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THE APOSTLE PAUL – LESSON 2

THE EARLY LIFE OF SAUL OF TARSUS – PART 2

Yesterday we spoke of the Sanhedrin's judgment to stone Stephen, a powerful deacon of "The Way", until he was dead. The young adult Saul was invited to attend the stoning; however, he could not be allowed to be an active participant in the throwing of the stones because he had not yet reached the age of thirty.

As a prized student of the renowned teacher of the Torah, Gamaliel, Saul had been accepted into the Jewish sect of the Pharisees. However, under Jewish custom a man must be at least thirty years old before he could be recognized to hold any type of authority or religious responsibility. That is why even Jesus had to wait until he turned thirty to begin his ministry.

Nevertheless, Saul was respected enough that he was allowed to hold and oversee the coats of the men who were to throw the stones. It was against the Jewish law for a man to have his coat on during such an activity where a man's blood was being shed, so this was quite an honor for young Saul of Tarsus.

As some time passed, the Jewish persecution of Jewish converts to "The Way" caused many of the converts to seek refuge in other countries. Syria was a bit north of Israel and was one of the areas among other places where these converts relocated.

Young Saul, very zealous for the God of the Jewish law, had now turned thirty and could be given responsibility. His zeal led him to a desire to try and eradicate these heretics of "The Way." The rulers of the Temple gave him official authority to seek out these converts to imprison them or even have them judged by the Sanhedrin's trail for death. He was given a contingency of the Temple guards (like soldiers) to escort him in seeking and arresting these people.

We do not know how many places he had already been with these supporting soldiers prior to going to Damascus. What we do know is that he had already arrested so many over such a wide territory that his reputation had already instilled widespread fear. Christians everywhere were terrified of Saul.

Tomorrow we shall see what happened to him on one of his several escapades.