



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Record of the Beginning of Jesus' Reign

Chapter Twenty-Six

INTRODUCTION

We are nearing the end of Acts, and I admit I'm a little sad about it. This study has been most rewarding. Our verse-by-verse method of analyzing text, context, language, custom, and history has produced more than I could have hoped.

This book surprised me. It has in it the keys to understanding the New Testament. It gives us insight into the greatest event in Christian history, and it makes the Gospel come alive. It has clarified our perception of Christ's Reign.

It is not as though these words were new to us. We've read them many times before. But in this study they became more than mere words in a book; they became an adventure. The record came alive ... as if we were there during those world-changing events as they were occurring.

We also gained clarification of a vital doctrine. This is not a new doctrine to us ... the New Testament is replete with it. But until we examined and dissected this book I hadn't noticed the clarity and strength with which this doctrine is presented in these chapters. The doctrine to which I refer is that of "the raising." In these chapters of Acts, Paul literally becomes a living portrayal of this doctrine.

I hope these studies are blessing you as much as they have blessed me.

NOTE: It is vital for us to have a grasp of Bible words and idioms from the original wording. Published English Bibles are products of church organizations, and they adjust their translations to fit their theologies.

Therefore, it is necessary for us to always check their translations for error.

The translation in these studies is my best effort to give you the correct text.

ACTS 26: 1-8 THE HATED DOCTRINE: THE RAISING OF THE DEAD!

Then Agrippa said to Paul, You are permitted to speak for yourself. Then Paul, having stretched forth his hand, began making his defense:

Concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews I count myself happy, King Agrippa, that it is you to whom I make my defense today:

Especially because you are aware of all the customs and questions pertaining to the Jews: wherefore I pray you to hear me patiently.

Indeed, from the beginning, the manner of my life from my youth that occurred in my nation and in Jerusalem, all the Jews have known;

They have known from the start, if they would but admit it, that according to the most strict sect of your religion I lived a Pharisee.

And now I stand and am being judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers:

Into which our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God day and night, are hoping to attain. For which hope, King Agrippa, I am being accused by the Jews.

Why is it thought unbelievable among you that God raises the dead?

THIS chapter starts with Paul going right to the heart of the matter. He was being held prisoner by the Roman governor Festus in Caesarea, about 70 miles from Jerusalem. Agrippa, the Judean King, has requested Festus to let him hear Paul's story.

Herod Agrippa II was a Judean king from the lineage of Herod The Great. His office was by appointment of the Roman Emperor. Agrippa was an Edomite Jew.

Before we address Paul's argument before Agrippa, let us notice one feature of this Roman court scene compared with the court system of modern America. Anyone who has stood before a court in modern America, or has witnessed others on trial, might notice that this Roman court was possibly less treacherous than the courts of today. I say this in light of the fact that Paul was allowed to freely state his case and his defense.

Agrippa asked Paul to explain his case! Paul was allowed to speak his mind. This never happens in a criminal trial in modern courts. In modern courts the defendant is allowed to talk only through his attorney, and then only in strict compliance with "court procedure." Court procedure is a set of lawyer-invented rules carefully designed to let lawyers and judges (with little or no stake in the outcome of a trial) control the case and conduct the trial. Furthermore, the prosecuting attorney's job is to prevent the defendant from speaking his mind. American courts have absolutely no regard to whether or not a man is truly innocent! It is set as a game, like chess. Attorneys seek only to win their cases ... the truth is not important.

But in this Roman court Paul was at least permitted to speak freely! He was allowed to explain his case without the objections and interruptions of a prosecuting attorney ... and King Agrippa listened to him.

I'm not suggesting that Agrippa was a fair and impartial judge. One does not acquire the position Agrippa enjoyed by being fair and impartial. Centralized government court systems never were, and never will be, good or fair. But it seems that modern courts have become even more proficient at suppressing fairness and truth. In fact, modern courts must have learned some of their protocol from the Sanhedrin whose total lack of fairness and objectivity is legendary.

Paul was somewhat encouraged to stand in the Roman court before Agrippa because the king was a Judean and thus familiar with the traditions and the environment in Jerusalem. He could understand Paul's predicament better than the Romans. Also, Agrippa was not appointed by the Sanhedrin. Rather, his kingship was appointed by Caesar in Rome.

In verse 4, Paul states that his accusers (the Jews) knew him. He says they had known him from his youth, and were aware of his record living in Judea. They knew he had been a devout Pharisee. Paul says that his accusers would admit all this if they were honest.

Then, once again, Paul referred to the theme that defined his predicament. He repeats it here, and will repeat it yet one more time before the end of this book. This theme that Paul keeps emphasizing over and over, and which he claims is the crux of the Sanhedrin's hatred toward him, is **THE RAISING OF DEAD ISRAEL ...** which he calls "*the promise made by God to our fathers.*"

Paul had not always believed this. He had realized it only recently. But now because of his new belief in that "promise" the Sanhedrin saw him as their enemy.

If we analyze what was going on, and why it was going on, a singular picture emerges. It was a war between two factions; two ideologies. It was the classic struggle that pits man against God. It was religion and politics versus the Reign of Christ. It was Babylon versus New Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin represented the religion and politics of Babylon, and Paul represented the Reign of Christ.

Earlier in this war Paul had been on the side of the Jews and the Sanhedrin. Now, he found himself on the opposite side. Paul had switched camps. He now found himself on the receiving end of the persecution he once dealt out. He hadn't planned it, but there he was. It happened suddenly. It began when he became the spokesman for "the hope and promise" to Israel. That hope and promise, given from Yahweh, spoken by the prophets, was being fulfilled ... as witnessed by the "raising of the dead." The proof cited by Paul was graphic indeed, and it brought the Sanhedrin down upon him.

Did the Jews understand what Paul was saying about the raising? Yes, definitely! If they hadn't understood they wouldn't have been threatened and outraged.

