

Acts 9:1: *'And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, ²And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. ³And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: ⁴And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? ⁵And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. ⁶And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. ⁷And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.'*

Saul hated the True Church with fierce and murderous hatred; his mission from God, he thought, was to stamp it out, to erase its very existence but in one moment, in the twinkling of an eye, in an instant, God miraculously changed him from the inside. He was transformed from a hardened, recalcitrant mule, kicking against while still being forced to submit unto God's formation of his life; he was, suddenly, a softened and pliable lump of clay, readied, finally, be formed into the man of God who would be used of God to write down the Words of God, revealing the Son of God in order to grow, strengthen and mature the True Church of God.

Verse 8: *'And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. ⁹And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.'*

He got up, dusted himself off and found that he was blind in a foreign place... a terrifying predicament for anyone, especially for someone accustomed to being in complete control of his surroundings; he was so humbled that he had to be led by the hand like a small child or a very old man. He was so traumatized that he did not eat or drink anything for three whole days. (... like Jesus in the dark grave for three days)

By the way... for those who maintain that God would never be the source of our trials; here is the most severe trial many might ever imagine, being suddenly blinded in a foreign place; no evil spirit did this to Saul; the source of this very serious trial is obviously God; God did this to Saul! And if God is Sovereign... really Sovereign... then we should recognize that He causes trials to form us into the image and likeness of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 10: *'And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.'* Like Paul who said: *'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'*

A certain disciple... a real and definite person!

The man, of whom I previously told you, who denies the Pre-Trib Rapture and so much more... also maintains the false belief that those who die are in an unconscious sleep until after the Millennium. Not only is this obviously wrong, in light of Paul's statement: *'Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: ⁷(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)' ⁸We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.'* 2Cor 5:6 but even more obvious in light of Jesus rehearsal of the definite, certain man, Lazarus and the rich man: *'There was a certain rich man... And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus,'* Luke 16:19 the Greek word for 'certain' is: **tis** which indicates a real and certain thing or person. Obviously, neither Lazarus nor the rich man are sleeping; both are wide awake and fully experiencing the place in which they were; the rich man is in Hades: the miserable side of Sheol, the Old Testament place of the dead which has been filling up since the time of Cain, and where they will all remain until the Final Judgment after the Millennium while Lazarus is, at the time of Jesus' telling, in Paradise/Abraham's Bosom, the good and pleasant side of Sheol which had been home to all the Old Testament righteous dead, from the time of Abel, until the Lord Jesus Christ went there after being crucified and took them all to Heaven; that place is now empty or, it's been taken whole up to Heaven. In any event, no one of God's Children are ever in any kind of unconscious state of sleep at any time following their

physical death; *to be absent from the physical body is to present with our Lord and Savior*; the Lord Jesus Christ died to save us from any kind of spiritual death whatsoever!

So, a **certain** disciple named Ananias: he is not the Ananias we met at the beginning of the Church who, with his wife, Sapphira, conspired together to lie to the Apostles and to the Holy Spirit, resulting in their quick and ignominious deaths. We do, however, hope for their sakes that they were, in fact, genuine Christians; if so, then lying would have had no bearing, at all, upon their eternal destiny: only upon their eternal rewards. If their Eternal Salvation was at stake, then no Christian's Salvation is ever truly secure.

This Ananias, like Samuel, upon hearing God's Voice said, *'Behold, I am here, Lord.'*

This is a man ready and willing to do God's Will.

Verse 11: *'And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, ¹² And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.'*

That seems simple enough: I am a chosen vessel of God! He wants to use me in a miracle healing! I'm ready to go! ... but it seems that it's not quite that simple...

'But Lord... Everyone knows about this terrible man...'

Verse 13 *'Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: ¹⁴ And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.'*

Verse 15: *'But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.'*

Ananias could never, this side of Heaven, understand how monumental this mission from God really is... what he is about to do won't seem like much to him, perhaps, but it will be studied, taught and remembered for 2000 years and on into forever!

'The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.' Isaiah 40:8

And Peter repeats this: *'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.** ²⁴ For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: ²⁵ But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.'* 1 Peter 1:23

These few verses concerning Ananias are The Word of God, which lives and will be remembered forever!

Ananias will have had a real part in God's presentation of most of our New Testament. He'll be instrumental in the conversion of Paul, who would then go on to write and record most of our Doctrine for the Church; God takes Ananias into His confidence: revealing first, to him, that Paul is, like himself, a chosen vessel, that he would take the Lord Jesus Christ's Name before kings and Israelites and that he would suffer greatly for the Word of God and also, most significantly, Ananias is the first person to hear, from God Himself, that **the Gospel would be taken to the Gentiles!**

'... Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also!' Rom 3:29

Verse 17: *'And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.'*

Ananias believed God and did as instructed; what he did will glorify God forever. The other Ananias and his wife, Sapphira will also be remembered in God's Word forever but for a different reason. If, however, the other Ananias and Sapphira were, in fact, genuine believers, they will also praise and glorify God forever for His Grace and Mercy toward them while God will surely, eventually, fully erase their shame because: *'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.'* Rom 8:1

Notice that Ananias calls Saul, '*Brother*;' he fully understands that God has chosen and saved Saul, that he, Ananias, is no more worthy of God's Grace than is Saul.

Verse 18: '*And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.*'

Something like scales fell from Saul's eyes and he could once again see but it would seem that he never again had sight or eyes as healthy as they'd been before this.

