

PAUL THE PATTERN BORN OUT OF DUE TIME WAS PAUL THE CHIEF SINNER?

Measured by true values, the apostle Paul was the greatest man who ever lived on this earth, with the exception of the Man Christ Jesus, who was in a class by Himself. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I must finish" and "I have finished." The apostle Paul said, "I must finish" (Acts 20:24) and "I have finished" (II Timothy 4:7). God honored Moses by directing him to write five books in the Bible. He honored John by permitting him to write five Books in the Bible. He Honored Peter by permitting him to write two Books in the Bible. But the Lord directed Paul to write more Books in the Bible than the twelve Books written by these three honored servants.

THREE OF PAUL'S TESTIMONIES

Note carefully these testimonies from the pen and heart of Paul:

"Though I might have confidence in the flesh. If any, other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Philippians 3:4 to 7.

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that He was seen of Peter, then of the Twelve: After that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that He was seen of James, then of all the apostles, And last of all He was seen of ME ALSO, AS OF ONE BORN OUT OF DUE TIME. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they, all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." I Corinthians 15:3; 5 to 10.

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, Who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; OF WHOM I AM CHIEF. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that IN ME FIRST Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for A PATTERN to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." I Timothy 1:12 to 16.

In Galatians 1:13 and 14 we have the testimony of Paul that, as Saul of Tarsus, he persecuted and wasted the Church of God beyond measure and profited in the Jews' religion beyond others, being exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers. Let us keep in mind that when Saul persecuted that Church of God that Church was made up of Jews before the same (joint) Body of Ephesians 3:6 existed.

Saul's heart was filled to overflowing with religion as well as with murder, "breathing" out threatenings and slaughter against disciples of the Lord, (Acts 9:1), as he journeyed towards

Damascus to apprehend men and women alike who dared to claim that they were disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. And suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, Why persecutest thou Me? And he said, Who are Thou Lord? And the Lord said, "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Acts 9:3 to 5. In Acts 26:14 we learn that Jesus spoke to Saul in the Hebrew tongue. Note Paul's statement in Acts 26:11: "And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Some may ask how a man so religious, one who profited in the Jews' religion above his equals, could be filled with such anger and murder. Saul was a blind religious Jew who was so steeped in tradition that he had very little of the true teachings of Moses and the prophets concerning Jesus of Nazareth, Israel's Messiah. Note the words of Christ Himself in John 5:45 to 47: "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" Religious men are often cruel and bigoted and deceived. Religious men had Christ nailed to the cross and persecuted all His apostles and faithful servants.

In the ninth chapter of First Corinthians Paul defends his apostleship; that is, he assures the Corinthians that he was an apostle by Divine authority. In Galatians 2:1 to 7 Paul declares that none of the twelve apostles added anything as to his apostolic authority or his message or ministry which was revealed to him by Christ in heaven. Galatians 1:11 and 12—Ephesians 3:1 to 8. In I Corinthians 9:1 and I Corinthians 15:8 Paul testifies that he saw the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course this was after the death and resurrection of the Saviour. He saw Him last, according to I Corinthians 15:8. Perhaps John on Patmos saw Him later.

Now let us remember this important fact, that, in appearing to Saul and saving him as He did, the Lord was doing something first in Saul. Note carefully I Timothy 1:16: "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that IN ME FIRST Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, FOR A PATTERN to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." Again we emphasize the word "FIRST" and also the word "PATTERN."

After the resurrection of Christ many Jews were saved before Paul was. In Acts 4:4 we learn that Christ had five thousand disciples months before Saul obtained mercy. These were saved when Peter said to Israel: "Unto you FIRST God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." If they were first, in what sense was Saul first?

These were FIRST before Saul of Tarsus was FIRST. They were saved by the testimony of twelve Spirit-filled apostles. Were not these twelve apostles patterns? In the light of Acts 4:4 why does Paul speak of himself as first?

The slogan of many preachers is "Back to Pentecost." Many preachers take Christians back to those first chapters of Acts to point out the spiritual behaviour and activities of those first Christians as worthy examples and patterns for Christians to follow. They were faithful, consecrated, courageous, Spirit-filled saints and servants, and unless we learn the meaning of Paul's statement in I Timothy, 1:16, perhaps we should think him quite conceited and egotistical. Surely he was not conceited when he testified that he was less than the least of all saints.

