is that the hand of the Lord is an Almighty hand, which can not only guide and direct individual believers, but also has in the past, and will in the future, guide and direct the nation Israel! For the present, we as individuals, and Israel as a nation better realize the truth of REVELATION 1:3 *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

Nor is there a safer hand to be kept in than in hand of the Lord! JOHN 10:27 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and my Father are one.*

Back to the Apostle Paul. The Lord used the yielded hands of Paul to achieve mighty eternal results. For example, we read back in ACTS 19:11 & 12: *And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: 12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.* Prior to that we found back in ACTS 14:3 how that Paul and Barnabas spoke *...boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.* Again in ACTS 19:1-7 when the Apostle Paul returned to Ephesus, he came upon about a dozen disciples, whom he asked: *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* After learning that they didn't know what he was talking about, and after explaining the gift of the Holy Ghost to them, we find this statement in ACTS 19:6 *And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.* (Did you ever wonder who these men were, and what became of them? God knows. Perhaps a couple of them were named Tychicus and Trophimus who later were Paul's traveling companions, and even his right hand men. {Study ACTS 20:4; 21:29; EPHESIANS 6:21 & 24; COLOSSIANS 4:7 & 18; 2 TIMOTHY 4:12 & 20; and TITUS 3:12}.) Part of the mighty eternal results achieved by the hand of Paul as he walked hand in hand with the Lord are still on going, for he wrote and signed with his own hand fourteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament! At the time he penned these letters and epistles Paul had no idea how the Lord would magnify what he wrote, nor that his words would be studied for centuries by those who read the New Testament of the Bible. {Study 1 CORINTHIANS 16:21; GALATIANS 6:11; COLOSSIANS 4:18; and PHILEMON 1:19 to see how Paul added his personal touch to his epistles.}

On last thought concerning the hand before we move on. How many digits are on one hand? Five. Five is the number of GRACE. May we remember the grace of God every time we look at one of our hands. None of the gospel writers wrote more about grace, and the grace of God than the Apostle Paul. Perhaps he too was reminded of the grace of God every time he stretched forth his hand, whether in speech, or in prayer. 1 TIMOTHY 2:8 *I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*

ACTS 26:1 *Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:...* . The Greek word translated "answered" as used here means to make a defence for oneself. In PHILIPPIANS 1:17 Paul writes: *...I am set for the defence of the gospel.* So we see that the Apostle Paul was here really answering for himself in defence of the gospel, which the Lord Jesus Christ Himself gave Paul to preach. We will see in ACTS 26:16 that when the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus, He told him that *...I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;..* . In other words, Paul's appointment by Jesus to be an Apostle meant that he was given Jesus Christ's gospel to defend, and preach, and answer for himself the rest of his life. As we go through Paul defence speech here in ACTS 26 note that Paul makes no apology for going about his appointed business of an Apostle, nor does he ask for the charges against him to be dropped, nor does he beg to be released. So even the Greek word *apologeomai* {ap-ol-og-eh'-om-ahee} (number 626 in the Strong's Greek Concordance) which is translated "answered" here in ACTS 26:1, does not mean that Paul in any way,

shape or form was making an apology for doing the Lord's business, which Paul was anointed, and appointed to do by Jesus Himself on the road to Damascus. Thus Paul continues: *...I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently....* ACTS 26:2 & 3.

When Paul states *...I think myself happy, king Agrippa...* he doesn't mean that he is ecstatic over being held prisoner, but rather Paul is stating that he considered himself blessed and privileged to be permitted to make his defence before a king who has extensive knowledge of the Jewish laws and customs and opinions, which the judges before him were not as familiar with. Paul couldn't have this happy blessed attitude that he expressed on the outside, if he didn't have this same grateful heart attitude on the inside, and the only One who could bless Paul with this kind of attitude is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. These inward blessings are expressed by a different Greek word eulogia {yoo-log-ee'-ah} number 2129 in The Strong's Greek Concordance used in *EPHESIANS 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ...* showing a giving of thanks to God for the spiritual benefits bestowed by believing in Jesus Christ! The kind of things Paul daily focused upon is also expressed in *PHILIPPIANS 4:8*, which reads: *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* Note that the word "things" is found seven times in this verse, showing us what kind of heart attitude is manifest in those who are letting the Lord work in their lives SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, and SPIRITUAL COMPLETION in those daily "things" He blesses us with.

With such a heavenly upward focus, "all the things" of this world that Paul was accused by the Jews of doing take on a far less insignificance. *ACTS 26:2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: 3 Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.* "All the things" that Paul was referencing to king Agrippa here were the very same things that Paul knew king Agrippa *...to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews.* In *1 CORINTHIANS 10:15* Paul wrote: *I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say...* and that is just exactly the same request that Paul was making unto king Agrippa when he requested above: *I beseech thee to hear me patiently...* ACTS 26:3. What a kind request Paul here made to king Agrippa, and this is a perfect example of what he wrote about in *1 CORINTHIANS 13:4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind...* . Only a heart full of the love of God can manifest such loving kindness.

The Greek adverb translated "patiently" here is only found used this one time in scripture, and comes from two root words that really breaks down it's meaning to passionate endurance, which thought really gives us a the correct view of Paul's life's testimony; a life of passionate endurance as he learned more Jesus Christ; a life of passionate endurance as he daily waited on the Lord to guide and direct his footsteps; a life of passionate endurance as he waited for the soon coming again of Jesus! {See word 3116 (makrothumos {mak-roth-oo-moce'}) in the Strong's Greek Concordance.} Paul later expressed a similar thought when he wrote in *HEBREWS 12:1* for the race course runner to *...run with patience the race that is set before us...* . Verses 4 through 23 of ACTS 26 then give Paul's life testimony in his own words, uninterrupted, which reveal some new information not covered in previous testimony records of Paul's life.

Here is Conybeare's translation of verses 4-23. *ACTS 26:4 My life and conduct from my youth, as it was at first among my own nation at Jerusalem, is known to all the Jews. 5 They know me of old (I say) from the beginning, and can testify (if they would) that, following the strictest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee. 6 And now I stand here to be judged, for the hope of the promise made by God unto our fathers. 7 Which promise is the end whereto, in all their zealous*

worship, night and day, our twelve tribes hope to come. Yet this hope, O King Agrippa, is charged against me as a crime, and that by Jews. 8 What! is it judged among you a thing incredible that God should raise the dead? 9 Now I myself determined, in my own mind, that I ought exceedingly to oppose the name of Jesus the Nazarene. 10 And this I did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I myself shut up in prison, having received from the chief priests authority so to do; and when they were condemned to death, I gave my vote against them. 11 And in every synagogue I continually punished them, and endeavored to compel them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I went even to foreign cities to persecute them. 12 With this purpose I was on my road to Damascus, bearing my authority and commission from the chief priests, 13 when I saw in the way, O King, at midday a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and those who journeyed with me. 14 And when we all were fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking to me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the goad.* 15 And I said, *Who art thou, Lord?* And the Lord said, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* 16 *But rise and stand upon thy feet; for to this end I have appeared unto thee, to ordain thee a minister and a witness both of those things which thou hast seen, and of those things wherein I shall appear unto thee.* 17 *And thee have I chosen from the house of Israel, and from among the Gentiles; unto whom now I send thee,* 18 *to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among the sanctified, by faith in me.* 19 Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. 20 But first to those at Damascus and Jerusalem, and throughout all the land of Judaea, and also to the Gentiles, I proclaimed the tidings that they should repent and turn to God, and do works worthy of their repentance. 21 For these causes the Jews, when they caught me in the Temple, endeavored to kill me. 22 Therefore, through the succour which I have received from God, I stand firm unto this day, and bear my testimony both to small and great; but I declare nothing else than what the Prophets and Moses foretold, 23 That the Messiah should suffer, and that He should be the first to rise from the dead, and should be the messenger of light to the house of Israel, and also to the Gentiles.

This then is the testimony of Paul's life, from his own mouth, as told to king Agrippa. It was simple. It was short. Yet it concisely covered the highlights of Paul's life from his youth until this present day when he appeared before king Agrippa. Paul's witness before king Agrippa included precise instructions that he had been given of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom Paul verified was indeed alive! So we see that Paul's testimony was about what the Lord Jesus Christ had done, and was doing in Paul's own life.