It's believed that the '*thorn in the flesh*' he'd been given from God was a lifelong problem with his eyes: Paul could have fallen prey to the temptation of pride because of the ministry to which God had called him when he was taken up into Heaven to be taught personally by the Lord Jesus Christ: '*I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord... I knew a man in Christ (himself) such an one caught up to the third heaven... he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter... and lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*' 2Cor 12:1

Later, we learn that this '*thorn in the flesh*,' a physical ailment which remained with him throughout his earthly ministry, was likely concerning his eyes. To the Galatians, Paul would later write: '*Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.* Gal 4:13

Paul is saying to the Galatians: 'At first, you loved me; you would have even given me your own eyes, if possible... but you've changed; now you are believing false reports about me from false teachers...'

The root of Paul's ongoing physical malady is thought to have originated right here as we see Ananias praying for him while something like scales fall from Saul's eyes.

Verse 19: '*And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul **certain** days with the disciples which were at Damascus.*'

Remember, Saul had not had any food or water for three days but now he has eaten and has been strengthened but food and water would've been the least of his hunger; for many months, Saul had used all his strength and all his might, working feverishly to destroy what he thought was an evil, false cult; he had worn himself ragged trying to stamp out Christianity but now, suddenly, he has come face to face with God Almighty, having met God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ... now his Lord and Savior; imagine his shame, his self-abnegation...

Saul would have been wise enough to refrain from wallowing in self pity; now that he knew the Truth, he would have been hungry, starving for more Truth... he would have been famished to learn more about the One Who had loved him so much as to have been willing to die in Saul's place, crucified on a cross, to have loved even Saul, the one who had, until 3 days ago, been more than willing to crucify Jesus Christ again!

Saul stayed with the Christians in Damascus, soaking in everything they knew about the Lord Jesus Christ and this new 'Way' but no one yet knew anything of any depth; even the 11 who had been with Jesus during His Earthly Ministry knew relatively little of Doctrine for the True Church; they did not yet understand that the True Church was a completely new thing; it was going to be Paul to whom the Lord Jesus Christ would reveal so many Mysteries of the Faith. For Saul, now listening to these Damascus disciples, quickly absorbing all that they knew, he was surely able to begin understanding how all his vast knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures did, in fact, all point to the Lord Jesus Christ; It would have been as though a highly intelligent adult were to sit in a 3rd grade class, quickly absorbing everything the 3rd grade teacher was teaching and, so,

having learned much of what there was to learn, this early in the life of the True Church, he went out and started his ministry of preaching the Word, anywhere and everywhere he was or ever would be.

He was being prepared, now, for the time, soon, when the Lord Jesus Christ would rapture him all the way up into the 3rd Heaven where he would be taught, personally by the Lord Jesus Christ, all the depth of Doctrine for His Body and Bride through which He would build His True Church for the next 2000 years until such time as He comes down into the clouds to call His Bride up to Himself, in our own Rapture. (see 2Cor 12:1 above)

It would not have taken very long at all until Saul fully understood everything the disciples in Damascus had learned and could teach him.

Verse 20: *'And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.'*

Back then there was a large Jewish population in Damascus but now, Damascus, like every Muslim controlled place, has become, like WWII Germany: Judenrein: Jews erased! Many of our own cities and universities are doing the same. That is one of the reasons why God plans to completely destroy Damascus which, today, is the oldest continuously inhabited city on Earth:

'The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap.'
Isaiah 17:1

The same fate likely awaits this nation, having quickly gone from being a close friend and protective ally of Israel unto one which, like most other nations of the World, has treacherously betrayed our only true ally in the Middle East; God sees these things and may respond as He has in the past.

Saul, having learned most of what the Damascus disciples had learned, was ready to begin his ministry of preaching God's Word; unto Timothy, Paul will write: *'I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; ² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. ⁵ But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.'* 2Tim 4:1

Saul began to fearlessly preach Jesus Christ in all the synagogues; like Philip, to the Ethiopian Eunuch, Saul would have begun with the Old Testament Scriptures, showing how they all spoke of, and pointed to, the Lord Jesus Christ, their long awaited Messiah...

Verse 21: *'But all that heard him were amazed, and said: is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?'*

This is why God chose Saul/Paul to understand and write most of God's Word unto His Body/Bride; the Jews, to whom he preached, were amazed: not only because he understood and clearly explained Jesus Christ's portrait within the pages of God's Word, but also because he clearly portrayed God's ability to completely change anyone who would come to Him through faith in His Son Who is the Word of God. Saul had come as a hater of the Lord Jesus Christ Whom God changed, in an instant, unto a willing servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, willing to preach Him no matter the cost. Paul could effectively preach God's ability and willingness to receive and transform anyone who comes to Him in faith because Saul had experienced God's Grace and Mercy poured out upon himself; he knew the Truth and preached the Truth because he had personally experienced the Truth: *'I know God's Grace and Mercy are offered to you because He poured it out on me, the most despicable of sinners; if He is willing and able to do this miracle in me... He can certainly do so in you!'*

Verse 22: *'But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. ²³ And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him'*

Jesus spoke Truth and the Jews killed Him; Saul is preaching the Truth of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Jews will seek to kill him.

It is not anti-Semitism to see this; It is God's Word; It is exactly what God wanted us to read and believe.