

RUSSELL SANDERS

7-6-2021

THE APOSTLE PAUL – LESSON 5

SAUL, THE FUGITIVE

We do not know the date of Saul's conversion to Christ, but we can make an educated guess. Using the more historically accurate date of Jesus death, resurrection, and ascension of about 29 A.D. or 30 A.D. (shunning Ussher's miscalculation of 33 A.D.) we would place the stoning of Stephen, attended by Saul, at about 30 or 31 A.D. Then Saul began persecuting the Followers of The Way around a period of about 32-35 A.D. It would appear that his Damascus Road encounter with Jesus may have been around 35 A.D.

Saul spent the next three years in preparation. His time in the Arabian wilderness was a period of Holy Spirit preparation, then he returned to Damascus and began preaching the gospel to the Jews who lived there. Some had been previously converted, but many resisted the gospel of Jesus Christ. Soon that resistance became so intense that the traditional Jews determined to kill this heretic called Saul (Paul) of Tarsus. They watched the city gates day and night hoping to capture and kill him. Saul was a fugitive for Christ's sake.

The believers knew that Saul needed an escape. After the city gates were closed one night, they put Saul in a large basket and let him down by ropes over the wall outside the city and into safety.

Saul (as Paul was still being called) then went to Jerusalem to meet with the head of the church, the Apostle Peter. (Paul was the Roman form of Saul.) He was not well received. All the believers were still afraid of him, not believing he was truly converted. They suspected it was just a ruse to discover them and arrest them.

One man believed him; Barnabas, who being a highly respected disciple, brought Saul to the Apostles and gave a full account of Saul's conversion (Acts 9:26-27). This gained his acceptance. Saul then was given liberty to proclaim Jesus throughout Jerusalem. This once again brought him trouble as we see in verse 29.

Saul disputed (argued) with the "Grecians," better known as Hellenist (Greek cultured) Jews. They were pagan proselytes converted to Judaism and not raised in the orthodox Jewish religion. We do not know the exact nature of the issues, but it was a severe enough difference that they also sought to kill him. Now he must flee as a fugitive from Jerusalem also.

The brethren escorted Saul out of Jerusalem into Caesarea. From there they sent Saul home to Tarsus, probably about 38 A.D. He remained seven years in his home of Tarsus most likely preaching the gospel around that region. This period of time seemed to be helpful in his maturity as a minister of the gospel.

His expansion of ministry was now about to happen, as we shall see tomorrow.