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THE APOSTLE PAUL – LESSON 3

THE EARLY LIFE OF SAUL OF TARSUS

PART 3

Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee and son of a Pharisee, and prized student of the renowned teacher of Jewish law (Gamaliel) was full of zeal for Yahweh, God of the Torah (Old Testament law). Believing that he was serving God, he desired to put an end to this movement of Christ-following heretics.

He had been commissioned with letters by the high priest to seek out these Followers of the Way and cast them into prison to await judgment. Acts 9 tells the story. One of the authorization letters was to the Syrian city of Damascus. Prior to that letter, Saul had already terrorized these people of “the Way” in other cities to the point that his fame (infamy) had already spread far and wide.

The High Priest had supplied him with armed temple guards (Jewish soldiers) to accompany him in all his travels to arrest, bind, and bring to Jerusalem these supposed insurgents who were leading orthodox Jews away.

Something extraordinary happened on the way to Damascus. An extremely bright light broke upon the traveling party. A “voice from nowhere” spoke loudly enough that every person in the party could hear it, but only Saul could understand it. It was Jesus speaking to him. Saul heard Jesus but could not see Him. In fact, had been struck totally blind. Jesus told him to go into Damascus and await instructions. Saul went there and abode in the house of Judas while fasting three days.

A devout convert by the name of Ananias was given a vision from God to go to Judas’ house and ask for Saul of Tarsus. Ananias being aware of Saul’s reputation, objected, but God assured him that this man was chosen as a special vessel for God’s purposes.

Ananias, in obedience, went and laid hands upon Saul whose sight then was restored. Ananias shared with Saul what the Lord had revealed to him. Saul was to take the name of Jesus to both the gentile world and to the Jews. He would suffer many great things as he bore this gospel across the gentile countries and cities.

This life-changing personal encounter with Jesus now begins the new life of Saul of Tarsus, better known hereafter as Paul, the apostle, who was personally called by Jesus Himself to fill the twelfth position, the position vacated by Judas Iscariot. (Matthias was not called by Jesus; he was only chosen by men’s reasoning.)