A testimony by definition is to be a witness, to bear witness, or to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something, or that he knows it because he was taught by divine revelation or inspiration. A good testimony (like we just read above) reflects what Jesus has done, or is doing in someone's life. And hopefully Jesus is the center point around which such a life is focused upon, thus the work Jesus is doing becomes the focal point of their testimony. Paul's testimony above did just that; told what the Lord Jesus Christ had done in his life from the point before he was even saved, up until the present day! Perhaps the best sermon many have ever heard was a personal testimony of what Jesus had done in that person's life! In our Testimonies Sunday School studies we noted that if our life reflects Jesus, as it should, then our life is a living testimony that can greatly benefit others as they observe us. With out a doubt Paul's life became a living testimony to us of what the Lord Jesus Christ can do in such a yielded vessel. In ACTS 22:10 Paul asked Jesus on the road to Damascus "*What shall I do Lord?*" Jesus answered him with the kind words recorded in ACTS 26:16-18 above, essentially telling Paul that he would be a testimony for Jesus Christ every where he went. What Paul

couldn't realize at that point in his life was that his testimony would reach down to even us today! That is why we study the life of Paul, which encompasses much of New Testament scripture. What a testimony Paul left for us to study, and the center of Paul's testimony was Jesus Christ. So Paul wrote in 1 CORINTHIANS 4:16 *Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.* He added in 1 CORINTHIANS 11:1 *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

Paul later wrote Timothy a testimony of his life, which Timothy would remember having witnessed all of what Paul wrote about. We read this short testimony in 2 TIMOTHY 3:10 *But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, 11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

Another testimony of Paul's was written unto the saints at Philippi 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. 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 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. 12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. 16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. 17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*

Let's examine Paul's testimony a little closer. ACTS 26:4 *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.* Paul addresses his "manner of life" as having been raised a "Pharisee," and this information would have been very meaningful to king Agrippa, who also would have been very familiar with the Pharisee's, their conduct, and their status among the Jews. In addressing the Sanhedrin council back in ACTS 23:6 Paul notes that he was "the son of a Pharisee," showing that he had been raised a Pharisee all of his life. The word Pharisee comes from an Aramaic word meaning "separated." This means that the Pharisee's chose a "manner of life" different from the general Jewish public. The Pharisee was looked upon by the general Jewish public in high regard, because they stood for the strict rigid observances of the letter and forms of the law of Moses, and lived a separated life style, which they felt put them on a higher plane than everyone else. Josephus notes that there were a little more than 6000 Pharisee's. Paul grew up in this separated life style, which he noted above, stating to king Agrippa: *My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; 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" in verse 5, which is really only one word in the Greek. It is used only this one time in scripture, meaning 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 smallest 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*. Even beyond that Paul lived after the strictest sect of even the Pharisee's, being the son of a Pharisee, who made sure that Paul closely followed this way of life. What this tells us is that he was trained from childhood to live a well disciplined life. So intent was Paul's Pharisee father of seeing to it that Paul achieved the highest heights of a Pharisee, that Paul's father sent him to Gamaliel in Jerusalem. 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. Paul himself may have been in training at the feet of Gamaliel to be a future Rabban, or Doctor of the law (of Moses). In ACTS 22:3 Paul told the Jews in Jerusalem that he was *...brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers,...*. 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. 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.

We have now defined Paul's "manner of life" referenced here in ACTS 26:4 as being that of a Pharisee. Think about where this "manner of life" Paul lived as a Pharisee took him. This Pharisee "manner of life" gave Paul prestige; gave him a title of leadership at a young age; set him upon a worldly pedestal; and led him down the road which he thought would take him on the fast track to worldly success. His Pharisee father couldn't have been more pleased. Paul's "manner of life" as a Pharisee was apparently trial free. Paul got to do what he wanted to do, which was to go after those Jews who didn't believe in following the law of Moses like he did. Those who claimed Jesus Christ as their Saviour were to be persecuted is the course Paul's "manner of life" had brought him to. Scripture records that Paul was consenting unto Stephen's death, and that he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison, and breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord... ACTS 8:1-3, and 9:1. Paul's "manner of life" as a Pharisee gave him this kind of worldly success, which he was earnestly seeking. Paul's "manner of life" as a Pharisee also left his legal minded conscience troubled, a fact that Paul will relate to king Agrippa in 26:14, where he notes how hard it was for him to go against the pricking voices of testimony of Jesus Christ that his victims were proclaiming to him as he persecuted them. Perhaps Paul later wrote about some of these victims of his pursuit when his "manner of life" as a Pharisee had him persecuting Christians. Note what Paul wrote in HEBREWS 11 about those worthies of faith who *...out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight,...* who *...were tortured, not accepting deliverance;...* *...And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:...* See HEBREWS 11:34-40. Yes, Paul's "manner of life" as a Pharisee gave him first hand experience with such worthies of faith, like Stephen, whose lives for Jesus Christ were living testimonies to him, and his empty unfulfilling "manner of life." Paul himself went on to write in GALATIANS 1:13 where this "manner of life" led him. GALATIANS 1:13 *For ye have heard of my conversation (manner of life) in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:...*. This "manner of life" Paul lived as a Pharisee led him down a path that gave him another title, which Paul wrote about in 1 TIMOTHY 1:13-15, there calling himself the chiefest of sinners, because he *...persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:...*. 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.* In 1 CORINTHIANS 15:9 Paul wrote: *For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

Paul's "manner of life" changed on the road to Damascus when he got saved. He was still a Pharisee after getting saved, and was still trained by Gamaliel, but he could no longer live the Pharisee "manner of life." If you take the time to look up all the Greek words that translate here in ACTS 26:4 "manner of life," you will see that Paul really

meant his former "manner of life," because when he got saved his "manner of life" changed as we noted above. Later Paul wrote to Timothy about his new-after-being-saved "manner of life" in his final epistle, which we also referenced earlier. {See page 860 of these notes.} 2 TIMOTHY 3:10 *But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, 11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.* Different Greek words are used in this text to define Paul's new "manner of life," meaning: a new way, a new course of life, a new discipline, a new way of conducting his life. His old "manner of life" and as an unsaved Pharisee left him *...dead in trespasses and sins...* (EPHESIANS 2:1). His new "manner of life" as a saved Pharisee made him alive; quickened together with Christ Jesus, having been forgiven all his trespasses... (see COLOSSIANS 2:13). 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* This is why the Apostle Paul was able to write what he did in GALATIANS 2:20 *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* This was Paul's new "manner of life," which we have been studying about because Paul instructed us to *...Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ...* 1 CORINTHIANS 11:1.

The difference between Paul's former "manner of life" as an unsaved Pharisee, and his new "manner of life" as an ambassador for Jesus Christ was Paul's testimony to king Agrippa. In verses 6 & 7 Paul introduces Jesus Christ to king Agrippa, calling Christ "the hope of the promise made of God," and "which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come." This is how ACTS 26:6 & 7 reads: *And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: 7 Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.* Here we see Jesus is both the promise, and the hope that Paul was referencing. Let's track some scriptural history on this promised Christ, the Lord, the hope of Israel, the fountain of living waters reference in JEREMIAH 17:13.

Jesus Christ revealed Himself to the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, showing Himself to this well trained Pharisee, that He was indeed *...the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers.* In his pattern sermon preached to those of Antioch in Pisidia back in ACTS 13, Paul spoke these words: ACTS 13:22 *...he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. 23 Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus.* Paul here was emphasizing that God wanted to establish His kingdom upon Israel forever, and He wanted to do this through the line of a king of Israel, a king who was a man after God's own heart. This king was David. Through the lineage of David the hope, and the promise of Israel came, and His name is JESUS, (study MATTHEW 1:25).