When churchgoers today read the Bible, do they understand what Paul was saying about the raising? No, probably not. They have been blinded by church doctrine patterned after the Pharisee's doctrine. Churches ignore the true "raising." Instead they embrace the Jewish "resurrection" doctrine ... and they call it "Christian."

Churches are the ultimate counterfeits; the wolves in sheep's clothing. Churches are the enemies in the camp.

Paul spoke these things to Agrippa in an attempt to define motives and to clarify the issue. The motivation of the Sanhedrin was obvious – they hated the “the promise and hope of Israel.” They hated Israel. The Sanhedrin (and the Jews) hated Israel's hope; they hated her promise; they hated her God; ... and they hated Paul.

In contrast, repentant Israelites (“the twelve tribes”) welcomed Paul's announcement. To them it was “good news.” It was hated by the Jews, but repentant Israelites embraced it. In verse 7, the distinction between the Jews and the Israelites is very clear. The “twelve tribes” (i.e., Israel) sought to attain the promise and hope of which Paul spoke. The “twelve tribes” did not hate Paul. They were not upset that their hope and promise was beginning to be fulfilled in their lifetime! Paul says they were hoping to attain it right then, serving God day and night.

In contrast, the Sanhedrin and the Jews saw Paul's announcement as a threat to their establishment. The Sanhedrin taught a “resurrection” that was a nebulous prophecy to be fulfilled at the “end of time” or the “end of the world” ... much like the churches teach today. Churches have adopted the anti-Christ Jewish doctrine of “the resurrection” rather than Christ's and Paul's doctrine of “the raising.” That is why the churches call themselves “Judeo-Christian.” Churches are Judaistic (i.e., anti-Christian). Nearly 2000 years have passed since Paul's day, and still the Jews and the churches are working full-time to obscure Christ's Reign and to cover-up truth.

Why did they hate the doctrine so? Because it exposed them as frauds. They were living a lie. Because of that lie they could not admit to a present active raising. To admit to a raising would necessitate a repentance. A repentance would have been an admission of fraud. To admit to being wrong would have destroyed their claim to being God's spokesmen. The Sanhedrin represented the establishment in Jerusalem. They could NEVER admit they were wrong or spiritually dead. To do so would be like the Pope admitting today the Catholic Church was established on wrong principles and has been wrong all these centuries. History has shown that rather than admit error and lose control over their people the Catholic and Anglican churches chose to kill reformers. The Sanhedrin, likewise, chose to kill the ones who were exposing truth.

50. “... it is expedient for you that one man (Jesus) should die for the people and that the whole nation should not be destroyed.”

53. “Therefore, from that day on they took counsel to kill him.”

Jn. 11:50 & 53

In verse seven, Paul says “the twelve tribes” were seeking to obtain “the hope and promise.” To make that statement Paul had to be aware of all twelve tribes at that time. In order to know what they were doing he must have known their whereabouts. They weren't lost! And they weren't Jews.

This makes a clear distinction between true Israel and the Jews. According to Paul, the “twelve tribes” of Israel were “serving God day and night.” In contrast, the Jews were fighting against God day and night, persecuting the saints and attempting to kill Paul. They had already killed Jesus. The “twelve tribes,” on the other hand, were not fighting Paul. There is a clear distinction between Israelites and Jews.

Some of the residents in Judea were Israelites, but most Judeans were non-Israelites brought in during the Assyrian/Babylonian captivity. Many of them were Edomites. Some were Assyrians and Persians. The Jews, as a religious/political group, did not represent Israel. Far from it. Judea and Jerusalem followed the model of Babylon in their religion and politics. Jerusalem's religion and politics, which Jesus called the “tradition of the elders,” was later canonized into *The Babylonian Talmud*. This Talmud is the Jewish “holy book.” Their Talmud clearly defies Holy Scripture. It is filled with perverted immoral innuendo, pagan worship practices, witchcraft, and it calls Jesus a bastard and his mother, Mary, a whore. Talmudism – also called Judaism – is probably the most depraved and anti-Christ religions on Earth. It certainly was not Israelite, and their faith was not built upon Bible principles. Judea was NOT Israel (i.e., Judea was not “the twelve tribes”). Judea did not share Israel's promise and hope. Some of the glaring differences between Israel culture and Judean culture are being identified in these chapters of Acts.

Notice the pointed question Paul poses in verse 8: “*Why is it thought unbelievable among you, that God raises the dead?*” This was more than a question; it was an accusation. His question was not about a future so-called “resurrection.” Rather, he asked why they found it impossible to believe that God gives life to the dead. The tense of the Greek word here is present indicative. That means the action was taking place at that very time.

This cuts directly to the heart of things. You will recall that Paul had said time and time again that he and the Jews were at odds, that they hated him and wanted to kill him because he was preaching “the raising of the dead.” This was Paul's so-called “crime.” This clarifies his difference with the Jews. They thought it unbelievable that God was raising the dead. The same can be said of churches and churchgoers today. Think about it!

How could it be any clearer? God was raising the dead! It was not a nebulous promise about a distant future event. He said God RAISES THE DEAD! The Jews hated Paul because he was proclaiming “the raising” (in contrast to the Pharisee's “resurrection”).

This is a very, very important doctrine in the New Testament. It is not the one we've been taught by the churches. Remember, in Acts 23 Paul referred to it in his defense before the Sanhedrin:

6. ...I am on trial because of the hope and raising of the dead.

Acts 23:6

That statement may sound strange to a churchgoer who assumes that the Pharisee's doctrine of "resurrection" was the same thing as Paul's doctrine of "the raising." To this very day, churches still teach the Pharisee's version of that doctrine. But, there is a great and fundamental difference between the Pharisee's "resurrection" and the Bible doctrine of "the raising."