Ephesians 3:8. But how about the statements in I Corinthians 3:10 and I Corinthians 15:10 and I Corinthians 11:1? In these scriptures Paul declared himself a wise master-builder and declared that he labored more than any and all others. Paul labored more abundantly than they all. Paul was a wise masterbuilder. Paul was an example for Christians to follow, we learn in I Corinthians 11:1.

But now back to I Timothy 1:16, Paul “first” and Paul “a pattern.” In order that we may better understand this, let us keep in mind Paul’s other testimony that he was “one born out of due time” (I Corinthians 15:8). And by all means we must understand Paul’s statement in I Timothy 1:15, “of whom I am chief.”

WAS PAUL THE WORST SINNER?

Do you believe that Paul was the chief, or greatest, of all sinners? Do you think that Paul was a worse sinner than Jereboam, or King Manasseh, or Ahab, or Herod, or Judas, or Caiaphas? But Paul said, “Of whom I am chief.” But the Greek word here translated “chief” is “proton.” It is the same word translated “first” in verse sixteen, “in me first.” This Greek word is translated “first” more than one hundred and forty times in the New Testament Scriptures. It is translated “former” in Acts 1:1 and in Revelation 21:4. The robe that was ordered for the prodigal son was the “protos,” (best) robe. Luke 15:22. It would not sound just right to say that Paul was the “best” sinner. Most Christians have interpreted the word “chief” to mean that Paul was the “worst” sinner. But Paul was the “proton” sinner. Now let us translate I Timothy 1:15 and 16 in this language . . . “sinners of whom I Paul am FIRST.” “Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me FIRST Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering for A PATTERN to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.”

Why should we call Paul the first sinner? Adam and Eve were the first sinners and millions of sinners lived and died before Saul of Tarsus was born. The word “proton” means first as to time and otherwise. Did Paul have in mind the time element? .

The word “alla” (how-be-it) that connects Paul’s statement to verse fifteen with his statements in verse sixteen does suggest that he was magnifying his sin and truly felt that no one could be a greater sinner than he had been before he met Christ near Damascus; that he might magnify the grace that abounded more than his sin. Romans 5:20.

However, in verse thirteen he seems to somewhat minimize his, guilt by saying that he sinned ignorantly in unbelief.

There is a sense in which every sinner feels that he is the chief of sinners when he is convicted by the Holy Spirit and gets a real glimpse of the glory of God. But now this question: How about the Jews who were associated with Paul in persecuting the disciples of Christ? Were those Jews not as guilty as he was? Why should Saul be singled out as the chief of sinners?

And another question, why did the resurrected Christ show Himself and preach to just one of His persecutors? Perhaps, if Christ had done for all of His unbelieving Jewish enemies what He did for Saul of Tarsus, every one of them would have become His faithful disciples.

But what the Lord did was His business and sovereign will. He needed Saul for a new program and so He singled him out.

Well, let us keep in mind “Pattern” and “first” in the sixteenth verse as we earnestly seek for the meaning of Paul’s words in verse fifteen, “chief.”

BORN OUT OF DUE TIME

Note carefully I Corinthians 15:5 and 6 and I Corinthians 15:8: “And that He was seen of Peter, and then of the twelve. After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.” “And last of all He was seen of me also, as ONE BORN OUT OF DUE TIME.”

Here let us mention and emphasize a fact that is most significant and it may be startling even at this late date. Saul of Tarsus was the only unsaved person on earth who saw the Lord Jesus after His death and resurrection. Stop and carefully consider this; for it is so important.

We read these statements in Acts 10:40 and 41, Acts 13:30 and 31 and I Corinthians 15:5 and 6. “Him (Christ) God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He arose from the dead.” “But God raised Him from the dead: And He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses onto the people.” “And that He was seen of Peter, then of the twelve: After that He yeas seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.” Christ’s apostles and disciples (believers) saw Him after His death, but no unsaved unbeliever on earth except Saul.

