
a ***Grace Notes*** course

The Acts of the Apostles

an expositional study
by Warren Doud

Lesson 401: **Acts 22:1-30**

ACTS

ACTS401 - Acts 22:1-30

Contents

ACTS 22:1-30.....	3
Baptism.....	10
Damascus.....	12
Hellenists and Arameans	16
Persecution of the Early Church	19

ACTS 22:1-30

ACTS 22:1. *Men, brethren, and fathers,* A common form of address used by the Jews; (see Acts 7:2) but that the apostle should introduce his speech to these people in this manner, after they had treated him so inhumanly, as to drag him out of the temple, and beat him so unmercifully, is remarkable, and worthy of observation, when they scarcely deserved the name of “men”; and yet he not only gives them this, but calls them “brethren”, they being his countrymen and kinsmen according to the flesh; and fathers, there being some among them, who might be men in years, and even members of the Sanhedrim, and elders of the people, that were now got among the crowd: this shows how ready the apostle was to put up with affronts, and to forgive injuries done him: ***hear ye my defense, which I make now unto you;*** in opposition to the charges brought against him, of speaking ill of the people of the Jews, the law of Moses, and of the temple, and in order to clear himself of these imputations, and vindicate his character and conduct.

ACTS 22:2. *And when they heard that he spoke in the Hebrew tongue to them,* (see Gill on “Acts 21:40”). ***they kept the more silence;*** it being their mother tongue, and which they best understood; and which the captain and the Roman soldiers might not so well understand; and chiefly because the Hellenistic language was not so agreeable to them, nor the Hellenistic Jews, who spoke the Greek language, and used the Greek version of the Bible; and such an one they took Paul to be, besides his being a Christian; wherefore when they heard him speak in the Hebrew tongue, it conciliated their minds more to him, at least engaged their attention the more to what he was about to say: ***and he said;*** the Syriac and Ethiopic versions add, “to them”, as follows.

ACTS 22:3. *I am verily a man which am a Jew,* By birth, a thorough genuine one; an Hebrew of the Hebrews, both by father and mother side, both parents being Jews, and so a true descendant from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: ***born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia;*** (see Gill on “Acts 21:39”). ***yet brought up in this city;*** the city of Jerusalem; though Tarsus was the place of his birth, he had his education at Jerusalem: ***at the feet of Gamaliel;*** of whom (see Acts 5:34) it was the custom of scholars among the Jews, to sit at the feet of their masters, when instructed by them; (see Deuteronomy 33:3) hence that saying of Jose ben Joezer; “let thy house be an house of resort for the wise men, and be thou dusting thyself, , “with the dust of their feet”.” which by one of their commentators is interpreted two ways, either “as if it was said that thou shouldst walk after them; for he that walks raises the dust with his feet, and he that goes after him is filled with the dust which he raises with his feet; or else that thou shouldst sit at their feet upon the ground, for so it was usual, that the master sat upon a bench, and the scholars sat at his feet upon the floor.” This latter sense is commonly understood, and adapted to the passage here, as illustrating it; though it may be, that the sense may only be this, that the apostle boarded in Gamaliel’s house, ate at his table, and familiarly conversed with him; which he modestly expresses by being brought up at his feet, who was a man that was had in great reverence with the Jews; and this sense seems the rather to be the sense of the passage, since his learning is expressed in the next clause; and since; till after Gamaliel’s time, it was not usual for scholars to sit when they learned; for the tradition is , that “from the times of Moses to Rabban Gamaliel, they (the scholars) did not learn the law but standing; after Rabban Gamaliel died, sickness came into the world, and they learned the law sitting; and hence it is said, that after Rabban Gamaliel died, the

glory of the law ceased.” It follows, *[and] taught according to the perfect law of the fathers*; not the law which the Jewish fathers received from Moses, though Paul was instructed in this, but in the oral law, the “Mishna”, or traditions of the elders, in which he greatly profited, and exceeded others, (Galatians 1:14). *And was zealous towards God*; or “a zealot of God”; one of those who were called “Kanaim”, or zealots; who in their great zeal for the glory of God, took away the lives of men, when they found them guilty of what they judged a capital crime; (see Matthew 10:4, John 16:2). The Vulgate Latin version reads, “zealous of the law”; both written and oral, the law of Moses, and the traditions of the fathers: *as ye all are this day*; having a zeal for God, and the law, but not according to knowledge.

ACTS 22:4. *And I persecuted this way unto the death*, That is, the Christian religion, and the professors of it; whom the apostle breathed out threatenings and slaughter against, haled out of their houses, and committed to prison; consented to their death, as he did to Stephen’s; and whenever it was put to the vote, whether they should die or not, he gave his voice against them; so that he was a most bitter enemy, and an implacable persecutor of them; which shows how very averse he was to this way, and how great his prejudices were against it; wherefore it must be a work of divine power, and there must be the singular hand of God in it, to reconcile him to it, and cause him to embrace and profess it: *binding and delivering into prisons, both men and women*: (see Acts 8:3, 9:2).

ACTS 22:5. *As also the high priest doth bear me witness*, Either Annas, or Caiaphas, who was at that time high priest; and it should seem by this, that he was still in being; or else that the apostle had preserved his letter, written with his own hand, which he was able to produce at any time, as a testimony of the

truth of what he had said, or was about to say; since he speaks of him (as now) bearing him witness, or as one that could: *and all the estate of the elders*; the whole Jewish sanhedrim, for this character respects not men in years, but men in office, and such who were members of the high court of judicature in Jerusalem; *from whom also I received letters unto the brethren*; some render it “against the brethren”, as if the Christians were meant; whereas the apostle intends the Jews of the synagogue at Damascus, whom the apostle calls brethren; because they were of the same nation, and his kinsmen according to the flesh; and, at that time, of the same religion and principles with him; and this is put out of doubt, by the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, which render it, “the brethren that were at Damascus”: and these letters were to recommend him to them, and to empower him to persecute the Christians, and to demand and require their assistance in it; the Ethiopic version calls them, “letters of power”; and it seems from hence, that these letters were received from the whole sanhedrim, as well as from the high priest, and were signed by both: *and went to Damascus to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished*: with stripes, or with death, as they should be judged worthy; (see Acts 9:2).

ACTS 22:6. *And it came to pass, that as I made my journey*, And had almost made an end of it: *and was come nigh unto Damascus*; about a mile from it, as some say, *about noon*; this circumstance is omitted in the account in (Acts 9:3) and is mentioned here, not so much to inform what time of day it was, that Saul came to Damascus, as to observe how extraordinary that light must be, which then appeared, as follows: *suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me*; and not only about him, but those that were with him, (Acts 26:13). This must be a great light indeed, to be distinguished at noon, and

to be above the brightness of the sun, and to have such effect upon the apostle and his company as it had; (Acts 9:3).

ACTS 22:7. *And I fell unto the ground,* And so did those that were with him, (Acts 26:14). ***And heard a voice, saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*** (See Gill on “Acts 9:4”).

ACTS 22:8. *And I answered, who art thou, Lord?* (See Gill on “Acts 9:5”).

ACTS 22:9. *And they that were with me saw indeed the light,* For it shone about them, as well as Saul:***and were afraid;*** the Alexandrian copy, the Vulgate Latin, and Syriac versions, have not this clause; but it stands in the Arabic and Ethiopic versions; the suddenness, greatness, and extraordinariness of the light surprised them, for it was even miraculous: ***but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me:*** they heard the voice of Saul, but not the voice of Christ; at least they did not hear it so as to understand it; (see Gill on “Acts 9:7”).

