

## The conversion of Saul of Tarsus: the sequel.

### THE BACKGROUND.

Before we read 'THE BIBLE PASSAGE', we do well to remind ourselves of the key events so far.

Briefly, following the death of Stephen (with which he had been in wholehearted agreement), Saul had not only thrown himself with all the intensity of his being into making 'havoc' of the church at Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup> but had also extended his furious crusade of persecution into foreign cities.<sup>2</sup>

Having identified Damascus as a city worthy of his time and effort, he had left Jerusalem, incandescent with rage, breathing threats and murder<sup>3</sup> against the disciples. He journeyed, armed with letters which (i) had been signed by the high priest himself<sup>4</sup> (in all likelihood, none other than Joseph Caiaphas, who had presided at the farce of the Jewish trial of the Lord Jesus) on behalf of the Sanhedrin,<sup>5</sup> and (ii) authorised him (Saul) to arrest any disciples (men or women) he found at Damascus and to bring them bound to Jerusalem to face punishment,<sup>6</sup> whether that punishment took the form of imprisonment or of death.<sup>7</sup>

But, shortly before Saul reached his intended destination,<sup>8</sup> the risen and glorified Lord had intervened, intercepting Saul in the most dramatic manner.<sup>9</sup>

And, as a result of that one encounter ([as we noted more fully in our previous study](#)):

(i) the man on his way to arrest as many followers of Christ at Damascus as he could, was himself 'arrested' before he ever reached the city gates;

(ii) the man who had left Jerusalem on a mission as an 'apostle' of the Sanhedrin, was made aware that, in some way he could not yet predict, he was thereafter to be an 'apostle' of Christ Jesus;

(iii) the man who had set out with the grim determination to lead others *out of* the city as *his* captives, was himself led *into* the city as the captive of *Jesus Christ*;

And (iv) the man who had set out as the high priest's respected representative and envoy, esteeming his impressive Jewish background and advantages very much as 'gain' to him, came to account them as no more than 'loss' and 'dross'.

We speak, therefore, of Saul's 'Damascus Road' experience as his 'conversion'. One commentator put it well: 'Conversion is ... an appropriate way to describe a central component of Paul's experience. Although Paul was not converted to another religion,<sup>10</sup> he was converted to a new way of life and thinking'.<sup>11</sup>

At the close of our previous study, we left Saul:

(i) in the house of his host, Judas, at Damascus;<sup>12</sup>

(ii) in physical darkness (having been blinded by the intensity of the light which had enveloped both him and his companions);<sup>13</sup>

(iii) praying;<sup>14</sup> and

(iv) waiting for someone named Ananias to come and to restore his sight,<sup>15</sup> who, in so doing, was to *open the eyes* of Christ's 'chosen vessel'<sup>16</sup> that he might in turn might apply himself to the lifelong task which the Risen Lord had made known to him, namely, to that of *opening the eyes* of the Gentiles, that they might turn from darkness to light.<sup>17</sup>

'What shall I do, Lord?' had been Saul's question back on the road.<sup>18</sup> And to no small extent that question would be his watchword for the rest of his life. For it was already clear to him that there could be no going back. 'Saul of Tarsus'<sup>19</sup> was now well and truly 'under new management'.

### THE BIBLE PASSAGE.

At this point, we pick up the story at Acts 9 verse 10.<sup>20</sup>

Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and the Lord said unto him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, 'Behold, I am here, Lord'.

And the Lord said unto him, 'Arise, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth; and he hath seen a man named Ananias coming in, and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight'.

But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon Thy name'.

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: for I will shew him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake'.

And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost'.

And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened.

And he was certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that He is the Son of God.

And all that heard him were amazed, and said, 'Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havoc of them which called on this name? and he had come hither for this intent, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests'.

But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ.

And when many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel together to kill him: but their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates also day and night that they might kill him: but his disciples took him by night, and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket.

And when he was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. 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 at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

And he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord: and he spake and disputed against the Grecian Jews; but they went about to kill him. And when the brethren knew it, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

So the church throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, was multiplied.

## SAUL IN DAMASCUS.

### Verse 10.

'**A certain disciple ... named Ananias**'. *Saul* had been told, in a vision, of the forthcoming visit of Ananias,<sup>21</sup> and now *Ananias* is instructed, in a vision, to make that visit to Saul.<sup>22</sup>

It is possible to detect several parallel features in the experiences of Ananias and Saul:

<b>'Ananias</b>	<b>Saul</b>
"Ananias" (Acts 9. 10)	"Saul, Saul" (Acts 9. 4)
Expression of submission (9. 10)	Accusation of wrongdoing (9. 4–5)
Recognition of the Lord (9. 10)	Inquiring who is this Lord (9. 5)
"Rise and go" to where Saul is staying (9. 11)	"Rise" and go into the city (9. 6)
Jesus tells Ananias about Saul (9. 11)	Jesus has told Saul about Ananias
(9. 12)	
Ananias is sent to restore sight (9. 12)	Saul's vision has blinded him (9. 8)
Jesus sends Ananias to his former persecutor (9. 13–14)	Saul is restrained from persecuting Christians
	(9. 4–5) and will himself suffer (9. 16)
Ananias obeys (9. 17)	Saul obeys (9. 8) <sup>23</sup>

Separately, it would be difficult not to connect (i) this almost simultaneous preparation of these two men by means of visions with (ii) the almost simultaneous preparation of two other men, recorded in the following chapter, again by means of visions. I refer, of course, to the dovetailing visions given to Cornelius<sup>24</sup> and to Peter.<sup>25</sup>

I note that, in both cases, (i) the *first* vision in each chapter was granted to the man to be visited by the other man, and (ii) the precise *location* of the man to be visited was provided clearly to the other man; everything but the postcode!<sup>26</sup>

Also, in both cases, there was a measure of questioning and *hesitation* on the part of the man who was sent to pay the visit; the one (Ananias) doubting the *wisdom* of paying such a visit and the other (Peter) doubting the *propriety* of paying such a visit.<sup>27</sup> But, in both cases, once God's will had been confirmed, there was instant and unhesitating obedience.

And, again, in both cases, the state of mind of the man awaiting the visit was identical; each man was waiting to hear what it was the Lord would say to him though his expected visitor.<sup>28</sup>

And, finally, both episodes close with the visited man's being baptised, having experienced (in the case of Saul) the filling of the Holy Spirit<sup>29</sup> and (in the case of Cornelius), the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.<sup>30</sup>

Clearly, Luke wants us to associate these two cases very closely, and that, I suggest, because they both, in different ways, form an essential part of his account of the expansion of the church into the Gentile world.