The twelve apostles saw the resurrected Christ “To whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” Matthias was one of the twelve who saw Him. Then more than five hundred disciples, or believers, saw Christ. But no unbeliever or unsaved person, except the one religious, self-righteous Pharisee who hated Christ and His disciples with a vicious hatred. Saul became the apostle of Christ, but he did not qualify according to Acts 1:21 and 22: “wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection.”

Inasmuch as Paul could not have qualified to become one of the twelve apostles, he had to receive from the risen Christ very special qualifications and credentials. By divine authority Paul could truly say, “For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. II Corinthians 11:5. “. . . For in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.” II Corinthians 12:11. Then read II Corinthians 12:12 with I Corinthians 9:1. Saul was born out of due time. How interesting is the Greek word “ektroma.” The Greek “trauma” means: wound or an injury. It is the word used in Luke 10:34 concerning the wound treated by the good Samaritan. Then the Lord Jesus, in Luke 20:12, spoke of a man whom they wounded. Here the word is “traumatize.” The Greek word is “traumatizo.” “Trauma” and “traumatize” are medical terms today. When a person is injured as the result of an operation he is “traumatized.” Surgeons speak of a certain wound or an injury as a “trauma.” Paul was “ektroma,” born before his time. Saul was a “miscarriage” or an “abortion.” As an “abortion” was Saul the first sinner and a pattern? Note concerning Saul in Acts 9:15: “But the Lord said unto Him Go thy way: for be is a

chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.” Then note Paul’s testimony in I Corinthians 9:16 and 17: “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.” I Corinthians 9:16 and 17.

Truly, Saul was a chosen vessel, chosen to witness and suffer, Note the Greek word translated “witness,” “martus.” “Martus is also translated “martyr”—Surely Paul and the other apostles were martyrs.

JESUS, ANANIAS AND SAUL

Let us hear again the testimony of the Israelite who was the first to be saved as he was saved, the abortion, or the miscarriage, and as we hear his words let us remember I Timothy 1:16: “Howbeit for this reason obtained mercy, that in me FIRST Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a PATTERN to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.”

We quote Paul’s testimony from Acts 22:5 to 16:

“As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. And it came to pass that, as I made my journey and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And I answered Who art Thou Lord? And He said unto Me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, Whom Thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked upon him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that just one, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou halt seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Load.”

The human agent, used by the risen Christ to instruct Saul, was a devout man, according to the law. He told Saul that God. wanted him to see Jesus of Nazareth and hear His voice and then witness all over the world what he had seen and heard. Then note Acts 22:16:

“And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

Ananias was a “law” preacher, not a “grace” preacher. He did not say to Saul, “we are now living in the age of grace and you can be saved by grace, without water baptism, but you should be baptized with water as a witness to the world that you have been saved by grace and

that you have been crucified, buried, and raised with Christ.” No, the words are plain, “be baptized, and wash away thy sins.” Ananias was a devout man according to the law.

All of this is a pattern, a pattern salvation. But not a pattern that fits into Ephesians 3:1 to 3 and I Corinthians 1:14 to 17. However Paul was also the pattern for members of the Body of Christ. But now note Ephesians 3:1 to 3 and I Corinthians 1:14 to 17:

“For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words;” “I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephenas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.”

God’s messengers in this economy and age of grace are not to be devout according to the law, but spiritual according to grace. They are to preach Ephesians 2:8 to 10: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

They are not to add to this, “be baptized, and wash away thy sins”; for such a message has no place in the gospel and program of grace.

THIS PARENTHETICAL CHURCH PERIOD

“The dispensation of the grace of God” for Gentiles was given to Paul sometime after he was instructed by Ananias, the “law” preacher. In Acts 13:2, Saul received a new commission. Soon he began to preach reconciliation and grace to Gentiles.

But this age of grace will come to an end. Note God’s program and the culmination or consummation of this age in Ephesians 4:11 to 13:

“And He (Christ) gave some, apostles, and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the; saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a Perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

Note Paul’s testimony in Colossians 1:5 and 6 and Colossians 1:23:

“For the hope that is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the Word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.” “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven, whereof I Paul am made a minister.”