In 2 SAMUEL 7 Nathan was the prophet of the Lord, to whom the Lord gave the following words to say. 2 SAMUEL 7:8 *Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, (habitation, abode of shepherds or flocks, pasture), from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: 9 And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. 10 Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, 11 And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. 12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the*

children of men: 15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. 16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever. 17 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David. Verses 8 through 17 above are also known as the Davidic Covenant. The word "covenant" as we need to think of it here means an sovereign alliance between God and man; in other words a promise of God to man. Again ACTS 13:23 states: *Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus.* It was commonly known among the Jews that out of the seed of David Christ would come, and JOHN 7:42 states it like this: *Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?*

One of the problems that Paul, and all of the Apostles had with the unbelieving Jews, was that they didn't believe Jesus was the promised Messiah, the hope of Israel whom Paul was now introducing, and beginning to explain about unto king Agrippa. If the Jews as a whole thought Jesus was the promised Messiah, would they have crucified him? No. JOHN 1:10 & 11 explains: *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.* Here we see that the world knew Him not, and the Jews received Him not. Jesus all through His ministry knew that the majority of the Jews didn't believe He was the One spoken of in ISAIAH 9:6 whose name shall be called:Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

When Jesus preached unto those Jews in the synagogue of Nazareth where He grew up, He quoted from ISAIAH 61:1 & 2, and informed the hearers that He was indeed their promised Messiah. It is recorded like this for us in LUKE 4. LUKE 4:16 *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. 17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. 20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. 22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? Did they believe Jesus was their Saviour? No, for in LUKE 4:28-30 we read how this sermon of Jesus ended: *And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. 30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way,...* . Thus we see that those Jews in Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, did not see Him as their promised Messiah, and the hope of Israel.*

Later in LUKE 9 we read this account: 18 *And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? 19 They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again. 20 He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. 21 And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing; 22 Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.* Here we see Jesus disciples did acknowledge that He was Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Still later in His ministry, after the Pharisees, and the Sadducees tried to entrap Jesus in His talk, but were unsuccessful, we find this discourse in MATTHEW 22. MATTHEW 22:41 *While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. 43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, 44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? 45*

If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? 46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions. Here we that these Jewish leaders didn't acknowledge that Jesus was their promised Messiah.

Then in MATTHEW 23 Jesus points out to the Jews a pattern of unbelief that had continued from generation unto generation. How that they had been sent over the centuries prophets, wise men and scribes, all who proclaimed the word of God in one fashion or another, and all were persecuted, and some were even killed and crucified. MATTHEW 23:34 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! They still didn't acknowledge Jesus to be The Christ of God, as Peter did back in LUKE 9:20.

Then after Lazarus was raised from the dead in JOHN 11, we read this account of the unbelieving Jews against Jesus. JOHN 11:46 But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. 47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. 48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. 49 And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, 50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. 51 And this spake he not of himself; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; 52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. 53 Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

While Jesus was on the cross we read this account in MATTHEW 27 on how the unbelieving reviled him. MATTHEW 27:39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, 40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. 41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, 42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. 43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. Then from noon until three in the afternoon there was darkness in the land. Surly the unbelieving must have known that this was Jesus Christ their Messiah whom they crucified, but they still didn't acknowledge Him as their Saviour. With a question of doubt in their mind on whether they were correct in thinking that Jesus wasn't their Messiah, the chief priests, and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, and made this statement unto Pilate starting in MATTHEW 27:63 ...Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. 64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. 65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. 66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

Of course we all know that after three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (MATTHEW 12:40), Jesus did rise again as He said He would. Here in MATTHEW 27:52 & 53 we read: And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. One has to wonder how many of those unbelievers who mocked Jesus saw a resurrected saint during this time after Jesus resurrection. Still the unbelieving Jews didn't believe that Jesus was their promised Messiah, nor the hope of salvation for Israel.

Part of the reason many Jews still didn't believe that Jesus was their promised Messiah, nor the hope of salvation for Israel, was because of a lie perpetrated by the

Jewish Sanhedrin that is recorded in MATTHEW 28. In MATTHEW 28:1-10 we find Jesus is risen from the dead as He said, and having Himself appeared unto Mary Magdalene, some other women, and some of His disciples. In MATTHEW 28:11 we read of some of the Roman watch, which we saw put in place by Pilate in MATTHEW 27:65 above, reporting to the chief priests of the resurrection of Jesus. MATTHEW 28:11-15 records more of why many Jews still didn't believe that Jesus was their promised Messiah, nor the hope of salvation for Israel: 11 ...some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. 12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, 13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. 14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. 15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

During the next forty days our resurrected Lord and Saviour Jesus made several more appearances, some of which the Apostle Paul recorded for us in 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-7. 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. Then in ACTS 1 we get another accounting of those who witnessed seeing our resurrected Saviour during this time frame. ACTS 1:3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: 4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. ...8 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. 9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. 12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. 15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)...

One of the things we observe as we review the above passages of scripture is that up until this point in time there still wasn't all that many Jews who believed that Jesus was ...the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers... that Paul was bringing to King Agrippa's attention in ACTS 26:6. We see in the above passages that Jesus appeared unto more than five hundred brethren at one time after His resurrection, but only a hundred and twenty tarried in Jerusalem until the day of Pentecost. Such few close followers after three plus years ministering all over that part of the country!

The Apostle John made mention in his gospel record noting some of these very same things, of how Jesus came into this world ...the hope of the promise made of God... yet not received by the majority. We read again in JOHN 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Later in JOHN 20, the Apostle John concludes: 29 ...blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. 30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which

are not written in this book: 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. John then writes one more chapter and gives his final conclusion on what he was able to write in his gospel record, stating: JOHN 21:24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. 25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

So we move forward to the day of Pentecost noting that the majority of the Jews still didn't believe that Jesus was their promised Messiah, nor the hope of salvation for Israel, thus on the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost inspired the Apostle Peter to make the following statement. 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. 25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: 26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: 27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. 29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; 31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool. 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Scripture goes on to record in ACTS 2 how that same day was added to the ranks of believers about three thousand souls, and after that daily there was added such as should be saved, all having now acknowledged that Jesus Christ was indeed their hope, and promised salvation.

Still the majority of the Jews, and all of the Jewish Sanhedrin council remained steadfast in their resolve against Jesus Christ, or hearing any more about Him. ACTS chapters 3 through 8 expounds upon the ministry of Peter and John, and the rest of the Apostles, and on how they won thousands for Christ, while being strongly opposed by the Jewish Sanhedrin.

After the lame man was healed in ACTS 3, Peter full of the Holy Ghost preached his second sermon, further explaining that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and the hope of Israel, spoken of throughout their Old Testament scriptures. The text of this sermon is found in ACTS 3:13-26, where Peter covers these topics. ACTS 3:13 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. About five thousand more got saved that day, (ACTS 4:4).

Of course when the Jewish Sanhedrin council heard that Jesus Christ was being preached, and through Jesus the resurrection from the dead, they arrested Peter and John, and ACTS 4 records this event in the following fashion. ACTS 4:5 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.

By the time frame of ACTS 5 thousands of Jews had become believers in Jesus Christ, all having acknowledged that Jesus Christ was indeed the promised Messiah, and the hope of Israel, spoken of throughout their Old Testament scriptures. Next we read in ACTS 5:12-16 the marvelous works of Jesus; the grander in scope works that Jesus spoke of in JOHN 14:12 that were being accomplished by the hands of the Apostles. (JOHN 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.) 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.

ACTS 5:17-33 shows how unhappy the still unbelieving Jewish Sanhedrin council was with the Apostles. 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. With these words Peter was essentially telling the Sanhedrin council the same things Paul was noting to king Agrippa in ACTS 26:6 & 7, that Jesus was indeed...the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers,... the ...promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. ACTS 5:33 tells that this indignant Sanhedrin council refused to believe that Jesus was their hope, their promised Messiah, and records: When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

Of course we know that the Apostles continued to preach the gospel, that Jesus was indeed...the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers,... and the disciples exponentially multiplied, proving once again the statement Jesus made unto the twelve Apostles in JOHN 14:12 true: Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these (grander in scope) shall he do; because I go unto my Father. The evidence of this growth of believers is found in ACTS 6, where we read: 1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. Obviously all of these disciples now believed that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah, the hope of Israel that Andrew, Simon Peter's brother spoke of in JOHN 1:41 when he announced to Peter: We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

With these events we just read about in ACTS 6 the Jewish Sanhedrin Council became more indignant with the disciples, who by now were numerous in Jerusalem. Their focal point now turned to Stephen who was full of the Holy Ghost, and full of faith and power, who did great wonders and miracles among the people. Even though they could not resist the Holy Ghost inspired wisdom given Stephen, they hired false witnesses against Stephen, and were told by these hateful men that ...*This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: For we have heard*

him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us... (ACTS 6:13 & 14). Stephen then preached a most wonderful Holy Ghost inspired sermon, which ended with words similar to what we found Jesus spoke in MATTHEW 23:34-37, (see page 864 of these notes). Here is Stephen's final words of his sermon. 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.* Stephen had once again announced unto this unbelieving Sanhedrin that the Just One, whom they betrayed and murdered, was indeed Jesus Christ the promised Messiah, the hope of Israel. With this announcement the Jewish Sanhedrin council then proceeded to stone, and kill Stephen, a topic we have covered extensively before. {Review pages 9-19 of these notes, and also page 772}. We have also noted that this sermon of Stephen's may not have affected the hardened hearts of the Jewish Sanhedrin council, but his Holy Ghost inspired words pricked deep into the heart and conscience of Saul of Tarsus!