The Jewish-influenced church world has discarded the Biblical term "raising" and replaced it with the Jewish term, "resurrection." We must be careful not to misread the Biblical text, and not accept the counterfeit replacement of the original words. In the Greek text the word is "**anastasis**." "Anastasis" means "raise up." To raise up means to rise to a higher status or level. The Jewish-influenced churches teach a different concept. They use the term "resurrection" which means "rise again." To "rise again" infers a restoration to a former status or level.

Lazarus, for instance, was "resurrected" (Jn. 11:43-44). He died and then was raised back to mortal life. He was returned to his former life status. He was still mortal. He died again later because he was only resurrected.

By contrast, when Jesus came from the tomb He was "raised." He was given a higher life status. He was "raised" immortal, not "resurrected."

Lazarus' "resurrection" had nothing to do with "the raising" (anastasis) Paul proclaimed. Paul taught two "raisings." The "first raising" (Rev. 20:6) is the new birth. The second is to immortality, and is yet future.

Israel had been "dead" in sins; without faith in God. Paul delivered the "good news" to Israel who had been spiritually "dead" for centuries. The good news was that LIFE was coming to them through Jesus. That new birth was "the raising" that Paul proclaimed.

For Paul to have phrased it the way he did, pointing out that he had been a Pharisee in the past, certainly shined a revealing light upon Judaism. The Pharisees believed in a future raising, but they didn't believe in "the raising" that

was happening at that time. Refer back to our study of Chapter 23, pages 3-7 for the complete explanation comparing the two terms: "resurrection" and "raising." These two terms do NOT mean the same thing.

Paul explained to Agrippa that he was being persecuted for his belief in the hope and raising of Israel. He stated this also in chapter 24:

21. ...*"I am being condemned by you this day because of the raising of the dead."*

Acts 24:21

The Sanhedrin was persecuting Paul because he preached the raising of the dead. If he had been proclaiming a future "resurrection" like the one the churches teach, the Jews would not have hated him. Obviously, that was not the issue.

Again, why did they refuse to believe that God was raising the dead? Think about it. The same question might be asked of any churchgoer today. Churches follow the Pharisee's teaching on this ... partly because of their ignorance about the word "resurrection." Churches teach a "new birth," but deny "the raising." They are ignorant to the fact that both terms refer to the same thing. God promised a future raising as well – a raising to immortality and to a state that Jesus has already attained. But what about the "dead" that God was "raising" back then, and the "dead" He is "raising" today?

Paul and scripture spoke of a different kind of "dead." These "dead" were walking and breathing.

Paul and scripture also speak of a different kind of "raising." Before this study ends you will understand what kind of "death" and "raising" Paul was teaching.

As Paul continues his defense before king Agrippa, he again recounts his experience on the road to Damascus where he ran into the raised and reigning Jesus. Paul had a hard lesson to learn ... and it came as quite a shock.

PONDER THIS: Why should it be surprising that Jesus is reigning, and that He judges people ... separating some, blessing others? Why can't people believe that He is "raising" people by giving them spiritual "life"? Why should it be unbelievable that God gives us "life" right now through his Son, and that His promises are being fulfilled right now?

This is not difficult to grasp once you read the gospel without the prejudice of church teaching. It begins with Jesus commanding the people to "... *repent and believe, for the Kingship is at hand.*" (Mk. 1:14-15)

For a Bible believer this is reasonable and more plausible than the futurist scenario that the churches teach. Churches teach that we never see Christ's Kingship until after we've died. According to them, in life we just live in a state of limbo until the end. They tell us that billions of Christian lives and thousands of years must pass before Christ's Reign can be realized. Then, after thousands of years of "Christian limbo," after all these billions of people have died and are supposedly restored back to life, then somehow, in a single day, they will all be judged and punished or rewarded for every single thing they ever did – a judgment that would bypass all experience and learning for mankind. During the interim, before this so-called "final reward," countless years would supposedly pass with the continual message given out every week that we are in the "latter days" and the Kingdom of God will come some day ... but people never live to see it. Millions of minds are blocked by this deception so that they will not even attempt to open their eyes to experience life with Christ as King.

ACTS 26:9-18 PAUL'S THIRD ACCOUNT OF HIS ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS

Indeed, I had therefore thought to myself that it was necessary to perform many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Which I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints I locked down in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests; and I consented when they were to be put to death.

And I punished them many times in all the synagogues, and compelled them to blaspheme; and raging madly against them, I persecuted them even into foreign cities.

In the course of these things, as I went my way to Damascus with authority and a warrant from the chief priests,

At midday on the road, O King, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around about me and them who journeyed with me.

And all of us fell down to the earth, and I heard a voice speaking to me in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? To be kicking against the goads is hard on you.

And I said, Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

But rise, and stand upon your feet: for I appear to you for this purpose, to take you in hand as a subordinate and a witness of the things which you know of me, and shall observe of me;

Choosing you out of the people and the nations, to whom I am sending you,

To open their eyes, and to turn from darkness to light, and from the authority of the adversary, to God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and receive their place among those who are separated by their faith in me.

ONCE more Paul recounts his experience on the road to Damascus where he was confronted by Jesus. Paul recounted this experience twice before: in Acts 9 and Acts 22.

Paul admits he was once a Pharisee. He admits that he had madly persecuted the people who followed Jesus of Nazareth, for which he is now ashamed. He helped the Pharisees persecute and kill saints. He even compelled them to blaspheme against Christ, a punishment more demeaning than death.

Then, one day as he was going to Damascus, commissioned to bring more

saints back to Jerusalem for trial and/or imprisonment, Paul was confronted there on the road. Jesus appeared in a blinding light. Paul and the men travelling with him saw the light, and they all fell to the ground.

Then Jesus – the risen and reigning Christ – spoke to Paul (Saul) and convinced him to stop persecuting Him. And then Jesus sent Paul to Damascus to meet a man named Ananias who would, in turn, give him further instructions. His commission was to take the gospel to his Israel brethren in the nations.

