

abode with him. 9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. The events recorded in ACTS 21 happened more than 20 years after ACTS 8!

ACTS 9

Several years ago I did a couple of different studies on the life of the Apostle Paul, and in those studies we covered a lot of information from ACTS 9 through ACTS 28 as much of the life of the Apostle Paul is documented by Luke in these chapters. In this study our focus remains primarily on the facts Luke recorded in scripture. Again we repeat what Luke wrote in LUKE 1:1-4 *Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; 3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.* LUKE 1:1-4 is one sentence; one very important sentence that reveals some interesting facts. Study LUKE 1:1-4 again and again until you get this point: Luke wrote down the things that were delivered unto him, that is the things told unto him from eyewitnesses. Luke interviewed these people, who told Luke exactly what happened. The Holy Ghost gave Luke the inspiration to write these things down in a chronological order. The only way Luke got this perfect understanding of all things concerning Jesus Christ was by the Holy Ghost leading him to get the chance to interview these eyewitnesses, and this opportunity came while Paul was being held prisoner in Caesarea. ACTS 24:27 informs us that Paul was held prisoner for two years at Caesarea, and ACTS 24:23 tells how Paul was given the freedom to receive all visitors during this time. Luke, as we learned previously, was taught by the Apostle Paul when Paul first went to Antioch, Syria. Luke was a follower of the Apostle Paul. At the conclusion of Paul's third missionary journey, Luke traveled with Paul from Philippi to Jerusalem, and was with Paul when Paul got arrested there in ACTS 21:27-40. Luke wasn't arrested but was a guest in Jerusalem for those two years Paul was held prisoner in Caesarea. Luke knew that when there would be a trial for the Apostle Paul, the accusing Jews from Jerusalem would be there, and Luke would hear about it, so Luke wasn't worried about Paul being tried in Caesarea without Luke's knowledge. Meanwhile during this two-year time period Luke got to interview many of the eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word he wrote about in LUKE 1:1-4. Luke had no idea that he would have two years to interview these people, but the Lord knew who to lead Luke to. As we pointed out when we studied LUKE 1 & 2 that Luke obviously got to interview Mary the mother of Jesus, for she told Luke many of the things, which had been on her heart for a long time. Of course the Holy Ghost made all of this possible. Luke got to interview the Apostle Peter, and perhaps some of the other Apostles in order to write the unique stories he wrote concerning their time with our Lord and Saviour when they were with him. The forty days after Jesus resurrection were well documented in LUKE 24 and ACTS 1 by our dear brother Luke. Most of the information we have covered in ACTS 1-6 came from Luke interviewing the Apostles, and the other eyewitnesses since the day of Pentecost. Luke by ACTS 9 has met Philip the Evangelist, and learned the facts of what is recorded in ACTS 8. The events recorded in ACTS 9 through ACTS 15 came from further interviews with the Apostles Peter, and Paul. Some of the details in these chapters were also known by Luke's first hand experiences with the Christians at Antioch, Syria. Luke again travelled with Paul in ACTS chapter 27 & 28, and as Paul wrote in 2 TIMOTHY 4:11 at the end of his life: *Only Luke is with me.* So we acknowledge that Luke had first hand experiences with many of the eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word since the timeframe of the birth of John the Baptist, until the death of Paul in 68 A.D. There is no indication that Luke ever got back to Jerusalem after the Apostle Paul died in 68 A.D., so the only conclusion we can arrive at is that Luke took full advantage of the only time he visited Jerusalem, which was when Paul was held prisoner at Caesarea for two years. The majority of what Luke recorded in scripture came from his interviewing these eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word during those two so-called silent years when Paul was held prisoner in Caesarea. And again Luke

didn't know he would have two years to spend in Jerusalem, but the Lord knew that Luke would have this much time there.

As we get into the information recorded in ACTS 9 concerning Saul of Tarsus, our brother in the Lord, Luke writes from the perspective of an outside observer telling the story as it was told him. No doubt Paul had told Luke the story of his conversion many times. Later in ACTS 22, and ACTS 26 Luke will record the story of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus using Paul's own words of testimony. Thus we have in ACTS three accounts of Saul of Tarsus' conversion. As we read this first account here in ACTS 9 be well aware that Luke never knew Saul of Tarsus. Luke however knew the Apostle Paul. Both are the same man, but the chief of sinners, Saul of Tarsus, wasn't a guy Luke got to know. Luke being a Gentile would not have been one whom a very proud Pharisee would have hung out with. The Apostle Paul explained how this can be when he wrote in 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.* Paul's old life as a Pharisee passed away on the road to Damascus, where he met our precious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who set Saul of Tarsus on the path that made him the Apostle Paul!! Truly all things became new for Saul of Tarsus that noonday on the road to Damascus. Here is how the Holy Ghost had Luke record this story.

ACTS 9:1 & 2 -- *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.*

"Threatenings and slaughter" translates into threatenings and murder. Murder was in the heart of Saul of Tarsus. In GALATIANS 5:19-21 the Apostle Paul writes that murder is one of the works of the flesh. In ROMANS 1:28 & 29 Paul writes that murder is the result of a reprobate mind. A "reprobate mind" simply means a mind of which God cannot approve. The mind of Christ can only be found in a believer, and in ACTS 9:1 Saul of Tarsus was not a believer. Not all believers yield to the mind of Christ that is in them, but all full overcomers will. In ROMANS 8:7 Paul writes that *...the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* Thus we get a little glimpse of the heart, and mind of Saul of Tarsus here in ACTS 9:1. Such a sinful heart he had, yet he didn't think so. As a proud Pharisee he was against the disciples of the Lord. But what he was really against was the constant pricking of the goad against his conscience. The words of Christian martyrs, like Stephen, were pricking his heart and conscience with the message of Jesus Christ being the Messiah.

In verse 2 we find Saul of Tarsus was well on his way to Damascus. Damascus, Syria is about 136 miles north of Jerusalem, and is one of the most ancient cities found in scripture. Josephus notes that Damascus was founded by Uz, son of Aram, grandson of Shem, great grandson of Noah. 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. Saul of Tarsus was given a SECOND TIME in his life here at Damascus to follow a new career. In the Old Testament 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" 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. The Holy Ghost was the leading, and inspiring power behind Saul of Tarsus' second career.

The famous swords used during the Crusading period were made in Damascus, and were known as "Damascus blades." Why make note of this? The Apostle Paul in EPHESIANS 6 taught of the warfare of the Spirit filled believer, and in EPHESIANS 6:17 Paul spoke of *...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* The career of the Apostle Paul started in Damascus where Paul got filled with the Holy Spirit. Brother Hill wrote in his booklet entitled "The Warfare of the Believer:" "When we wield the sword of the Spirit we are wielding God's thoughts, His plan and His purpose. There is nothing that will stop God's plan! To fully grasp the Word as it concerns us, we must know

that Paul was given a special revelation for the church and the plan of God and His purpose. When we embrace that revelation, it reveals His will for our lives personally. From the moment He saves us from the deathly consequence of sin He wants to bring us to the unsearchable riches that He has for us in Christ.” {End of quote from Brother Hill.} The Apostle Paul also was a crusader of a different sort, who on several missionary journeys wielded God’s powerful gospel message by the power of the Holy Ghost, which he received in Damascus. We will see this when we get to ACTS 9:17.

ACTS 9:1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. 3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Let’s consider the pricking of the goad for a moment, for it plays an important part in our understanding of Jesus words to Saul of Tarsus. The goad was an instrument that was used by those plowing or driving oxen or cattle. It was a long sharp pointed pole about eight feet long. Often the sharp point was made from iron. If the oxen or cattle were to kick against the goad of their driver, some injury would result, thus the driver got control over these large animals and thus was able to make them go where he wanted them to go. When Jesus told Saul of Tarsus: *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks...* . He was saying “you are finding it painful to kick against the ox-goad of your own conscience.” Again it was the Holy Ghost inspired words of Christian martyrs, like Stephen, that were pricking, like a goad, the heart and conscience of Saul of Tarsus. 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.*

All three accounts of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus talk about the sudden light that appeared from heaven. ACTS 9:3 says: *...and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.* In ACTS 22:6 Paul says: *...about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.* And ACTS 26:13 records: *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.* We know that this **light** was Jesus appearing unto Saul of Tarsus. The Apostle John began his epistle defining Jesus as being **Light**. JOHN 1:4 *In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. (John the Baptist) 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* In JOHN 8:12 we find these words of Jesus: *...I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* This phrase “...the light of life...” is only found this one time in scripture. It means that Jesus is the **Light** of everlasting life. Life is the opposite of death, just like **Light** is the opposite of darkness. Here in JOHN 8:12 we find that Jesus is both **Light** and Life. Saul of Tarsus up to this point in his life was living in darkness, and had the sting of death all over him. Later in 1 CORINTHIANS 15:56 Paul would write: *The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.* Here in ACTS 9 Saul of Tarsus was dead in trespasses and living in the darkness of sin. Then Jesus came! Jesus the **Light** of the world came and lit up Saul of Tarsus. So bright was the glory of that **Light** that Saul of Tarsus fell to the earth. {See ACTS 9:4; 22:7 and 26:14.} So bright was the glory of that **Light** that Saul of Tarsus was left blind for three days. (More on this later, but for now see ACTS 9:8 & 9 & 18; and ACTS 22:11-13.) So bright was the glory of that **Light** that Saul of Tarsus that day passed from death unto life! How dark is death, and how bright is life? Additionally JOHN 5:24 tells us: *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. Because of this bright **Light** of Jesus shining on Saul of Tarsus, the Apostle Paul was later able to write these words found in 2 CORINTHIANS 4:6 *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.* Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord!!!

There are twenty-two verses of scripture where we find the word “**heavenly**,” and twenty-two is the number associated with **LIGHT**. We read in ACTS 26:19 the Apostle Paul explaining to king Agrippa about the **heavenly Light** Paul saw on the road to Damascus: *Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the **heavenly** vision.* The **heavenly Light** that appeared unto Saul of Tarsus was indeed Jesus as Ananias told Saul in ACTS 9:17 *...Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest,...* . Furthermore, and this is an understatement, the **heavenly Light** that appeared unto Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus was exceeding abundant above all we could think or imagine full of love! The **heavenly Light** that appeared unto Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus shined into the heart of Saul of Tarsus, revealing His divine love, *...to give the **light** of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ...* as we read above in 2 CORINTHIANS 4:6.

It is beyond interesting to note that we do not find the word “**love**,” or “**loved**” in the book of ACTS. The Apostle John, and Old Testament worthy of faith David wrote more about “**love**” than the rest of the writers of scripture. Let’s read from 1 JOHN 4 some defining statements about the love of God, which is also found in Christ Jesus. 1 JOHN 4:7 *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.* 8 *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.* 9 *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* 10 *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation* (the means by which sin is covered) *for our sins.* 11 *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* 12 *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.* 13 *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* 14 *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.* 15 *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.* 16 *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* 17 *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.* 18 *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.* 19 *We love him, because he first loved us.*

What does all of this have to do with Saul of Tarsus witnessing the **heavenly Light** on the road to Damascus? We are showing with scriptural proof that the **heavenly Light** that appeared unto Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus was exceeding abundant above all we could think or imagine full of love! We just read in 1 JOHN 4:16 that *...God is love...* and in JOHN 10:30 Jesus said: *I and my Father are one.* Thus we must acknowledge that not only *...God is love...* but **Jesus is love!!!** You have probably read GALATIANS 2:20 hundreds of times, but if not, here we find this statement concerning Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour: *...the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* In EPHESIANS 5:2 we read: *...Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.* In ROMANS 5:6 we read that *...Christ died for the ungodly.* In ROMANS 5:8 two verses later we read: *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* In 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3 we find this statement: *...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.*

Let’s read again our text found in ACTS 9:3 *And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:...* . We now know that this **heavenly Light** was indeed Jesus, who appeared unto Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus full of grace, and truth, and love, who asked this question to Saul of Tarsus in ACTS 9:4 *...Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* This was a deep heart penetrating question Jesus asked Saul. Saul of Tarsus

knew from the lips of martyrs like Stephen that he was really persecuting the Lord, otherwise why did Saul at this time not ask the question: "When did I Persecute you Lord?" Rather Saul of Tarsus asks this question of the Lord recorded in ACTS 9:5, 22:8 and 26:15: "...*Who art thou, Lord?*" Jesus answers Saul of Tarsus' question in these same three verses, and ACTS 22:8 records it like this: *I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.* This simple answer of the Lord completely answered any doubts Saul of Tarsus may have had of who it was that was talking to him.