Another result of the stoning of Stephen was the scattering of the vast number of Christian believers from Jerusalem as noted in ACTS 8:1 *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.* Thus the fact that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the hope of Israel, began to be spread in earnest beyond the borders of Jerusalem. ACTS 8:4 records: *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.* Hot in pursuit of these who believed that Jesus Christ was indeed the promised Messiah, the hope of Israel, was Saul of Tarsus, who had heard Stephen's sermon, and ACTS 8:3 records: *As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.* All of his actions were done with the full approval of the unbelieving Jewish Sanhedrin council. This is noted in ACTS 9:1 & 2: *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.*

What happened next is one of the most remarkable, and unusual miracle recorded in scripture, for that self righteous Pharisee, who later called himself the chiefest of sinners; Saul of Tarsus met on that road to Damascus the promised Messiah, the hope of Israel, whom he was now describing to king Agrippa in ACTS 26:6 & 7...the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. Within seconds Saul of Tarsus knew on that road to Damascus that the witness of Jesus disciples to him was true; that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah, the hope of Israel who was personally appearing unto him; and Saul of Tarsus trembling, and astonished believed for himself the Messias, (like Andrew told Peter back in JOHN 1:41), which is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world! Within a few short days this man, who had been persecuting Christians for believing that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the hope of Israel, was himself preaching ...*Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God...* (ACTS 9:20)!

Hopefully this little scriptural history lesson we have covered here (in the above portion of notes) helps us better understand, and appreciate the important relevance to the Jews, and to king Agrippa, the facts of this statement Paul made to King Agrippa in ACTS 26:6 & 7: *And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: 7 Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.* Paul was making it known unto king Agrippa that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the hope of Israel, the Christ, the Saviour of the world, who had already come into this world, died for all sinners, had risen from the dead, and had shown Himself a light unto the people, and to the Gentiles... (see ACTS 26:23).

Obviously Paul now had king Agrippa's undivided attention. But to make sure the Holy Ghost inspires Paul to ask king Agrippa a question in verse 8. One of the purposes

of a question is to get the listener to think. If someone asks you a question, you are expected a response, even if it is silent. Here is the question Paul wanted king Agrippa to think about. ACTS 26:8 *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* This wasn't a question to be passed over lightly. The Apostle Paul had actually prepared king Agrippa back in verse 3 to be ready for some hard questions when he stated: *...I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.* Back in ACTS 25:19 Festus actually prepared king Agrippa for this question when he told the king that Paul *...had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.* Conybeare's translation of verse 8 again reads: *What! is it judged among you a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?*

This is a good question, and addresses a doctrine of Paul's we have already studied at length, that being the doctrine of resurrection. {Review pages 806 through 817 of these notes}. All believers who believe in Jesus as their own personal Saviour, believe that He arose from the dead. Paul wrote in ROMANS 10:9 *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.*

Take the time to study the Greek word (apistos {ap'-is-tos}, number 571 in the Strongs Greek Concordance) that translates "incredible" here in verse 8, and note how it is used in scripture. It is a negative particle meaning not believing, disbelieving, without Christian faith, and points to those that believeth not, who are faithless, and really references the unbeliever. Essentially then Paul is asking king Agrippa, and those present in this assembly: "Why is it deemed with all of you a thing past belief for God to make the dead come to life again?" {This from an expounded translation.} Recall when Paul gave his sermon on Mars Hill back in ACTS 17 he addressed the very same fundamental topic, which all believers acknowledge, that God hath indeed raised Jesus Christ from the dead. When Paul spoke of this in ACTS 17:31 the listeners interrupted his sermon, and ACTS 17:32 notes: *And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.* To his credit, king Agrippa did interrupt or mock Paul here, but rather he pondered Paul's question.

The way Paul phrased this question to the king Agrippa, (*Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?*) no doubt some what surprised the king, and left Agrippa considering an answer. Before hearing Agrippa's response to this question, but pausing long enough for the king to think about it, Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost now begins to explain through his own personal history on how he came to answer this very same question for himself.

Paul then states: ACTS 26:9 *I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.* This is a remarkable verse of scripture if you really stop and think about it, for here we find great insight to Paul's own thinking before he was saved. As he makes this statement it seems as if he is going back in his own mind, and remembering his own thoughts about the Messiah, the hope of the promise made of God unto the Jewish fathers, and not believing for one second that Jesus of Nazareth could ever have been The Just One, the promise, the Hope of Israel, which the twelve tribes of Israel, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. This kind of reasoning within himself caused Paul, then known as Saul of Tarsus, *...to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.* Stated another way, he believed in his well trained Pharisee mind to be right and just in doing *...many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.*

ACTS 26:9 *I verily thought with myself,...* The word "myself" is found 118 times in scripture. Fourteen times "myself" is found in the gospel of JOHN, all in reference to Jesus. (Fourteen is the number that has to do with DELIVERANCE or SALVATION, and thus points us to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.) Look up these fourteen scriptures in JOHN, and note that Jesus always references His use of "myself" with God the Father. For example, we read in JOHN 8:28 *Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.* Again in JOHN 12:49 Jesus proclaims: *For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.* In JOHN 14:10 Jesus announces: *Believest*

thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Jesus was very careful never to use the word "myself," by itself without reference to His heavenly Father. In other words if Jesus ever would have said, like Paul did, *...I verily thought with myself...* He would have in some way acknowledged God the Father as being part of His thought process. This is a quality of a full overcomer, that is acknowledging God in every aspect of one's life, *...For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.* (ROMANS 11:36).

When we in our everyday language use the word "myself" in conversation, is it used in connection with our heavenly Father? Stated another way, who is your partner in your thoughts? Paul here said *...I verily thought with myself...* consulting only his religious training as his partner in thought, and as he did so he did *...many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.* Paul got himself in a lot of trouble with God when he *...thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.*

We must then realize that our self absorbing thoughts about "myself," without making any connection to God, leads us down a path that is not good. Job had a lot of self absorbing thoughts, and Brother Hill noted in his Bible that Job spoke of himself over seven hundred times in the forty-two chapters of JOB. Job also spoke of God fifty-four times. Stated another way, Job spoke of God one time for every thirteen times he referenced himself. Twelve times in the book of JOB, we find Job using the word "myself." Here are some of Job's "myself" statements. JOB 9:20 *If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.* JOB 9:27 *If I say, I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my heaviness, and comfort myself.* JOB 10:1 *My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.* JOB 19:4 *And be it indeed that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself.* Then speaking to the Lord in JOB 42:6, Job says: *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

The Apostle Paul came to a similar conclusion after he got saved, stating in ROMANS 7:18 *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.* Here again we see that our self absorbing thoughts about "myself," without making any connection to God, leads us down a path that is not good. Paul then wrote a little later in ROMANS on the kinds of thoughts we are to ponder. ROMANS 12:3 *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.* Here we see that we are to think with a sane estimate of our capabilities, measured by the degree of faith that God has given us. HEBREWS 11:6 informs us that without faith it is impossible to please God, *...for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Thus combining the thoughts of ROMANS 12:3 with HEBREWS 11:6 we find to think correctly and soberly about ones self requires a partnership with God where we diligently seek His input about every facet of our lives, and how we can please Him. Such a thought process does not leave "me," "myself," and "I" alone. Nor does this kind of thought process leave us thinking *...with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth...* as unbelieving Saul of Tarsus did when left alone with his own thoughts. The full overcomer pleases God, has faith in God, and has his hearts thoughts directed toward God, and with God, thus leaving all his thoughts about "me," "myself," and "I" in God's hands. In PHILIPPIANS 4 Paul later wrote some more on the kind of thoughts we are to ponder. PHILIPPIANS 4:8 *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* If we think on these kinds of things then "myself" makes the proper harmony, the correct connection with God.

John the Baptist stated in JOHN 3:30 *He must increase, but I must decrease...* and all full overcomers must come to this in their own life as they consider for themselves, "me," "myself," and "I." Brother Hill used to say: "one with God is a majority," and in the context of our thinking here, "me," "myself," and "I" must decrease if the life of

Christ is ever going to have majority rule in me! Paul phrased it like this in ROMANS 8:11 *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* The full overcomer learns by walking with God to replace "me" with "Christ in me;" to replace "myself" with "myself with Christ;" to replace "I" with "Christ Jesus my Lord and I." This is how "me," "myself," and "I" become a majority with God.