“THE AUTHORITY OF THE ADVERSARY”

In verse 18 Paul says that Christ sent him to turn people “... *from darkness to light*,” and “*from the authority of the adversary, to God.*” Turning “from darkness into light” is a phrase that envisions Israel in darkness. They obviously needed to be turned in a different direction, toward light so they can see where they are going. This is what Jesus wanted Paul to do for his brethren who were lost in darkness in the nations.

In the next verse, the King James Bible incorrectly inserts the word “*Satan*” instead of the right word: “*adversary.*” We will address this point in more detail in the next chapter (Acts 27). But we must touch briefly upon it here as well. This is a revealing statement because Paul is comparing darkness with light, and he is comparing the authority of the adversary with the authority of God.

Now, depending on your definition of “the adversary,” this statement can be interpreted to mean several different things. Obviously, the KJV translators took great license to insert the personal noun, “Satan.” But, to correctly identify the adversary we only need to ask some obvious questions: a) Who or what was Paul’s adversary? b) Who or what was the saints’ adversary? c) Who or what claimed authority to imprison, kill, and persecute the sons of God? If we deal just with reality “the adversary” becomes obvious.

The adversary murdered Jesus.

The adversary was trying to murder Paul (and eventually did). The adversary persecuted Paul for witnessing about Jesus.

Who or what was the adversary? It was the Jewish establishment in Jerusalem! It was the Sanhedrin! Scripture is clear. No wonder Jesus called them children of the devil (Jn. 8:44 & 47).

Jerusalem had become a city of the adversary. The religious/political system of Jerusalem and Judea was not only wicked – it sought to replace Yahweh with a god of their own making. Scripture called Jerusalem “*spiritual Egypt and Sodom*” (Rev. 11:8). Jerusalem’s religious/political system was imported from Babylon. The system there in Jerusalem was “the adversary” ... much like the system of government and religion here in America is the adversary.

These references were to a system of wicked men ... not to an all-powerful supernatural entity. Good kingdoms are of “light,” and bad kingdoms are of “darkness.” And the basic concept here, which we will address in more detail in the next chapter, is that “light” symbolizes life and living, and “darkness” symbolizes death and dying. There’s no supernatural devil here; only men ... some who follow light (life), and some who follow darkness (death).

Paul was talking about “the raising of the dead.” God was raising people from “darkness” to “light.”

The phrase, “... *the authority of the adversary*,” has specific application ... inferring that we grant authority to whatever government we believe in and choose to ally ourself to. We grant them authority by believing in them.

The adversary (Sanhedrin) had conquered the Judeans by convincing them to accept its jurisdiction over them. Once the people were convinced, they willingly submitted to the “*authority of the adversary*.”

Paul’s good news of Christ’s Kingship was opening some people’s eyes and turning them, by changing their allegiance from “*the authority of the adversary*” over to “*the authority of Christ’s Reign*.” Paul

and the saints considered themselves citizens of Christ’s Reign, thus they were at odds with adversary governments of men that usurp God and replace Him with their own lawmakers. This is clearly a breach of God’s law (Ex. 20:3; Is. 33:22).

Today, most people are making the same mistake. They are like the walking dead ... under the adversaries’ spells. But God still gives life to the dead. Receiving this life equates to getting our eyes opened. It enables us to identify the adversary and to turn from our misdirected systems of death. It enables us to learn allegiance to Christ’s Reign of life. With the light God gives us we can see that the world system is the adversary. It is “The Beast.”

We should pray to God to deliver our minds from the darkness of that system. We must learn to recognize and love God’s system, and recognize and hate the Beast system.

The process could be started if only a few people would come together and stop loving and emulating the Beast system. We could begin to emancipate our minds from the Beast’s authority. Then, others would see and learn to believe in Christ’s Reign. But, to turn to the Kingship of Christ we must first believe in it.

THE “RESURRECTION”

The churches, armed with their King James Bibles, have taught churchgoers to believe in a future

“resurrection” patterned after the Futurist’s doctrine. The fact is, the word “resurrection” is not in the Bible. It was inserted into English Bible versions ... like the King James Version. The word “resurrection” was preferred by church translators because it helped them to avoid Paul’s doctrine of “the raising.”

The correct word in the Bible text is “raising,” not “resurrection.” And it is not merely a word change – it is a different concept. It may be tempting to just replace the term “resurrection” with the term “raising,” and keep your thinking the same. But you must resist that impulse for it would still be false doctrine. After the battles fought and the sacrifices made to publish the good news of the raising, it would be shameful for you to accept a false word on this.

Stop and think about two important points as you reconsider long-established church doctrine:

1. Nowhere in the Bible does the term “resurrection” appear. It is a church term, not a Bible term.

2. The majority of the verses that address “the raising of the dead” were written in the present tense, indicating that the raising was occurring at the time the words were spoken! The raising was not a future event ... like churches have taught us. Those first raisings heralded the dawn of new life for Israel who had been lost and spiritually dead under the jurisdiction of the beast system.

QUESTION: We are so accustomed to how man’s government works that we find it hard to understand how God’s government works. If we were to change our allegiance from man’s government to God’s government, what security would we have? Wouldn’t we need traffic laws? Wouldn’t people still need to be licensed and bonded in certain professions? Since there are no traffic laws or other laws in the Bible covering modern technology, wouldn’t there be a lot of confusion? The function of God’s government seems very nebulous to me. With man’s government everything is clearly spelled out, and we feel secure.

This was “the first raising” (Rev. 20:5-6). Here in these final verses of the book of Acts it comes out strong and clear.

The churches have given out a lot of speculation and erroneous teaching about what they call “the resurrection.” This error has spawned additional false doctrine, like “the rapture,” “the millennium,” a physical heaven somewhere in outer space, a literal “burning hell,” and one great “future judgment.”