We know that, in calling on Ananias, the Lord, as you would expect, had chosen His servant well. For not only did He (the Good Shepherd), know his (Ananias's) name,<sup>31</sup> but the ear of Ananias was well tuned to the Good Shepherd's voice; ***Behold, I am here, Lord***.<sup>32</sup>

#### Verses 11-12.

***'And the Lord said to him, 'Arise and go ...'***. 'There were no signposts designating streets, but they had names and locals knew them; once one found the correct street, one asked for a particular house by the name of its owner'.<sup>33</sup>

Hence, the Saviour's instruction to Ananias was, ***'Go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas*** look for a man of Tarsus named Saul'.

***'He'***, the Lord added, ***'is praying'***. Not, I guess, that there was much else that Saul could have done in the circumstances. 'But', Ananias may well have wondered, 'about what is he praying?' 'Surely, 'all Pharisees prayed, all devout Jews prayed. That by itself didn't tell Ananias anything, except that Saul might well be stoking up his religious fervour in preparation for the assault on Jesus' followers. Ah, but [the Lord added further], "He has seen a vision; and it's a vision about you"<sup>34</sup>. How strange it must have seemed, to hear about one vision in another vision!

Little did Ananias know it, but the very man who had until recently been preying on the people of God is now to be found praying to the God of His people!

#### Verses 13-14.

***'Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard ..."***. In effect, the good man was saying:

'Lord, haven't you read this morning's "Damascus Daily"? Frankly, Lord, ***"this man"*** is infamous. Not to put too fine a point in it, he has a bad and blood-stained track record, and he certainly hasn't come here for a holiday!

To Ananias's thinking, for him 'to go to [Saul] seemed like venturing into the lions' den. So, like others whom God calls to duty, he tries to instruct Him, as though He were ignorant about the work to which He sends His servants'.<sup>35</sup>

But, to *my* thinking, the description which Ananias gives of the believers 'at Jerusalem' (namely, ***'your saints'***) speaks volumes about his appreciation of the person of the Lord Jesus.

It is true that 'this is the first occurrence of this name [*'saints'*] for the followers of Christ. They were men set apart and dedicated: separated from the world; in it, but not of it'.<sup>36</sup> But, for me, the description given by Ananias to our Lord carried massive implications.

We are familiar with the way in which Luke normally described our Lord's followers as 'disciples'. He spoke of them as such over 30 times in his Gospel and has already done so four times in the Book of Acts.<sup>37</sup> But Luke also knew that, in one sense, anyone can have disciples. He wrote of the 'disciples' of John the Baptist and the 'disciples of the Pharisees,<sup>38</sup> and, indeed, he noted that even Saul had 'his disciples'.<sup>39</sup>

Yes, in one sense, anyone can have 'disciples'. But only God can have His 'saints'. It was only in addressing God that one could speak in terms of 'your saints'.<sup>40</sup>

And so, to me, Luke's record of the words, 'your saints', addressed by Ananias to the Lord Jesus 'speaks volumes' about his faith in the deity of the Saviour.

#### Verse 15.

Note that, before Ananias spoke, 'the Lord said unto him, "Arise, and ***go***", and, after Ananias spoke, 'the Lord said unto him, "***Go*** ...".

There was no mistaking the Lord's message; Ananias's 'objection' had been 'overruled'!

**'He is'**, the Lord added, **'a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name ...'**. Those last words stand in marked contrast to the words of Ananias, 'he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon Thy name'.<sup>41</sup>

It has been well said that, 'Jesus explains that He is sending Ananias to Saul not because of Saul's former commission from the high priests ... but with a new one from Himself'.<sup>42</sup> And some commission this was!<sup>43</sup>

**'To bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel'**. No doubt, the Gentiles are named before the children of Israel, because, although Saul's later stated and consistent practice was to preach Christ to the Jews first in every city where there were Jews,<sup>44</sup> his special calling was to be 'the apostle to the Gentiles'.<sup>45</sup>

The Lord's words probably came as something of 'a revelation to Ananias, who as a devout Jew would not yet have contemplated the inclusion of the whole world in the Church of Christ'.<sup>46</sup>

**'And kings'**. These words recall the Lord's prediction that His disciples would be brought 'before kings and governors' for His name's sake.<sup>47</sup>

#### Verse 16.

**'Many things he must suffer for my name's sake'**. The Lord met Ananias's protest head on. For, when Ananias pointed out that Saul had come as the Sanhedrin's chosen representative to bind those who called on His name,<sup>48</sup> the Lord pointed out that, as His 'chosen vessel', Saul was not only destined to bear His name before all,<sup>49</sup> but also to suffer many things for the sake of His name.<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, we know from his later words that, as the Lord's servant, Saul stood 'ready', if necessary, 'to die ... for the name of the Lord Jesus'.<sup>51</sup> And I guess that the Lord's mention of Saul's future sufferings must have reassured Ananias on at least two scores; namely, (i) that, if Saul was to suffer himself, there was no risk of Saul's causing him to suffer, and (ii) that it was not left to him to notify Saul of his future sufferings ... that the Lord would break the news to him Himself.<sup>52</sup>

And so the man who had set out from Jerusalem, relishing the opportunity to inflict suffering on any and all who loved the name of Jesus at Damascus, was to be shown by the Lord Himself that he was himself to suffer 'many things' on behalf of that very name.

#### Verse 17.

**'Ananias departed, and entered into the house'**. Although, quite understandably, on account of Saul's terrifying reputation, Ananias had initially raised an objection, in his reckoning, Jesus was 'Lord' in more than in name.<sup>53</sup> And so, having voiced his concerns and having heard the Lord's response, he went about his allotted task as directed. Truly, 'his willingness to obey immediately, after the Lord's explanation, is commendable'.<sup>54</sup> Good man!

**'Laying his hands on him ... be filled with the Holy Spirit'**. Elsewhere in the Book of Acts, the bestowing of the Holy Spirit is linked to the laying on of hands, not only in the case of the apostles Peter and John and the Samaritans in chapter 8,<sup>55</sup> but also in the case of the apostle Paul and the disciples of John the Baptist in chapter 9.<sup>56</sup>

'It would seem that Paul received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands of Ananias. Elsewhere it appears to have been the function of the apostles to bestow the miraculous influences of the Spirit; but Paul did not receive them through the apostles, because he was to occupy an independent position, in order that his gospel might be seen not to be of man, but of God'.<sup>57</sup>

**'Brother Saul'**. In commenting on verse 10 above, I said that Ananias had his ears 'tuned to the Good Shepherd's voice'. Well, I think we can safely say that the very first words which he spoke to Saul in the house of Judas must have sounded as sweet music to his ears.

#### Verse 18.

**'There fell from his eyes as it were scales'**. One commentator wrote that Saul later 'ascribes his blindness to the brightness of the heavenly light,<sup>58</sup> and it may have been that some accretion, caused by the intensity of that vision, which formed over (Saul's eyes), and at his cure fell away'.<sup>59</sup> For my part, I am content to leave it that 'it may have been'.