When then did Saul of Tarsus get saved? ACTS 9:6 answers this question: *And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* This was a statement of faith, for at that precise point in time Saul of Tarsus got saved, thus changing his life for the better forever. That is why with full assurance of faith years later the Apostle Paul was able to write with full knowledge, and first hand experience this fact found in ROMANS 10:13 *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* When Saul of Tarsus asks in ACTS 9:6 *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* It is a question, which a Pharisee taught from his youth to be a Pharisee would naturally ask, for from his youth Saul of Tarsus has been living a religion of do's and don'ts. I wonder how many times Saul of Tarsus asked his Pharisee Father, "what shall I do?" But now for the first time in his life Saul of Tarsus would realize that there was nothing more he could do other than believe Jesus. *What shall I do, Lord?* is a statement of belief in Jesus, and shows Saul's surrender, and willingness to go on with the Lord. In an instant of time he has given up years of seemingly wasted learning, and a very high profile career. With now nowhere to go, and nothing to do, he asks: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* He realizes deep in his heart the facts of 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17, which we read earlier: *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* The Lord, of course, knows the change of heart Saul of Tarsus has now experienced, and Luke here gives the Cliff notes version of what Jesus answered Saul of Tarsus: *...And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do...* ACTS 9:6.

Twenty plus years later the Apostle Paul reveals the full context of what the Lord Jesus told him on the road to Damascus. We read this in ACTS 26:16-18 where the Lord explained in one sentence what Saul of Tarsus was to do. ACTS 26:16 *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.* These three verses are really one sentence spoken by Jesus. There are 99 words spoken in this one sentence. This truly was the "life sentence" for Saul of Tarsus. In this one sentence we find the answer to Saul of Tarsus' question: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* In this one sentence we find Saul of Tarsus given instructions that would take him through every day for the rest of his life. In this one sentence we find Saul of Tarsus made a minister and a witness for Jesus Christ. In this one sentence we find Saul of Tarsus anointed an Apostle! In this one sentence we find Saul of Tarsus is now wanted of the Jews! In this one sentence we find Saul of Tarsus also wanted of the Gentiles. In this one sentence we find Saul of Tarsus delivering others from darkness unto light; opening blind eyes that they may see. In this one sentence we find Saul of Tarsus learning of an inheritance among them, which are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus! In this one sentence we learn that Saul of Tarsus was told by Jesus Christ that He would again appear unto him and reveal to him these things he was to teach, for at that moment in time when Saul of Tarsus believed, he had not yet received Paul's gospel message! In this one sentence we find Saul of Tarsus a changed man forever. In this one sentence we find Saul of Tarsus needing to learn a whole lot more than he already knew. I dare say the list of things found in this one sentence is nearly endless, and as our brother in the Lord Luke records in ACTS 9, it would take the power of the Holy Ghost to enable Saul of Tarsus to become the Apostle Paul, the Apostle sent unto the Gentiles! Of course at this moment Saul of Tarsus had no idea how all of this would happen, but as we learned at this years camp, the Lord knew from the eternities past how this would

happen. ISAIAH 46:9 *Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.* Ironically perhaps Saul of Tarsus was familiar with this scripture, thus he didn't question how the Lord would accomplish all of what He told Saul of Tarsus in ACTS 26:16-18, he only believed that it would be the Lord that would bring all of this to pass!

Make a note in your own studies of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus that there was not a negative, nor a condemning statement made to Saul of Tarsus from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We read in 2 PETER 3:9 this statement: *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* Our most precious Lord and Saviour was ...*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance...* even Saul of Tarsus, who was a terrorist to Christians. Be aware also that the conversion of Saul of Tarsus was also an answer to Stephen's final prayer of ACTS 7:60 "...Lord, lay not this sin to their charge... .!!!" What a loving Saviour is our Lord Christ Jesus!

ACTS 9:6 *And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* The Lord Jesus Christ immediately instructed Saul of Tarsus on what he was to do next: ...*Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* ACTS 22:10 adds a couple of more thoughts here, stating: *Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.* We will discuss this further in a moment, but before we do we need to realize the facts of ACTS 9:7-9 where we are informed of Saul's blindness. ACTS 9:7 *And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. 8 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.*

Saul of Tarsus was told by the Lord to ...*Arise, and go into Damascus...* but his sight was gone; he was now blinded by the Light of Jesus, and would be blind for the next three days! So in order for him to "Arise, and go into Damascus" he would have to take steps of faith. Saul of Tarsus didn't question the Lord on how it was going to happen either, but rather he just believe the Lord's instruction, and though it was difficult for him, he, being led by the hand, came into Damascus. Saul of Tarsus came into Damascus by faith. In ACTS 9:6 we again read Saul of Tarsus instructions: ...*Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* That little word "must" means: it is necessary; there is need of; it behooves; and it is right and proper. "Must" comes into our English here from the Greek word *dei* {die} (number 1163 in the Strong's Greek Concordance), which numerically adds up to the number 19. The number 19 we found in our numbers study to be the number of FAITH! Another way of saying this portion of ACTS 9:6 would be like this: ...*Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must* (by faith, in faith, and through faith) *do.* Saul of Tarsus came into Damascus by faith in Christ Jesus, because it was necessary that he do so in faith, so that he could receive through faith the right and proper instructions for himself of all things that were appointed him to do!

This brings us to ACTS 22:10, which records Saul of Tarsus' instructions like this: *Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.* Here we find a little different wording from the statement in ACTS 9:6. In ACTS 9:6 we find ...*it shall be told thee what thou must do...* and here in ACTS 22:10 we read ...*it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.* Let's do a little test here on how we receive the word of God again. Do you in your heart really think Saul of Tarsus was told while in Damascus "all things" that were appointed for him to do? How great is your conviction that this statement is true: ...*it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do?* Ten per cent? Thirty per cent? Sixty percent? Or one hundred percent? Jesus told Saul of Tarsus to go into Damascus and ...*it shall be*

told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. I know this to be a one hundred percent true statement. If you study ACTS 9 along with GALATIANS 1 you will see that Saul of Tarsus was based at Damascus approximately three years, with a side trip into the desert of Arabia, where no doubt the Lord fully revealed His gospel unto Saul of Tarsus. By the time three years later when he left Damascus, actually he escaped from Damascus as noted in 2 CORINTHIANS 11:32 & 33, he assured that Saul of Tarsus had been told “all things” that were appointed for him to do.

A key word for us to examine in ACTS 22:10 is “appointed:” *...it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.* This word “appointed” comes from the Greek word “tasso,” which is found eight times in the New Testament. The number eight we learned in our study of the meanings of the numbers is a number with several important meanings, and it has to do with NEW CREATION; NEW BIRTH; NEW BEGINNING; RESURRECTION; and the BRIDE; five things, or five different meanings. The Apostle Paul taught us much about each of these five things, because the Lord had “appointed” (assigned; ordered; destined) it so. Now each of these five things, and the many other things revealed unto Paul, were not revealed unto him all at once, nor in one day. In fact some of these things became a life long pursuit of Paul’s. Consider the fact of the RESURRECTION for example. Saul of Tarsus positively knew on the road to Damascus of the fact of the RESURRECTION of Jesus Christ, for resurrected Jesus Christ Himself appeared unto him on that road. Yet after many years of following Jesus the Apostle Paul later wrote in PHILIPPIANS 3:10 & 11 -- *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.* The Greek word for “resurrection” in verse 10 is different than the Greek word for “resurrection” in verse 11. In verse 10 the Greek word for “resurrection” is anastasis {an-as'-tas-is}, number 386 in The Strong’s Greek Concordance, meaning: a raising up; or a rising. The Greek word translated resurrection in PHILIPPIANS 3:11 is exanastasis {ex-an-as'-tas-is}, number 1815 in The Strong’s Greek Concordance found only this one time in scripture, meaning: the resurrection out from the resurrection; an earlier resurrection in other words. Yes there are ranks in the RESURRECTION! The Apostle Paul also magnified the subject of RESURRECTION in 1 CORINTHIANS 15, which we also know as the RESURRECTION chapter. The point is, all of just these facts concerning RESURRECTION were part of the “all things” which were “appointed” of Paul to know, and to do. And Saul of Tarsus was told in Damascus “all things” that were “appointed” him to do during the course of the rest of his life, thus it put him on the correct course for the rest of his life, even though he was not yet taught by the Lord these things. Also jumping ahead just for a minute let me note that it wasn’t just the devout disciple Ananias of Damascus who told Saul of Tarsus things he was appointed to do, though Ananias was used of the Lord to tell him some of what he was to do. It took the Lord Jesus Christ Himself to fully reveal the “all things” that were “appointed” of Saul of Tarsus to do. {Study ACTS 22:14 to see who it was that taught Saul of Tarsus these “all things... ..appointed.” ACTS 22:14 *And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.*}

Ananias of Damascus

One of the New Testament heroes of faith is Ananias of Damascus, who we would know absolutely nothing about had it not been for our Brother Luke. Luke is the only write of scripture that states anything about Ananias of Damascus, and he does so both in ACTS 9:10-19, and ACTS 22:12-16.

ACTS 9:10 *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. 11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, 12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. 13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here*

he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. 17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. 19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

ACTS 22:12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, 13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. 14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. 15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. 16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Ananias of Damascus was a devout Christian in Damascus, whom we have very little background information about, but we do know some things about him, which we just read above. There were probably were hundreds, if not thousands just like Ananias scattered abroad in various cities after the death of Stephen. ACTS 8:1 tells that many devout Christians were scattered abroad after the death of Stephen. It seems Ananias of Damascus was one of them. We read in scripture of very few of them, and yet many of them went on to have God's best. Many of these same devout Christians had been put into prison, or had even been put to death because of Saul of Tarsus. All of these devout Christians persecuted by Saul of Tarsus were in some measure a testimony to Saul of Tarsus. Perhaps the Apostle Paul had some of these very same devout Christians personally in mind when he wrote in HEBREWS 11:39 *...And these all, having obtained a good report through faith,...* . Ananias of Damascus was on high on Saul of Tarsus' list of people to persecute before he got saved.

Paul's own words of ACTS 22:12 gives us quiet a bit of background on Ananias. ACTS 22:12 *And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,...* . The Greek word translated "devout" here in ACTS 22:12 is only used four times in the New Testament, and simply means "godly." So we see that Ananias was a godly man. No doubt Ananias was on the top of Saul of Tarsus' "hit list" with the letters he carried from the high priest at Jerusalem. ACTS 9:13 & 14 indicate that Ananias of Damascus knew this to be a fact. ACTS 9:13 *Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.* This is a true statement, but that was before Jesus came into the life of Saul of Tarsus. Saul of Tarsus life had been changed, and his letters from the high priest had been voided by Jesus Christ the ultimate High Priest. Saul of Tarsus went to Damascus to meet Ananias, and Jesus Christ worked it out so that Ananias came first to seek out Saul of Tarsus, and on friendly terms. It is always amazing what the Lord can do, and how He works in mysterious ways sometimes.