Understanding “the raising” enables you to see the churches’ Futurism as nonsense. The raising, the judgment, and Christ’s Reign are ongoing. They’ve been current and ongoing for two millennia. There have been trials and judgments, but God’s kingdom continues. The churches and the Pharisees lumped these together into one dramatic event which they claim will occur at the so-called “end of the world.” But that is nonsense.

The “raising” that was occurring in Paul’s day was a living upgrade. Men were given new minds and made “alive in Christ,” whereas they had previously been “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). This is central to the theme of the gospel. It is spiritual life overcoming spiritual death. In Paul’s world there were Israelites who were biologically alive but spiritually dead. Such men are often referred to as “the dead” in Scripture.

1. *“...I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, but you are dead.”*

Rev. 3:1

When the spiritually-dead were given new life in Christ they were “raised from the dead.” This spiritual raising is not the only raising promised us. But it is the one referred to in most Bible passages that talk about “raising.”

There is also a great future raising to immortality, following the example of Jesus. But scripture has less to say about that raising. The Bible teaches us about spiritual death (the state of being blind, deaf, and

lost), and about spiritual life (being able to see, understand, and believe).

Scripture does promise a future raising to immortal life (e.g., I Cor. 15:12-19), but very little explanation is given about it. We are not told much about immortal life. Most of what we know about it is based on the recorded model of God raising Jesus to immortality. Jesus was “the first fruits” of that raising. Witnesses recorded this blessed event, and we believe it. Jesus was raised immortal from the tomb after He died. Our future raising to immortality will be after that model (Acts 26:23).

Our grasp of the mechanics of that is limited to say the least. We talk of immortality, but we really do not know much about it, or how to relate to it. No doubt, the reason God preferred to not expound on the subject for us is because the concept transcends the capacity of our mortal minds. If the Bible did go into detail about it men would be confused and they would misuse the information.

So, the fact that the Bible doesn’t give a lot of explanation about our future hope of immortality simply tells us:

1. Full understanding of it is not required for our life today, or for the work that God requires of us today.

2. We couldn’t understand the physics of immortality even if it were explained to us.

The “first raising (i.e., the new birth),” on the other hand, definitely is relevant to us today. We can understand it. It is the new life that redeems us out of the state of spiritual death. It is life in Christ. It is the mortification of “the old man” and the birth of “the new man in Christ” (Eph. 4:24). It is the enabling of our ears and eyes so they can hear and see the truth. This raising is for life today! And, if we want to serve Christ, this is the only way to do it.

Being born again (i.e., being raised from the dead) is no small matter. It is life-changing and sometimes traumatic. In Paul’s case it was both traumatic and life-changing.

Some folks have a lackadaisical approach to the new birth. They figure it is merely an adjustment to

their lifestyle; a decision on their part that can be evoked by a simple prayer or by a quick trip to the altar in some church. This is myth.

Being born again is a miracle from God. It is like waking up after sleep. It is life from the “dead.”

It is unlikely that a man will choose to see himself as “dead.” Therefore, if a man is to be born again he must have outside assistance. He must come to realize that life as he has known it was actually a state of being lost in spiritual death. Something must push him and force him to face the truth. Something beyond himself must bring him to see it. Otherwise, a man is not likely to think of himself as “dead” and in need of a new life.

Paul didn’t choose to see himself as “dead”; to abandon his old identity. Something forced him to it. Man must be forced to abandon his old self; his old ways of thinking. Only God can bring a man to that. Only God, through Christ, was able to bring Paul to that point. Paul was knocked down, flat on his back, good as dead. It took that trauma to wake him up and enable him to move on to a new life.

Paul was not a “good guy” merely waiting for God’s approval. No, he was a bad guy. He didn’t think he was, but he was. He persecuted saints. He tortured them and forced them to blaspheme their Savior. He worked for an organization that tortured and murdered innocent men, women and children. No one with a conscience could do that, and continue doing it.

Paul did that! He was not a good guy. He was incorrigible. It took a life-shaking trauma to force him to take inventory of himself. Short of that, he never would have changed.

The same is true of us! If we’ve been born again it is because Christ pushed us into it. Everyone of us is born into this world like Saul, susceptible to the spiritual death that creeps upon us from the world system. We all desperately need that higher life that Christ brings us. Without it we are lifeless reprobates ... even though we may think highly

of ourselves. We need Christ to confront us, to make us see that we are dead and in need of life. We need Him to push us to look at Him instead of ourselves.

If you are clinging to your world, to your old self, hoping to receive a mere adjustment to round out your personality and let you “be all you can be”; or if you think that a past adjustment or mere “spiritual experience” made you “born again,” or if you think you are “born again” because you repeated a “sinners prayer,” then I regret to inform you that you may still be dead.

Christ does not call us to receive an adjustment. He calls us to die to self and be reborn!

Man becomes infected with “death” and he requires a radical remedy.

It takes severe convincing to make a man admit that he is dead; to abandon a lifestyle and a way of thinking he has acquired through his life – the only life he knows. The man who goes to churches has been told that all he needs is a ritual adjustment – a prayer, a baptism, an altar call – and then a so-called future “resurrection” will give him a complete makeover later, after his regular life is over. God

help you if you have accepted that lie.

If you haven’t differentiated between the false “resurrection” and the real “raising,” then chances are you have not yet accepted the fact that you have been “dead” without Christ, and you probably aren’t prepared to transfer from the authority of the adversary to the authority of Christ’s Reign. Like Saul (Paul) before his encounter with Jesus, you may be an Israelite by genetics, but you may not yet be a “*son of promise*” and an “*heir according to the promise*.”

If you have not yet encountered Jesus as Paul did, be prepared for a life-changing interruption in your life. Jesus sees you, although you may not see Him yet! Once you see Him, you will no longer hold dear your past life. You will gladly cast off your old dead self and accept the new life He offers. You will joyously pass from death to life, and understand Paul’s words: “*Death is swallowed up in victory. Oh, death, where is your victory? Oh death, where is your sting?*” (I Cor. 15:54-55).