Where and to whom had the gospel been preached under Paul’s supervision? In all the world to every creature under heaven. Read Acts 19:10. What about the twelve apostles? What did they do? Read Acts 8:1 and Acts 15:1 to 19 and Galatians 2:9. And then ask why they did not obey Mark 16:14 to 18.

Now with these statements note Matthew 24:13 and 14:

“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come”

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

The end (temporarily) of Jerusalem came about 70 A.D., when the Roman army, in fulfillment of Matthew 22:7 and Luke 21:24, besieged Jerusalem. The end of Paul’s earthly career came (about 67 A.D.) after his farewell message in II Timothy 4:7 to 9 and Colossians 1:23 to 28. But the end mentioned in Matthew 24:14 has not come and it will not come during this present economy of grace. The consummation of Ephesians 4:13 is not the end of Matthew 24. To sinners, both Jews and Gentiles, God’s true messengers will today preach God’s “grace” message of salvation and obey Ephesians 3:9: “And to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.”

And at the same time they should teach those, who are willing to hear and learn, that God’s kingdom covenants have been interrupted and suspended, and that while this Messianic kingdom is in abeyance and God’s kingdom prophecies will not be fulfilled until after God has accomplished His eternal “grace” purpose (II Timothy 1:9—Ephesians 3:11) concerning the Joint Body of Ephesians 3:6, the gospel of the kingdom has been temporarily set aside. The kingdom program, with the kingdom gospel, is to be proclaimed by God’s servants after the close of this age of grace.

A NEW SOCIAL ORDER

Like the promises after the last world war, again today some statesmen and politicians, especially the Christian socialists among them, some of the so-called Christian Liberals, and a few Evangelical Postmillenarians are promising a new democracy, with freedom and new social order patterned as nearly as possible after the program of Jesus of Nazareth in His Sermon on the Mount. “Victory then peace,” is the slogan of statesmen and some preachers. Even many of the Reformed Jews say that they are willing to fall in, if no claim is made for the virgin birth and eternal Deity of Jesus Christ and many of the religious Christians (?) agree not to refer to any Scriptures where the Jews are accused of the murder of the Son of God. In some respects things have not changed since Saul’s time. How mad Saul and his fellow anti-Christian Jews became when God’s true servant preached God’s truth to them, “ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted: and they have slain them which showed before the coming of the Just one; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.” Acts 7:51 to 53. They were so stirred to anger by this message that they added one more crime to their awful record: they stoned the messenger to death. Present-day Jews tell us that it was Pilate who killed Christ. These Christ-rejecting Jews are being encouraged in their infidelity today by so-called Christian preachers.

What fallacy to expect unsaved Gentiles and Christ-rejecting Jews to practice the ethics of Jesus, in a new social and religious order with Divine blessing that will guarantee peace,

justice and equity and plenty to the human race all over the world. No man can practice the ethics of Jesus until he receives the nature of Jesus by becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus. God will never take away His wrath from those who deny the eternal Deity of His Son and refuse to accept His sacrifice as the only remedy for sin. No Gentile Christian should persecute the Jews but they should tell them in very plain language that without Christ they are eternally doomed, and of course they should tell the Gentiles the same thing.

There is to be a new order on this earth. Note something of this new order in Isaiah 62:1 to 4:

“For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a NEW NAME, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.”

Saul the “first,” the “abortion”—the “pattern”—received a new name and surely the Lord was delighted with him. He was the Lord’s chosen vessel, and he fought a good fight and finished his course. And this age and program of grace will finish its course and after the Church is in glory with Christ Isaiah 62:1 to 4 will be fulfilled. Jerusalem and Israel will be new.

But in the meantime note the new things in connection with “the dispensation of grace” and the Body of Christ.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. II Corinthians 5:17.

“Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain One New Man, so making peace.” Ephesians 2:15.

God’s New Man in this age of grace will be made up of new creatures in Christ Jesus; Jews and Gentiles, who believe the gospel of the grace of God. But this One New Man is altogether different from the Hephzibah and Beulah, the new things of Isaiah 62:1 to 4.

