

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Part VI: The Ministry Of The Universal Church In Its Spread To The Ends Of The Earth, Acts 8:26-28:31

A. Christ's Ministry To Evangelize Segments Of All Mankind, Acts 8:26-11:18

2. Christ's Evangelization In The Line Of Shem

(Acts 9:1-31)

I. Introduction

- A. The most difficult folk to disciple are those who think they are already right with God or do not need Him.
- B. Nevertheless, the power of the risen Christ to disciple and use His people to disciple the most difficult is evident in His reaching Saul in Acts 9, and we view that passage for insight on the process (as follows):

II. Christ's Evangelization In The Line Of Shem, Acts 9:1-31.

- A. Though Christ had demonstrated His will to disciple people of the line of Ham in reaching the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40, His evangelization of Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9:1-31 demonstrated His will to reach even very deceived men of the line of Shem who think they are right with God, cf. Acts 9:1-2, 3-4a:
 - 1. Noah's son, Shem, was particularly blessed of his three sons to have the spiritual and even financial leadership of all of Noah's other offspring, cf. Genesis 9:26-27.
 - 2. Indeed, Abraham of the line of Shem was given the Abrahamic Covenant through whom God would bless all of the families of the earth, cf. Genesis 11:10-26 with Genesis 12:1-3.
 - 3. However, Saul of Tarsus of the seed of Abraham, a devout Pharisee who believed he was theologically correct and that Christians were cultists, arrived on the scene of history and presented a particularly difficult challenge to disciple, Acts 9:1-2; Philippians 3:4-6:
 - a. Saul's racial and theological heritage as a devout member of Judaism (Philippians 3:4-6) led him to think he stood for God's truth in opposing the Christian faith.
 - b. In this position, he forcefully threatened to slaughter Christians (Acts 9:1a), even going so far as to seek letters of permission from the Jewish High Priest to capture Christians in faraway Damascus that he might bring them bound for sentencing to death at Jerusalem, Acts 9:1b-2.
 - 4. Regardless how difficult he thus seemed to evangelize, Christ wanted to disciple Saul, so the Lord appeared in glory to Saul on the road to Damascus, causing him to fall down in shock, Acts 9:3-4a.
- B. Jesus revealed that Saul was persecuting Him by persecuting His people, Christians, and that He as Jesus was the God who was true God so that Christians were God's true people, Acts 9:4b-5.
- C. Though the phrase "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" in Acts 9:5b is not found in most manuscripts, it does appear in all the manuscripts in Paul's later Acts 26:14 account of this event, cf. U. B. S. Greek New Testament, 1966 ed., p. 518-519. Apparently, Paul's conscience had been bothering him about persecuting Christians ever since he witnessed Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 8:1), and he had been trying to squelch his troubled conscience by fiercely attacking believers. Christ thus arrested him and made him realize his conscience was true and his antagonism to Christ and His people was wrong!
- D. Saul immediately believed in Christ, so the Lord directed him into the city where Saul would later be told what he should do by a reputable Jewish Christian there named Ananias, Acts 9:6 with Acts 22:12-13.
- E. Ananias was understandably reluctant to approach Saul when the Lord initially told him to visit him, but Ananias was finally persuaded of Christ that Saul was a true convert. He thus visited and ministered to Saul, baptizing him and healing him of his temporary blindness caused at his conversion, Acts 9:7-18.
- F. Saul was thus discipled by nurturing believers in Damascus, and rescued from martyrdom, Acts 9:19-25.
- G. When Saul came to Jerusalem, Barnabas took him and testified of his conversion so that the Church would believe he was truly saved, and the Church there ministered unto him, Acts 9:26-31.

Lesson: Christ discipled the difficult, spiritually blinded son of Shem in Saul by using Stephen's stand, Ananias' obedience and the love of Barnabas and other believers in concert with His own great power.

Application: (1) May we trust God's will and power to disciple the most difficult of people. (2) May we also (a) stand for the truth like Stephen, (b) obey God in His leading like Ananias and (c) love the needy like Barnabas and other believers so that God might use us to disciple even the most hardened people!