ACTS 9:10 *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.* This verse helps explain how devout a man Ananias was. Note a couple of things here in this verse. First of all, the Lord calls Ananias by his name. JOHN 10:3 tells us that Jesus calls His sheep by name. Later we read these words of Jesus in JOHN 10:27 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:...* . Furthermore in JOHN 18:37 Jesus states: *...Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.* What we should note in these passages of scripture is that it is important for we Christians to hear the voice of the Lord. I guarantee all full overcomers are in tune with the voice of the Lord. 1 THESSALONIANS 4:16-18 tells us: *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the*

Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words. Are you listening to the voice of the Lord?

The second thing we note in ACTS 9:10 is that Ananias recognizes the voice of the Lord. Otherwise why would Ananias answer: *...Behold, I am here, Lord?* Again all full overcomers are in tune with the voice of the Lord. They talk to the Lord often every day, and the Lord talks to them in return. In GENESIS 5:24 we find that Enoch walked with God. In HEBREWS 11:5 we find that Enoch was translated. In JUDE 1 verses 14 & 15 we read words of God spoken to Enoch. Enoch was our first example in scripture of someone being translated, and as a full overcomer we note that he was intimate in conversation with God. Elijah was the second man in scripture translated. Read 1 KINGS 19 and see how he conversed with God; see also how he heard *"...a still small voice..."* which happened to be the voice of the Lord.

The phrases "here I am," and "here am I" are often responses to inquires of the Lord to specific individuals. In scripture we often find times the Lord calls out a persons name from heaven and they answer either "here am I." or "here I am." In Ananias' case the Lord appears unto Ananias in a vision, and Ananias after hearing his name responds: *...Behold, I am here, Lord.* There was no question in Ananias' mind that he was talking with the Lord. An important part of obeying the voice of the Lord is to answer Him when you are called, and of course Ananias does this. Some of the people in scripture that answered the voice of the Lord from heaven "here am I," or "here I am," were: Abraham (GENESIS 22:1 & 11), Jacob (GENESIS 31:11, 46:2), Moses (EXODUS 3:4), Samuel (1 SAMUEL 3:4-8), Isaiah (ISAIAH 6:8). We find these very same people in HEBREWS 11. These Old Testament worthies of faith heard the voice of the Lord, they heard with listening ears of hearing, with open hearts of faith, they believed what they heard, and they followed by faith the instructions given unto them from the Lord. These very same people of Old Testament fame heard again the voice of the Lord during the time of His resurrection spoken of in EPHESIANS 4:8-10 and MATTHEW 27:52 & 53, who arose from their graves and appeared unto many. Thus they are found mentioned in the hall of fame of Old Testament full overcomers, referred to as a "great cloud of witnesses" in HEBREWS 12:1. Here in ACTS 9:10 we find Ananias of Damascus answering the call of the Lord, *...Behold, I am here, Lord...* and as we will see shortly, he was given a very important mission, and a more important message to give to Saul of Tarsus. Imagine if you yourself were given a charge of the Lord to go talk to one of the most famous terrorists! Would you do it? Essentially this was what Ananias was told of the Lord to do, that is, go talk to the terrorist who came to kill you. With out any shadow of a doubt it would take the power of the Holy Ghost to be able to accomplish such a request! So once again we see how Luke recorded in the book of ACTS some more about the acts of the Holy Ghost.

Before we continue with the instructions Ananias of Damascus was given of the Lord, let's consider some facts about the full overcomers, men and women of faith. We will find that Ananias fits their mold. All full overcomers are given things along their course of faith to overcome. These things full overcomers are given to overcome are not necessarily things of their own choosing, but rather the things they are given to overcome are put in their pathway by God. Sure we would all like to choose the things in life that we are to overcome, but that is not God's way. Let's look at some examples. Noah never really wanted to build a big ship in his back yard. Nor did Noah ever want to get flooded out, and looses his home either. But God told him to do all of this, and by faith Noah did, facing the ridicule of the masses for around one hundred years. Never before on earth had there been a flood, but when the flood did come Noah was ready, having been prepared by God for the things that were in his future. 2 PETER 2:5 also notes that Noah was a *...preacher of righteousness...* . Noah was told by God what the future held, and Noah preached of the coming flood, even though there had never even been rain before the time of the flood. GENESIS 6:3 informs the possibility that it took about one hundred and twenty years to build the ark. GENESIS 6:3 *And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.* Who did the LORD say this too? The most likely suspect is Noah, and here the LORD is telling that there would be one hundred and twenty years until the flood. GENESIS 6:12-17

gives the reason, and instructions for building the ark. Every opportunity that Noah had to explain this big ship he was building, and why he was building it, became his opportunity to be a ...*preacher of righteousness*... . In 2 PETER 3:9 Peter acknowledges that: *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* This was true also in Noah's day, so we do not know how many, or how few actually believed Noah's preaching, nevertheless Noah still was a ...*preacher of righteousness*... .

Moses wanted to deliver the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, but he wanted to do it his way. When that didn't work out God set him aside for forty years. By the time Moses was eighty years old the angel of the Lord appeared unto Moses in a burning bush and essentially told him that he was now to go and deliver the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. A couple of chapters in EXODUS tell us how Moses told God he couldn't do this thing. God assured him he could, by faith in God. By faith in God Moses goes on and did some impossible things, and becomes for us one of the greatest examples of an Old Testament full overcomer. If you will take the time to study the life of Moses you will find that he was given many things of God to overcome, and none of these things were really of Moses choosing. None of these things Moses was given to overcome were "easy" to accomplish. None of these things Moses was given to overcome were things that Moses really of himself wanted to do, nor things that he could do by himself. It was only by putting his faith and trust completely in God that he was able to do the overcoming things given of him to do.

Abraham too was given many impossible things to do; things that were not easy; things not of his own choosing; all of these things were given him of God to help Abraham overcome. None would have been harder for Abraham to do than to sacrifice Isaac, his son of promise, but in GENESIS 22 that was exactly what God had told Abraham to do. In that chapter we find that Abraham believed that God would provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering, and God did provide a lamb. God provided for us a Lamb for our sacrifice for sin. This Lamb is Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is our ultimate example of a full overcomer. As a man He was given many impossible things to overcome, and as a man some of these things He did not really want to do. For example in MATTHEW 26:39 during His last night here on earth Jesus prayed: *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:...* . It seems that all of the full overcomers in scripture somewhere along the way cried this similar cry: *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:...* . However that was not all Jesus uttered in MATTHEW 26:39, for after pausing for a moment and realizing that the things He was given to overcome as a man, was given to him by God to accomplish His purpose, and not necessarily was something He really wanted to do, but by faith He did, thus Jesus cries out in faith believing: *...nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.* On your own study all of the Old Testament full overcomers and see for yourself that the things they were given to overcome, the very things that made them full overcomers were not things of their own choosing, nor were they things that they necessarily wanted to do, or even things that they could do by themselves; thus the only way they could accomplish such things by putting their faith and trust and 100% confidence in God. The same holds true for those of us who want to be New Testament full overcomers. God sees to it that we are given things in our life to overcome. The things placed on our path by the Lord Jesus Christ to overcome are not of our own choosing, nor often times are they the things that we want to face. However if any of us are to have God's best we will have to learn to suffer these very same things with Christ Jesus, *...who for the joy who was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God...* HEBREWS 12:2. By faith is how the Old Testament worthies became overcomers. By faith in God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and by yielding to the guidance of the Holy Spirit is how we New Testament Saints will attain God's best, which is to be the Bride of Christ!

Now back to Ananias and see how he fits this mold of a man of faith. We mentioned that Ananias of Damascus was told of Lord in a vision how he was to go find the terrorist that had originally come to Damascus to seek and kill him. This is not something that Ananias wanted to do, nor was it something of his own choosing. Ananias is bold enough to answer the Lord in this matter,

stating in ACTS 9:13 & 14 -- *Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.* Ananias here shows how famous Saul of Tarsus was as a terrorist. Like Ananias of Damascus, I too would have a long list of complaints concerning Saul of Tarsus, and wouldn't have had any trouble explaining to the Lord what my complaints were. However like Ananias of Damascus, I would soon realize that I need to also put my trust and confidence in the Lord, who knows the end from the beginning, and has a plan far greater than I can yet appreciate! PSALMS 118:8 *It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.* Ananias of Damascus, by faith, will follow these seemingly hard for him to understand instructions of the Lord. In return for following by faith these instructions of the Lord we find that Ananias will be there when Saul of Tarsus receives again his sight. Also Ananias will be there when Saul of Tarsus is filled with the Holy Ghost. How would you have liked to be a witness the day the future Apostle Paul received the Holy Ghost? Additionally Ananias would be there when Saul of Tarsus was baptized, an event most significant in the life of a Jewish Christian. According to ACTS 22:16 it was Ananias of Damascus who baptized Saul of Tarsus! ACTS 9:18 records: *...and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.* ACTS 22:16 tells these words of Ananias spoken unto Saul of Tarsus: *And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.* This is a somewhat difficult wording to understand. A little better wording of this verse would read: Come then, why art thou wasting time? Get up, and be baptized, and have thy sins bathed away, having called on the name of the Lord. Brother Copley spends much time in his ACTS study book explaining this verse, for many try to use this verse as stating water baptism is essential to salvation. It is not, for if it were the thief on the cross that believed Jesus was the Saviour didn't have the opportunity to be baptized, yet Jesus told him in LUKE 23:43...*To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* In ACTS 16:31 the Apostle Paul told the Philippian jailor exactly how to get saved, stating *"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..."* Saul of Tarsus got saved on the road to Damascus when he called on the name of the Lord, as we have been studying, and three days later Ananias of Damascus was the first one given the opportunity to baptize Saul of Tarsus.

The word "calling" used here in ACTS 22:16 in our King James version is in the past perfect tense, the Greek word: epikaleomai {ep-ee-kal-eh'-om-ah-ee}, number 1941 in The Strong's Greek Concordance. It means that Saul of Tarsus had called fully on the name of the Lord before he was exhorted to be baptized by Ananias of Damascus. This means in short that Saul of Tarsus became a believer, and got saved while traveling on that road to Damascus. Before Ananias ever met Saul of Tarsus he knew that he was a believer, for the Lord had told Ananias of how Saul was a chosen vessel unto Him. Ananias addressed Saul of Tarsus as Brother Saul because Ananias knew Saul was a believer. Brother Copley further points out that "salvation is by faith in the blood of Christ apart from any works, even wholly apart from the beautiful symbol of baptism in water." The Apostle Paul in his preaching never emphasized water baptism. In fact he writes in 1 CORINTHIANS 1:17 & 18 his point of emphasis: *For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. 18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.* We have discussed this before in this study that water baptism is not a requirement in order to be saved. Water baptism is an outward expression of an inward belief that one believes in the death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In John the Baptist's day water baptism was an outward expression of an inward belief in the soon coming Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and His forgiveness of sins. After the resurrection of Jesus water baptism to a Jew was an outward expression of an inward belief that they had accepted Jesus as their own personal Saviour, His forgiveness of their sins, and that they had died unto the law of Moses and were to be counted among those who believed in the resurrected Jesus Christ. Brother Copley points out that a fellow Jew will not believe that a Jew is saved if they are not willing to be baptized in water, thus when a Jew is baptized in water the unbelieving Jews denounce the baptized Jew from Judaism, and even from their family. They are referred to by other Jews as "the blotted out," having denounced Judaism and accepted the message of the Saviour. Recall also in 1

CORINTHIANS 1:22 that Paul writes: *For the Jews require a sign,...* . Water baptism was a definite sign unto the Jews that one had accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. Saul of Tarsus' former friends, if they were present when Ananias of Damascus baptized him, knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that Saul of Tarsus had become a believer in our precious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! We will mention some more things concerning Ananias and Saul of Tarsus a little further in this study.