ACTS 22:10. *And I said, what shall I do, Lord?* (See Gill on “Acts 9:6”).

ACTS 22:11. *And when I could not see for the glory of that light,* Which was above the brightness of the sun, and so dazzled his eyes, that he could not see his way into the city, some of his company took him by the hand, and led him: and ***being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came unto Damascus*** but not with the same view he set out with: he took his journey thither, and pursued it, in order to persecute the saints there; but now he enters into it, to be informed by one of them what he must do for Christ, whom he had persecuted.

ACTS 22:12. *And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law,* The Alexandrian copy, and Vulgate Latin version, read only, “a man according to the law”; one whose walk, life, and conversation, were agreeable to it: a

strict observer of the law of Moses, both moral and ceremonial: he not only lived a holy life and conversation, according to the moral law, but he religiously and devoutly attended to the rituals of the ceremonial law; and this part of his character the apostle chose to mention, as what would recommend him to the notice of the Jews he now addressed: for though he was a disciple, a believer in Christ, yet as many of the believing Jews did, so he strictly observed the rituals of the law. The Ethiopic version adds, “who was of the apostles”; one of that number, and in that office, which is nowhere said that he was; and had he, it would not have been agreeable to the apostle’s design to have mentioned it; and he is said to be one of the seventy disciples, and bishop or pastor of the church at Damascus; (see Gill on “Luke 10:1”). Of this Ananias, his name and character, (see Gill on “Acts 9:10”). ***Having a good report of all the Jews that dwelt there:*** that is, at Damascus, as the Ethiopic version reads; and so do the Complutensian edition, the Alexandrian copy, and several other copies; for though he was a Christian, yet being not only a man of an unblemished life and conversation, but zealous and devout in the observance of the ceremonial law, was very much interested in the affections and esteem of the Jews.

ACTS 22:13. *Came unto me,* Being at the house of Judas, in that street of Damascus called Straight, (Acts 9:11) and stood; at the side of him, or by him, putting his hands on him: ***and said unto me, brother Saul;*** (see Gill on “Acts 9:17”). ***receive thy sight,*** “or look up”, ***and the same hour I looked up upon him;*** that is, immediately, directly: for so the phrase, “that same hour”, is frequently used by the Jews: the words in (Numbers 16:21) “that I may consume them in a moment”, are rendered by Onkelos, “that I may consume them in an hour”; for an hour is used for a moment with them.

ACTS 22:14. *And he said, the God of our fathers hath chosen thee,* From all eternity, in his everlasting purposes and decrees; or “he hath taken thee into his hand”; in order to form, and fit, and qualify him for his service; and may design both his call by grace, and to apostleship. The apostle represents Ananias as speaking of God, as the God of the Jewish fathers, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to show that the Christian doctrine was not contrary to the faith of the one God of Israel; nor did it introduce any other, or any new deity. The ends of this choice or separation were, *that thou shouldest know his will;* his revealed will, concerning the salvation of men by Jesus Christ, which is no other than the Gospel, of which the apostle had been entirely ignorant; for though he knew the will of God, as revealed in the law, or his will of command, yet not spiritually; and he was altogether a stranger, till now, to God’s will, way, and method of saving sinners by Christ, of justifying them by his righteousness, and of pardoning their sins through his blood, and of giving them eternal life by him; and the knowledge of this he came at by the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in consequence of his being chosen and called: *and see that just One:* Jesus Christ the righteous, who is both as he is God, and as he is man, and also as he is Mediator, having faithfully discharged his office, and performed his engagements; him the apostle saw, both with the eyes of his body, when he met him in the way, and called unto him, and with the eyes of his understanding beholding his beauty, fulness, and suitableness as a Saviour; the former of these was what many kings, prophets, and righteous men desired: and the latter is what is inseparably connected with eternal life and salvation. *And shouldest hear the voice of his mouth;* both his human voice in articulate sounds, when he spoke to him in the Hebrew tongue, as in (Acts 22:7) and the voice of his Gospel, of which he appeared to make him a

minister; which is a voice of love, grace, and mercy, of peace, pardon, righteousness, and salvation, and is very powerful when accompanied by the Spirit, and is soul charming, alluring, and comforting.

ACTS 22:15. *For thou shalt be his witness unto all men,* Gentiles as well as Jews, an eye and an ear witness to them; *of what thou hast seen and heard;* as that he saw him personally and alive, and so could witness to the truth of his resurrection; for after he had been seen by all the apostles, he was last of all seen of Paul; and also, that he heard him and received from him the Gospel, and a mission and commission to preach it; for what he preached he did not receive of man, nor was he taught it by any, but he had it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

ACTS 22:16. *And now why tarriest thou?* Though it might not be the apostle’s case, yet it is often the case of many, to procrastinate and delay obedience to the commands of Christ, and particularly to the ordinance of baptism: the reasons of which delay are, the strength of their corruptions, and the weakness of their graces, which cause them to question whether they have any interest in Christ; as also fears of falling away, and so of dishonouring Christ, his Gospel, and ordinance: and in some the reproaches of men; and sometimes such a delay is made, waiting for more comfortable frames, or for a greater fitness; but no such delay, nor on such accounts, ought to be; for it is a command of Christ, and ought to be forthwith complied with, as soon as a man believes; and to obey it is a following of Christ, in which no time should be lost: and the consequences of a delay are very bad: it is a prevention of the glory of Christ, as well as shows ingratitude to him, and a bereaving of ourselves of that comfort, which might be hoped to be enjoyed; and it often induces a carelessness about the ordinance, and even a losing the sense of the

duty: *arise, and be baptized*; this shows that Ananias was a Christian, since he directs to an ordinance of Christ, and that he was a preacher of the word, and had a right to administer baptism; for that it was administered by him, though not in express terms yet seems to be naturally concluded from (Acts 9:18) as also this passage shows, that baptism was not administered by sprinkling, since Saul might have sat still, and have had some water brought to him, and sprinkled on him; but by immersion, seeing he is called upon to arise, and go to some place proper and convenient for the administration of it, according to the usage of John, and the apostles of Christ. “And wash away thy sins”; or “be washed from thy sins”; not that it is in the power of man to cleanse himself from his sins; the Ethiopian may as soon change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as a creature do this; nor is there any such efficacy in baptism as to remove the filth of sin; persons may submit unto it, and yet be as Simon Magus was, in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity; but the ordinance of baptism, may be, and sometimes is, a means of leading the faith of God’s children to the blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin; *calling on the name of the Lord*; the name of the Lord is not only to be used by the administrator of baptism in the performance of it; but it should be called upon by the person who submits to it, both before and at the administration of it, for the presence of Christ in it; and this invocation of the name of the Lord in baptism, signifies an exercise of faith in Christ at this time, a profession of him, and obedience to him.

ACTS 22:17. *And it came to pass, that when I was come again to Jerusalem,* Which was three years after his conversion; for he did not immediately return to Jerusalem, but went into Arabia; and when he returned to Damascus, which was three years after he came to

Jerusalem; (see Galatians 1:17,18) *even while I prayed in the temple*; the temple was an house of prayer; hither persons resorted for that purpose; and as the apostle had been used to it, he continued this custom, and during the time of prayer he fell into an ecstasy: *I was in a trance*: and knew not whether he was in the body, or out of the body: whether this was the time he refers to in (2 Corinthians 12:2) is not certain, though probable.