What we do know is:

(i) that the last sight which Saul had seen, when his midday suddenly blazed with 'a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun',<sup>60</sup> as a result of which he was plunged into darkness,<sup>61</sup> was that of the face of the risen Lord, and

(ii) that, the first sight he saw now, when that darkness was dispelled, was the face of the Christian brother whom the same risen Lord had sent to restore his sight; 'in that very hour I looked on him'.<sup>62</sup>

**'He arose and was baptized'**. We learn later that Saul's baptism followed on Ananias's exhortation that he should not delay but should 'arise, and be baptized' and 'wash away' his sins, calling on the Lord's name.<sup>63</sup>

It is at least possible that it was in the river Abana, which flows through Damascus parallel to 'the street called Straight', that Saul was baptised,<sup>64</sup> and that most likely it would have been Ananias who did the baptising.

'Naaman the Syrian'<sup>65</sup> has the distinction of being the only man in scripture of whom it can be said that *he was saved by seven ducks in a dirty river*.<sup>66</sup> (You may need to think about that one!) Well, the river Abana may not have been able to do for Naaman what he wanted, but the Abana certainly offered Saul all that he needed, namely, somewhere to be baptised! And I hazard a guess that, at this point in his life, as far as Saul was concerned, this river of Damascus really was 'better than all the waters of Israel!'<sup>67</sup>

#### Verse 19.

**'And he took food and was strengthened'**. Clearly, Saul's first priority had been to identify himself with the name of the Lord Jesus in baptism,<sup>68</sup> before he ever thought of making time to eat, even though he had gone without food for three full days.<sup>69</sup> Saul's priority reminds me of that of Abraham's servant in Genesis 24, who also refused to eat before he had attended to a more important matter.<sup>70</sup>

As ever, Saul ranked his spiritual needs above those of his physical needs. And, in one sense, therefore, we might say that his heart and soul (so to speak) were filled with the Holy Spirit before ever his stomach was with food.<sup>71</sup>

**'He was certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus'**. 'Ananias was a wise choice to help Saul at this time for "he was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there"'.<sup>72</sup> But, Ananias was not only 'highly respected by all the Jews', but he was, obviously, also held in high regard among the disciples at Damascus, for, when Ananias spoke up on behalf of Saul, he was immediately welcomed into their fellowship.

#### Verse 20.

**'Straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus'**. 'Paul was no sooner converted and called to be a witness to Jesus Christ than he began to fulfil his commission, associating himself with the existing Christians in Damascus and preaching to the unbelieving Jews'.<sup>73</sup>

It is interesting to trace some of the parallels between: (i) Luke's account of the opening of our Lord's ministry and (ii) his account of the opening of Paul's ministry:

<b>'Jesus in Luke 4. 16–30'</b>	<b>Paul in Acts 9.20–25'</b>
Opens ministry with a message in a synagogue	Opens ministry with messages in synagogues
Audience is astonished (Luke 4. 22)	Audience is astonished (Acts 9. 21)
Is this not the son of Joseph? (Luke 4. 22)	Is this not the one who opposed Christians? (Acts 9. 21)
Jesus escapes violent response (Luke 4. 28–30)	Paul escapes violent response (Acts 9.22–25). <sup>74</sup>

**'That He is the Son of God'**. This is the first occurrence of the title 'Son of God' in the Book of Acts, and we should perhaps compare Paul's use of the title with his later statement that it was as God's 'Son' that the Lord Jesus had been revealed to him on the Damascus road.<sup>75</sup>

We should note (i) the parallel expression, **'that this is the Christ'**, used by Luke shortly after<sup>76</sup> and (ii) that both Nathanael and Peter clearly linked together the Messiahship and the divine Sonship of Jesus.<sup>77</sup>

'That some at least of our Lord's contemporaries regarded the Messiah as God's Son is evident from the high priest's question: "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"<sup>78</sup> As applied to Jesus,

the title denotes Him as the true representative of the Israel of God ... and as God's anointed king, as well as expressing His unique personal relationship to the Father which is His in the Triune Godhead'.<sup>79</sup>

### Verses 21–22.

**'All that heard him were amazed'.** Saul's hearers in the synagogues of Damascus were all compelled to acknowledge that his had been a most remarkable turnabout. We might say, I suppose, that heaven respected no 'U-turn' sign on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus!

'It was to the synagogues of Damascus that Saul had been sent with the commission from the high priest, and to the synagogues of Damascus he went. But instead of presenting his letters of credence and demanding the extradition of the disciples of Jesus, he appeared as the bearer of a very different commission, issued by a higher authority than the high priest's,<sup>80</sup> and as a disciple and messenger of Jesus he announced his Master's claims. No wonder that his hearers were amazed by the change that had come over him'.<sup>81</sup>

To Saul's hearers in the synagogues of Damascus, 'the message was not as shocking as the one delivering it'.<sup>82</sup>

Commenting on their question, **'Is not this he ...?'** it has been said that the 'old proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" was revived with a new meaning'.<sup>83</sup>

**'That ... made havoc'.** The Greek word translated 'made havoc'<sup>84</sup> occurs only twice again in the New Testament, on both occasions used by Paul to describe the same activities as here: (i) 'beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and made havoc of it', and (ii) 'he that once persecuted us now preaches the faith of which he once made havoc'.<sup>85</sup>

**'Proving'.** 'This word is used again [in the Book of Acts<sup>86</sup>] and translated there, "assuredly gathering". The idea conveyed by it is that of putting things side by side, and so making a comparison and forming a conclusion. Thus Saul, well equipped with a knowledge of the ancient Scriptures, set before his hearers a description of the Messiah as He is there portrayed, and, relating the life history of Jesus, showed them that in Him the Scriptures of the prophets had been fulfilled'.<sup>87</sup>

### Reading between the lines.

Although it didn't fall within the scope of Luke's history of the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth,<sup>88</sup> we learn from one of Saul's subsequent letters that he had broken up his stay at Damascus by a lengthy sojourn in Arabia.<sup>89</sup> We don't know exactly how long he stayed in Arabia. All that we know is that the whole period from his conversion to his first trip to Jerusalem spanned three years.<sup>90</sup>

The name 'Arabia' refers to 'the Nabataean kingdom, which stretched from the very walls of Damascus to the Gulf of Akaba, with its capital at Petra'.<sup>91</sup> We know nothing of what Saul did in Arabia, nor indeed to which part or parts he went.