It was the Lord Jesus Christ who arranged this meeting between Saul of Tarsus and Ananias of Damascus. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself told both men to "***Arise, and go.***" To Saul of Tarsus we already read these instructions given him from Jesus: ACTS 9:6 *And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* ACTS 22:10 *And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.* Now here in ACTS 9:11 we read the 911 instructions that the Lord gave Ananias: *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,...* . We know by experience, and from reading MARK 7:37 that Jesus does "...all things well,..." so when He arranges a meeting between two people, even former enemies, we expect all things to go well. I guarantee that neither man, Saul of Tarsus or Ananias of Damascus, ever forgot the day they met. Saul of Tarsus never forgot the day he was filled with the Holy Ghost, just as everyone one of us who are filled with the Holy Ghost have never forgot that initial experience. And as we mentioned above Ananias was there when Saul of Tarsus got filled with the Holy Ghost. Ananias was there when Saul of Tarsus once again received his sight. Ananias was there when Saul of Tarsus was baptized. Ananias was there in Damascus as a friend for Saul of Tarsus, who on that road to Damascus had lost all his so-called friends. PROVERBS 18:24 *A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.* The point of PROVERBS 18:24 is that no matter how close your brother may stick to you, Jesus is a friend that sticketh closer. Ananias of Damascus became a friend to Saul of Tarsus, and was his first Christian friend. It was the Lord who brought them together, and it was the Lord who fostered their close friendship. Ananias then introduced Saul of Tarsus to the other disciples there at Damascus. Ananias, along with these other disciples at Damascus, became Saul of Tarsus' newfound friends, whose common ground was Jesus Christ. Certainly Saul of Tarsus learned much from these Christian disciples at Damascus.

Earlier we mentioned the fact that Saul of Tarsus headquartered out of Damascus the first three years after meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus. After these three years he was sought after by fellow Jews who wanted to kill him, for by then Saul of Tarsus was preaching what we now know as Paul's gospel message; the message that was revealed unto him in Arabia by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as is told in GALATIANS 1:17-18 -- *Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem...* . This is an important portion of scripture to understand for this is when, and where Paul's gospel message was revealed unto him. Then after these three years ACTS 9:25 and 2 CORINTHIANS 11:32 & 33 tells of Saul of Tarsus escaping from Damascus by the hands of his friends who let him down by the wall of Damascus in a basket by night. The scripture doesn't specifically say so, but I would be willing to bet that Ananias of Damascus was right there helping Saul of Tarsus escape that night he left Damascus. And just thinking of myself for a minute, I realize that the best friends that I have are my fellow Christians; people I can have close fellowship with; Jesus Christ being our common ground. It is wonderful to have such good friends.

So we see that Jesus Christ Himself arranged for Saul of Tarsus to meet Ananias of Damascus, "...a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there," as the Apostle Paul later told in ACTS 22:12. And again no doubt they became real good friends. They had the common ground of Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour. Additionally they were both Jews very familiar with the customs of the law, and they were both instructed by Jesus Christ Himself to "***Arise, and go***" to a certain place in Damascus, where they were to initially meet.

Jesus was very specific in his instructions to Ananias on how to locate Saul of Tarsus for ACTS 9:11 again states: *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus:...* . These are pretty specific instructions, instructions that are not at all hard to follow. Straight Street still exists in Damascus. It is one of the old main thoroughfares running west to east. The street called Straight was built by the Romans, and extended about 1500 meters (almost a mile) with a gate on each end of it. There were columns that used to line both sides of the street, with markets and houses on both sides. The columns also supported an aqueduct. Thus we note that one who lived on Straight Street really had it made, for there we find food, shelter, and water, and all the necessities of life. Straight Street is symbolic to us in scripture, for it represents *...having all sufficiency in all things...* 2 CORINTHIANS 9:8 that we find in Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus we find spiritual food, the water of life, a shelter in the time of storm, and all the necessities of spiritual life. PROVERBS 3:6 tells us: *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* PSALMS 37:23 further states: *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.* Following these instructions one will find the “*...straight paths for your feet...*” spoken of in HEBREWS 12:13. The street which is called Straight was symbolic in Saul of Tarsus’ life too, for from that day forward that he was filled with the Holy Ghost on Straight Street, he followed the straight path of the leading of the Holy Ghost, and in the end he received God’s best.

Let’s review ACTS 9:11 & 12 and see some more of Jesus instructions to Ananias concerning Saul of Tarsus: *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, 12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.* After locating Saul of Tarsus in the house of Judas on the street called Straight, Ananias was to note the fact that Saul of Tarsus would be praying. In the vision the Lord had told Ananias *...behold, he prayeth.* In other words the Lord told Ananias, “look, I want you to see that this man Saul of Tarsus, and when you see him you will know its him because he prayeth.” By the time Ananias got there Saul of Tarsus would have been praying three days. Praying was an occupation that Saul of Tarsus continued in the rest of his life. In 1 THESSALONIANS 5:17 Paul encourages us also to: *Pray without ceasing.* While Saul of Tarsus was involved in this continual praying at the house of Judas in Damascus, we find in verse 12 above that he was given of the Lord a vision about *...a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.* Recall that Saul of Tarsus was blinded by the glory of the Light of Jesus on the road to Damascus, and had to be led by the hand into Damascus. {ACTS 9:8 and ACTS 22:11}. One result of this physical blindness for Saul of Tarsus, his first real trial as a Christian, was the opportunity to pray without ceasing. We should also note that this time of praying also resulted in some answers from the Lord. No doubt Saul of Tarsus had inquired of the Lord during his time of ceaseless prayer on how long he would be left blind. The Lord graciously answered him in a vision, where as we noted above, the Lord told him about *...a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.*

There is a double meaning here concerning *...that he might receive his sight.* Physically Saul of Tarsus came to Damascus blind, so he expects to receive his physical eyesight back when Ananias comes and puts his hand on him. More importantly to Saul of Tarsus would be his spiritual sight. Our spiritual sight is important to all of us. And none of us can see spiritual things as we ought to without being filled with the Holy Ghost. Jesus told his disciples in JOHN 14, 15, and 16 about the importance of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost was to be a Comforter to them, and (of course) to us. {JOHN 14:26}. The Holy Ghost was also known as the Spirit of truth, as noted in JOHN 16:13. JOHN 16:13 reads: *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.* The blind need some kind of guide to be their eyes, and this is one aspect of what the Holy Ghost is to us. The Holy Ghost, among His many other responsibilities, was to open spiritual eyes, to enlighten, and shew one things to come; things that it takes spiritual eyes to see. Ananias

already had his spiritual eyes open, and knew that when he met Saul of Tarsus he was to lay hands on him that he might receive two things: (1) his physical sight, and (2) the Holy Ghost who would in turn open his spiritual eyes. We will see this happen when we get to verses 17 & 18 of ACTS 9.

However first we read of some serious questioning to the Lord by Ananias. We see this in ACTS 9:13 & 14, after Ananias was told were to go find Saul of Tarsus. ACTS 9:13 *Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.* Ananias, though a saved man and filled with the Holy Ghost, and as we have noted a man of faith, still needed clarification on the Lord's instructions, for he had some serious doubts concerning Saul of Tarsus. The Lord had been real specific in His instructions to Ananias, however the Lord had not expressed to Ananias up to this point that Saul of Tarsus was a changed man, having become a believer in Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. Ananias needed this assurance from the Lord that Saul of Tarsus was safe to approach, and indeed a believer. Ananias knew in his heart the reality of 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17, which reads: *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* And so we find the Lord answering Ananias' questioning in the next two verses of ACTS 9.

ACTS 9:15 *But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* Note that phrase in verse 15 "...Go thy way..." The phrase "...Go thy way..." is found nineteen times in scripture. Nineteen is the number having to do with FAITH. We have already talked about the FAITH of Ananias, and now we see it again in this statement to "...Go thy way." The way that the Lord wanted Ananias to go however was really not the same way Ananias would have chosen for himself. If Ananias were to really go his way, and follow his own desires, and his own leading, would he really be following by faith the leading of the Lord? No, of course not. So when the Lord says to Ananias "...Go thy way..." He means for Ananias to go by FAITH and follow the instructions given him in the vision. In other words the Lord is saying "take My way, and make it thy way." This is no different than any worthy of faith following the instructions given them of the Lord, and doing so by FAITH. Ananias, or any worthy of FAITH, has to accept and receive these instructions given them of the Lord as their own personal guidance for what they are by FAITH to do. "...Go thy way..." here means for Ananias to go the way he was instructed of the Lord to go, and to by FAITH do the things he was instructed of the Lord to do. Once Ananias accepts these instructions as his own, then the way he goes from that point forward will be the correct path, which the Lord here calls "...thy way..." The reason that Ananias can so readily accept these instructions was because he was a devout man, a godly man in other words, a man who believed the word of God, and a man who could by FAITH follow instructions of the Lord. No doubt Ananias had learned in his heart the facts of PROVERBS 3:5 & 6, which reads: *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* Ananias of Damascus will shortly put his faith into action by following the leading of the Lord, thus acknowledging that the Lord is directing his path. In verse 17 we find that "...Ananias went his way..." meaning that he went by FAITH in the way the Lord had instructed him to go. Additionally we would know nothing about Ananias of Damascus had he not allowed the Lord to direct his steps.

The Lord then reveals some things to Ananias concerning His plans for Saul of Tarsus. ACTS 9:15 *...for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* Do we read here that Ananias was to share this information with Saul of Tarsus? No, however we don't read that Ananias was not to share this information with him either. Here in ACTS 9:10-17 we find that Ananias was given instructions where to find Saul of Tarsus, and he was to pray for the return of Saul of Tarsus' eyesight. Ananias was also given insight into the future of Saul of Tarsus, and such information could be shared with Saul of Tarsus when his spiritual eyes and ears were opened to receive such information. Further we noted above the great possibility how Ananias of

Damascus became Saul of Tarsus' first Christian friend for the time Saul of Tarsus was in Damascus. Certainly Ananias of Damascus shared the information with Saul of Tarsus that the Lord explained to him in the vision. We don't ever read of our brother Luke meeting Ananias of Damascus, so it had to be Paul who told Luke what Ananias had been told by the Lord Jesus Christ in the vision given unto him.

We find that the Lord revealed five (GRACE) things to Ananias concerning Saul of Tarsus here in ACTS 9:15 & 16. First we find that Saul of Tarsus was a "chosen vessel" unto God. Second we find that Saul of Tarsus was to bear the name of Jesus unto the Gentiles. Third we find that Saul of Tarsus was to bear the name of Jesus unto kings. Forth we find that Saul of Tarsus was to bear the name of Jesus unto the children of Israel. And fifth we find that Saul of Tarsus was to suffer great things for bearing the name of Jesus unto so many.