ACTS 22:18. *And I saw him saying unto me,* That is, the Lord Jesus Christ, that just One, whom he had seen in his way to Damascus, and whose voice he had heard, and whose name he had called upon at his baptism: *make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem*: not because his life was in danger, but because Christ had work for him to do elsewhere, which required haste; and that he might not continue here useless and unprofitable, as he would have been, had he staid; *for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me*; Christ the omniscient God, and the searcher of the hearts, knew the hardness and unbelief of the Jews; and that they would continue therein, notwithstanding the ministry of the apostle; and that they would give no credit to any testimony of his, that he saw him, as he went to Damascus, and heard words from his mouth. The Ethiopic version renders it without the negative, “for they will receive thee, my witness concerning me”; as if Christ sent the apostle away in all haste from Jerusalem, lest he preaching there, the Jews should believe and be healed; compare with this (Matthew 13:14,15). Very likely this interpreter might be induced to leave out the negative, as thinking that the apostle’s reasoning in the following words required such a sense and reading.

ACTS 22:19. *And I said, Lord, they know, that I imprisoned,* Men and women, that made a profession of the Christian religion, (Acts 8:3) *and beat in every synagogue them*

that believed on thee; in Jerusalem there were many synagogues, and in these scourging and beating of offenders were used; (see Gill on “Matthew 10:17”).

ACTS 22:20. *And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed*, Stephen was a martyr for Christ, both by confession with his mouth, and by the effusion of his blood; he was the proto-martyr, or “the first martyr” that suffered for Christ; and there are copies, as one of Stephens’s, and the Complutensian edition, which so read in this place; his blood was shed by stoning: *I also was standing by*; to see the inhuman action performed; nor was he an idle and indifferent spectator: *and consenting unto his death*; being pleased and delighted with it, and rejoicing at it; (see Acts 8:1). *and kept the raiment* of them that slew him; the accusers of him, and witnesses against him, whose hands were first on him, and cast the first stones at him, and continued to stone him, until they killed him: these laid their garments at the feet of Saul, who looked after them, that nobody stole them, and run away with them, whilst they were stoning Stephen; which shows how disposed he was to that fact, and how much he approved of it: and these things he mentions to suggest that surely the Jews would receive his testimony, since they knew what a bitter enemy he had been to this way: and therefore might conclude, that he must have some very good and strong reasons, which had prevailed upon him to embrace this religion against all his prejudices, and so might be willing to hear them; and it also shows what an affection the apostle had for the Jews, and how much he desired their spiritual welfare, for which reason he chose to have stayed, and preached among them.

ACTS 22:21. *And he said unto me, depart*, At once from Jerusalem, and out of the land of Judea: *for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles*; to the nations afar off, even as far as

Illyricum, Pannonia, or Hungary, where the apostle went and preached, (Romans 15:19) and so by a divine mission and commission he became the apostle of the Gentiles, and preached the Gospel among them with great success, to the conversion of many thousands of them, and to the planting of many churches in the midst of them.

ACTS 22:22. *And they gave him audience unto this word*. The Ethiopic version reads, “and I heard him so speaking unto me”; as if it was to be understood of the apostle hearing Christ speaking to him concerning his mission to the Gentiles; whereas the words refer to the Jews attending quietly to the apostle, till he came to that part of his oration. They heard him patiently, and did not offer to molest him, or hinder his speaking, and being heard, till he came to mention his mission to the Gentiles: all the rest they either did not understand, or looked upon it as an idle tale, as the effect of madness and enthusiasm, at least as containing things they had nothing to do with; but when he came to speak of the Gentiles, and to pretend to a divine mission to them, this they could not bear; for nothing was more offensive, irritating, and provoking to them, than to hear of the calling of the Gentiles, whom they were for depriving of all blessings, and for engrossing all to themselves; (see Romans 10:20). *and then lift up their voices*; in a very loud and clamorous manner, as one man: *and said, away with such a fellow from the earth*; take away his life from the earth: this they said either to the chief captain, to do it, or as encouraging one another to do it: *for it is not fit that he should live*; he does not deserve to live, he is unworthy of life; it is not agreeable to the rules of justice that he should be spared; it is not convenient, and it may be of bad consequence should he be continued any longer; he may do a deal of mischief, and poison the minds of the people with bad

notions, and therefore it is not expedient that he should live.

ACTS 22:23. *And as they cried out,* In this furious manner: *and cast off their clothes;* either like madmen, that knew not what they did, or in order to stone him; (see Acts 7:57,58). *and threw dust into the air* either with their hands, or by striking the earth, and scraping it with their feet, through indignation and wrath, like persons possessed, or mad.

ACTS 22:24. *The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle,* Into the inside of it; for till now he was upon the top of the stairs, or steps, which led up to it; which might be done in order to save him from the rage of the people, and that he might privately examine him, and get the true state of his case, though he took a very wrong and unjustifiable method to do it in, as follows: *and bade that he should be examined by scourging;* he gave a centurion, with some soldiers, orders to scourge and whip him, and to lay on stripes more and harder, until he should tell the whole truth of the matter, and confess the crime or crimes he was guilty of, which had so enraged the populace: *that he might know wherefore they cried so against him;* for though he had rescued him out of their hands, when they would in all likelihood have beat him to death; and though he took him within the castle to secure him from their violence; yet he concluded he must be a bad man, and must have done something criminal; and therefore he takes this method to extort from him a confession of his crime, for which the people exclaimed against him with so much virulence.

ACTS 22:25. *And as they bound him with thongs,* To a pillar, in order to be scourged, according to the Roman manner. Nor was the Jewish form of scourging much unlike, and perhaps might be now used, which was this; when they scourge anyone they bind both his hands to a pillar, here and there — and they do

not strike him standing nor sitting, but inclining; for the pillar to which he was bound was fixed in the ground, and so high as for a man to lean upon; and some say it was two cubits, and others a cubit and a half high: and the word here used signifies an extension, or distension; perhaps the stretching out of the arms to the pillar, and a bending forward of the whole body, which fitly expresses the stooping inclining posture of the person scourged, and was a very proper one for such a punishment: now as they were thus fastening him with thongs to the pillar, and putting him in this position, *Paul said unto the centurion that stood by;* to see the soldiers execute the orders received from the chief captain: *is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?* Though the apostle puts this by way of question, yet he knew full well what the Roman laws were in such cases; he did not put this through ignorance, or for information, but to let them know who he was, and to put them in mind of these laws, and of their duty; for, according to the Porcian law, Roman citizens were not to be beaten. Hence, says Cicero, “it is a heinous sin to bind a Roman citizen, it is wickedness to beat him, it is next to parricide to kill him, and what shall I say to crucify him?” And, according to the Valerian law, it was not lawful for magistrates to condemn a Roman without hearing the cause, and pleading in it; and such condemned persons might appeal to the populace.

ACTS 22:26. *When the centurion heard that,* The question put by Paul, which strongly suggested that he was a Roman: *he went and told the chief captain; what Paul had said: saying, take heed what thou dost;* or “art about to do”; lest some bad consequences should follow; lest he should affront the Roman people and senate, and lose his place, if not incur some corporeal punishment: *for*

this man is a Roman; and it can never be answered to bind and beat a Roman.