But I suspect that his lengthy stay there gave him the opportunity, not only to reflect quietly on what had happened to him and to re-orientate both himself and his understanding of his Old Testament scriptures (sitting now at the feet of an infinitely greater Teacher than Rabban Gamaliel<sup>92</sup>) but also to occupy himself in the proclamation of Christ and His gospel.<sup>93</sup>

### Verse 23.

**'The Jews took counsel together to kill him'.** At some point after Saul's return to Damascus,<sup>94</sup> we find (not surprisingly in the circumstances) that the man who had formerly breathed an atmosphere of *murder* against the Lord's disciples,<sup>95</sup> himself became the object of a plot to *murder* him.<sup>96</sup> The shoe was now very much on the other foot.

But though Saul doubtless saw in his Jewish persecutors a mirror image of his former self,<sup>97</sup> he would have realised that they had an additional cause of resentment. For they would have regarded him as the *very worst* of apostates, in that, from their viewpoint, he had not only forsaken the faith of his fathers but had also betrayed the trust reposed in him by the high priest.<sup>98</sup>

### FAREWELL DAMASCUS.

**Verses 24-25.** Saul later rehearsed this story in what we know as his Second Epistle to the Corinthians.<sup>99</sup>

The Jews **'watched the gates also day and night that they might kill him'**. 'Watching the gates both "day and night" entails careful guarding, recognizing that Paul might escape at any time. City gates were closed at night, but presumably individuals travelling alone could exit smaller doors there with permission from guards'.<sup>100</sup>

We discover later that this was not an attack made only by the Jews in Damascus but that they had gained the support of the civic authorities.

Saul was compelled 'to leave Damascus in this way because the governor under the Nabatean king Aretas IV was guarding the city in order to arrest or kidnap him'.<sup>101</sup> In other words, both the Jews and the Arabs were now after him! Perhaps this governor wanted to arrest him since he had done something in Arabia that he did not like—such as preaching!<sup>102</sup>

By way of background, king Aretas IV was the king of Nabatea (the 'Arabia' of Galatians chapter 1<sup>103</sup>). It is probable that it was Saul's preaching over many months in the kingdom of Aretas which had aroused the hostility of the authorities there. This would explain why, when the Jews of Damascus attempted, with murderous intent, to prevent Saul's escape from the city,<sup>104</sup> they did so with the full backing and authority of the governor, who, at the time, was the representative of Aretas.<sup>105</sup>

**'In a basket'**. The word which Luke uses here signifies something twisted or folded up, 'an ordinary loose weave basket'. The word used by the apostle in 2 Corinthians 11 describes a large, round, plaited basket and 'was used especially for fish'.<sup>106</sup> (Could Paul, I wonder, still remember the stench after twenty years?)

Not that Saul of Tarsus was the first biblical character to make use of such an undignified escape route. I have in mind, of course, the escape (i) of the two Israelite spies from the Canaanites at Jericho<sup>107</sup> and (ii) of young David from Israel's king Saul at Gibeah.<sup>108</sup>

But, as both Luke and Saul noted, although the Jews kept careful guard over all the gates by night as well as by day, one night the disciples at Damascus succeeded in lowering Saul out through a window and down the wall, enabling him to escape out of the hands of both the Jews and the governor.

It was **'by night'**, I note. For, truly, the One who kept 'Israel', kept Saul too, and (as we know well), 'He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep'!<sup>109</sup>

And it is clear that Saul never forgot the humiliating circumstances of his narrow escape. It is not difficult to imagine how the shameful way in which he had been constrained to leave Damascus must have contrasted glaringly in his mind with the dignified manner in which, some time ago, he had approached it.

It cannot have been easy for the man who, until recently, had been the respected envoy of the high priest, not only to *enter* Damascus helplessly as a blind man, but now to *leave* it helplessly as if he was a bundle of hay or a sack of fish. There was, indeed, a stark contrast between (i) the traditional Roman honour accorded the first soldier over an enemy city's wall,<sup>110</sup> and (ii) the shame attached to this Roman citizen's<sup>111</sup> being lowered down in a basket<sup>112</sup> through an opening in the city wall.<sup>113</sup>

And so it was that, when Paul felt compelled to boast (not, mark you, in his strength – as his opponents did in theirs – but in his weakness), this incident was the first which came to mind and to pen.<sup>114</sup>

## **SAUL IN JERUSALEM.**

### **Verse 26.**

And so, having tasted just a little of the medicine which, until recently, he had been administering to others, Saul headed for, and reached, Jerusalem. 'It must have been a memorable journey for Saul. What a crowd of memories would throng upon him as he passed the spot where the Lord had appeared to him'!<sup>115</sup>

**'When he was come to Jerusalem'**. Initially, Saul didn't find it as easy to secure acceptance by the disciples at Jerusalem as he had by the disciples at Damascus.

**'They were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple'**. We must assume that, for some reason, Saul carried with him no letter of commendation or introduction<sup>116</sup> from his Christian brethren at Damascus to those at Jerusalem, as earlier he had carried from his Jewish brethren at Jerusalem to those at Damascus.<sup>117</sup>

We must remember that, when Saul had left the city some three or four years previously, it had been to track down believers with a view to hauling them before the Jewish authorities at Jerusalem to be punished.<sup>118</sup> And it is clear from his own words later ('I was unknown by face unto the churches of Judæa which were in Christ'<sup>119</sup>) that very little, if anything, was known in Jerusalem about his activities since his conversion.

Any impression which the story of his conversion made at first may well have diminished with the passage of time, and the fact that he had been unheard of for three years could easily have given rise (i) to doubts about the reality of his experience and (ii) to fears that he might have reverted to his former faith and violent ways.

'It is also to be observed that Luke does not affirm that the disciples had never heard of his conversion, but only that they did not believe that he was a disciple'.<sup>120</sup>

And we can hardly blame the disciples for regarding Saul with great suspicion. It wasn't beyond the realms of possibility that he was a fifth-columnist, attempting to penetrate their circle to discover their meeting-places and to identify their leaders.

After all, it was a well-known and much used strategy for spies to infiltrate the ranks of a movement by faking commitment to a cause. We might think, for instance, (i) of the clandestine activities of Hushai the Archite back in the days of David and Absalom,<sup>121</sup> or (ii) of the sham-brethren of whom Paul later wrote, who furtively 'slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery'.<sup>122</sup>

Ironically, at an earlier time, unbelievers had fought shy of 'joining'<sup>123</sup> themselves to the disciples at Jerusalem,<sup>124</sup> and now the disciples at Jerusalem fought shy of letting a genuine believer 'join' (the same Greek word) himself to them!

#### **Verses 27-28.**

**'But Barnabas took him'**. At this point, Barnabas proved himself to be a true 'son of encouragement' (the meaning of his name<sup>125</sup>) to Saul.

And thanks to the good offices of Barnabas, Saul was admitted to the fellowship, not only of the apostles (of whom only two were then at Jerusalem, Peter, and James, our Lord's brother<sup>126</sup>) but of the whole church at Jerusalem.

