**Truth Sowers Life Group**

January 20, 2013

**Who Was the Apostle Paul?**

**His Early Life and Education**

Introduction: We started our study on Paul last week and went over a basic overview of his life. We also talked about Paul’s “thorn in flesh” and how Paul told us exactly what it was and that it was not an eye problem. It was a “messenger of Satan” given to him to keep him from become puffed up in pride due to all the revelations he had received. This evil angel caused him to go through all kinds of persecution which is listed in the previous chapter, 2 Cor. 11. Not once is any physical illness listed. Paul wrote a majority of our New Testament and his “Pauline Revelation” is what we base much of Christian doctrine on. It is very important that we know those who labor among us.

**1 Thess 5:12, 13**

*12And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves.*

1. Paul was born as Saul in Tarsus, the chief city of Cilicia.
   1. We aren’t told much of his upbringing but we can get an idea of his youth by studying;
      1. The life of a young Jewish boy in the Middle East.
      2. Tarsus was in what is now south central Turkey, near Mersin.
      3. It was a large city with a large industry of trade.
      4. Paul learned to be a tent maker. This could have been the family business.

**Acts 18:1-3**

*After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. 2And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. 3So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.*

* + 1. Paul would have moved to Jerusalem at about the age of 13 for university.
    2. What it would be like to train “at the feet of Gamaliel.”
       1. **Acts 22:3 (NKJV)**   
          “I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city **(Jerusalem)** at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers’ law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.
       2. **Acts 5:34 (NKJV)**   
          Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while.
       3. Gamaliel the Elder or
       4. Rabban Gamaliel I
       5. Was a leading authority in the Sanhedrin in the mid-1st century CE (Common Era).
       6. died twenty years before the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem (70 CE).
       7. President or one of the top leaders of the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.
       8. Gamaliel holds a reputation in the [Mishnah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishnah) for being one of the greatest teachers in all the annals of Judaism.
       9. There are some accounts that Gamaliel converted to Christianity later in life but lived a secret Christian life, still remaining in the Sanhedrin so he could help Christians.
    3. What the state of the Roman empire was at the time.
       1. King Herod who had murdered the babies when Jesus was born was a Jew but put in place by the Romans.
       2. His descendents were put in place by him after he died.
       3. The Romans despised the Jews.
       4. The Jews despised the Romans.
    4. The political position of the Jews
  1. Saul could have been born between 6 B.C. and 10 A.D. (Probably around 5 A.D.)
     1. It is believed that Jesus was born in 5 B.C. and died in 33 A.D.
        1. <http://pjtibayan.wordpress.com/2009/04/15/what-year-was-jesus-born-and-what-year-did-he-die-and-rise/>
     2. Jesus would have been nine or ten years old when Paul was born.
  2. It is very obivious that Paul had a very strict religious and zealous upbringing.

1. Our first view of him is as a young man at Stephens martyrdom. **Acts 7:51-60**
   1. Saul had already made a name for himself by this time and had some sort of following.
      1. Had God only used the 12 apostles that walked with Jesus, the gospel may have only reached Palestine.
      2. They were mostly fishermen and mostly uneducated.
   2. Until this time though, not much is known of his life.
   3. Paul was extremely educated for his day and age.
      1. A Hebrew of among Hebrews. **Acts 22:3**;

**Philippians 3:5, 6**

*5circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

* + 1. He had a following.
       1. The people that murdered Stephen laid their coats at his feet.
       2. Paul was commissioned by the Sanhedrin to arrest Christians.

1. There was no difference between Christianity and Judaism at this time other than believing Jesus was the Messiah.
2. Many of the Jews looked at Christianity as a sect that came up out of Judaism that they didn’t like.
3. It wasn’t until about two hundred years later that Christianity began its separate journey from Judaism.
4. So now, at Stephen’s martyrdom, we see Saul of Tarsus at about 30 years old probably around 35 A.D. Probably a couple of years after Christ was crucified and ascended to Heaven.

**Acts 7:51-60 NKJV**

*51“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. 52Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, 53who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.” 54When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. 55But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” 57Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; 58and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

**Acts 8:1-8 NKJV**

*1**Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. 3As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. 4Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. 5Then Philip went down to the[*[*a*](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+8&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-27182a)*] city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. 6And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. 8And there was great joy in that city.*

1. Saul was used to scatter the believers throughout the region.
   1. God did not intend for the Christians to just stay around Jerusalem after Christ ascended to Heaven.
   2. He wanted them to take the gospel to the furthermost reaches of the earth.
   3. Through persecution, the people were scattered.
   4. What Satan intended for evil, God used for good!
2. Paul caused “havoc” in the church, entering people’s homes sending them to prison for their beliefs.

**Acts 9:1, 2**

*1 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*

1. We have no reason to believe that Philip (not one of the original apostles) was an “ordained” minister.
   1. He took it on himself to go to Samaria to preach the Gospel.
   2. He had good results, many were saved, demons were cast out, many were healed, and there was much joy in the city.
   3. You do not have to be called to the ministry or ordained to preach the gospel!
   4. Matthias was ordained to take the place of Judas Iscariot.

**Acts 1:21-26**

*21“Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” 23And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen 25to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” 26And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

* 1. Paul was **NOT** one of the original 12 Apostles.
  2. Paul did not consider himself worthy to be an apostle

**1 Cor. 15:5-9**

*5and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.**9For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

1. Yet Paul still saw the Holy Spirit move through his ministry.
2. He saw the gifts of the Holy Spirit move through his ministry.
3. He teaches us about the gifts of the Holy Spirit
4. He teaches us about tongues, interpretation of tongues and prophecy and says that he wishes we all spoke in tongues. 1 Cor. 14:5.
   1. Some people think only miracles follow those who actually saw Jesus in the flesh.
      1. Paul’s miracles rule this out.
      2. Some say Paul was an exception.
      3. Not true. Jesus said it is more blessed to believe without having seen Him.

**John 20:29**

*Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

* + 1. Paul taught spiritual gifts and miracles would follow those that believe (**1 Cor. 12 -14.)**

Conclusion:

We are just beginning to get to know Saul of Tarsus, a very educated young man, a very zealous young man for his God. He has been brought up in a home where he has been taught the very finest of religious ideals from his parents and relatives. He has been taught a sense of national pride. Around the age of thirteen he moved to Jerusalem to study at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the greatest honors for a young man of his time. This would have been an honor for his family too. This would have been the equivalent to an Ivy League education in our day and age.

When we first see Saul, he already has made a name for himself and has a following as those who take Stephen outside the city to stone him, lay their cloaks at Saul’s feet. It is very likely that right after this event, Saul is invited to join the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem which would be quite an honor. “The Sanhedrin as a body claimed powers that lesser Jewish courts did not have. As such, they were the only ones who could try the king, extend the boundaries of the Temple and Jerusalem, and were the ones to whom all questions of law were finally put.”

Next week, we will discuss Saul’s conversion on the road to Damascus.