Jesus never intended any of us to be left alone with "me," "myself," and "I" in the first place. And the believer knows, like Paul wrote, that *...Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me...* GALATIANS 2:20. So we are not left alone with "me," "myself," and "I" as we noted also above. Jesus told his disciples, who had been with him all through his ministry, that He wasn't going to leave any of them alone either. Jesus told them at the last supper in JOHN 14:16 & 17 & 26 of the Holy Ghost, whom He also called the Comforter, whom He would send to them, and to us, so that none of us would be left alone with "me," "myself," and "I." JOHN 14:16 *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

ACTS 26:9 *I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.* We have already shown how this solitary thinking "with myself" isn't such a good thing to do. This led Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, *...to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.* Note that he didn't just do one or two things contrary to the name of Jesus, but many things. Paul, after consulting with himself, and remembering his Pharisee upbringing, felt bound to do as much as was humanly possible to oppose the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. The disciples said in JOHN 1:41 *We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ...* and as we noted earlier in our quick review of the first six chapters of ACTS, the number of disciples of Jesus of Nazareth had multiplied greatly since His death and resurrection. The disciples of Christ the Messiah all believed as Peter stated in ACTS 4:12 that *...there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.* Paul, as unbelieving Saul of Tarsus, noted here that his line of thinking was just the opposite of Christ's disciples, thus he thought within himself to do many things against them. But that is not the way he stated it here in verse 9. Paul now knew that his persecution against Christians had been viewed by God from heaven above as opposition to Jesus Himself. Jesus lives in the heart of a believer, thus any persecution against a Saint is viewed from above as being in opposition to Jesus Himself. Remember from ACTS 9:4, ACTS 22:7, and ACTS 26:14 that the first question Jesus asked Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus was: *"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"* Paul never asked the Lord, "when did I persecute you?" for he knew in his heart the truth of MATTHEW 25:40 where Jesus said: *...Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* Thus Paul knew his persecution of Christians was viewed as being the *...many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth...* he referenced here in ACTS 26:9.

Paul goes on recalling his own personal history to king Agrippa explaining where he began *...to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.* ACTS 26:10 *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.* ACTS 8:3 records that Paul, as Saul of Tarsus *...made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.* Earlier in ACTS 22:4 Paul had stated to the Jews in Jerusalem *...I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.* This is where Paul's thinking with himself brought him to, persecuting Christians; persecuting those who had Christ living within their heart (GALATIANS 2:20); thus Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, was really persecuting Jesus of Nazareth.

Paul's actions as Saul of Tarsus in persecuting Christians, and giving his voice against them, is something he never forgot. 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.* Paul noted in GALATIANS 1:13 & 14: *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 points Paul emphasized here in GALATIANS 1:13 & 14 concerning the "Jews' religion" goes beyond what the law of Moses stated, and taught, and what the Jews true religious beliefs were. As used in this text the term the "Jews' religion" references the religious practices that the Pharisees and scribes had developed and extended from the law of Moses that became their traditions, whom Paul noted in GALATIANS 1:14 to be *...the traditions of my fathers*. There are two key concepts we must see from these two verses.

The first is that the law of Moses never taught to go out and persecute Christians. This persecuting of Jewish Christians was something new that had now become a tradition of the Pharisees. The law of Moses never taught to go out and kill Christians either. The law of Moses plainly stated in EXODUS 20:13 *Thou shalt not kill*. Yet Paul had already admitted to king Agrippa in ACTS 26:10 that *when they* (these Jewish Christians) *were put to death, I gave my voice against them*. To the Jews of Jerusalem Paul had stated in 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*. We see then that Paul's following *...the traditions of my fathers...* put him in violation the law of Moses. As a Pharisee, and *...being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers...* over ruled, in Paul's mind, what the law of Moses really taught. No doubt these traditions of his fathers that violated the letter of the law of Moses troubled Paul's conscience, which is one reason Jesus told him on the road to Damascus: *...it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks...* meaning: "it is hard for you to go against the constant pricking of your own conscience." Another law of Moses that Paul violated in all of this is found in EXODUS 20:16 *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour...* but when Paul gave his voice against the Jewish Christians as he admitted he did to king Agrippa in ACTS 26:10 above, he was in essence bearing false witness against his neighbor. Yet in all of this Paul was following, and *...being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers...* that he spoke of in GALATIANS 1:14 above. Thus we see that the Pharisees traditions were their own religious practices that went way beyond what the law of Moses stated, and taught. (Study out for your self the Greek word *Ioudaismos* {ee-oo-dah-is-mos'}, number 2454 in the Strong's Greek Concordance, and see how *...the Jews' religion...* which this word means, had drifted away from following the law of Moses, and fell into the trap of following the traditions taught by the scribes and Pharisees, who the Jewish population looked up to as the experts.)

The second key concept that we need to see in GALATIANS 1:13 & 14 revolves around the phrase *...the traditions of my fathers...* found in verse 14. Specifically we need to zero in on the Greek word translated "traditions," and may what we learn here trigger a memory in our hearts and minds every time we here the word "tradition." We actually have talked about the word "tradition" in a couple of previous Sunday School lessons years ago. At that time we learned that the Greek word that translates into our English "tradition(s)" is *paradosis* {par-ad'-os-is}, which numerically adds up to 666! (Interestingly, *paradosis* {par-ad'-os-is}, is found thirteen times in scripture; thirteen being the number associated with rebellion.) REVELATION 13:18 tells us: *Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six...* which is 666. Brother Copley noted that the beast referenced in REVELATION 13:18 is a depraved man, Satan assisting him. He is to us anti-Christ. So the number 666 is commonly referred to as the number of the beast, or anti-Christ. E. W. Bullinger in his book "Number in Scripture" tells that there is great significance in the three fold concentration of a number, such as 666. In our meaning of the numbers study we learned that in scripture we find Satan listed by eighteen different names, broken down into three groups of six, (6+6+6). There are six proper names of Satan found in scripture; {(1) Satan, (found 55 times in scripture), (2) Beelzebub, (found 7 times in scripture), (3) Devil, (mentioned 61 times in scripture), (4) Lucifer, (one time ISAIAH 14:12), (5) Dragon, (found 19 times in scripture), and (6) Prince, (as in EPHESIANS 2:2, prince and power of the air)}; there are six names of Satan in type found in scripture; {(1) Adder, (PSALMS 91:13 with ROMANS 16:20), (2)

Adversary, (1 PETER 5:8), (3) Belial, (2 CORINTHIANS 6:15), (4) Leviathan, (ISAIAH 27:1), (5) Star, (REVELATION 8:10 & 11), (6) and Wormwood, (REVELATION 8:11).}; and there are six other names associated with Satan found in scripture; {(1) Tempter, (MATTHEW 4:3), (2) Destroyer, (1 CORINTHIANS 10:10), (3) Devourer, MALACHI 3:10 & 11), (4) Serpent, (GENESIS 3:1,2, 13-15; 2 CORINTHIANS 11:3, REVELATION 12:9 & 20:2), (5) Wicked One, (MATTHEW 13:19 & 38; 1 JOHN 2:13 & 14; 3:12; 5:18), and (6) Enemy (MATTHEW 13:39; ACTS 13:10; ISAIAH 59:19)}. Thus we found that Satan's many names adds up to 6+6+6. Having said all of this we once again need to note that "tradition" is one of the number that adds up to 666, thus we see Satan's influence all over it. We see Satan's influence then in this statement taken from GALATIANS 1:14, of how Paul was *...being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers*. No wonder then that Paul later wrote in COLOSSIANS 2:8 to *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*.

Hopefully all of this also helps us better understand the statement Paul made in ACTS 26:9, of how he *...verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*.