As one commentator has observed, 'When Saul desperately needed a true friend in Damascus, Ananias played that part to him; now, when he stood in equal need of one in Jerusalem, he found a friend in Barnabas<sup>127</sup> ... The action of Barnabas implies that he was previously acquainted with Saul and knew that the sincerity of his character left no room for doubting the reality of his conversion'.<sup>128</sup>

**'How he had seen the Lord in the way'**. I don't think it would be too fanciful for us to imagine that, when Barnabas informed James and Peter that Saul 'had seen the Lord', James may have responded, 'So have I',<sup>129</sup> with Peter then chiming in, 'Me too, and that on the very day He rose'!<sup>130</sup>

**'He had preached boldly (v. 27) ... preaching boldly (v. 29)'**. Back in chapter 4, the company of disciples at Jerusalem had prayed that the Lord would, as they said, 'grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal'.<sup>131</sup> We might say that *verses 20-31* of Acts 9 are concerned with Saul's speaking God's word with boldness,<sup>132</sup> and *verses 32-43* are concerned with God's stretching out His hand to heal.<sup>133</sup>

**'He was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem'**. It was Peter, in particular, that Saul wished to visit.<sup>134</sup> I imagine that, when this relatively new (but, by no means, junior<sup>135</sup>) apostle spent fifteen days in the company of the older apostle, they did more than discuss the weather! For, apart from any other matters, 'though Saul had received his commission directly from Jesus, there were many things in the history of the life of Christ which could be best learned from the lips of him who had been with Jesus from the commencement of His ministry'.<sup>136</sup>

#### **Verse 29.**

Now, at Jerusalem, as formerly at Damascus,<sup>137</sup> Saul preached boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And we need have no doubts about the substance of his preaching in both cities. He later explained to Agrippa II (the great grandson of Herod the Great), 'King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem ... that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance'.<sup>138</sup>



**'He spake and disputed against the Grecian Jews'**. Saul turned his attention to the Hellenists. These were the Greek-speaking Jews at Jerusalem, and in 'disputing' against them he was (and it may have been deliberately) continuing the work begun a few years before by Stephen.

I was interested to find that the word translated 'disputed' here<sup>139</sup> is used by Luke in only one other place, namely, in chapter 6, where we read that the same group of men 'arose and disputed with Stephen'.<sup>140</sup> But I note that, according to chapter 6, it was the Hellenists who launched the offensive ('disputing with Stephen'), whereas here, in chapter 9, it was Saul who took the initiative ('disputing against' them). And there was certainly no-one better equipped than the converted Saul of Tarsus to do just that!

**'They went about to kill him'**. The effectiveness of Saul's debating skills is demonstrated by the way in which the Hellenists planned to do to their former ally (now, in their eyes, turned traitor) what they had done to Stephen! Truly, history was repeating itself, in that, the Greek-speaking Jews, finding themselves altogether unable to silence their opponent by argument, set out to silence him by violence.

As Damascus before, so now Jerusalem had become too hot for Saul.

## FAREWELL JERUSALEM.

### Verse 30.

**'When the brethren knew it, they brought him down to Caesarea'**.

And so Saul left Jerusalem, in part, because of the intervention of the other disciples. They may well, I suppose, have been apprehensive, not only about Saul's own safety, but also for their own. For Saul's violent death could easily have triggered a repeat performance of the widespread persecution which had followed in the wake of the bold testimony and violent death of Stephen.<sup>141</sup>

I say, 'in part', because we know that there was more to Saul's departure from Jerusalem than simply the action of Saul's *'brethren'*. For, in Saul's later speech on the steps of the Roman barracks at Jerusalem, he told how, when in prayer in the Temple, he had fallen into a trance, during which the Lord Himself had instructed him to leave Jerusalem quickly.<sup>142</sup>

Interestingly, in the same way that (i) Ananias had earlier raised an objection to facing Saul, on the grounds that everyone at Damascus knew what Saul had done to the saints at Jerusalem, to which the Lord had responded, 'Go',<sup>143</sup> so (ii) Saul had then also raised an objection to leaving Jerusalem, on the very same grounds, namely, that everyone knew what he had done to the saints at Jerusalem, to which the Lord had also responded, 'Go'.<sup>144</sup>

And so, with his *brethren's* concern *for him* dovetailing perfectly with *his Lord's* word *to him*, Saul had no choice but to leave Jerusalem. He would not see its familiar, and, no doubt, dearly loved,<sup>145</sup> walls and streets again for full fourteen years.<sup>146</sup>

The saints then brought Saul, we read, 'down to **Caesarea**'.

In one way, history would repeat itself later. This was the 'first, but not the last, time that he had to be taken to Caesarea because of danger in Jerusalem'.<sup>147</sup> The second occasion is recorded in chapter 23. On both occasions, the Jews attempted to 'kill him',<sup>148</sup> and, on both occasions, he was 'brought' from Jerusalem to Caesarea, the first time by 'the brethren'<sup>149</sup> and the second time by Roman cavalry.<sup>150</sup>

We are told plainly that Caesarea was only a stop-off point on the way to Saul's ultimate destination, a city he knew very well, Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia.

But, if Saul knew 'Tarsus' well, the name 'Caesarea' should certainly ring bells with you and me.

For, as we learn from the following chapter, there lived in Caesarea a centurion from the Italian Regiment, a moral and devout man who 'feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always'.<sup>151</sup> Yes, you guessed correctly, Caesarea was the home of Cornelius, a Gentile, who, at the time, was in sore need of hearing the gospel that he and his household might be saved.<sup>152</sup>

And now, lo and behold, to Caesarea comes none other than 'the apostle to the Gentiles'.<sup>153</sup> Surely, we might have thought, God would see to it that, in His good providence, these two men (the zealous preacher and the eager seeker) would somehow meet up. But, no!

For God no more set up a meeting between Cornelius and Saul than He set up a meeting between Cornelius and 'Philip the evangelist', who seemingly dwelt at Caesarea, having settled there following his itinerant labours in Samaria, Gaza and Azotus.<sup>154</sup> (We know that he was still there with his family when Saul/Paul and his companions stayed some time at Caesarea and enjoyed his hospitality many years later.<sup>155</sup>)

But it wasn't God's will for either Philip or Saul to make known the gospel to Cornelius and his household. That task was reserved for another ... reserved for the man whose labours will occupy the closing section of our chapter<sup>156</sup> ... reserved for the apostle Peter.