In Romans 11:25 to 30 we learn that Israel will be saved after God has accomplished His purpose in the age of grace. After the Body is completed the Messianic kingdom of Christ will be established on this earth. Acts 3:21—Matthew 25:31 to 43.

ISRAEL’S TWO-FOLD ELECTION

Now note Paul’s testimony in Romans 11:1—Romans 11:5 and 7—Romans 11:28:

“I say then, Hath God cast away His People? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.” “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” “What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” “As concerning the gospel, they, were enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they, are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.”

Saul was an Israelite. Other Israelites were elected; “the remnant according to the election of grace.” Jesus Christ in resurrection did not show Himself to them; but only to Saul of

Tarsus. After God, during this present age and reign of grace, has accomplished His “grace” purpose (II Timothy 1:9) there will be another election of Israel, in fulfillment of the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31 to 35, as well as the covenants which God made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the fathers of Romans 11:28.

It is very interesting and instructive to study this two-fold election of Israel in the eleventh chapter of Romans. In the first election the remnant obtained righteousness by grace. The rest (of Israel) was blinded. In the coming election when Israel shall be saved (Romans 11:26) the election will be, because the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Note in Ezekiel 36:22 and 23, and Ezekiel 36:32, that God is going to reclaim His ancient people, for His own holy name’s sake, and not for Israel’s sake.

Israel’s redemption and restoration will come when their Deliverer comes out of Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, “because this is My covenant when I shall take away their sins.” Romans 11:26 and 27. “And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on Him Whom they pierced.” Zechariah 12:10. John 19:37. “Behold, He cometh with clouds and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.” Revelations 1:7.

Now note this interesting statement: “Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.” Isaiah 66:8.

Now read again Isaiah 62:1 to 4: “Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighted in thee and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marryeth a virgin, shall thy sons marry thee, and as a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” Isaiah 62:3 to 5.

And also Amos 9:15: “And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, with the Lord thy God.” Amos 9:15.

Remember Saul of Tarsus was an abortion, the first of sinners, the pattern for others who would be saved, an elect vessel. Note again Peter’s message to Israel in Acts 3:19 to 21 and Acts 3:26: “Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And He shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His Holy prophets since the world began.” “Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” Note also Peter’s message in Acts 5:30 and 31: “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”

If Israel’s rulers had repented and if God had sent Christ back to bring about the restitution of all things, these Israelites thus redeemed would not have been abortions. Five thousand of them were saved within a few months after the death of Christ (Acts 4:2 to 4) and many more Israelites were saved before Saul of Tarsus was born out of due time.

So again we ask the question, “Why did not the Lord Jesus appear to the rulers of Israel, the other unbelieving Pharisees who were as guilty as Saul of Tarsus in persecuting the Messiah and His disciples? Why did He thus appear to only one unsaved Jew after His resurrection? What would have happened, if the resurrected Christ had appeared to the other unbelieving Israelites and done for them what He did for Saul of Tarsus?”

If Christ had appeared to all of Israel’s rulers and done for them what He did for Saul, then we would not have the message and program mentioned in Romans 11:30 and 15: “For as ye in times past have not believed in God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief.” “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” There would be no such thing as the dispensation of grace for the Gentiles, if all Israel had done what Saul did. If Israel had repented and God had sent Christ back to earth. There would be no such thing as the Body of Christ, or the mystery among the Gentiles, while Israel, the castaway nation, is in blindness, waiting for the times of the Gentiles to be fulfilled (Luke 21:24. Romans 11:25 and 26) if Christ had done for Israel what he did for one blind Israelite.

Once a proud self-righteous, very important man, said to a preacher, “If Christ will do to me and for me what He did to and for Saul of Tarsus, I too will believe on Him and follow Him.” This experience was for the apostle born out of due time, but for us “Whom having not seen ye love; in Whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice with unspeakable and full glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

ABRAM THE HEATHEN—PAUL THE JEW

As God chose Abram, the Gentile, out of all the Gentiles, for a very special program, including the creation of a very special nation, even so God in His sovereignty elected one special Israelite for a very special program. Hear again Paul’s testimony, “For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.” Romans 11:13. “Unto me, and am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” Ephesians 3:8.