- PERSPECTIVE -

As we study the book of Acts we’re covering a period of approximately 30 years. This writing is from approximately 29 A.D., to 60 A.D. Toward the end of the book of Acts the apostles were growing old. It’s likely they started their work around the age of 30, which would make them 60 or over by the time we get to the end of the book. Acts takes us through the prime of these apostles’ lives. Also, several of the other letters were written during this same time period (during the years covered in the book of Acts). For instance, the books of First and Second Corinthians, the book of Galatians, First & Second Thessalonians, James, First Peter and possibly a few others, were written during the times that we’ve been covering in this set of lessons. All of these things were taking place and all of these teachings were coming out of the apostles during this time. The time covered in the book of Acts was an important early period of the Reign of Christ and the manifestation of His ecclesia.

QUESTION: Churchgoers cling to a greatly-anticipated future resurrection. We’ve learned to console ourselves with this.

The on-going “spiritual” raising is a lot less attractive than a physical transformation to a state where we won’t be sick, won’t have physical impairments, and won’t have any enemies. So what good does it do us if we are “raised” but still are mortal, with diseases and enemies? People and powers in the world outnumber and overpower us. If we are to believe in an on-going spiritual raising, how can we see it as a great thing? I think the churches’ physical resurrection is more desirable.

ACTS 26:19-24 **LIGHT = “RAISING THE DEAD”**

Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not apathetic to the heavenly vision:

Moreover, I testified to those in Damascus first, and in Jerusalem, and all the region of Judea, and then to the nations, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works befitting their repentance.

On account of these things the Jews captured me in the temple, and attempted to slay me.

Therefore, having obtained help from God, I have stood until this day and witnessed to both small and great, saying nothing but those things the prophets and Moses spoke that were to occur:

That Christ would suffer, and would be the first raised from the dead, and would show light to the people and to the nations.

PAUL calls his experience on the road to Damascus a “heavenly vision.” What did he mean by “heavenly vision”?

To learn this saying we cannot rely on traditional religious jargon and pagan idioms picked up from the churches. Free yourself from these tendencies so that key words, like “heaven” or “adversary,” no longer evoke erroneous thoughts of physical castles in outer space and supernatural horned devils.

When Paul went on into Damascus and met Ananias, he received back his sight ... as if scales fell from his eyes. This metaphor undoubtedly referred to more than optical vision. It meant that Paul received spiritual vision as well.

With his new spiritual eyes Paul said he saw something concerning heaven. What did he see? What did he mean by “heaven”?

Symbolically, “heaven” is the realm of governments, kings, and rulers. Paul’s vision of “heaven” was an understanding of governments and kingdoms.

“Heaven” (Grk. “Ouranos”) infers height: a high place, or a high status. “Heaven” is a place of high office, high status, or power. The “kingdom of heaven,” then, means the “high kingdom.” Depending upon the context, the term can apply to any kingdom that has great power. One example of metaphor in Scripture is when we read about “stars in the

heavens.” This often depicts kings or rulers in government. Heaven is seat of power, and the stars are the rulers in that seat. When stars fall from heaven, metaphorically speaking, it depicts kings or rulers falling from positions of power.

God’s position of power is the ultimate heaven.

Paul says he saw something about heaven. In other words, Jesus taught Paul something about government: about the Kingdom of God versus the kingdoms of men.

Paul was obviously talking about kingdoms and governments! Not mythical apparitions appearing in the sky. Jesus showed Paul the difference between the governments of men and the government of Christ (i.e., the Kingship of Heaven), and then sent him to share the good news with his Israel kinsmen.

In verse 21 Paul repeats again the reason why the Sanhedrin was seeking to kill him. On three different occasions Paul states that they sought to kill him because he preached “the raising” (the raising from the dead) and because he was calling upon them to repent and turn to God. The Sanhedrin took this – and rightly so – as an accusation that they were frauds. They claimed to be Children of Abraham when in fact they were children of Babylon (Jn. 8:39).

You could imagine, today, what would happen if a prophet told the U.S. Congress that they must repent and turn to God. Government can never admit to such an accusation. If the government were to admit its need for repentance it would be an admission of fraud. They can’t do that. They prefer to discredit and/or get rid of the prophet who is exposing them ...as the Sanhedrin did to Paul.

In chapter 26 the Sanhedrin is still trying to silence Paul to protect their system.

Repenting, turning to God, and doing “works meet for repentance” is what Paul equates with being raised from the dead. This is what he calls “the hope of Israel,” “the raising,” “the new birth,” or “the Reign of Christ.” He spoke of it also in chapter 24, verse 21.

Paul was pointing to current events as fulfillments of prophecy. The prophets had foretold events that were happening then and there! The King and his Kingship had come! The Light had dawned, and the dead were being raised. Notice in the book of Ephesians, chapter 5:

14. Wherefore he is saying, “Wake up, you who sleep, and rise from among the dead, and Christ will shine upon you.

Ephesians 5:14

In our text, Paul explains to King Agrippa that the Jews are persecuting him because he was proclaiming the raising from the dead and the appearing of the light.

In Ephesians chapter 2 we find this:

4. But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us,

5. And we who were dead in trespasses and sins, He has brought to life together with Christ, having been saved by grace.

6. And He raised us up together, and seated us together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

Ephesians 2:4-6

Life was replacing death. Light was overpowering darkness.

QUESTION: By eliminating the concept of Heaven, that is, an outer space paradise or kingdom where there is no pain, suffering, or evil of any kind, you also eliminate the need for us to be Christians! Why should we sacrifice the good things of this life by following God’s Laws if we can’t be rewarded by going to heaven?

HOW DOES A KINGDOM “COME”?

Kingships or governments are products of faith. They begin as abstract creations of the mind. They exist to the extent that people are convinced they exist. Governments rely upon the belief of the people. The government concept must be sold to the people and they must actually believe it.