Listen carefully to Peter's own words, spoken later at the so-called Council of Jerusalem: 'Men and brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe'.<sup>157</sup>

We may or may not want to read into our Lord's words, spoken to Peter some years before, 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven',<sup>158</sup> that He was indicating that it would be Peter who was to open the door of faith and salvation (i) to the Jews in Acts 2 and (ii) to the Gentiles in Acts 10. But, most certainly, as Peter himself recognised, God had chosen him to be the one through whom the first Gentile household should be brought into the blessing of His salvation.

**'And sent him forth to Tarsus'**. To Saul, then, Caesarea was not to be the place where he could point Cornelius and his household to the Saviour; it was only the springboard from which he was to return to the home of his childhood and youth.

And so, exit Saul, and enter Peter.<sup>159</sup> 'For a time, Paul has held the centre of the stage; but once again [from verse 32 onwards] Peter commands the limelight'.<sup>160</sup>

And here you and I must say our 'farewell' to Saul. We'll meet him again in the closing section of chapter 11, when, again courtesy of Barnabas, he will leave Tarsus (perhaps for the last time) to begin his work in earnest as 'apostle to the Gentiles', taking Antioch as his base of operations.<sup>161</sup>

## THE PROGRESS REPORT.

### Verse 31.

It is at this point that Luke inserts the third of his seven résumés or gospel progress reports.<sup>162</sup>

**'Had peace'**. In Luke's next report,<sup>163</sup> 'the church has peace because God strikes the persecutor dead;<sup>164</sup> in the present case, the church has peace because God converts the persecutor ... The idea of a period of peace after testing and before the next period of testing was familiar from Scripture'.<sup>165</sup>

A further cause of 'peace for the Christians was that the attention of their persecutors, the Jews, was turned from them to resist the attempt made by [the Roman Emperor] Caligula to have his statue erected in the Temple at Jerusalem'.<sup>166</sup> For a time, therefore, 'the Jews had other matters to think about ... the danger of rebellion was only averted by the assassination of the emperor in AD 41'.<sup>167</sup>

If I can be permitted to put it this way: 'for a spell, trouble for the Jews spelt peace for the church'.

**'The church ... was multiplied'**. Luke's previous progress report had included the words, 'the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem'.<sup>168</sup> Now he is able to report that 'the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria ... was multiplied'.

However you look at it, *that* is impressive growth!

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Acts 9. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 26. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 9. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 9. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 26. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 22. 4-5.

<sup>7</sup> See Acts 26. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 9. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Acts 9. 4-6.

<sup>10</sup> Saul/Paul ever remained a practising 'Jew', Acts 21. 39; 22. 3; Rom. 9. 3; Gal. 2. 15. Cf. Acts 18. 18; 20. 6, 16; 21. 23-26 (note: 'that you walk orderly, keeping the law', v. 24); 22. 17; 24. 11, 17-18 (note: 'I went up to worship ('προσκυνεω') at Jerusalem', v. 11, and 'I came ... to present offerings', v. 17); 1 Cor. 16. 8. He did not, therefore, change his religion.

<sup>11</sup> Craig Keener, 'Acts: an Exegetical Commentary', page 1615.

<sup>12</sup> Acts 9. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 9. 8; 22. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Acts 9. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Acts 9. 12, 18.

<sup>16</sup> Acts 9. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Acts 26. 18.

<sup>18</sup> Acts 22. 10.

<sup>19</sup> For the reference to Saul's origin in Tarsus, see Acts 21. 39; 22. 3; cf. Acts 9. 30; 11. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Acts 9. 10-31 (Revised Version).

<sup>21</sup> Acts 9. 12; 26. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Acts 9. 10-12.

<sup>23</sup> Craig Keener, *ibid.*, page 1645.

Compare the words of J. S. Howson:

'The simultaneous preparation of the hearts of Ananias and Saul, and the simultaneous preparation of those of Peter and Cornelius—the questioning and hesitation of Peter and the questioning and hesitation of Ananias—the one doubting whether he might make friendship with the Gentiles, the other doubting whether he might approach the enemy of the Church—the unhesitating obedience of each when the Divine will was made clearly known—the state of mind in which both the Pharisee and the Centurion were found—each waiting to see what the Lord would say unto them—this close analogy will not be forgotten by those who reverently read the two consecutive chapters, in which the baptism of Saul and the baptism of Cornelius are narrated in the Acts of the Apostles', W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, 'The Life and Epistles of St. Paul', volume 1, pages 101-102.

<sup>24</sup> Acts 10. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Acts 10. 17, 19; 11. 5. 'Luke has already prepared his audience for numerous visions in the announcement of the era of the Spirit in Acts 2. 17', Craig Keener, *op. cit.*, page 1645.

<sup>26</sup> 'Go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul', Acts 9. 11; 'fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter: he lodges with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side', Acts 10. 6.

- <sup>27</sup> 'Neither Ananias nor Peter was keen to go at first, since they feared the consequences. Both natural fears and deep-seated prejudices can make a believer reluctant to respond to divine guidance', J. Anderson, 'Acts (*What the Bible Teaches*)', on Acts 9. 10-12.
- <sup>28</sup> Acts 9. 6; 10. 33.
- <sup>29</sup> Acts 9. 17;
- <sup>30</sup> Acts 10. 44; that the description 'outpouring' is accurate can be shown by comparing Acts 2. 33 with Acts 11. 17.
- <sup>31</sup> Acts 9. 10b.
- <sup>32</sup> Acts 9. 10c. See John 10. 3, 14, 27.
- <sup>33</sup> Craig Keener, *op. cit.*, page 1652.
- <sup>34</sup> N. T. Wright, 'Acts for Everyone', page 144.
- <sup>35</sup> W. M. Furneaux, 'The Acts of the Apostles', page 132.
- <sup>36</sup> W. M. Furneaux, *ibid.*, page 132.
- <sup>37</sup> Acts 6. 1, 2, 7; 9. 1.
- <sup>38</sup> Luke 5. 33.
- <sup>39</sup> 'But his disciples took him by night', Luke 9. 25. So RV, ESV, JND, NASB, NRSV.
- <sup>40</sup> As in 2 Chron. 6. 41; Psa. 52. 9; 79. 2; 89. 19; 132. 9; 145. 10.
- <sup>41</sup> Acts 9. 14.
- <sup>42</sup> Craig Keener, *op. cit.*, page 1655.
- <sup>43</sup> 'In his later speech to the Jerusalem populace from the top of the steps connecting the temple precincts with the Antonia fortress (22:14–16) Paul gives a fuller account of what Ananias said to him; in his speech before Agrippa (26:16–18) he includes Ananias's communication in what was said to him during the heavenly vision. In the present narrative, too, it is plain that the Damascus-road vision and the message of Ananias were mutually confirmatory; by this twofold communication Saul received his commission from the Lord', F. F. Bruce, 'The Book of Acts (*New International Commentary on the New Testament*)', Kindle Locations 6945-6949.
- <sup>44</sup> 'To the Jew first, and also to the Greek', Rom. 1. 16. For Paul's practice of preaching and teaching in the Jewish synagogues first, see Acts 13. 5; 14. 1; 17. 1, 10; 18. 4, 19; 19. 8.
- <sup>45</sup> Rom. 11. 13; cf. Acts 26. 17; Rom. 15. 16; Gal. 1. 16; 2. 2, 7, 9; Eph. 3. 8; 1 Tim. 2. 7.
- <sup>46</sup> J. R. Lumby, 'The Acts of the Apostles (*Cambridge Greek Testament*)', page 196.
- <sup>47</sup> Luke 21. 12. The Lord's words receive fulfilment more than once in the Book of Acts; see Acts 13. 7–12; 24. 10–25; 26. 2–29.
- <sup>48</sup> Acts 9. 14; compare Acts 9. 21.
- <sup>49</sup> Acts 9. 15.
- <sup>50</sup> Acts 9. 16. 'Instead of inflicting suffering on those who bear Christ's name (9. 14), Saul himself will now suffer for this name (9. 16) ... Although Paul was not the first to evangelize Gentiles (Acts 8. 27–39; 10. 28–43; 11. 20), he advanced the Gentile mission more than others and historically viewed it as a task the Lord had especially appointed for him (Rom. 1. 5; 11. 13; 15. 16, 18; Gal. 1. 16; 2. 7–9; Eph. 3. 1–8, esp. 3. 2–3, 8; Col. 1. 25–27; cf. 1 Tim. 2. 7)', Craig Keener, *op. cit.*, page 1655.
- <sup>51</sup> Acts 21. 13.
- <sup>52</sup> 'I will show him how many things he must suffer', Acts 9. 16.
- <sup>53</sup> Acts 9. 10, 12.
- <sup>54</sup> Ajith Fernando, 'Acts (*NIV Application Commentary*)', page 299.