These five points concerning Saul of Tarsus prove first of all that he was a "chosen vessel" to preach the GRACE of God to all, Gentiles, Jews, kings, and everyone he came in contact with. Later Paul would write about this in EPHESIANS 3:8 & 9 -- *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.*

Looking at some of these points a little closer we find the fact that Saul of Tarsus was a "chosen vessel" unto God is no small statement in scripture. And both of these words "chosen" and "vessel" are of extreme importance to understand. Considering the word "vessel" first, we find that there is a lot of meaning in just this one word "vessel." Implied in the meaning of "vessel" is the fact that usually a "vessel" is formed or made by someone. "Vessels" come in all shapes and sizes, and can be formed out of many materials, such as wood, gold, silver, clay, glass, and the list goes on. "Vessels" are designed to hold or to contain something, or many something's. For example ships are considered large "vessels" and they contain or possess many things all at the same time. There really is no limit as to what a particular "vessel" may possess. Consider just one eight-ounce glass "vessel" for a moment. It could possess an ocean full of water given enough time, it's only limits are that it can only possess eight ounces of water at one time. And an eight ounce glass "vessel" is not limited by only possessing water, for it can also contain eight ounces of any fluid, or any other material which could fit in it. The possibilities are endless as to what an eight-ounce glass "vessel" can hold. And what would an eight-ounce glass of gold dust be worth? How about an eight-ounce glass full of diamonds?

Now that we have expanded our thinking on "vessels" somewhat, let's narrow our focus down to the human "vessel." The Lord God made the human vessel GENESIS 2:7 tells us, stating: *And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.* The human "vessel" comes in all shapes and sizes, and a variety of colors. The human "vessel" that was formed by the Lord God was made to contain many things at once; some of these things are tangible and some of these things are intangible. For example, there are limits as to what one human "vessel" can eat or drink at one time, but there is really no limit as to how much knowledge one human "vessel" can possess at one time. There also is no limit to the amount of the love of God that any one human "vessel" can possess, however we live in a world where we find some human "vessels" possessing vast amounts of hate. Consider now the chosen "vessels" of God. God is the potter spoken of in JEREMIAH 18 who makes the "vessels" of clay into something useful unto Him. These "vessels" are His workmanship. The Apostle Paul writes us in EPHESIANS 2:10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* The Apostle Paul also writes in 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.* This treasure that the Apostle Paul is referring to here is the glorious gospel of Christ. Your earthen "vessel" is not limited as to how much of the glorious gospel of Christ it can possess. Your earthen "vessel" is only limited by your unbelief. The worthies of faith latch on to as much of the glorious gospel of Christ as their "vessel" can hold, thus they ask the Lord to fill

their cup (vessel), and to give them a larger cup (vessel) to fill. How much “...*exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think...*” can your “vessel” hold? {See EPHESIANS 3:20}. We will know the answer in the ages to come!

In ACTS 9:15 we find that Saul of Tarsus was a “chosen vessel” unto God. The Greek word translated “chosen” here is *ekloge* {ek-log-ay'}, number 1589 in the Strong's Greek Concordance. This word is only used seven times in New Testament scripture, and further is only translated this one time as “chosen.” Six times *ekloge* {ek-log-ay'} is translated as “election” as in election of God in 1 THESSALONIANS 1:4, and election of grace in ROMANS 11:5. Here in ACTS 9:15 the Lord Jesus is stating to Ananias of Damascus that Saul of Tarsus is a vessel of choice unto Me. The other six times we find *ekloge* {ek-log-ay'} translated “election” references the fact that before the foundation of the world God decreed his selection and blessing to certain persons as vessels of choice, by which He determined to bless them through Christ Jesus by grace alone. Saul of Tarsus was such a “chosen vessel.” Go look in the mirror and you will see another “chosen vessel,” chosen before the foundation of the world!

Now consider Saul of Tarsus, that “chosen vessel” of God. Before he got saved he too was like the children of Israel mentioned above, who were blinded in their unbelief with ears dull of hearing. But when Jesus Christ, The Word of Truth Himself, appeared unto Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus accepted the Truth. Jesus Light shined upon him, and Saul of Tarsus yielded unto His power. In the process his spiritual eyes were opened, and his ears too were opened to receive the instructions of God. True he was left physically blind for a season, which gave him plenty of time to pray and ponder the wonderful things he witnessed of God. In time Saul of Tarsus, that “chosen vessel” of God, came to a complete understanding of his calling of God, the fact of his “election” that he was, as it were, “one born out of due time,” as note in 1 CORINTHIANS 15:8, and made “the apostle of the Gentiles” as recorded in ROMANS 11:13, who “fully preached the gospel of Christ” according to ROMANS 15:19.

We mentioned above that there were five things revealed unto Ananias concerning Saul of Tarsus in ACTS 9:15 & 16 *...for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* So far we have only covered the fact of what it meant to be a “chosen vessel” unto God. And this is a very important point to understand. Ananias understood the importance of these words “chosen vessel.”

The second point we need to note from this portion of scripture is that Saul of Tarsus was to bear the name of Jesus unto the Gentiles. The Apostle Paul acknowledged this fact when he wrote in ROMANS 11:13 *For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.*

The third point narrows down the fact that Saul of Tarsus was to bear the name of Jesus unto certain kings, and most of them too were Gentiles. Of course we know from studying the life of the Apostle Paul that the way he got to meet these kings face to face was as a prisoner of Jesus Christ. In ACTS 26 we find the Apostle Paul as a prisoner brought before King Agrippa. Paul recounted unto the king, and those present, facts of his conversion, some of which we have been studying. In ACTS 26:28 we find King Agrippa making a statement unto Paul: *Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.* Later in life, still a prisoner, we find the Apostle Paul making his appeal unto Caesar. (Study 2 TIMOTHY 4:16 & 17). The point for us to realize here is that Saul of Tarsus was to also bear the name of Jesus unto certain kings.

The fourth point of ACTS 9:15 & 16 was that Saul of Tarsus was a “chosen vessel” to also bear the name of Jesus unto *...the children of Israel.* We find the Apostle Paul constantly in his travels going to the synagogues. In the synagogues is where the Jews met for their Sabbath day services. Paul being a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee, still dressed as a Pharisee. Thus in a synagogue often times Pharisees would be asked by the Jews in these synagogues to speak unto them. The Jews always respected, and held in high esteem the Pharisees, and were eager to hear what the Pharisees had to say. Paul always was more than willing to speak in a synagogue service when asked, and he

even wrote in ROMANS 10:1 the reason for his eagerness: *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* Many Jews got saved because of Paul's preaching. But as strange as it may sound, Paul's going to the synagogues also opened the door for him to speak unto the Gentiles. ACTS 13 records one of Paul's early sermons. In ACTS 13:42 we read: *And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.* The next Sabbath day came, and so did the whole town to hear Paul preach. The Jews were envious and spoke against the words of the Apostle Paul, which was not really a smart thing to do in the eyes of God. ACTS 13:46-48 records what happened next: *Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. 48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* Multiply this times the number of synagogues Paul attended and spoke to, and you can see how he preached to untold thousands of Jews, and in the process reached untold thousands of Gentiles. So much so that in ACTS 17:6 Paul was accused of turning the world upside down. So the fact was that Saul of Tarsus was a "chosen vessel" to also bear the name of Jesus unto ...*the children of Israel,*... and in the process of speaking to the Jews, the door was opened for many more Gentiles to hear, and receive the Word of God.

The fifth thing that was revealed unto Ananias concerning Saul of Tarsus here in ACTS 9:15 & 16 was the fact that because he was to bear the name of Jesus unto the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, he would **suffer** many things, and not just **suffer** many things in particular, but more specifically **suffer** many great things! ACTS 9:15 & 16 again states it like this: *But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* The reality of this statement is the fact that **suffering** is part of bearing the name of Jesus. This is not a popular message, thus it is seldom preached in assemblies today, but a necessary message to those who would be full overcomers. Paul in his gospel record wrote the word "**suffer**" twenty-six times, and twenty-six is the number associated with the GOSPEL, or THE GOOD NEWS of the GOSPEL. ROMANS 8:17 is one of the highlight verses that the Apostle Paul wrote unto us using the word "**suffer**," and PHILIPPIANS 1:29 also goes right along with it.

We have been taught facts of **suffering** with Christ Jesus often here at Living Water Tabernacle. Here again is some of what was written earlier in these notes: ROMANS 8:16 *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* We find here the opportunity we all have to be a joint-heir with Christ. ROMANS 8:17 explains degrees of heir-ship. ROMANS 8:17 *And if children, then heirs {kleronomos (2818)}; heirs {kleronomos (2818)} of God, and joint-heirs {sugkleronomos 4789} with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.* We see here that there are heirs, and that there are joint-heirs with Christ. A joint-heir is a fellow heir, a heir together, a heir with, or a joint participant with some other heir or heirs, and in this particular example we find ...*if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together...* with Christ as His joint-heir wife! All believers won't be "joint-heirs with Christ" even though this provision is made for all believers during this church age. But all believers are not filled with the Holy Ghost, thus they are missing the dunamis {doo'-nam-is} power that is required to qualify as a "joint-heirs with Christ." The most profound, and complete meaning of the Greek word sugkleronomos is joint-heir, or co-inheritor as of a wife with her husband! The Bride of Christ is the ultimate "better thing" Paul spoke of in HEBREWS 11:40 *God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.* The point being emphasized here in HEBREWS 11:40 is that God has given us everything to the end that we may be joint-heirs {sugkleronomos --

number 4789 in The Strong's Greek Concordance} with His Son Jesus, which is a far "better thing" than was offered the Old Testament worthies of faith! This then defines what it is to be a "full overcomer." PHILIPPIANS 1:29 *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake. "To believe on Him" for everything is how one lives "by faith."*

The sad fact is that most assemblies today do not preach to full overcomers, for if they did the doctrine of **suffering** with Christ would be preached. One more scripture the Apostle Paul wrote concerning "**suffering**" is found in 2 TIMOTHY 2:12 *If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.* Brother Hill often taught the truth of this statement by pointing out the fact that Paul is telling Timothy this; Timothy if we **suffer** with Jesus Christ, we shall also reign with Him, however if we, in our hearts, deny Him the right to **suffer** with Him, then He has no choice but to deny us the right of joint-heirship with Him. This has nothing to do with the fact of ones salvation, but has everything to do with living lives of faith, and going on to have Gods best in our lives. All Christians are heirs of God, but not all Christians are joint-heirs with Christ, for not all Christians are willing to **suffer** with Christ Jesus, and this is what ROMANS 8:17 is pointing out. So to be a *...joint-heir with Christ...* means to be willing to *...suffer with him.* Those Saints of Smyrna were willing to **suffer** with Christ, even unto death, and thus they became full overcomers.