ACTS 22:27. *Then the chief captain came, and said unto him,* To Paul: *tell me, art thou a Roman?* he had told him before that he was a Jew of Tarsus, and which was true, and had said nothing of his being a Roman; wherefore the chief captain desires that he would tell him the whole truth of the matter, whether he was a Roman or not: *he said yea*; that he was one.

ACTS 22:28. *And the chief captain answered, with a great sum obtained I this freedom,* For, it seems, he was not a Roman born, but very likely a Grecian, or Syrian, by his name Lysias; and as all things were now venal at Rome, the freedom of the city was to be bought with money, though a large sum was insisted on for it: this the chief captain said, as wondering that so mean a person, and who he understood was a Jew by birth, should be able to procure such a privilege, which cost him so much money: *and Paul said, but I was free born*; being born at Tarsus; which, as Pliny says, was a free city, and which had its freedom given it by Mark Antony, and which was before the birth of Paul; and therefore his parents being of this city, and free, he was born so.

ACTS 22:29. *Then straightway they departed from him, which should have examined him,* By scourging; namely, the soldiers, who under the inspection of the centurion, and by the order of the chief captain, were binding him with thongs to scourge him, and thereby extort from him his crime, which was the cause of all this disturbance; but hearing that he was a Roman, either of their own accord, or rather at the order of their officers, either the centurion or chief captain, or both, left binding him, and went their way: *and the chief captain also was afraid after he knew that he was a Roman*; lest he should be called to an account for his conduct, and his commission should be taken from him: chiefly, *and because he had*

bound him; not only had commanded him to be bound with thongs to a pillar, in order to be scourged, but he had bound him with two chains, when first seized him; and, as before observed, (see Gill on “Acts 22:25”); it was a heinous crime to bind a Roman.

ACTS 22:30. *On the morrow,* The next day; so that Paul was kept in the castle all night: because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews; which, as yet, he could not come at, some saying one thing, and some another; and which he ought to have known before he had bound him, and ordered him to be scourged: *he loosed him from his bands* not from his being bound with thongs to the pillar, that he had been loosed from before, but from the two chains with which he was bound, and held by two soldiers; (see Acts 21:33,35). *and commanded the chief priests, and all the council to appear,* the whole Jewish sanhedrim, which was now very much under the direction and influence of the Romans: and this he the rather did, because, though he could not come at the certainty of the charge and accusation, he perceived it was a matter of religion, and so belonged to them to examine and judge of: *and brought Paul down*; from the Castle of Antonia, into the temple, and to the place where the sanhedrim sat, which formerly was in the chamber Gazith, but of late years it had removed from place to place, and indeed from Jerusalem itself, and was now at Jabneh; only this was the time of Pentecost, and so the chief priests and sanhedrim were at Jerusalem on that account: *and set him before them*; or “among them”; in the midst of them, to answer to what charges should be brought against him.

Baptism

INTRODUCTION

The word baptize is from the Greek word *baptidzo* which means to identify or to be made

one with. In early Greek, the word had both religious and secular meanings. In general, it refers to the act of identifying one thing with another thing in such a way that its nature or character is changed, or it represents the idea that a real change has already taken place.

As a reference to identification, baptize means to place a person or thing into a new environment, or into union with some one or something else, so as to alter his or its condition or relationship to the previous environment.

There are seven types of baptism mentioned in the Bible. Four of these are real baptisms and three are ritual baptisms.

Real Baptisms

- The Baptism of Moses
- The Baptism of the Cross or Cup
- The Baptism of the Holy Spirit
- The Baptism of Fire

Ritual Baptisms

- The Baptism of John
- The Baptism of Jesus
- The Baptism of the Christian Believer

These seven baptisms are described in the sections below.

REAL BAPTISMS

A baptism is called real if it involves actually identifying a person with something or someone.

THE BAPTISM OF MOSES

The baptism of Moses was a double identification, the children of Israel are identified both with Moses and with the cloud (Jesus Christ) as they passed through the Red Sea. No water involved and remember, they went through the sea on dry land when the waters were parted. 1 Cor. 10:1, 2.

THE BAPTISM OF THE CROSS OR CUP

Jesus Christ drank the cup filled with our sins. Another way of expressing it is that all the sins of the world were put into one cup and poured out on Christ while He was on the cross. God the Father judged our sins while they were on Christ. Christ was identified with our sin and He bore our sins on the cross. He was made sin for us. 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24.

In Matt. 20:22 Jesus speaks of the cup he is to drink as he makes a reply to the mother of Zebedee's children. In Matt. 26:39, He prays to the Father to "let this cup pass from me . . ." Nevertheless, He determined to drink from the cup, as seen in John 18:11, "the cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink from it?"

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a real baptism. When a person accepts Christ as savior, he is placed into the body of Christ. He is identified as a believer. The mechanics are given in 1 Cor. 12:13.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit did not occur in Old Testament times. The first occurrence was on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit placed the new believers into the body of Christ.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the basis for positional truth. Believers are placed in Christ, and in this position have access to many kinds of privileges and blessings. Ephesians 1 has a good description of what it means to have "all blessings in heavenly places in Him."

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was prophesied by John the Baptist, Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16. And it was prophesied by Jesus Christ, John 14:16, 17; Acts 1:5.

The implications of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, for all believers in the family of God, are given in Gal. 3:26-28.

The principle of retroactive identification with Christ is brought out in Rom. 6:3, 4 and Col. 2:12.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not an experience. It is not accompanied by speaking in tongues or any other kind of feeling or behavior. The things that happen to believers at the moment of salvation are accomplished by the Holy Spirit, not by us, and these things are not experiences.

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

A judgment is coming at the second coming of Christ when all nonbelievers are taken from the earth. They will join the rest of the unbelievers in torments also called Sheol, Hades and Hell to wait for the last judgment also called the great white throne judgment described in Revelation 20 at the end of the millennium. This removal of unbelievers for judgment is the baptism of fire.

Fire is a symbol for judgment all through the Bible. Examples are the fire which burned the sacrifice on the Hebrew altar and the fire from God which burned the watered down sacrifices of Elijah and the prophets of Baal.

The doctrine of the baptism of fire is stated in Matt. 3:11, 12; Luke 3:16, 17; and 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

The Lord Jesus taught several parables regarding the end times when believers and unbelievers will be separated. The believers are to go into the millennium, the unbelievers are cast off into fire. These parables are analogies to the baptism of fire.

Wheat and tares - Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43.

Good and bad fish - Matt. 13:47-50.

The wise and foolish virgins - Matt. 25:1-13

The sheep and the goats - Matt. 25:31-46

RITUAL BAPTISMS

A baptism is called a ritual baptism, or a ceremonial baptism, when water is used as a symbol for something else. It is a representative identification. The individual is placed in the water, which means, symbolically, that he is identified with that which the water represents.

THE BAPTISM OF JOHN - MATT. 3:6-11

Here the water is symbolic of the kingdom of God which John was preaching. When a person was baptized by John, he was testifying to his faith in the Messiah and his identification with Christ's kingdom. The new believer was identified with the water, but the water represented a spiritual identification.