We mentioned above that Paul's actions as Saul of Tarsus in persecuting Christians, and giving his voice against them, is something he never forgot. In epistles that he would write some years after speaking to king Agrippa here in ACTS 26 Paul remembered his well trained self-righteous Pharisee self being comfortable in *...persecuting the church...* PHILIPPIANS 3:6. To Timothy in 1 TIMOTHY 1:13 Paul later recalled how he *...was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious...* . Being a blasphemer takes one right to the edge of violating one of the ten commandments found in EXODUS 20:7 *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain;*... . Certainly this is exactly the kind of thing a very religious Pharisee like Saul of Tarsus never intended to do, yet following the traditions of his fathers had brought him to this place. What a low place *...being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers...* had brought Paul to! What a dark pit religious legality! On the road to Damascus the Lord saw to it that Saul of Tarsus actions in persecuting Christians ceased, and became a funnel through which he saw the grace of God; a point further emphasized throughout all his epistles. Thus Paul writes the following continuation in 1 TIMOTHY 1:13 *...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*. Brother Copley noted in his 1 TIMOTHY study book how that salvation brought Paul to the place where he could make the tremendous leap from blasphemy to worship, from prosecutor to preacher, from injurious to useful, from chief of sinners to the chief of saints, from one extreme to the other, through the exceeding abundant grace of the Lord. As Brother Hill used to say, "from gutter most to utter most." Yes Paul never forgot his actions as Saul of Tarsus, nor did Paul ever forget the exceeding abundant above all grace, and greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Paul further expounds to king Agrippa in verse 11 of the many things he did *...contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth...* to Christians beyond the limits of Jerusalem. ACTS 26:11 *And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities*. There is a song written by Harold McWhorter called "Sin Will Take You Farther," and this song was made famous by The Cathedral Quartet. The chorus of this song states: "Sin will take you farther than you wanna go, Slowly by wholly taking control, Sin will leave you longer than you wanna stay, Sin will cost you far more than you wanna pay." There is a lot of truth in this chorus, for this is exactly the road Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, was traveling on before he got saved. It wasn't enough for Saul of Tarsus just to persecute the Christians at Jerusalem, so he began to persecute *...them even unto strange cities*. This sin of persecuting Christians in the name of Jewish religion was taking old Saul of Tarsus farther than he originally thought; leaving him there longer than he wanted to stay; and costing him far more in mental strain and pain than he originally thought he would ever pay. Perhaps all of his actions in following the traditions of his Jewish fathers, that had taken him so far away from what the law of

Moses had really stated, later led him in part to write a thought about sin, which is stated like this in ROMANS 7:7 *...I had not known sin, but by the law...*

There is a key phrase in verse 11 that speaks volumes concerning the testimonies of those whom Saul of Tarsus persecuted, and that phrase is, *...and compelled them to blaspheme...*. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, which is an excellent resource in determining the meanings of original Greek words in the New Testament scriptures, doesn't attribute the Greek word blasphemeo {blas-fay-meh'-o} (number 987 in the Strong's Greek Concordance) as having a place or meaning here, which in itself really says a lot. The Greek word blasphemeo means: to blaspheme, rail at, or revile, and speaks of contumelious speech, that is to speak irreverently or profanely of Jesus Christ, but there is no evidence given that this ever happened here in verse 11. Stated another way, the Jewish Christians that Saul of Tarsus was persecuting because they believed that Jesus Christ was their Messiah, their Saviour; none of them ever denied that Jesus Christ was their Saviour. None of them ever denied that Jesus Christ had not died for them. None of these Jewish Christians could deny that Jesus lived in their heart. So try as he might, old Saul of Tarsus never did convince any of those Christians he arrested that they were wrong, and he was right. Not one Christian that Saul of Tarsus persecuted, *...and compelled them to blaspheme...* yielded to his compelling request! What a testimony these New Testament worthies of faith were to Saul of Tarsus! Perhaps many of these same Christians were on Paul's mind when he later wrote in HEBREWS 11:36 & 37 of those who *...had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword:...*

ACTS 26:11 *And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.* The fact that Saul of Tarsus wasn't able to get any Christians to speak against Jesus Christ, or to deny that He lives, and lives within their heart, was what made him *...exceedingly mad against them*. Thus we see that Saul of Tarsus became a maniac, and raged like a mad man against the Christians. *He made havock of the church...* ACTS 8:3 notes. He destroyed them that called on Jesus name, according to ACTS 9:21. Ananias of Damascus had heard of Saul of Tarsus before he ever came to Damascus, and noted to the Lord in ACTS 9:13 & 14 *...how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.*

The Greek word used here in ACTS 26:11 translated "*mad against*" is emmainomai {em-mah'-ee-nom-ah-ee} (number 1693 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), and is only found this one time in the Bible, and emphasizes the fierce rage, and how much Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, was beside himself with exceeding great fury against the Christians. Saul of Tarsus was to the Christian Jews like Hitler was to the Jews in general. Both wanted their perceived adversary eliminated. This was not a pretty picture Paul was painting of his former self before king Agrippa. The portrait Paul was revealing here of himself showed all who heard his words what the chiefest of sinners looked like just before Grace and Truth arrested him! JOHN 1:17 tells us: *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

ACTS 26:12 *Whereupon....*. The power and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost goes way beyond words. The word "*whereupon*" is only found seventeen times in scripture, (twice here in ACTS 26), and the number seventeen we learned in our meaning of the Bible numbers study points to VICTORY IN CHRIST JESUS. We noted in our meaning of the Bible numbers study that the number seventeen is the seventh prime number, and thus shows that it has something to do with SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, or SPIRITUAL COMPLETION. COLOSSIANS 2:10 informs us that we are complete in Christ, and 1 CORINTHIANS 15:57 states: *...thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* In other words when Paul utters the word "*whereupon*" here in ACTS 26:12, he is beginning to expound upon how *...God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ...* used the testimonies of these Christians to bring the chiefest of sinners to repentance. {Study MATTHEW 9:13; MARK 2:17; and LUKE 5:32.} The end result led this very same Saul of Tarsus to become our Apostle Paul, who wrote this about Jesus in HEBREWS 2:10 *For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

ACTS 26:12 *Whereupon as I went to Damascus...* . Damascus is noted to be the most ancient city found in scripture, and is located in Syria about 130 miles north of Jerusalem. Damascus, Syria still thrives today, and currently boasts a population of about two million. Damascus is noted to be the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world. Josephus notes that Damascus was founded by Uz, son of Aram, grandson of Shem, great grandson of Noah. Thus Damascus was a city by the time we first read of it during the days of Abraham in GENESIS 14:15. Very few make an effort to explain the meaning of Damascus because it's origins go back so far. Some say that Damascus means the fast moving camel because the building of the city was done swiftly. Others say Damascus means a sackful of blood, a name derived from the Aramaic word (dam shaq), which means a town built on the rock where blood flowed after a fight between two brothers who could not agree on what to name the town. Still others feel that the name Damascus when linguistically analyzed was derived from "the water land." This brings to mind a statement made by Naaman in 2 KINGS 5:12 *Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?*

In total Damascus is mentioned 60 times in scripture. 60 we learned in our numbers study is a number having to do with SECOND TIME or SECOND PLACE. For example Sarah's name is found by it's different spellings 60 times in scripture. Sarah was given a SECOND TIME at youth, and during this SECOND TIME she bare Isaac. Saul of Tarsus was given on the road to Damascus new life, and a SECOND TIME to follow a new career. In GENESIS 15:2 we find Eliezer of Damascus to be Abraham's faithful steward. In GENESIS 24 Eliezer, though not mentioned by name in this chapter, is the one who seeks out a bride for Isaac. Thus Eliezer is a figure of the Holy Ghost, the agent of the Trinity who prepares the bride for her husband. Each of the fifteen times we find "Damascus" mentioned in the New Testament is in association with the Apostle Paul, (the former Saul of Tarsus). Saul of Tarsus got filled with the Holy Ghost in Damascus, and was the leading and inspiring power behind Saul of Tarsus' second career. As the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul was in the greatest sense sent out to preach about the unsearchable riches we have in Christ Jesus, and to urge Christians to be race course runners, running to win Christ as their Bridegroom, much the same as Eliezer of old told Rebekah about her husband to be, Isaac. SECOND PLACE was not what the Apostle Paul wanted in his own Christian life, so we find in 2 CORINTHIANS 11:32 & 33 that *...In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.* By the time Paul left Damascus he had called that ancient city his head quarters for approximately three years. Never again did he return to Damascus.

There is a bit of irony here in Paul's visit to Damascus. ACTS 26:12 tells us in Paul's own words: *...I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests...* and this power gave him the legal where-with-all to persecute Christians. Then while on the road to Damascus Paul himself joined the sect of the Nazarenes, and after banding with the King of Kings, and preaching that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, Paul himself was pursued by the governor of Damascus under king Aretas, who had the legal power to arrest and kill Paul! In Damascus Saul of Tarsus the pursuer became the Apostle Paul the pursued.