Let's now review again ACTS 9:15 & 16 and see two more important points, which we so far have passed over. ACTS 9:15 & 16 again states it like this: 15 *But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:* 16 *For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* Note the following from these two verses. First of all the Lord revealed unto Ananias of Damascus the five facts we covered above concerning Saul of Tarsus. But in verse 16 we see that it was the Lord who would show Saul of Tarsus the "great things" he must **suffer** for Jesus name sake. And if you will carefully study Ananias of Damascus in ACTS 9:10-17, and ACTS 22:12-16 you will note that Ananias didn't tell Saul of Tarsus what "great things" he was going to **suffer** for Jesus name sake for only the Lord knew what **sufferings** lay ahead in the life of Saul of Tarsus. What can we take out of this statement for ourselves? One thing we should all know by now is that each of us has our own racecourse to run with patience. On this race course each one of us has to realize that Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith according to HEBREWS 12:1 & 2, meaning that it is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who will bring things of His design on our race course to **suffer**, if need be, for the purpose of making *...you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen...* HEBREWS 13:21. All of us on this race course to win God's best also know ROMANS 8:28, which expounds to us like this: *And we know that all things* (whether they seem good to us, or bad to us; whether we **suffer** loss of some kind, or illness of some kind; all of these things) *work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* The point here is this; it is the Lord Jesus Christ who will also have to show each of us what kind of great things we too may have to **suffer** for His name's sake. For after all, we are His workmanship, as we have so often read in EPHESIANS 2:10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

The second point I want to note here in ACTS 9:15 & 16 concerns THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL. Essentially this was what the Lord was telling Ananias of Damascus concerning Saul of Tarsus; that he would be preaching the gospel, and not to just a few, but unto many, both Jews and Gentiles, and to men and women from every walk in life, from the poor unto even kings. In our meaning of the numbers study we found that there was a number for THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL, and it was the number 27. When studying about the number 27 we found that the word "preaching" is found 27 times in scripture, twelve times in association with the Apostle Paul. In ACTS 15:35 we read that Paul was *"...teaching and preaching the word of the Lord,..."* Sometimes like in ACTS 20:9 Paul was long in preaching. In ACTS 20:25 and 28:31 we find that Paul was *"...preaching the kingdom of God..."* In ROMANS 16:25 we find that Paul was *"...preaching of*

Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began... .” In 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18 we find that Paul was “...*preaching of the cross... .”* Three verses later in 1 CORINTHIANS 1:21 we find Paul telling us that “...*it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*” In 2 CORINTHIANS 10:14 we find that Paul was also “...*preaching the gospel of Christ... .”* Thus we find in the above scriptures, and some more that we didn’t reference, the importance of THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL in Paul’s gospel. Again the number for THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL is the number 27.

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus was a monumental moment in time. As we progress with what Luke wrote us in scripture, the details he writes in ACTS 9, 22, and 26 reveal the importance of this historic event. Jesus appeared unto Saul of Tarsus as a Light from heaven with instructions that would take Saul of Tarsus to the chosen vessel the Lord before eternities past ordained him to be before the foundation of the earth!! There is no way except by faith that we can understand all of this.

When Saul of Tarsus was blinded by the Light from heaven, the Light of life, who was the Lord Jesus Christ appearing unto him, we again read in ACTS 9:9 *And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.* ACTS 26:13 tells us in Paul’s own words that the light he saw from heaven was ...*above the brightness of the sun!* To this statement agrees John the Revelator in REVELATION 1:16 where he writes; ...*his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

Ponder this for a moment, Saul of Tarsus was blinded, but neither did he, nor probably could he, eat nor drink. Why? I contend that he was overwhelmed by the inexpressible love of Christ, which flooded his life on the road to Damascus. We find what he did here in verse 11; ...*behold, he prayeth.* What else could he do? In verse 12 we read during this time that he saw ...*in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.* The Lord heard his prayers, and began to answer his requests. Saul of Tarsus knew the Old Testament scriptures like few others, and certainly during his prayers the Lord began to reveal Himself to Saul of Tarsus in a Light like he had never seen before. But it would take the power of the Holy Ghost to fully enlighten him. The prayer Paul makes in EPHESIANS 1:18 that ...*The eyes of your understanding being enlightened...* certainly has a deep meaning to one who was physically blind for a season. It was during this time of physical blindness that Saul of Tarsus eyes of understanding began to be enlightened, but again it would take the power of the Holy Ghost to fully enlighten him what he later expressed in 1 CORINTHIANS 2:9 ...*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* The three days that Saul of Tarsus was without sight, and neither did eat nor drink prepared him for the moment Ananias of Damascus would put his hands upon him.

In our studies in ACTS 9 the Lord had also ordained Ananias of Damascus to be the first believer to befriend Saul of Tarsus, and pray for his eyesight to be restored, and to receive the Holy Ghost. Saul of Tarsus is called of God to become the Apostle Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, and he will need to be full of the Holy Ghost in order to fulfil his ministry. Ananias of Damascus will be the one who introduces Saul of Tarsus to the Holy Ghost. Do you think Saul of Tarsus, our Apostle Paul, ever forgot the day he got filled with the Holy Ghost? No. In ACTS 9:10-16 the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is giving Ananias a front row seat (so to speak) to witness this most important event to the man given the calling of THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL to the Gentiles. Ananias of Damascus had no way of knowing that Saul of Tarsus would turn out to be the Apostle Paul until the Lord in a vision revealed this unto him, as noted in ACTS 9:10-16. ACTS 9:10 *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. 11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, 12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. 13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a*

chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Armed with this information, and having a great amount of faith and courage in the Lord Jesus Christ, and being led of the Holy Ghost, we read in ACTS 9:17 this concerning Ananias of Damascus: *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.* Here is another verse loaded with good information, so let's now examine some thoughts from this verse a little closer. Ananias of Damascus would be used of the Lord to open the eyes of Saul of Tarsus literally, and spiritually, by introducing Saul of Tarsus to the Holy Ghost.

When Ananias addresses Saul of Tarsus as "*Brother Saul,*" Ananias was acknowledging the fact revealed unto him by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself that Saul of Tarsus was indeed a born again believer. This was the first time Saul of Tarsus had been addressed like this: "*...Brother Saul,...* ." We know from ACTS 9:12 that Saul of Tarsus also was expecting Ananias of Damascus to find him in the house of Judas praying. So the two men meet, Saul of Tarsus the feared former Christian persecutor, and Ananias of Damascus, the devout man of God with the good report. You can imagine that there was an air of excitement in Ananias' voice when he addressed Saul of Tarsus, for after all it was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who sent Ananias on this very important mission, and when Ananias found Saul of Tarsus to be right where he was told he would be, no doubt some exciting emotions came over him, and quickly Ananias lays his hands on Saul of Tarsus and expounds: *...Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.* These words of Ananias spoken unto Saul of Tarsus were Holy Ghost inspired words; words that echoed the love of God; powerful words full of testimony; words from the Lord, spoken by a man with a tender soothing voice expressing much compassion for a fellow Saint; and were probably the most comforting human voiced words that Saul of Tarsus had heard since being blinded on the road to Damascus. Words with this much power in them had been heard by Saul of Tarsus before when spoken by Stephen in ACTS chapter 7, however now Saul of Tarsus was hearing these powerful Holy Ghost inspired words with a believing tender heart of a new born Saint, and they brought much comfort to him. This salutation of Ananias of Damascus also stuck with Saul of Tarsus for years, for the Apostle Paul himself states in ACTS 22:12 & 13 how Ananias of Damascus came and said unto him at this time: *...Brother Saul, receive thy sight.*

After reading these two portions of scripture, do you think Saul of Tarsus missed his eyesight? Oh yes, more than we can imagine. Years later Paul remember how Ananias said unto him: *...Brother Saul, receive thy sight.* (ACTS 22:13). There is a double meaning here. His eyesight was extremely important to him. While in his blinded condition the Lord used this short time of physical blindness to reveal some important things of Himself unto Saul of Tarsus. For one thing when Saul of Tarsus was in this physical blind condition his focus was totally upon the Lord, and not upon the things of this world. We mentioned earlier about some of the things the Lord revealed unto Saul of Tarsus concerning his future while he was in this physically blind condition, which is recorded in ACTS 26:16-18. ACTS 26:16 *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.* These three verses are a ninety-nine-word sentence in our King James Version of scripture. It took the Apostle Paul over twenty years before he could further reveal what the Lord Jesus Christ told him on the road to Damascus. I am sure Saul of Tarsus couldn't yet fully comprehend on the road to Damascus these words of truth Jesus spoke to him, yet the Lord here told him that he would further reveal Himself to him in future appearances. We know it would take the power of the Holy Ghost to shew Saul of Tarsus the depths

of the truths Jesus would show him. On the road to Damascus Saul of Tarsus' spiritual eyes were being enlightened during this time of his physical blindness. In other words the same Light that blinded the eyes of Saul also enlightened his spiritual heart to see things he had never seen before, and to think differently about Jesus, and Christians. This spiritual enlightenment was just a preview of great and marvelous things to come in his life.

We think of how comforting then were these Holy Ghost inspired words of Ananias of Damascus in ACTS 9:17 to the ears of Saul of Tarsus: *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.* The warm human touch of Ananias of Damascus, a Holy Ghost inspired Saint, was no doubt soothing to blind Saul of Tarsus. And we see here that Ananias putting his hands on Saul of Tarsus had a two-fold related purpose: *...that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.*

ACTS 9:18 *And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.* When the power of the Holy Ghost came upon believing Saul of Tarsus in ACTS 9:18 *...immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales...* . The scales that fell from Saul's eyes were given to him of the Lord to protect his eyes from that blinding light that Paul saw in the way on the road to Damascus a few days earlier. In one sense this shows us of God's great love and thoughtfulness towards us in every aspect of our lives. Had the Lord not given Saul these "scales" to protect his eyes, he may very well have been physically blind the rest of his life. The scales falling off are also representative of the truth that can only be revealed by the Holy Spirit. Those who haven't been filled with the Holy Ghost have "scales" over their spiritual eyes, which keep them from seeing all the things God would like them to see. That's why being filled with the Holy Ghost is such an eye opening experience. Jesus told his disciples in JOHN 16:12-15: *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* How can you be guided into all the truth without the Holy Ghost? You can't. Further how can you see all the truth without the guidance of the Holy Ghost? You can't. If you haven't yet received the Holy Ghost since ye believed (see ACTS 19:2-6) then there are "scales" over your spiritual eyes, which keep you from seeing all of the truth.

Though it is not told us here, when Saul of Tarsus was filled with the Holy Ghost when Ananias of Damascus laid his hands on him, the sign and the evidence that Saul was filled was he spoke in tongues, just like those on the day of Pentecost in ACTS 2:4; just like those at the house of Cornelius in ACTS 10:46; and just like the twelve disciples Paul prayed for to receive the Holy Ghost in ACTS 19:6.

The last part of ACTS 9:18 informs us that when Ananias of Damascus put his hands on Saul of Tarsus that *...immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.* We have discussed previously that after the resurrection of Jesus water baptism to a Jew was an outward expression of an inward belief that they had accepted Jesus as their own personal Saviour, His forgiveness of their sins, and that they had died unto the law of Moses and were to be counted among those who believed in the resurrected Jesus Christ. Saul of Tarsus submitted to having Ananias of Damascus baptize him. Brother Copley points out that a fellow Jew will not believe that a Jew is saved if they are not willing to be baptized in water, thus when a Jew is baptized in water the unbelieving Jews denounce the baptized Jew from Judaism, and even from their family. They are referred to by other Jews as "the blotted out," having denounced Judaism and accepted the message of the Saviour. We also mentioned previously also in 1 CORINTHIANS 1:22 that Paul writes: *For the Jews require a sign,...* . Water baptism was a definite sign unto the Jews that one had accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. Saul of Tarsus'

former friends, if they were present when Ananias of Damascus baptized him, knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that Saul of Tarsus had become a believer in our precious Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

ACTS 9:19 tells this of Saul of Tarsus: *And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.* The disciples which were at Damascus included Ananias of Damascus, and the other Christians there that originally Saul of Tarsus came to Damascus to persecute with the authority of the high priest at Jerusalem. Then Jesus came and changed the whole environment, and now Saul of Tarsus spent his time with those disciples who were at Damascus. And when it was time for a Synagogue service, Saul of Tarsus went with them. Recall that Saul of Tarsus was a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee, and thus he still dressed as a Pharisee. However now all of his Pharisee training took on the perspective of a believer. Recall also in a Synagogue service that often times if a Pharisee was in attendance that they would be asked to say something. Thus we find this happening in ACTS 19:20 *And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.* His message at this point in his Christian career was "Christ is the Son of God!" What else did he know? Nothing, for Paul's gospel message hadn't been revealed unto him at this point in time. But he did preach this foundational truth, Christ, that he is the Son of God. We read in 1 CORINTHIANS 3:11 *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* Saul of Tarsus preached this fact to the Jews first, that "Christ is the Son of God" as they assembled in the synagogues of Damascus. And notice this also, that Saul of Tarsus began preaching after being filled with the Holy Ghost. Here in ACTS 19:20 Saul of Tarsus was then fulfilling the part of the statement made concerning him in ACTS 26:16 when Jesus told him *...I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen...* So Saul preached what he had witnessed, and seen, that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God, and he preached this by the power an inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

How was Saul of Tarsus' preaching received? We find our answer in ACTS 9:21 & 22 -- *But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? 22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.* He could prove this from personal witness, and from Old Testament scriptures that he was very familiar with.