One man cannot rule over a hundred by physical strength. The people must have a state of mind that accepts rulership ... regardless what name they call it. Mental slavery always precedes physical slavery. Governments, and government powers, can function only if people believe in their power. Until mental slavery has succeeded, the people will not accept physical slavery. Without the faith of the people a government cannot exist. People don't need to like government; they only need to believe it is viable and/or unavoidable.

7. For as he thinks in his heart, so is he:

Prov. 23:7

Grass-roots belief may be evoked by persuasion of force, by persuasion of argument, or by evidence of facts. Politicians must sell their package to establish their government in the minds of their victims. The people must be convinced, otherwise government is no more than just the ambition of a few crooked men.

Like counties, states, or nations, governments become tangible after a common belief is established among the people. Kingdoms exist because people are convinced that they exist.

Kingdoms have boundaries. Without boundaries kingdoms have no definition. Boundaries of kingdoms are abstract (i.e. imaginary,). They are non-tangible demarcations. They exist in the minds of the people who accept those kingdoms.

Go to the border between any two states. Look for a boundary line there on the ground. You'll not find it. The line exists only in the minds of the people ... because politicians have convinced the people it exists. Borders move. What makes them move? A belief! Politicians tell people the border is moved, and when the people are convinced it has been moved ... it is moved. Faith makes it so – faith in whoever declares it. Borders exist because, and where, people believe they exist.

Kingdoms (governments) are produced by the same dynamic that produces borders.

New Jerusalem exists by the same dynamic. That dynamic is not something visible. It does not “come with observation.” Governments are created by non-tangible faith. Governments, like borders, exist where people choose to recognize them. Physical elements like flags,

armies, buildings, politicians, etc., are not what constitute governments. These are merely physical evidences of a government that exists in the minds of the people. Governments, like false gods, are created by the imaginations of those who worship them. Such governments (and gods) produce tangible evidences of existence only after the people believe in them and serve them. Government eventually becomes visible and outwardly manifest ... after it initially “came” without observation.

In Luke 17 we find a clarification:

20. When asked by the Pharisees when the Kingship of God comes, he answered them and said, The Kingship of God comes not with observation:

21. Neither will they say, “Look here!” or, “Look there!” for the Kingship of God is inside you.

Luke 17:20-21

The concept of governments is not unlike the Kingship of God. The essence of the Kingship of God, like any other kingship, is in the belief of the people. It happens in their hearts. It happens without visual observation. Some folks tend to think the Kingship of God operates on a different dynamic than the kingships of men. But that is untrue. The Kingship of God requires faith and recognition from us before tangible products and blessings begin to develop. Faith is intangible, but it must exist first, before a kingdom or system can exist and produce tangible results (blessings, etc.).

The question is this: which kingship will people accept? Ultimately, we all must choose a king.

Any kingship you recognize and believe in, is the product of faith. It is the result of your faith and the faith of your fathers. Men inherit kingships from their fathers because they inherit their fathers' faith. To change allegiance and kingdoms men must change their faith.

But faith does not come easy. Nor does it leave easy. Developing, or abandoning, a particular faith usually takes years and major intervention from God. One generation inherits its faith from the former generation. Change comes hard and slow. The reason we are deprived of many of the benefits of Christ's Reign today is because we, as a people, have inherited the faith of our fathers which denies that the present Kingship of Jesus exists. We are blinded by the faith of our fathers. Also we have not been able to let go of our faith in the Beast System. The churches of our fathers (like the traditions of the elders in old Jerusalem) have convinced the people that Christ's Reign does not exist.

Repent and believe the good news! Believe in God. Believe in Jesus' Kingship!

THE KINGSHIP OF GOD

The Bible defines its own terms and idioms. No other book or body of literature is better qualified to define Bible terms. Since the Holy Bible is unique in the world, and since “The Kingdom of God” as a Bible term is unique as well, it can be defined only by the Bible itself. The Bible introduced the concept of God’s Kingship. There are no other sources available to explain this term ... because the use of the term is unique to the Bible.

Using the Bible to define this term we find that Paul was teaching about a spiritual, life-changing upgrade in the minds and hearts of men. That “raising” was called “life.” That “life” was given to people who had been “dead.” The new “life” enabled men to “see the Kingship of God” (Jn. 3:3) and to differentiate between God’s Kingship and the kingdoms of men.

When Paul was speaking of “the Kingship” that kingship was currently manifest in the REIGN of Christ. The Reign (Kingship) of Christ is manifest among men who perceive Christ as King.

Christ was announced “King” by his Father. Thus, from the time of that announcement (Mtt. 28:18) the terms “Kingship of God” and “Reign of Christ” came to mean the same thing. God appointed his Son as King.

The term “Reign of Christ” is the expression and the culmination of the following events and terms: “the raising” (Jn. 11:25), “eonian life” (Mtt. 19:16), “ears to hear and eyes to see” (Mtt. 11:15) (Ez. 12:2), “awaking to the light of Christ” (Eph. 5:14), “new birth” (I Pet. 1:23), “born from above” (Jn. 3:3), “regeneration” (Mtt. 19:28), “life in Christ” (Rm. 8:2), “raising the dead” (Acts 26:8), etc.. These terms all refer to the receiving of “life” from God through his Son who is King of “the living.”

Thus, “the Kingship of God” is about LIFE and LIVING. It’s about New Jerusalem: the city of THE LIVING! The holy city of life. It is the Kingdom wherein the living have their citizenship. Its residents are listed in “the book of life” (Rev. 21:27). Those in the Book of Life are living under the Kingship (Reign) of Christ.

26. *But the (New) Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.*

Gal. 4:26

The Living reside in New Jerusalem. The dead are kept outside.