The truth that is difficult to understand is John 12:39 and 40 and Romans 11:8: “Therefore they could not believe because Isaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.” (“According as it is written God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.” All we can say is to join with Paul: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!” Romans 11:33.

When Israel is elected after this age of grace, they will be saved much in the manner that Saul of Tarsus was saved. The same Jesus, Who appeared in the clouds to Saul, is going to appear, to many Sauls, that is, to many self-righteous, religious, Christ-rejecting and Christ-hating Israelites, and they will be suddenly changed. But they will not be abortions. They will not be born out of due time, although they will then know what even most Christians do not seem to know now, that this parenthetical age of grace, during which God is building up and

completing the Body of Christ, is an age quite different from Israel's prophesied "kingdom" age, and that God's programs for Christ's Messianic earthly kingdom are quite different.

OUR RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

When we learn the all-important truth of Acts 5:29 to 32, Acts 13:31 to 35, Acts 13:46 and Romans 11:15, that reconciliation was sent to Gentiles when and because Israel rejected Christ in resurrection, as well as in incarnation, we shall find our great commission in II Corinthians 5:16 to 21. So let us carefully read II Corinthians 5:16 to 21 and Romans 11:15:

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To-wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." "For if the casting away of them (Israel) be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"

Here then we find a "reconciliation" commission has superseded the "Matthew" 28:19 and 20 commission; but the "Matthew" commission will again be God's order.

When most Christians are asked why the twelve apostles, after receiving the great commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20 from the risen Christ, remained in the land of the Jews, they seem astonished at the very idea. But after they learn from the Book of Acts that Peter and the Eleven did not go into all the world and preach to Gentiles, they seem to think that the apostles were prejudiced, indifferent and disobedient.

Note a very intelligent comment concerning the great commission by a very able Bible expositor, Mr. John N. Darby of Plymouth Brethren fame.

"This as far as Scripture teaches us has never been fulfilled. In the course of events under the hand of God, the disciples remain in Jerusalem. A new mission is sent forth in the person of Paul and that connected with the establishment of the Church on earth. The accomplishment of the commission here in Matthew has been interrupted, but there is the promise to be with those who went forth in it to the end of the age. Nor do I doubt it will be so. This testimony will go forth to the nations before the Lord comes. The brethren will carry it to warn the nations. The commission was given, but we find no accomplishment of it. It connects the testimony with the Jewish remnant owned by a risen Lord of all, with the earth, and His earthly directions, and for the present it has in fact given place to a heavenly commission, and the Church of God." (Collected Writings, Page 327).

Read again the commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20. Then note Acts 8:1, Acts 15:1 to 19 and Galatians 2:9. In the Book of Acts we find no record of any missionary journeys by Peter and the Eleven outside the land of the Jews. In Galatians 2:7 to 9 their ministry is declared and as we think of the ministry of the Twelve past or future, note these words:

“Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Matthew 19:27 and 28.

“When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory.” “Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Matthew 25:31 and 34.

This is all quite different from Ephesians 2:6 and Ephesians 1:3 and 4: “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.” “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.”

Now again we quote Romans 11:25 to 28: “For I would not, brethren that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.”

With this read Hebrews 8:11: “And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest.”

Note again Revelation 1:7: “Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.”

When the Jews of whom Saul, the abortion, was the first the pattern, experience Zechariah 12:10 they will, become the Lord’s kingdom messengers, perhaps the most zealous missionaries of all ages. “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one who is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

Remember the truth of II Peter 1:19 and the words of Christ in Matthew 5:17 and 18: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.” “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

What must we believe from these statements? That there are literally hundreds of unfulfilled prophecies concerning the future earthly glory of God’s “kingdom” nation, which will be fulfilled after God has accomplished His eternal purpose in this parenthetical “grace” age.

While we are faithful in proclaiming these prophecies let us remember I Corinthians 4:1 to 3 and Ephesians 3:9:

“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.”

May God direct us and enable us to faithfully obey His will in this matter.

Always let us keep in mind Philippians 1:10: “That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.” The correct translation is “Test things that differ, that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.”