So Saul of Tarsus life was changed on the road to Damascus, and the course of his life had a new direction as we read above in ACTS 26:16-18. The truth of EPHESIANS 2:10 became a reality in the life of Saul of Tarsus: *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* Years later near the end of his life the Apostle Paul wrote in his first letter to Timothy a reflection of how he came into the ministry. 1 TIMOTHY 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;... 12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; 13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.*

Next in ACTS 9:23 we find this revealing statement: *And after that many days were fulfilled,...* which is explained in GALATIANS 1. "Many days" is a rather ambiguous statement, which can mean anything from several days, to in this instance nearly three years. GALATIANS 1:15 *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.* What we learn here is that

Paul didn't remain too long in Damascus before the Lord led him in to the desert regions of Arabia where Moses before him received the ten commandments. Here the Lord taught this young Hebrew Christian by the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and the revelation of Jesus Christ, the gospel which Paul was to preach. That is why Paul wrote in GALATIANS 1:11 & 12 -- *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.* Realize here that the one hundred chapters we have of Paul's gospel message left for us in New Testament scripture was revealed to him during this approximate three years he was in Arabia.

Before we move on with what Luke wrote for us in ACTS in introducing how Saul of Tarsus became our Apostle Paul, let's take a moment to appreciate a little of what was revealed unto Paul during his approximate three years he was in Arabia. In this present church age it is our enlightened privilege to learn and to know Paul's gospel, and furthermore we need to know Paul's gospel for the following two reasons: ROMANS 2:16 *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.* ROMANS 16:25 *Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel,* (Who of the Godhead has the power to stablish you? The answer is the Holy Ghost. We need to be filled full of the Holy Ghost to understand fully Paul's gospel!) *and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, 26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: 27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.*

There are four facts of that power found in this one sentence that will establish us; that will equip each of us to be a full overcomer, if we will but yield to such doctrine. Of course we must first know where this power comes from, and these four facts of power come from the Holy Ghost. ACTS 1:8 *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:...*

Fact (1). He will establish you according to Paul's gospel. We must then know Paul's gospel in order to be established. After we learn Paul's gospel, then we can clearly see God's message throughout the whole Bible. If we cannot examine the rest of the scripture in the light of Paul's gospel, then we are really limited as to what we can see. Without Paul's gospel it will be impossible to achieve God's best in our lives during this present church age.

Fact (2). The second fact that will establish you is the preaching of Jesus Christ. Paul was not preaching the do's and don'ts of the law, like he was taught by gifted men, but rather his focus was upon Jesus Christ, thus he preached the truth concerning Jesus Christ. Paul had learned by first hand experience with Jesus Christ, that *...grace and truth came by Jesus Christ...* JOHN 1:17. Jesus Christ Himself, like a mystery, was revealed unto the Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. Jesus revealed Himself unto Paul in that brighter than noonday sun light that appeared unto Paul, and told him that He was *...Jesus whom thou persecutest...* ACTS 9:5. Thus from his first sermon forward Paul always preached that Jesus Christ *...is the Son of God...* ACTS 9:20.

Fact (3). The third fact that will establish you is that Paul's gospel reveals the mystery that was kept secret in the Old Testament. This mystery is the church age. The church age was hidden to those of the Old Testament, but was revealed unto Paul. The purpose of this church age also was revealed to Paul, and once we see that, then all of the scripture, both Old Testament, and the New Testament is opened unto us. That is why Paul is able to write in verse 26 that this mystery that was hidden since the world began is now made manifest unto Paul; that this mystery is revealed unto us by the gospel of Paul.

Interestingly we find the Apostle Paul using the word mystery(s) nineteen times in his epistles. Nineteen is the number that has to do with FAITH. No wonder then that the Apostle Paul also wrote in this very same ROMANS epistle this statement found in ROMANS 10:17 *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* It is this very same word of God that the Apostle Paul references in his fourth fact of establishing power found here in ROMANS 16:25-27.

Fact (4). The fourth fact of the power that will establish you is *...the scriptures of the prophets, that is the Old Testament prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God.* It is not a message of law, but rather of grace. And he goes on to write that his gospel was *...made know to all nations for the obedience of faith...* ROMANS 16:26.

Before we get back to what Luke wrote us in ACTS, there is one more important mystery Paul revealed in EPHESIANS 3. EPHESIANS 3:1 *For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,* 2 *If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:* 3 *How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,* 4 *Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)* 5 *Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;* 6 *That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:* 7 *Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.* 8 *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;* 9 *And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:...*

The mystery Paul writes about here is explained in EPHESIANS 3:6 *...That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.* This verse has a depth to it that incorporates the other mysteries revealed unto Paul, which very few Christians ever grasp, or ever see, mainly because the vast majority of Christian pastors and teachers don't know, and haven't been properly taught what it means to be fellowheirs with Christ. The Kingdom Apostle didn't know this, or teach this because this was Paul's gospel message to teach, which is "the mystery of Christ" referenced in EPHESIANS 3:4. The Greek word translated "fellowheirs" here in EPHESIANS 3:6 is again sugkleronomos {soong-klay-ron-om'-os}, number 4789 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, and sugkleronomos elevates the word "fellowheirs" to it's highest levels. Sugkleronomos also translates to "heirs with him" in HEBREWS 11:9; "heirs together" in 1 PETER 3:7; and "joint-heirs with Christ" in ROMANS 8:17. All believers won't be "joint-heirs with Christ" even though this provision is made for all believers during this church age. But all believers are not filled with the Holy Ghost, thus they are missing the dunamis {doo'-nam-is} power that is required to qualify as a "joint-heirs with Christ." The most profound, and complete meaning of the Greek word sugkleronomos is joint-heir, or co-inheritor as of a wife with her husband! The Bride of Christ is the ultimate "better thing" Paul spoke of in HEBREWS 11:40 *God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.* The point being emphasized here in HEBREWS 11:40 is that God has given us everything to the end that we may be joint-heirs {sugkleronomos -- number 4789 in The Strong's Greek Concordance} with His Son Jesus, which is a far "better thing" than was offered the Old Testament worthies of faith! This then defines what it is to be a "full overcomer."

Back in ACTS 9 between verses 22 and 23 we find Saul of Tarsus, our Apostle Paul, armed with this gospel message he was shown by revelation of Jesus Christ in Arabia returning after three years to the place he had a few Christian friends, Damascus. Saul of Tarsus wasn't able to stay there very long for as we read in ACTS 9:23 *And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:* 24 *But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.* Concerning this time the Apostle Paul writes in 2 CORINTHIANS 11:32 & 33 *In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:* 33 *And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.* ACTS 9:25 & 26 finishes this part of the story. ACTS 9:25 *Then the disciples (of Damascus) took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.* 26 *And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.* Please note this fact concerning those at Jerusalem concerning Saul of Tarsus, who became our Apostle Paul, *...they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a*

disciple. GALATIANS 1:18 explains the “many days” of ACTS 9:23 stating: Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem... . Here we see that Saul of Tarsus after three years returned to Jerusalem, his former residence. This was his first visit back in Jerusalem as a Christian. His old friends were on the opposite side of faith, and would not receive him. The Christians of Jerusalem at this time were exclusively all Jews, and prior to getting saved the only association that Saul of Tarsus had with them was as a persecutor, none of whom were looking forward to seeing him again. That is why we read here in ACTS 9:26 ...they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

So it seems Saul of Tarsus was at a dead end, which was the case except for Barnabas. We owe a debt of gratitude for Barnabas, *...a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith...* according to ACTS 11:24. At this point in time when it seemed that Saul of Tarsus was shunned, we read in ACTS 9:27 *But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.* This is another verse rich with information. Our brother in the Lord, Luke, introduced us to Barnabas in ACTS 4:36 & 37 where he was associated with the early church at Jerusalem, and had given money to the Apostles for distribution as they in church at Jerusalem had all things common according to ACTS 2:44 & 45, and ACTS 4:32. We are not told if Barnabas was among the hundred and twenty filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, but if not he was filled with the Holy Ghost shortly afterward. Barnabas name means the son of consolation, that is son of exhortation, which also means son of encouragement. Also some translations refer to Barnabas as the son of comfort, the man of encouragement, and even one translation refers to Barnabas as the preacher. All these different meanings of Barnabas' name are certainly fitting. So we find here in ACTS 9:27 that Barnabas had befriended Saul of Tarsus, and brought him to the Apostles. Paul himself clarifies who he saw on this visit in GALATIANS 1:18 & 19 -- *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.*

Let's read ACTS 9:27 again: *But Barnabas took him, (Saul of Tarsus) and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.* As you read, and reread this verse it becomes apparent that Barnabas has already spent some time with Saul of Tarsus, and he would have done so at Damascus. Ananias of Damascus may have introduced Barnabas to Saul of Tarsus, or Barnabas may have been passing through Damascus one day when Saul of Tarsus spoke in one of the synagogues of Damascus. We are not told how they got acquainted, but Barnabas no doubt heard Saul of Tarsus tell first hand how that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. {See ACTS 9:20}. Barnabas also knew the story of how Saul of Tarsus had met the Lord on the way to Damascus, and how the Lord had spoken unto him, so Barnabas knew the testimony of how Saul of Tarsus got saved. Thus Barnabas declares to the apostles now in Jerusalem how that Saul of Tarsus had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus, and how Jesus had spoken unto him.

The Greek word “boldly” used here in both ACTS 9:27 & 29 is *parrhesiazomai* {par-hray-see-ad'-zom-ahee}, number 3955 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, which interestingly is only used in association with the Apostle Paul, and is found nine times with his speaking boldly, and preaching boldly with the power of the Holy Ghost behind his words! We would expect this from our beloved Apostle Paul, and he followed this pattern throughout all of his ministry, preaching and teaching with the power of the Holy Ghost inspiring his every word.

Because of Barnabas introducing Saul of Tarsus to some of those at Jerusalem we next read in ACTS 9:28 *And he (Saul of Tarsus) was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.* As we read above in GALATIANS 1:18 & 19 Saul of Tarsus spent time with the Apostle Peter, and James the Lord's brother, and as we just read here in ACTS 9:28 he also *...was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.*

Note again the power of the Holy Ghost behind Saul of Tarsus' powerful preaching in ACTS 9:29. ACTS 9:29 *And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.* The Grecians were Greek speaking Jews, and Saul of

Tarsus, our Apostle Paul spoke Greek, Latin, and Hebrew scripture tells us. Saul of Tarsus preached boldly that Christ is the Son of God (ACTS 9:20); he preached boldly that Jesus was the very Christ (ACTS 9:22); and spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus in ACTS 9:27 and 29. In ACTS 6:9 & 10 we find indications that the Grecians were part of the group that disputed with Stephen, so it is kind of ironic that perhaps some of the same individuals were now disputing with Saul of Tarsus concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. They went about to kill Stephen, and here in ACTS 9:29 they went about to slay Saul of Tarsus.