The phrase kingdom of God is a general term referring to all believers from the time of Adam until the end of the millennium. At the time of John the Baptist, all believers were pre church age Christians, although many lived on into the church age which began at the day of Pentecost.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, water was symbolic of God's will in salvation, namely that Jesus would go to the cross.

BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

Believer's baptism is a symbolic act in which a believer proclaims his union with Jesus Christ. It represents death to sin, to the old way of life and

resurrection to a new spiritual life in Christ (Rom 6:3, 4; Col 2:11-12, Titus 3:5).

Damascus

from "The Life and Epistles of St. Paul" by Conybeare and Howson.

Damascus is the oldest city in the world.¹ Its fame begins with the earliest patriarchs and continues to modern times. While other cities of the East have risen and decayed, Damascus is still what it was. It was founded before Baalbec and Palmyra, and it has outlived them both. While Babylon is a heap in the desert, and Tyre a ruin on the shore, it remains what is called in the prophecies of Isaiah, "the head of Syria." (Isa. 7:8) Abraham's steward was Eliezer of Damascus (Gen. 15:2), and the limit of his warlike expedition in the rescue of Lot was "Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus." (Gen. 14:15) How important a place it was in the flourishing period of the Jewish monarchy we know from the garrisons which David placed there (2 Sam. 8:6; 1 Chron. 18:6), and from the opposition it presented to Solomon (1 Kings 11:24). The history of Naaman and the Hebrew captive, Elisha and Gehazi, and of the proud preference of its fresh rivers to the thirsty waters of Israel, are familiar to everyone.

And how close its relations continued to be with the Jews, we know from the chronicles of Jeroboam and Ahaz and the prophecies of Isaiah and Amos.² Its mercantile greatness is indicated by Ezekiel in the remarkable words addressed to Tyre, "Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making; they occupied in this fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate. Damascus was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches, in the

¹ Josephus makes it even older than Abraham. (Antiquities, I.6.3)

² See 2 Kings 14:28; 16:9,10; 2 Chron. 24:23; 28:5,23; Isa. 7:8; Amos 1:3,5.

wine of Helbon, and white wool." (Eze. 27:16,18) Leaving the Jewish annals, we might follow its history through continuous centuries, from the time when Alexander sent Parmenio to take it, while the conqueror himself was marching from Tarsus to Tyre, to its occupation by Pompey,³ to the letters of Julian the Apostate, who describes it as "the eye of the East," and onward through its golden days, when it was the residence of the Ommiad Caliphs, and the metropolis of the Mahommedan world, and through the period when its fame was mingled with that of Saladin and Tamarlane, to our own days, when the praise of its beauty is celebrated by every traveler from Europe. It is evident, to use the words of Lamartine, that, like Constantinople, it was a 'predestinated capital.' Not is it difficult to explain why its freshness has never faded through all the series of vicissitudes and wars. Among the rocks and brushwood at the base of Antilibanus are the fountains of a copious and perennial stream, which, after running a course of no great distance to the southeast, loses itself in a desert lake. But before it reaches this dreary boundary it has distributed its channels over the intermediate space and left a wide area behind it rich with prolific vegetation. These are the "streams from Lebanon" which are known to us in the imagery of Scripture (Cant. 4:15); the "rivers of Damascus," which Naaman not unnaturally preferred to all the "waters of Israel." (2 Kings 5:12) By Greek writers the stream is called Chrysorrhoeas, or the "river of gold." And this stream is the inestimable unexhausted treasure of Damascus, The habitations of men must always have been gathered around it, as the Nile has inevitably attracted an immemorial population to its banks. The desert is a fortification round

³ Its relative importance was not so great when it was under a Western power like that of the Seleucids or the Romans; hence we find it less frequently mentioned than we might expect in Greek and Roman writers. This arose from the building of Antioch and other cities in northern Syria.

Damascus. The river is its life. It is drawn out into watercourses, and spread in all directions. For miles around it is a wilderness of gardens, gardens with roses among the tangled shrubberies and with fruit on the branches overhead. Everywhere among the trees the murmur of unseen rivulets is heard. Even in the city, which is in the midst of the garden, the clear rushing of the current is a perpetual refreshment. Every dwelling has its fountain; and at night, when the sun has set behind Mount Lebanon, the lights of the city are seen flashing on the waters.

It is not to be wondered at that the view of Damascus, when the dim outline of the gardens has become distinct, and the city is seen gleaming white in the midst of them, should be universally famous. All travelers in all ages have paused to feast their eyes with the prospect; and the prospect has always been the same. It is true that in the Apostle's day there were no cupolas and no minarets; Justinian had not built St. Sophia, and the caliphs had erected no mosques. But the white buildings of the city gleamed then, as they do now, in the center of a verdant inexhaustible paradise. The Syrian gardens, with their low walls and waterwheels, and careless mixture of fruits and flowers, were the same then as they are now. The same figures would be seen in the green approaches to the town, camels and mules, horses and asses, with Syrian peasants and Arabs from beyond Palmyra. We know the very time of the day when Saul was entering these shady avenues. It was at mid-day.⁴ The birds were

⁴ Acts 22:6; 26:13. Notices of the traditional place where the vision was seen are variously given both by earlier and later travelers. The old writer Quaresmius mentions four theoretical sites: (1) twelve miles south of Damascus, where there is a stream on the right of the road, with the ruins of a church on rising ground; (2) six miles south on the left of the road, where there are traces of a church and stones marked with crosses; (3) two miles south on the same road; (4) half a mile from the city; and this he prefers on the strength of earlier authorities and because it harmonizes best with what is said of the Apostle being led in by the hand. It one of

silent in the trees. The hush of noon was in the city. The sun was burning fiercely in the sky. The persecutor's companions were enjoying the cool refreshment of the shade after their journey; and his eyes rested with satisfaction on those walls which were the end of his mission, and contained the victims of his righteous zeal.

Damascus

by Dr. Glenn Carnagey

1. THE CITY'S NAME HAS BEEN DAMASCUS FROM ABOUT 1500 BC UNTIL THE PRESENT.

Egyptian inscriptions speak of TI-MAS-KU and SA-RA-MAS-KI between the 1500's and 1200's BC.

The Arab name is DIMASHK ESH-SHAM or "DIMASHK of the Left". The meaning of DIMASHK or Damascus is unknown, but the ESH-SHAM means "the Left" and is to be compared to YEMEN or "The Right".

2. THE CITY IS LOCATED IN THE NW CORNER OF THE GHUTA, A FERTILE PLAIN ABOUT 2300 FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL, EAST OF MT. HERMON.

The Eastern part of the Ghuta, east of the city, is called the "Meadow Land" of Damascus, the EL-MERJ. The River Barada (Abana) flows through Damascus and waters the plains beyond the city.

A few miles south of the city the river NAHR EL-AWAJ flows through the plain as well. It is surrounded on three sides by barren hills and on the east beyond the GHUTA by the desert. The city is marked by fountains and streams, orchards and fields, especially in the spring.

In Arabic literature Damascus is described as an earthly paradise.

The Barada River is the lifeblood of the city, coming out of the hills in a narrow gorge, it spreads out into many streams through the

these cases there is an evident blending of the scene of the Conversion and the Escape; and it would appear from Mr. Stanley's letter that this spot is on the east and not the south of the city.

Ghuta and loses itself into the desert, where it vanishes in the marshes.