<sup>55</sup> Acts 8. 14-17.

<sup>56</sup> Acts 19. 6. See Darrell L. Bock, '*Acts (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*', on Acts 9. 17.

<sup>57</sup> P. J. Gloag, '*Acts of the Apostles (A Critical and Exegetical Commentary)*', Volume 1, page 328. See Gal. 1. 1, 11-12; cf. 1 Cor. 15. 3; Eph. 3. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Acts 22. 11.

<sup>59</sup> J. R. Lumby, *op. cit.*, page 197.

<sup>60</sup> Acts 26. 13.

<sup>61</sup> Acts 22. 11.

<sup>62</sup> Acts 22. 13.

<sup>63</sup> Acts 22. 16. It is possible, I suppose, to understand this as meaning in the traditional way that 'first he must get himself baptized, as *the outward and visible sign of his inward and spiritual cleansing from sin*', F. F. Bruce, '*The Book of Acts (New International Commentary on the New Testament)*', Kindle Locations 14396-14397. Personally, I think it more likely that, because Saul had been closely involved in crimes against Christ and His church, his baptism served as a public dissociation from those sins. Compare the words of Peter, 'be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins ... Save yourselves from this perverse generation', Acts 2. 38, 40.

<sup>64</sup> 'Damascus offered an abundance of locations for baptisms ... Perhaps the most obvious location is the river Barada, which runs east-west through Damascus, close to Straight Street', Craig Keener, *op. cit.*, page 1667. ['Barada' is the name by which the river Abana is now known.]

<sup>65</sup> The description given to him by the Lord Jesus, Luke 4. 27.

<sup>66</sup> 2 Kings 5. 10, 14.

<sup>67</sup> 2 Kings 5. 12.

<sup>68</sup> Acts 9. 18.

<sup>69</sup> Acts 9. 9.

<sup>70</sup> Gen. 24. 33.

<sup>71</sup> Acts 9. 17-19.

<sup>72</sup> Ajith Fernando, *op. cit.*, page 299, quoting from Acts 22. 12.

<sup>73</sup> I. Howard Marshall, '*Acts (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries)*', on Acts 9. 19-20.

<sup>74</sup> Ben Witherington III, '*The Acts of the Apostles (A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary)*', Saul's Early Efforts.

<sup>75</sup> Gal. 1. 16. Compare Paul's later application of Psa. 2. 7, 'Thou art my Son', to the Lord Jesus, Acts 13. 33.

<sup>76</sup> Acts 9. 22.

<sup>77</sup> John 1. 49; Matt. 16. 16.

<sup>78</sup> Mark 14. 61.

<sup>79</sup> F. F. Bruce, '*The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*', page 204.

'The background of this phrase needs to be understood in its Old Testament context of God's special relationship with the anointed king of Israel. The Lord had a unique relationship with David and promised him that one of his descendants would be king of Israel in the future, that he would have a glorious and eternal reign, and that he would enjoy a relationship of sonship to the Father: "I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son". To announce that Jesus is the Son of God is to proclaim the arrival of the anointed king (the "Messiah") who will reign on the throne of David', Clinton E. Arnold, '*Acts (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary)*', on Acts 9. 20.

<sup>80</sup> Acts 9. 2.

- <sup>81</sup> F. F. Bruce, *'The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary'*, Kindle Locations 7010-7014.
- <sup>82</sup> D. Gaertner, *'Acts (The College Press NIV Commentary)'*, on Acts 9. 21.
- <sup>83</sup> W. M. Furneaux, *ibid.*, page 137, quoting 1 Sam. 10. 12.
- <sup>84</sup> The word, *'πορθεω'*.
- <sup>85</sup> Gal. 1. 13, 23.
- <sup>86</sup> Acts 16. 10.
- <sup>87</sup> J. R. Lumby, *op. cit.*, page 199.
- <sup>88</sup> Acts 1. 8.
- <sup>89</sup> Gal. 1. 16-17.
- <sup>90</sup> Gal. 1. 18.
- <sup>91</sup> F. F. Bruce, *'Galatian Problems: Autobiographical Data'*, Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 51 (2), page 298.
- <sup>92</sup> Acts 22. 3.
- <sup>93</sup> 'It is commonly supposed that Paul's sojourn in Arabia had the nature of a religious retreat: that he sought the solitude of the desert—perhaps even going to Mount Horeb as Moses and Elijah had done—in order to commune with God and think out all the implications of his new life, without disturbance. But the context in which he tells of his going to Arabia, immediately after receiving his commission to proclaim Christ among the Gentiles, suggests that he went there to preach the gospel', F. F. Bruce, *'The Book of Acts (New International Commentary on the New Testament)'*, Kindle Locations 7029-7033.
- <sup>94</sup> Gal. 1. 17-18. For the 'many days' of Acts 9. 23, compare 1 Kings 2. 38-39, where 'many days' also covers a period of about three years.
- <sup>95</sup> Acts 8. 1.
- <sup>96</sup> Acts 9. 23.
- <sup>97</sup> 1 Tim. 1. 13.
- <sup>98</sup> See the comments at W. M. Furneaux, *op. cit.*, page 138.
- <sup>99</sup> 2 Cor. 11. 32-33.
- <sup>100</sup> Craig Keener, *op. cit.*, page 1683.
- <sup>101</sup> 2 Cor. 11. 32.
- <sup>102</sup> Ajith Fernando, *op. cit.*, page 300.
- <sup>103</sup> Gal. 1. 17.
- <sup>104</sup> Acts 9. 23-24.
- <sup>105</sup> 2 Cor. 11. 32.
- <sup>106</sup> J B Lightfoot, *'The Acts of the Apostles'*, pages 152-153.
- <sup>107</sup> Josh. 2. 15.
- <sup>108</sup> 1 Sam. 19. 12. (See Gibeah' in 1 Sam. 15. 34 and 22. 6; 23. 19.)
- <sup>109</sup> Psa. 121. 4.
- <sup>110</sup> The gold Corona Muralis was 'awarded to the first man over an enemy wall', 'Ancient Roman Military Decorations', accessed at <https://www.warhistoryonline.com/ancient-history/11-ancient-roman-military-decorations-m.html>.
- <sup>111</sup> Acts 16. 37-38; 22. 39.