Before we read ACTS 9:30 & 31 we must first read Paul's own testimony that he gives in ACTS 22 of this time in his life, which explains why those Grecians in Jerusalem went about to slay him. ACTS 22:17 *And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, (after being away these three years) even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; 18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. 19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: 20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. 21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.*

These words underlined in verse 18 & 21 are red-letter words spoken by Jesus unto Saul of Tarsus while he prayed there in Jerusalem. And three things were made plain unto him: (1) Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; (2) for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. (3) Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. Thus it was shown to Saul of Tarsus by the Lord himself that the gospel message he was given to preach wasn't a message that would be received by those Jews in Jerusalem, but rather was a message that was to be preached unto the Gentiles, who were far outside the bounds of Jerusalem. The church age at this point in time was a hidden thing to those in Jerusalem. Later in ACTS 15 they would see this, but not yet. So now as we return to ACTS 9 we get a better picture that it was the Lord who order Saul of Tarsus exit from Jerusalem.

ACTS 9:30 *Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.* Again a great deal of information is stated in this verse. Barnabas, Peter and James we know were the main "brethren" who received Saul of Tarsus on this his first visit back to Jerusalem after being saved. So they were probably the "brethren" we read about in ACTS 9:30 that *...brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.* The word "brought" means to lead down, or to bring down. So it is possible that Barnabas and probably at least Peter accompanied Saul of Tarsus down to Caesarea the main sea port closest to Jerusalem. Caesarea became an important place in Paul's life. Tarsus was the town in Cilicia where Saul of Tarsus was born, and grew up according to ACTS 22:3.

Let's do a little history here, which isn't commonly taught concerning Saul of Tarsus, our Apostle Paul. It will be about five years later when we next read of Saul of Tarsus in the book of ACTS, which is in ACTS 11:25. If there were any so-called silent years in the life of Paul it would have been these next approximate five years. What happened to Saul of Tarsus during these five silent years? Our best clues are found in Paul's own words of 2 CORINTHIANS 11. 2 CORINTHIANS was most likely written during the time frame between ACTS 19 and 20. The only other letters Paul had written before 2 CORINTHIANS, was 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS, and 1 CORINTHIANS. By the time Paul writes 2 CORINTHIANS he was in the middle of what we call his third missionary journey. Here is some of what he wrote in 2 CORINTHIANS 11 concerning the things which had happened unto him prior to his writing this. The specifics of the following events are for the most part not recorded in the book of ACTS, and some are. A significant amount of the following sufferings occurred during this approximate five year silent period from ACTS 9:30 to ACTS 11:25. Paul in 2 CORINTHIANS 11:23-31 is reflecting back on what has happened to him since becoming a minister of Christ, and these events were not written in chronological order. 2 CORINTHIANS 11:23 *Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more*

abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? 30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. 31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. 32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: 33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands. Some of these sufferings happened during these next five years past ACTS 9:30. Conybeare and Howson specifically note in their book *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* that the five Jewish scourging's, and two of the three Roman beatings with rods, and the three shipwrecks recorded in verse 25 are not recorded in the book of ACTS. Both Paul and Luke later suffered another shipwreck in ACTS 27. So it is thought that most of these events mentioned in 2 CORINTHIANS 11:25 happened after Saul of Tarsus returned to Tarsus, and before the time frame when Barnabas sought him out in ACTS 11:25. We read where Saul of Tarsus was during this time in GALATIANS 1:21 *Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.* Tarsus was a city of Cilicia according to ACTS 21:39, and ACTS 22:3.

So again we ask, what did Saul of Tarsus do during these approximate five silent years? We must realize by the time Saul of Tarsus returned to Tarsus in ACTS 9:30 that he was equipped with the gospel message the Lord Jesus Christ gave him to preach. And we just read Paul's own words in GALATIANS 1:21 how he came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, so did he preach there? Saul of Tarsus was called to be the Apostle unto the Gentiles, and we know that he availed himself of every opportunity to attend synagogue services everywhere he went. We also know he continued this pattern when he returned to his home-town of Tarsus. Every opportunity he got after being saved he preached that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God, and suffered these many things recorded in 2 CORINTHIANS 11 for his persistence. The five so called silent years in Saul of Tarsus' life from ACTS 9:30 to ACTS 11:25 weren't really silent at all, but rather were full every day in doing the work of a minister, and in time the work of an apostle, for which he suffered many things. His was not a trial free life. Don't expect your life to be trial free either, especially if you are a racecourse runner following the Apostle Paul as he followed Christ.

Were any churches established by Saul of Tarsus during this time? We find no scriptural account of the founding of churches in the regions of Cilicia, and Syria by Saul of Tarsus, except for what is recorded in ACTS 15:41 when Paul began his second missionary journey. ACTS 15:41 *And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.* Even though we find no scriptural record of Paul founding any churches in Syria and Cilicia, we must acknowledge that he must have founded some churches at Syria and Cilicia if he returned to these assemblies in ACTS 15:41 at the beginning of his second missionary journey confirming them. Thus we have to assume that these churches at Syria and Cilicia must have been founded by Saul of Tarsus during the time frame these approximate five silent years when he had returned to Tarsus as noted in ACTS 9:30 and GALATIANS 1:21. As for Tarsus the city itself, it was one of the most important cities in Cilicia, and was a major trade hub as well as a cultural center famous for Greek literature and philosophy. Certainly Saul of Tarsus would have been familiar where all the synagogues were in the regions nearby Tarsus, and when he returned to his boyhood town in ACTS 9:30 we can safely know that he continued boldly expounding the name of the Lord Jesus, and began to teach the gospel message he received from the Lord Jesus Christ in the region of Arabia.

ACTS 9:31 *Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were*

multiplied. The Apostle Paul explained in GALATIANS 1:22 & 23 a little more of why these churches had rest, writing: *And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: 23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.* In other words the persecution that began against the church at Jerusalem in ACTS 8:1 had caused many to flee, and they fled to the regions of Judaea and Samaria, but now Saul of Tarsus was no longer a threat having now been saved, and having departed the region.

Peter the Evangelist

ACTS 9:32 *And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. 33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. 34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. 35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.*

After the churches had rest throughout Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria, we find the Apostle Peter traveling outside the limits of Jerusalem, as he also did in ACTS 8. The purpose of his travels seems to be to encourage all the Saints, which had scattered from Jerusalem after the persecution of Saul of Tarsus. We must also note that Peter was known of the Saints, and attracted a crowd everywhere he went. In ACTS 9:32-35 we find Peter at Lydda, about 32 miles west of Jerusalem. History records that Lydda was a place famous for Jewish doctors. We gather from the narrative that Peter came there to encourage the Saints of Lydda and nearby Saron, who apparently made Peter aware of a man named Aeneas, who was sick in bed of the palsy eight years. Obviously the doctors from that area couldn't help Aeneas, but the Great Physician, the Lord Jesus Christ could. Recall what we read earlier in this study from ACTS 5:12 *And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people;... 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.* Obviously Peter had a healing ministry, and had seen many healed and delivered throughout his ministry such as the lame man in ACTS 3, and these we just read about in ACTS 5. Peter also knew the facts of HEBREWS 13:8 even though it hadn't yet been written: *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.* Peter himself would later write in 1 PETER 2:24 this concerning the Lord Jesus Christ: *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.* So we read in our text above in ACTS 9:34 when Peter found Aeneas sick in bed: *...Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.* Of course we know that immediately Aeneas arose from his bed healed of the palsy by the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result of this miracle ACTS 9:35 records: *And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.* And the fame of the Apostle Peter spread.

Before we read any further here in ACTS 9 let's read something from MATTHEW 10 that Jesus told His twelve disciples as He sent them forth to preach early on in His ministry. Jesus told them in MATTHEW 10:8 *Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.* After they received the Holy Ghost in ACTS 2 they then truly had the power to accomplish this assignment, which if you think about it, had no time limit. With this thought in mind let's now read the next few verses in ACTS 9.

About five miles away from Lydda was Joppa. ACTS 9:36 *Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. 38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring*

him that he would not delay to come to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. 42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

Obviously the Lord was the One who raised Tabitha from the dead as Peter prayed for her. Peter received his encouragement from the Lord to pray for Tabitha to be raised from the dead. Brother Copley here notes that the raising of life to Dorcas (Tabitha) figures the national resurrection of Israel, as outlined in EZEKIEL 37, where we hear the rattle of the “dry bones.” Dorcas is the Greek and Tabitha is the Syriac for gazelle. Indeed, with gazelle-like swiftness, resurrected and restored Israel will spread the glad tidings to the nations. ISAIAH 27:6 *...Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.* The end result will be just like is stated here in ACTS 9:42 *...and many believed in the Lord.*

For a moment let's consider the examples left for us in scripture of people who were raised from the dead, besides Jesus, and besides Paul. There are eight, which happens to also be a number of RESURRECTION or NEW BEGINNING. In the Old Testament we find three examples of people raised from the dead: a widows son, a rich persons child, and a dead man during the time of burial. (1) The widows son raised by the LORD because of the prayer of faith of Elijah in 1 KINGS 17:17-25. (2) The son of the Shunammite, a wealthy woman, who was raised from the dead because of the faith of Elisha in 2 KINGS 4:32-37. (3) In line with the double portion of the spirit of Elijah granted to Elisha, another man was resurrected from the dead during his burial after touching the bones of Elisha in his sepulchre, as told in 2 KINGS 13:20 & 21. In the New Testament Jesus raised from the dead a widows son, a rich persons child, and a dead man during the time of burial. Jesus raised from the dead (4) a widows son in LUKE 7:11-18, a (5) rich persons child, in LUKE 8:41-56 and MARK 5:35-43, and (6) a dead man during the time of burial, Lazarus in JOHN 11. The last two examples of people raised from the dead, besides Jesus, and besides Paul, revolve around the ministries of the (7) Apostle Peter, which we just read above in ACTS 9:36-42 raising Tabitha from the dead, and (8) the Apostle Paul, who raised Eutychus from the dead in by the prayer of faith in ACTS 20:9 & 10.

This is just the record of those raised from the dead in scripture, but remember that God is not in a box, and there are no limits of what He can do. With God all things are possible ...MATTHEW 19:26. MARK 9:23 says it this way: *Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.* MARK 10:27 reads: *And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.* We find this statement of Jesus in MARK 14:36 *And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee...* . LUKE 1:37 states: *For with God nothing shall be impossible.* And one more verse found in LUKE 18:27 informs us: *And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.*

Since there are no limits with what God can do, we must note that there is an untold number of examples since Christ was raised from the dead of others raised from the dead by the prayer of faith. Smith Wigglesworth is noted to have prayed for at least fourteen different people during his ministry who were raised from the dead! I have heard testimonies in my lifetime of several others who were raised from the dead, and you probably have heard similar testimonies. The examples we have left for us in scripture are there to encourage our faith, to believe that with God all things are possible. The end result of all these miracles of people being raised from the dead is that our faith is encouraged, and like we read in ACTS 9:42 *...and many believed in the Lord.* The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 CORINTHIANS 1:9 *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: 10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;...*