Its beauty can only be appreciated if seen from the desert point of view, and especially in the spring when its fruit trees bloom. (Apricot, pomegranates, walnuts and many others.

3. THE STRUCTURE OF THE CITY.

The main part of the city runs east to west along the south bank of the river.

A long street called the Meidan stretches along the southern part of the city, passing beyond the city wall and terminating at the BAWWABET ALLAH ("The gate of God"), which is the starting-point of the annual HAJ, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

In the Greek and Roman period, a long colonnaded street ran through the city. (Acts 9:11) DERB EL-MUSTAKIM.

- Archaeologists have uncovered parts of the Street Called Straight

- It runs from east to west with the Jewish Quarter on the South and the Christian quarter on the North.

- On the West end of town the street ends in the SUK EL- MIDHATIYEH, a bazaar built by MIDHAT PASHA, north of which is the Moslem quarter of the city, in which are the citadel and the Great Mosque.

Part of the city wall has been preserved with a foundation going back to Roman times, with Arab rebuilding above it.

Biblical sites pointed out to the tourist are spurious.

- Traditional site of Paul's escape over the wall in a basket. II Cor 11:33; Acts 9:25

- NAAMAN's House. II Kings 5:1ff

4. INDUSTRY ASSOCIATED WITH DAMASCUS.

It always was famous for its textile industry, from which the English word "Damask" is taken.

In the Middle Ages it was famous for the "Damascus blades" of the time of the Crusaders.

Timur (Tamerlane), the son of Genghis Khan, took the city and ended its armament production by carrying its armorers off to Samerkand, but the city went right on after 1399 AD.

5. EARLY HISTORY OF THE CITY OF DAMASCUS.

The earliest reference to it in Scripture is Genesis 15:2, in which Abraham complains that this "Son of possession", BEN MESHEQ, ELIEZER, the DAMESHEQ (Damascus), will "inherit his house."

This would indicate a date for the city of, at the oldest, 1800 BC.

Eliezer the Damascusite was from Damascus and the city name would thus mean something on the order of "The one who possesses or has possessions." (Based on Aram. relative pronoun DIY + MESHEQ).

The city is mentioned one additional time during Abraham's time, in Genesis 14:15, where Abraham is said to have pursued the four kings of Mesopotamia "as far as Hobah, which is on the left hand (North) of DAMASCUS."

6. DAMASCUS DURING THE TIME OF DAVID.

Damascus allied itself with neighboring Aramaean cities against David. II Sam 8:5ff

The center of Aramaic power during David's time was Zobah, whose king Hadadezer, was executed by David after the defeat of the allied army.

Unfortunately, Rezon, ben Eliada, an officer in Hadadezer's army escaped and built an army of bandits and ultimately seized the city of Damascus, where he ruled as king and built a powerful kingdom. I Kings 11:23ff

Rezon continued to be a thorn in the side of Solomon. I K 11:25.

7. THE ARAMAEAN KINGDOM. (950-732 BC).

Rezon may or may not be identical with Biblical Hezion, who fathered Tab-rimmon, Who in turn fathered Ben-hadad. I K 15:18

Ben-hadad (BIR-IDRI) is the first king after Rezon of whom we have any first-hand

knowledge, when he became the nemesis of Ahab.

He played Israel against Judah beautifully to the detriment of both.

- ASA hired him with a bribe to attack Israel to relieve him. I K 15:18ff

- Either the above Ben-Hadad I or his successor, Ben-Hadad II, defeated Omri of Israel, annexed several Israelite cities, and secured the right to have Aramaic "streets" or Bazaars in Samaria, in about 880 BC.

Ben-Hadad II, then, campaigned incessantly against Israel.

(1) Scripture account of his campaigns against the Jews is found in I Kings 20:22.

(2) He won the first encounter, but later lost twice to Ahab.

(3) He became a prisoner of Ahab after the Battle of Aphek, but was treated with great consideration by Ahab.

(4) Ahab demanded only the return of his cities and the reciprocal right of setting up "Streets" in Damascus as penalty.

(5) Primary enemy was Assyria, who under Shalmaneser III, attacked a coalition of 10 states including Israel & Damascus at the Battle of Qarqar in 854 BC, though the battle was a draw, neither side winning a decisive victory.

(6) The Assyrians attacked Ben-Hadad twice more, in 842 and 846, with no more decisive results than at Qarqar.

(7) With the death of Ahab at Ramoth-Gilead the only threat to Damascus other than Assyria was ended.

In about 844 BC Hazael murdered Ben-Hadad and usurped the throne.

(1) He was attacked by the Assyrians in 842 and 839, again without any decisive outcome.

(2) From then until about 810 BC, the Assyrians stayed home, allowing the Aramaeans a free hand against the Jews.

In 803 BC, Mari' (Ben-Hadad III, Son of Hazael) was forced to become a vassal of Ramman-Nirari III of Assyria. II K 13:3

This allowed tremendous expansion of Israel under Jeroboam II.

The Assyrians attacked Damascus again in 773 BC

Tiglath-Pileser III, (745-727 BC) campaigned in the West often, bringing about the payment of tribute by Rezin in 738 BC

Rezin joined with Pekah of Israel to force Judah into an anti-Assyrian coalition. II K 15:37; 16:5; Isaiah 7.

In 734 BC the Assyrians advanced and placed Damascus under siege, taking the city in 732 BC. Rezin was executed and the city was destroyed.

8. Subsequent to its destruction by the Assyrians, the city lost most of its prominence and is only incidentally mentioned during the remainder of the OT. Jer. 49:23ff; Ezek 27:18; 47:16.

9. AFTER THE PERSIANS TOOK OVER, THE CITY REGAINED ITS PROSPERITY, THOUGH NOT ITS COMMAND POSITION.

10. WHEN THE SELEUCID KINGDOM OF SYRIA WAS ESTABLISHED IN 301BC, ITS CAPITOL CITY WAS ANTIOCH ON THE COAST, AND THE CENTER OF POWER SHIFTED WEST TO THE SEACOAST FROM THE INTERIOR.

11. IN 111 BC THE SYRIAN KINGDOM WAS DIVIDED, AND ANTIOCHUS CYZICENUS BECAME KING OF COELE-SYRIA (TRANSJORDAN), AND MADE DAMASCUS HIS CAPITOL.

- His successors, Demetrius Eucerus and Antiochus Dionysus, had problems including wars with the Parthians and with Alexander Jannaeus of the Judahite Hasmonean line as well as with Aretas, the Nabatean, who took Damascus in 85 BC.

- Tigranes, the Armenian, ruled thereafter until the Romans took the city under Pompey in 64BC.

12. UNDER ROMAN RULE ITS HISTORY IS OBSCURE, BUT THE NABATEANS SEEM TO HAVE GAINED CONTROL OF DAMASCUS FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME.

- Roman coins indicate that the Romans held it from 31 BC to 33 AD.

- Aretas IV, king of Nabatea held it and appointed an ETHNARCH to rule the city after this. II Cor 11:32

- Under NERO it reverted back to Roman rule.

13. DURING THE CHRISTIAN ERA IT PLAYED A MINOR ROLE IN HISTORY, THOUGH IT IS OBVIOUS THAT PAUL'S ASSOCIATION WITH THE CITY AT HIS CONVERSION DREW SOME ATTENTION TO THE SITE. ACTS 9:1-25

- All the NT references to it are to be related to that conversion.