ACTS 26:12 *Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, 13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.*

There are moments in history that ripple through the ages, that are still discussed today, moments that are remembered for centuries; life changing events that still affect us today. The biggest ever life changing event for all humanity was the day Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins. Dozen of scriptures tell of this historic event, which becomes the foundation upon which we build. *...Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone...* according to EPHESIANS 2:20. Probably the second most important life changing event for us Christians was the day the Lord Jesus Christ appeared unto Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus! Now I realize that is quiet a statement, yet if you stop and think about it for a minute you too will realize that this is true. The reason Jesus appearing unto Saul of Tarsus becomes a life changing event for you and me is that during this moment in history, Saul of Tarsus was anointed by our Lord and Saviour

Jesus Christ to be the Apostle unto the Gentiles, a fact we have covered before, and will review again as we study these next few verses in ACTS 26. This is the third time Luke records this moment in history in the book of ACTS, and he does so under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost because this was one of those moments in history that still ripple like a giant tsunami. (The tsunami wave goes unnoticed until it reaches shallower water, and moves on shore. How close are we to that day when the first rank wave of Pauline disciples reaches that eternal golden shore?)

Let's contrast for a minute or two the facts of ACTS 26:12 with the facts of ACTS 26:13. In verse 12 Saul of Tarsus was living life like he wanted to. In verse 13 Saul of Tarsus was a man of power, having *...authority and commission from the chief priests...* . Saul of Tarsus, though still a young man, thought he had it made; he thought life couldn't get any better than this; Saul of Tarsus thought he was unstoppable; and thought within himself that he was right, and doing the right things in life. However in verse 13 Saul of Tarsus finds himself face to face with the highest power in the universe, and in this instant in time Saul of Tarsus realizes that his power and *...authority and commission from the chief priests...* means absolutely nothing; that he could be stopped; that he no longer had it made; that he had been blinded both by his beliefs, and in his eye sight. A life changing obstacle had been placed in "the way" of Saul of Tarsus. No longer could he continue in "the way" he was going. He had just been arrested by The Ultimate Authority in the universe! Webster defines arrest as: (1) to stop or check the motion, course, or spread of something; (2) to seize or take into custody by authority of the law. Think about this for a minute, Jesus *...Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth...* ROMANS 10:4. Jesus Christ was the ultimate authority of the law, and JOHN 1:17 tells us: *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* Grace and Truth arrested Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus.

Think of Paul's words like this here in ACTS 26:13 for a moment: *At midday, C king, I saw in the way...* for the first time in my religious life, Grace and Truth! *I saw in the way a light...* and that Light was Jesus. *I saw in the way a light...* and that great Light *...shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ...* (2 CORINTHIANS 4:6). *At midday, C king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, ...full of the brightness of the LORD'S glory...* (EZEKIEL 10:4). *I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me...* *...Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high...* (HEBREWS 1:3). *I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me...* and I was surrounded by it, and could not escape the brightness of His glory. HEBREWS 2:3 *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?*

ACTS 26:13 *At midday, C king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.* We know that glory of the bright light of Jesus blinded Saul of Tarsus on that road to Damascus. ACTS 9:8 & 9 tells us: *And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.* ACTS 22:11 records it like this: *And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.* The glory of Jesus' light was directed at Saul of Tarsus, and only he was left blind by this event. At the same time his spiritual eyes were open to see Jesus, and receive Him into his heart as his own personal Saviour. There is kind of a double irony here. Saul of Tarsus was physically blinded while at the same time being spiritually enlightened. Also while in this physically blind condition he was told he would be sent to the Gentiles to open their spiritual blind eyes too, yet in the mean time physically blinded Saul of Tarsus was in physical darkness and needed someone to lead him by the hand. While in this physically blind state Jesus told Saul of Tarsus that he would be the one used to take spiritually blinded Gentiles by the hand, and lead them to the Light of Jesus, thus turning them from darkness to light. This is how it is stated in ACTS 26:18 *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

Notice here in Paul's own account to king Agrippa that he doesn't mention the fact that this bright light of the glory of Jesus physically blinded him for three days. Why do you think the Holy Ghost had him leave that little tid bit out of his testimony? I believe that the reason Paul didn't mention going blind by the glory of that light was because he now in his life was totally focused upon Jesus. He wasn't blind any longer, and even if he had been, he wanted king Agrippa to see Jesus for himself. Jesus had healed Paul's blindness both physically, and spiritually the day Ananias laid hands on him back in ACTS 9:17 & 18, and from that day forward Paul walked in the Light that Jesus provided him on his race course, ever looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of his faith! Even if Paul had still been physically blind when he appeared before king Agrippa, it wasn't his blindness that he wanted Agrippa to focus upon, rather Paul was trying to get king Agrippa to the point where he too could see Jesus. In other words, Paul was careful here in his testimony not to draw the attention to himself, but to point the way to Christ. In 2 CORINTHIANS 4:3-7 Paul had already written: *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.* In HEBREWS 2:9 Paul later would write it like this: *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.* Paul's life testimony pointed to Jesus, not to Paul, which should be the case in all of our testimonies.

ACTS 26:13 *At midday, C king,...* . Sometimes as we examine in depth these scriptures, we often over look some seemingly simple thoughts, probably because they seem unimportant to at the time. But note here that Paul brings king Agrippa into the loop, requesting his continued undivided attention as he brings out these most important facts of his testimony. Recall back in verse 8 Paul had asked king Agrippa a question: *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* Since verse 8 Paul has been giving king Agrippa his testimony on how he, Paul, had answered this very same question. Paul was emphasizing resurrected Jesus Christ in his answer to king Agrippa, and again we note that Paul's life testimony pointed to Jesus, not to Paul. So when Paul says *At midday, C king,...* he is trying to get king Agrippa to *...see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man....* (HEBREWS 2:9), including kings!

ACTS 26:13 *At midday, C king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.* The names of them which journeyed with Paul are not recorded for us in scripture, and have you ever wondered why? Because the Lord was dealing with the heart of Saul of Tarsus, and had been for some time. Everyone of the Christians he persecuted were testimonies of the faithfulness of Christ to him, and now he was meeting Jesus face to face (as it were). We don't read of those who journeyed with Saul of Tarsus continuing on persecuting Christians after this point in time, nor did they have the authority to do so, for only Saul of Tarsus had authority from the chief priests to persecute and arrest Christians. When Jesus arrested Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, his followers had no leader to follow. Their persecuting days were over, at least for the time being. So whose attention was the Lord trying to get here? Obviously Saul of Tarsus'. Think about this, after Saul got saved, who *...led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus?* ACTS 9:8 tells us that it was the very same men who were traveling with him. ACTS 22:9 tell us that *...they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid;...* . Who explained to these men on the road to Damascus after this event what had just happened, and what the bright light from heaven was all about? It was Saul of Tarsus, their leader, who was now giving his first testimony of Jesus to them! Did they believe him? Only the Lord knows the answer to that question, because scripture doesn't tell us one way or the other. Again ACTS 22:9 proclaims: *...they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid;...* . They were without excuse if they didn't believe Saul of Tarsus testimony

of Jesus to them. Within a few days of this event Saul of Tarsus was found preaching...*Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God...* this according to ACTS 9:20.

ACTS 26:14 *And when we were all fallen to the earth,...* . Think about this. Saul of Tarsus, and his companions were on a business trip, heading to Damascus, when all of a sudden the glory of the Light of the Lord shone round about them. They all fell to the earth. They could do nothing else. They didn't do this as an act of worship. They were all trying to hide from the glory of the Lord. Yet this brings to mind to following scripture found in ISAIAH 45. ISAIAH 45:18 *For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else. 19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right. 20 Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. 21 Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. 22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. 23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.* When the Lord says "every knee shall bow" it means "every knee shall bow," and our text of ACTS 26:14 shows just how fast this can happen; instantly!

ACTS 26:14 continues: *And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me,...* . ACTS 9:7 records: *And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.* ACTS 22:9 seems to contradict this statement, noting: *...but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.* There is no contradiction here, but rather a difference in understanding of how the word "voice" is to be rendered in these verses. Obviously Saul of Tarsus heard the voice of Jesus, and understood the words the Lord was speaking unto him, the exact words which we will get to shortly. Those that were with Paul heard a noise, but didn't discern words, but only remembered hearing a sound. Remember Jesus was speaking unto Saul of Tarsus, not to those who were with him. Jesus didn't say 'Saul, Saul, and those who are with you, why are you persecuting me?' Back in JOHN 12:28-30 Jesus was praying to God, and some people standing by heard the following discourse: JOHN 12:28 *Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. 29 The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. 30 Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.* Notice that Jesus heard the voice of God as distinct words, because God the Father was speaking directly to Him. But those standing by didn't hear the voice of God as words, but rather they thought that it had thundered, and others were sure that an angel had said something to Him. On the road to Damascus those traveling with Saul of Tarsus heard something, but they didn't exactly understand what it was they were hearing, for they heard not the articulating words of the Lord. All this makes sense when you realize that when the Lord speaks to you, He is speaking to you, not to everyone else.