<sup>112</sup> 2 Cor. 11. 33.

<sup>113</sup> Acts 9. 25.

<sup>114</sup> 2 Cor. 11. 30-33.

<sup>115</sup> W. M. Furneaux, *op. cit.*, page 140.

<sup>116</sup> Compare the later action of the saints at Ephesus on behalf of Apollos: 'when he was minded to pass over into Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him', Acts 18. 27 ('the first instance of letters of commendation sent from one church to another', J. R. Lumby, *op. cit.*, page 329); and the example set by Paul himself in Rom. 16. 1 and Col. 4. 10.

<sup>117</sup> Acts 22. 5.

<sup>118</sup> Acts 9. 21; 22. 5.

<sup>119</sup> Gal. 1. 22.

<sup>120</sup> P. J. Gloag, *op. cit.*, page 342.

<sup>121</sup> 2 Sam. 15. 30-37; 16. 16-19; 17. 15-16.

<sup>122</sup> Gal. 2. 4.

<sup>123</sup> To glue or cement together ('κολλᾶω').

<sup>124</sup> Acts 5. 13.

<sup>125</sup> Acts 4. 36.

<sup>126</sup> Gal. 1. 18-19. 'Paul met only the two key apostles, Peter and James. Luke's reference to "the apostles", therefore, should be interpreted as "a generalizing plural"'. Ajith Fernando, *op. cit.*, page 301.

<sup>127</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts (New International Commentary on the New Testament)*, Kindle Locations 7065-7066.

<sup>128</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, page 206.

<sup>129</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 7. Referring to Galatians 1. 19, one commentator wrote, 'It is highly probable that Paul would state to him the vision which he had of the Lord Jesus on his way to Damascus, and that James also would state to Paul the fact that he had seen Him after He rose', Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Bible*, on 1 Cor. 15. 7.

<sup>130</sup> Luke 24. 34; 1 Cor. 15. 5.

But, as we noted on page 7 of our study, *'The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus'*:

'We know that, during the 40-day interval between His resurrection and His ascension (Acts 1. 3), the Risen Lord had appeared on many occasions to many of His disciples, including, on one occasion, in excess of 500 brethren (1 Cor. 15. 4-7). But, as far as we know, the Ascended Lord revealed Himself directly to only three men: (i) first, as we just noted, to Stephen in the city of Jerusalem (Acts 7. 55-56); (ii) now, to Saul on the road outside of Damascus (Acts 9. 17); and, (iii) many years later, to the apostle John on the island of Patmos (Rev. 1. 10-20)'.

<sup>131</sup> Acts 4. 29-30.

<sup>132</sup> Note the word 'boldly', Acts 9. 27 and 28.

<sup>133</sup> Note the word 'heals', Acts 9. 34.

<sup>134</sup> Gal. 1. 18.

<sup>135</sup> Gal. 2. 6.

<sup>136</sup> J. R. Lumby, *op. cit.*, page 202.

<sup>137</sup> Acts 9. 27.

<sup>138</sup> Acts 26. 19-20.

<sup>139</sup> The word is 'συνεζητεω', 'to discuss'.

- <sup>140</sup> Acts 6. 9.
- <sup>141</sup> Acts 7. 60-8. 1.
- <sup>142</sup> Acts 22. 17-18.
- <sup>143</sup> Acts 9. 13-16.
- <sup>144</sup> Acts 22. 19-21.
- <sup>145</sup> Compare the sentiments of a much earlier godly Israelite in Psalm 122.
- <sup>146</sup> Gal. 1. 18 to 2. 1.
- <sup>147</sup> F. F. Bruce, *'The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary'*, page 207.
- <sup>148</sup> Acts 9. 29; 23. 15.
- <sup>149</sup> Acts 9. 30,
- <sup>150</sup> Acts 23. 31,
- <sup>151</sup> Acts 10. 1-2.
- <sup>152</sup> Acts 11. 14.
- <sup>153</sup> Rom. 11. 13.
- <sup>154</sup> Acts 8. 25-26, 40.
- <sup>155</sup> Acts 21. 8-10.
- <sup>156</sup> Acts 9. 32-43.
- <sup>157</sup> Acts 15. 7.
- <sup>158</sup> Matt. 16. 19.
- <sup>159</sup> Acts 9. 32-43.
- <sup>160</sup> William Barclay, *'Acts (Daily Study Bible)'*, on Acts 9. 32-43.
- <sup>161</sup> Acts 11. 25; 12. 25; 13. 1-3; 14. 26-28.
- <sup>162</sup> See also Acts 2. 47; 6. 7; 12. 24; 16. 5; 19. 20; 28. 30-31.
- <sup>163</sup> Acts 12. 24.
- <sup>164</sup> Acts 12. 1-3, 12-23.
- <sup>165</sup> Craig Keener, *op. cit.*, page 1695, referencing Judg. 3. 11; 5. 31; 8. 28.
- <sup>166</sup> J. R. Lumby, *op. cit.*, page 31, referencing Flavius Josephus, *'Antiquities of the Jews'*, Book 18, Chapter 8, Section 2 (where Caligula is given the name 'Caius'). See further, R. C. Young and A. E. Steinmann, *'Caligular's Statue for the Jerusalem Temple'*, JETS 62.4 (2019): 759-73.
- <sup>167</sup> E. H. Trenchard, *'Acts (New Testament Commentary)'*, on Acts 9. 31.
- <sup>168</sup> Acts 6. 7.