- Under the Emperor of the early Byzantine period the city continued to be an unimportant city, second to Antioch.

- Passed out of Christian control to the Arabs in 634 AD.

- Damascus has been a Moslem city ever since.

Hellenists and Arameans

from Conybeare and Howson, "The Life and Epistles of St. Paul," Chapter 2.

We have seen that early colonies of the Jews were settled in Babylonia and Mesopotamia. Their connection with their brethren in Judea was continually maintained; and they were bound to them by the link of a common language. The Jews of Palestine and Syria, with those who lived on the Tigris and Euphrates, interpreted the Scriptures through the Targums, or Chaldean paraphrases, and spoke kindred dialects of the language of Aram; and hence they were called Aramean Jews.

We have also had occasion to notice that other dispersion of the nation through those countries where Greek was spoken. Their settlements began with Alexander's conquests and were continued under the successors of those who partitioned his empire. Alexandria was their capital. They use the Septuagint

translation of the Bible, and they were commonly called Hellenists, or Jews of the Grecian speech.

The mere difference of language would account in some degree for the mutual dislike with which we know that these two sections of the Jewish race regarded one another. We were all aware how closely the use of a hereditary dialect is bound up with the warmest feelings of the heart. And in this case the Aramean language was the sacred tongue of Palestine. It is true that the tradition of the language of the Jews had been broken, as the continuity of their political life had been rudely interrupted. The Hebrew of the time of Christ was not the oldest Hebrew of the Israelites; but it was a kindred dialect, and old enough to command a reverent affections. Though not the language of Moses and David, it was that of Ezra and Nehemiah. And it is not unnatural that the Arameans should have revolted from the speech of the Greek idolaters and the tyrant Antiochus, a speech which they associated moreover with innovating doctrines and dangerous speculations.

For the division went deeper than a mere superficial diversity of speech. It was not only a division, like the modern one of German and Spanish Jews, where those who hold substantially the same doctrines have accidentally been led to speak different languages. But there was diversity of religious views and opinions. This is not the place for examining that system of mystic interpretation called the Kabbala, and for determining how far its origin might be due to Alexandria or to Babylon. It is enough to say, generally, that in the Aramean theology, Oriental elements prevailed rather than Greek, and that the subject of Babylonian influences has more connection with the life of St. Peter than that of St. Paul.

The Hellenists, on the other hand, were Jews who spoke Greek, who lived in Greek countries, and were influenced by Greek civilization, are associated in the closest manner with the Apostle of the Gentiles. They are more than

once mentioned in the Acts, where our English translation names them "Grecians" to distinguish them from the heather or proselyte "Greeks." Alexandria was the metropolis of their theology. Philo was their great representative. He was an old man when St. Paul was in his maturity; his writings were probably known to the apostles; and they have descended with the inspired Epistles to our own day. The work of the learned Hellenists may be briefly described as this – to accommodate Jewish doctrines to the mind of the Greeks, and to make the Greek language express the mind of the Jews. The Hebrew principles were "disengaged as much as possible from local and national conditions, and presented in a form adapted to the Hellenic world."

All this was hateful to the Arameans. The men of the East rose up against those of the West. The Greek learning was repugnant to the strict Hebrews. They had a saying, "Cursed be he who teacheth his son the learning of the Greeks." We could imagine them using the words of the prophet Joel (3:6), "The children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them from their border," and we cannot be surprised that even in the deep peace and charity of the Church's earliest days, this inveterate division reappeared, and that "when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews." (Acts 6:1)

It would be an interesting subject of inquiry to ascertain in what proportions these two parties were distributed in the different countries where the Jews were dispersed, in what places they can into the strongest collision, and how far they were fused and united together. In the city of Alexandria, the emporium of Greek commerce from the time of its foundation, where, since the earliest Ptolemies, literature, philosophy, and criticism had never ceased to excite the utmost intellectual activity, where the Septuagint translation of the Scripture had been made, and where a Jewish temple and

ceremonial worship had been established in rivalry to that in Jerusalem, there is no doubt that the Hellenistic element largely prevailed. But although (strictly speaking) the – Alexandrian Jews were nearly all Hellenites, it does not follow that they were all Hellenizers. In other words, although their speech and the Scriptures were Greek, the theological views of many among them undoubtedly remained Hebrew.

There must have been many who were attached to the traditions of Palestine, and who looked suspiciously on their more speculative brethren; and we have no difficulty in recognizing the picture presented in a pleasing German fiction, which describes the debates and struggles of the two tendencies in this city, to be very correct. In Palestine itself, we have every reason to believe that the native population was entirely Aramean, though there was no lack of Hellenistic synagogues (see Acts 6:9) in Jerusalem, which at the seasons of the festivals would be crowded with foreign pilgrims, and become the scene of animated discussions. Syria was connected by the link of language with Palestine and Babylonia; but Antioch, its metropolis, commercially and politically, resembled Alexandria; and it is probable that, when Barnabas and Saul were establishing the great Christian community in that city, the majority of the Jews were “Grecians” rather than “Hebrews.” In Asia Minor we should at first sight be tempted to imagine that the Grecian tendency would predominate; but when we find that Antiochus brought Babylonian Jews into Lydia and Phrygia, we must not make too confident a conclusion in this direction. We have ground for imagining that many Israelitish families in the remote districts (possibly that of Timotheus at Lystra) may have cherished the forms of the traditional faith of the eastern Jews, and lived uninfluenced by Hellenistic novelties.

The residents in maritime and commercial towns would not be strangers to the western developments of religious doctrines; and when Apollos came from Alexandria to Ephesus (Acts

18:24), he would find himself in a theological atmosphere not very different from that of his native city. Tarsus in Cilicia will naturally be included under the same class of cities of the West, by those who remember Strabo’s assertion that in literature and philosophy its fame exceeded that of Athens and Alexandria. At the same time, we cannot be sure that the very celebrity of its heathen schools might not induce the families of Jewish residents to retire all the more strictly into a religious Hebrew seclusion.

That such a seclusion of their family from Gentile influences was maintained by the parents of St. Paul is highly probable. We have no means of knowing how long they themselves, or their ancestors, had been Jews of the dispersion. A tradition is mentioned by Jerome that they came originally from Giscala, a town in Galilee, when it was stormed by the Romans. The story involves an anachronism and contradicts the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 22:3). Yet it need not be entirely disregarded, especially when we find St. Paul speaking of himself as “a Hebrew of the Hebrews” and when we remember that the word “Hebrew” is used for an Aramaic Jew, as opposed to a “Grecian” or “Hellenist.” Nor is it unlikely in itself that before they settled in Tarsus, the family had belonged to the Eastern dispersion, or to the Jews of Palestine. But, however this may be, St. Paul himself must be called a Hellenist; because the language of his infancy was that idiom of the Grecian Jews in which all his letters were written. Though, in conformity with the strong feeling of the Jews of all times, he might learn his earliest sentences from the Scripture in Hebrew, yet he was familiar with the Septuagint translation at an early age.

It is observed that when he quotes from the Old Testament, his quotations are from that version/ and that, not only when he cites its very words, but when (as if often the case) he quotes it from memory. Considering the accurate knowledge of the original Hebrew which he must have acquired under Gamaliel at Jerusalem, it has been inferred that this can

only arise from his having been thoroughly imbued at an earlier period with the Hellenistic scriptures. The readiness, too, with which he expressed himself in Greek, even before such an audience as that upon the Areopagus at Athens, shows a command of the language which a Jew would not, in all probability, have attained, had not Greek been the familiar speech of his childhood.