ACTS 26:14 *And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue,...* . Recently a preacher on television said: "the language of heaven is Hebrew," and he used this text as an example. What a tiny box this preacher has put God in. True enough, when Jesus was here on earth, He spoke Hebrew, for it is the language of the Jews. Jesus said in JOHN 10:27 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:...* . Jesus didn't say: "My sheep hear my voice, and I only speak to them in Hebrew." Jesus also said in JOHN 18:37 *...Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.* When Jesus speaks to me through the Holy Spirit, He doesn't speak to me in Hebrew, because I simply wouldn't understand a word He was saying. There is a heavenly language all right, and 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1 notes there are *...tongues of men and of angels;... tongues of men, and tongues of angels, languages we haven't even heard, or heard of yet.* And when we get there we will be able to communicate better than we can ever imagine.

When Jesus arrested Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, He spoke to him in Hebrew, not because it was the language of heaven, but rather it was the language Saul of Tarsus grew up with. In PHILIPPIANS 3:5 Paul notes that he was *"an Hebrew of the Hebrews,"* meaning he knew the Hebrew language, and customs probably in more depth than most Jews. We know that he also knew Greek from ACTS 21:37, and have also noted that Paul was fluent in Latin, the language of the Roman empire. Would it then make any sense for Jesus to speak to Saul of Tarsus in, let's say, Chinese? Absolutely not! Jesus spoke to Saul of Tarsus in the same language his mother would have spoken to him in, and with a similar tone, because He wanted Saul of Tarsus' immediate undivided attention. When Jesus said *...in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul,...* it got his immediate undivided attention. There was no doubt as to whom Jesus was speaking. Saul of Tarsus was a captive audience, and the Lord had his undivided attention.

Perhaps the reality of ISAIAH 51:1 hit Saul of Tarsus at this moment. ISAIAH 51:1 *Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.* Jesus was indeed knocking on Saul of Tarsus' hearts' door. REVELATION 3:20 *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

Jesus then continued by first asking Saul of Tarsus: *...why persecutest thou me?* {ACTS 9:4; 22:7; 26:14}. (There are twenty-eight "thou me" statements in scripture. Twenty-eight interestingly is the number having to do with ETERNAL LIFE.) *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Wouldn't you like to know how long the pause was between *...Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* and *...it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks....* (verse 14). Even if it was a couple of seconds, it was an eternity to Saul of Tarsus! "Eternity" means: for ever; "eternity" means: never coming to an end; "eternity" means: everlasting. Eternity, and ETERNAL LIFE was in the balance here for Saul of Tarsus. Jesus, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Almighty (see REVELATION 1:8), who knows our thoughts afar off, (PSALMS 139:2), who searcheth the reins and hearts, (REVELATION 2:23), knew what was going on in Saul of Tarsus conscience, and stated to Saul, (after letting him think for a moment or two of Who it was that was addressing him); *...it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

The mid-eastern shepherds staff, or ox goad, was about eight feet long, and had a sharp point on one end usually made of iron. This goad could be used as a weapon, but was more commonly used to encourage oxen, cattle, or sheep to move in a certain direction. If an animal resisted, he did so at his own harm by kicking against the sharp pointed end of the goad. Jesus was expressing to Paul, "you are finding it painful to kick against the ox-goad of your own conscience." ECCLESIASTES 12:11 tells us: *The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.* What was pricking the conscience of Saul of Tarsus was the Holy Ghost inspired words of Christian martyrs, like Stephen, and the many others whom he persecuted all along the way. Their testimonies were pricking, like a goad, the heart and conscience of Saul of Tarsus. Jesus knew that the testimonies of His Saints to Saul of Tarsus was deeply bothering his Pharisee trained mind, so here in ACTS 26:14 Jesus states: *...Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.* The truth, and power of these words of Jesus were now piercing Saul of Tarsus' heart. Years later the Apostle Paul wrote from personal experience these words found in HEBREWS 4:12 -- *For the word of God is 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, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

When we are asked a question, a verbal answer is usually required. ACTS 26:15 gives Saul of Tarsus' response: *And I said, Who art thou, Lord?* Do you suppose there was really any doubt in Saul of Tarsus' mind who it was that was talking to him out of this blinding light? Certainly Saul knew with out a doubt it was the Lord Jesus Christ who was speaking to him, yet this fact hadn't fully registered in his mind, that is until he uttered these words: *Who art thou, Lord?* This was an ah-ha moment for Saul of Tarsus. As he uttered these words *Who art thou, Lord?* it finally clicked in his heart that his manner of life from his youth had taken him on a contrary path from Jesus, just like he expressed it to king Agrippa back in verse 9-- *I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.* How hard is it to come to

the realization in an instant of time that you are on the wrong path, and have been all of your life? This is exactly where Saul of Tarsus was at this moment in time. The words of LAMENTATIONS 3:59 may have flashed through his mind here: *O LORD, thou hast seen my wrong: judge thou my cause.* Perhaps the thought of PROVERBS 21:2 was also realized by Saul of Tarsus as the Lord spoke to him: *Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.* Saul of Tarsus also realized at this instant in time that he was *...dead in trespasses and sins;...* (EPHESIANS 2:1).

When Paul told king Agrippa that he answered the voice he heard speaking to him, *...Who art thou, Lord?...* I imagine that king Agrippa was really listening to what Paul was saying. Why? One of the titles a king carries with him is that of lord. This makes us wonder how many times in his life king Agrippa had been called lord. Now Agrippa finds that Paul had addressed Jesus as Lord. In other words Saul of Tarsus began to acknowledge that Jesus *...is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords...* on the road to Damascus. {Study 1 TIMOTHY 6:15}. It was king Agrippa's great-grandfather Herod the Great who had tried to kill the young child Jesus back in MATTHEW 2:2 when the wise men inquired where is He who is called King of the Jews. Perhaps king Agrippa picked up that Paul too had really addressed Jesus as King of kings, and Lord of lords, when on that road to Damascus he asked Jesus *...Who art thou, Lord?* The very same Jesus whom the wise men inquired king Agrippa's great-grandfather about, was now being proclaimed to a king by another wise man, the Apostle Paul. The wise men back in MATTHEW 2 were inquiring to king Herod about the whereabouts of the King of the Jews, and the wise man here in ACTS 26 was telling king Herod Agrippa II where the King of the Jews could be found! Kind of ironic isn't it?

ACTS 26:15 continues: *And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* If there was any doubt in Saul of Tarsus' mind who was speaking to him out of this bright light, all doubt was erased when Jesus said: *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* Jesus knew exactly what was going on in Saul of Tarsus heart, and if there was any skepticism concerning Jesus being the Messiah, and being raised from the dead, as so many had witnessed to him about, all of this was eliminated when Jesus answered Saul of Tarsus *...I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* In the context of Paul's questioning king Agrippa about Jesus, let's think of Jesus answer to Saul of Tarsus like this: *...I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. ...Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* (ACTS 26:8). It was at this point in time that Saul of Tarsus became a believer. In this instant he got saved! He passed from death unto life. Jesus own words of JOHN 5:24 read: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.* Yes, Saul of Tarsus himself, that great persecutor of Christians, had now become a Christian himself, having believed! Saul of Tarsus, who later called himself *...a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious...* (1 TIMOTHY 1:13), had just obtained mercy from the One full of Grace and Truth! Later in life Paul would write in 1 TIMOTHY 1:16 his recollection of his salvation, stating: *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.* Saul of Tarsus, when he here realized it was the Lord Jesus Christ who was speaking unto him, then believed that God had indeed raised Jesus from the dead, and confessed that *...Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father...* (see PHILIPPIANS 2:11). In ROMANS 10 Paul wrote some statements concerning salvation, stating: ROMANS 10:9 *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. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* Paul knew all of this to be true, for this was exactly how he got saved on the road to Damascus. When Paul and Silas were asked at midnight by the Philippian jailor...*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?...* Paul was able to simply respond: *...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.* {Study again ACTS 16:30 & 31.} Thank God for His simple plan of salvation.