But still the vernacular Hebrew of Palestine would not have been a foreign tongue to the infant Saul; on the contrary, he may have heard it spoken almost as often as the Greek. For no doubt his parents, proud of their Jewish origin, and living comparatively near to Palestine, would retain the power of conversing with their friends from there in the ancient speech. Mercantile connections from the Syrian coast would be frequently arriving, whose discourse would be in Aramaic; and in all probability there were kinsfolk still settled in Judea, as we afterwards find the nephew of St. Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 23:16).

We may compare the situation of such a family (so far as concerns heir language) to that of the French Huguenots who settled in London after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. These French families, though they soon learned to use the English as the medium of the common intercourse and the language of their household, yet, for several generations, spoke French with equal familiarity and greater affection.

Moreover, it may be considered as certain that the family of St. Paul, though Hellenistic in speech, were no Hellenizers in theology; they were not at all inclined to adopt Greek habits or Greek opinions. The manner in which St. Paul speaks of himself, his father, and his ancestors, implies the most uncontaminated hereditary Judaism. "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I." (2 Cor. 11:22) "A Pharisee" and "the son of a Pharisee." "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews."

Persecution of the Early Church

from *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, by Conybeare and Howson.

The death of St. Stephen is a bright passage in the earliest history of the church. Where in the annals of the world can we find so perfect an image of a pure and blessed saint as that which is drawn in the concluding verses of the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles? And the brightness which invests the scene of the martyr's last moments is the more impressive from its contrast with all that has preceded it since the crucifixion of Christ. The first apostle who died was a traitor. The first disciples of the Christian apostles whose deaths are recorded were liars and hypocrites. The kingdom of the Son of Man was founded in darkness and gloom. But a heavenly light reappeared with the martyrdom of St. Stephen. The revelation of such a character at the moment of death was the strongest of all evidences, and the highest of all encouragements. Nothing could more confidently assert the divine power of the new religion; nothing could prophesy more surely the certainty of its final victory.

To us who have the experience of many centuries of Christian history, and who can look back through a long series of martyrdoms to this which was the beginning and example of the rest, these thoughts are easy and obvious; but to the friends and associates of the murdered saint, such feelings of cheerful and confident assurance were perhaps more difficult. Though Christ was indeed risen from the dead, His disciples could hardly yet be able to realize the full triumph of the Cross over death. Even many years afterwards Paul the Apostle wrote to the Thessalonians concerning those who had "fallen asleep" (1 Thess. 4:13) more peaceably than Stephen, that they ought not to sorrow for them as those without hope; and now, at the very beginning of the Gospel, the grief of the Christians must have been great indeed, when the corpse of their champion and their brother lay at the feet of Saul the murderer. Yet, amidst the consternation of

some and the fury of others, friends of the martyr were found,⁵ who gave him all the melancholy honors of a Jewish funeral, and carefully buried him, as Joseph buried his father, “with great and sore lamentation.” (Gen. 1:10)

After the death and burial of Stephen the persecution still raged in Jerusalem. That temporary protection which had been extended to the rising sect by such men as Gamaliel was now at an end. Pharisees and Sadducees, priests and people, alike indulged the most violent and ungovernable fury. It does not seem that any check was laid upon them by the Roman authorities. Either the procurator was absent from the city or he was unwilling to connive at what seemed to him an ordinary religious quarrel.

The eminent and active agent in this persecution was Saul. There are strong grounds for believing that if he was not a member of the Sanhedrin at the time of St. Stephen’s death, he was elected into that powerful senate soon after, possibly as a reward for the zeal he had shown against the heretic. He himself says that in Jerusalem he not only exercised the power of imprisonment by commission from the High Priests, but also, when the Christians were put to death, gave his vote against them.⁶ From this

⁵ Acts 8:2. Probably they were Hellenistic Jews impressed in favor of Christianity. It seems hardly likely that they were avowed Christians. There is nothing in the expression itself to determine the point.

⁶ The word “voice” in the AV should be read “vote.” Acts 26:10. If this inference is well founded, and if the qualification for a member of the Sanhedrin mentioned in the last chapter was a necessary qualification, Saul must have been a married man and the father of a family. If so it is probably that his wife and children did not long survive; for otherwise, some notice of them would have occurred in the subsequent narrative, or some allusion to them in the Epistles. And we know that if ever he had a wife she was not living when he wrote his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 7). It was customary among the Jews to marry at an early age. Baron Bunsen has expressed his belief in the tradition that St. Paul was a widower.

expression it is natural to infer that he was a member of that supreme court of judicature.

However this might be, his zeal in conducting the persecution was unbounded. We cannot help observing how frequently strong expressions concerning his share in the injustice and cruelty now perpetrated are multiplied in the Scriptures. In St. Luke’s narrative, in St. Paul’s own speeches, in his earlier and later epistles, the subject recurs again and again. He “made havoc of the Church,” invading the sanctuaries of domestic life, “entering into every house;” (Acts 8:3: see 9:2) and those whom he thus tore from their homes he “committed to prison;” or, in his own words at a later period, when he had recognized as God’s people those whom he now imagined to be His enemies, “thinking that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ... in Jerusalem ... he shut up many of the saints in prison. (Acts 26:9,10; cf. 22:3)

And not only did men thus suffer at his hands, but women also, a fact three times repeated as a great aggravation of his cruelty (Acts 8:3; 9:2; 22:4). These persecuted people were scourged “in many synagogues.” (Acts 26:10) Nor was Stephen the only one who suffered death, as we may infer from the apostle’s own confession.⁷

And what was worse than scourging or than death itself, he used every effort to make them blaspheme that holy name whereby they were called.⁸ His fame as an inquisitor was notorious far and wide. Even at Damascus Ananias had heard (Acts 9:13) “how much evil he had done to Christ’s saints at Jerusalem.” He was known there (Acts 9:21) as “he that

⁷ “I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women (Acts 22:4), and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them (Acts 26:10).”

⁸ Acts 26:11. It is not said that he succeeded in causing any to blaspheme. It may be necessary to explain to some readers that the Greek imperfect merely denotes that the attempt was made; so in Gal. 1:23, alluded to at the end of this chapter.

destroyed them which called on this Name in Jerusalem." It was not without reason that in the deep repentance of his later years, he remembered how he had "persecuted the Church of God and wasted it," (Gal. 1:13; cf Phil. 3:6) how he had been a "blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious," (1 Tim. 1:13), and that he felt he was "not meet to be called an Apostle," because he "had persecuted the Church of God."⁹

From such cruelty, and such efforts to make them deny that Name which they honored about all names, the disciples naturally fled. In consequence of "the persecution against the Church at Jerusalem, they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria." The Apostles only remained (Acts 8:1). But this dispersion led to great results. The moment of lower depression was the very time of the church's first missionary triumph. "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." (Acts 8:4; 11:19-21) First the Samaritans and then the Gentiles received that Gospel which the Jews attempted to destroy. Thus did the providence of God begin to accomplish, by unconscious instruments, the prophecy and command which had been given, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

⁹ 1 Cor. 15:9. It should be observed that in all these passages from the Epistles the same word for "persecution" is used.