14. *Blessed are those doing his commands in order that they may have right to the tree of life and they may enter by the gates into the city.*

15. *Outside are dogs, and sorcerers, and fornicators, and murderers, and idolaters, and all who are loving and doing a lie.*

Rev. 22:14-15

The Kingdom of God is the Holy City New Jerusalem that emanates down from God out of heaven. It is the “city” that Abraham sought that was built not by man (Heb. 11:10 & 16). It is the Bride of Christ: the “city” wherein “*living waters*” and a “*pure river of water of life*” flow from the Throne of God, giving life to “*whosoever will*” take of the water of life (Rev. 22:17). All who “*hunger and thirst after righteousness*” (Mtt. 5:6) can be citizens in this great holy city. These are listed in the city’s directory called “*the book of life*.”

Jesus ascended the throne of this Kingship in order to bring us in and make us citizens. He offers us access by offering us life. The “city” is perpetually open to all who seek it, and all who desire Christ to reign over them.

This Kingship comes “*not with observation*.” That is, it does not make a physical arrival like an army, a passenger jet, or a visitor. It does not physically come or go. The Kingdom (Christ’s Kingship) “comes” in like manner as any reign of any kingdom. Kingdoms don’t suddenly appear out of the blue. Kingdoms must first be conceived. And after a time of gestation and labor they

are born. A kingdom or a government must begin (be conceived and born) before it is manifest physically. It is “seen” first spiritually ... and then later it is manifest physically.

Reigns are conceived in minds and hearts. The people’s allegiance comes not physically (not by observation). It is in hearts and minds. “Inside.”

Governments of men exist by popular consent, one way or the other. If a government does not have the consent of the people, it is nothing more than a force hoping to become a government. Its method is to create war. Wars convince people they need governments. Governments must be accepted or rejected in the heart ... by force or otherwise. That acceptance neither comes nor goes “with observation.” Physical evidences of government are produced afterward and can then be “observed.” These evidences include buildings, armies, flags, lands, etc.. They come later. But the actual reign itself arrives (“comes”) without physical evidence. It manifests in the hearts of people. Thus it is with the Reign of Christ. It comes “not with observation.” In time, however, it does display observable physical evidences.

Lost sheep are found; the spiritually dead begin coming alive with inspiration; people who were spiritually blind begin to see. Families stay together; common sense appears along with prosperity; chaos goes away; and people learn the difference between freedom and slavery. Freedom is nurtured and the innocent are protected instead of exploited.

“*The Kingship of God is inside you.*” Some people interpret this verse to mean that the kingdom of God is a human quality that comes with all men at birth. But that is not the intention of this Scripture. Christ’s Kingship is manifested “inside” (within) his body ... within the body of people joined in common faith under Jesus. It is “inside you” (plural): the saints who are the remnant. The word “you” is the plural form, meaning more than one. The Kingdom is manifest inside a body of

people who come together in an ecclesia to honor Christ as King.

20. *For where two or three have been drawn together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.*

Matthew 18:20

This is why Jesus said you can't "observe" the kingdom arriving, or standing here or there. The Kingdom is not a physical throne or a geographic location. It is a faith; a quality. It is a common loyalty shared among families who recognize Jesus as their Head, and God's word as their government. It is not a name on a membership list, nor is it a name on a national census. It is not defined by the geographical confines of a state. You can't say "Look here" in the United States! or "There in Great Britain!" You cannot "observe" a belief. You can only see the physical evidences that are born of it. The Kingship of Christ is a concept. It is the belief that Jesus is King, and that God's Law is our law. That quality or conviction does "not come with observation."

Christ's Reign manifests itself in the lives of people who seek to be under the jurisdiction or authority of Jesus' Kingship.

22. *And he said to the disciples, The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and you will not see.*

23. *And they will say to you, "Look here"; or, "Look there." Do not go, neither follow them.*

24. *For as the lightning flashes out of the heavens and shines into the lower heavens, thus will be the Son of man.*

Luke 17:22-24

He was saying that days would come when people would desire to see this light but would not be able to see it. Great darkness and blindness would come over them. Men will say that the Kingdom is a geographical location ("See here or see there"). But Jesus says, "Do not follow them! They are wrong!" The light of the

Reign of Christ is like the flash from a lightning storm; the lightning flashes high in the sky and shines all the way across the sky and onto the Earth. It can't be confined to one corner of the sky. It is present everywhere at once. When people first "see" the Kingship they realize that the "light" of Christ shines for all to see ... but only the living see it. It transforms them – raises them out of darkness to light!

We are not waiting for the light to arrive. We are waiting for men's eyes to open and see what is already here. It is more constant than the Sun, and remains for all to see ... if they will but open their eyes. Those who have "life" can see it because their spiritual eyes are now working correctly.

5. *I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees you.*

Job 42:5

The light that shines on people to enlighten them emanates from heaven, from the Son of Man. Paul was bearing witness of that light as it shined upon him... changing him into a new man.

The light of Christ still shines today. It enlightens hearts and minds. It gives life to the dead.

QUESTION: Why would Jesus Christ establish a kingdom that is so vague and meaningless? I mean, here's this so-called great kingdom hidden among the people. This so-called kingdom is overpowered by corrupt and evil kingdoms of men. People can't even see this kingdom! What good is that? I'm sorry, but the alternative of a future kingdom where the problems of mankind have been solved and everything in government is working seamlessly makes more sense, because it points to a God who has the power to create the best kind of a kingdom, whereas your view of God's government points to an ineffectual God who, for some reason, settles for a lack-luster invisible kingdom.

ACTS 26:24-32 TRUTH CAN HELP ANYONE

And as he said these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, you are mad; the many writings are turning you mad.

But Paul said, I am not mad, mighty Festus; but I speak the words of truth and a sound mind.

For the king [Agrippa] knows well of these things, toward whom I speak openly. For I am persuaded that none of these things have escaped his notice; for this was not done in a corner.

King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.

Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You would, with little persuading, have me made into a Christian.”

And Paul said, I wish to God that with little or with great [persuasion], not only you, but also whoever might hear me this day, would become such as I am also, except for this imprisonment.

And the king stood up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that were sitting with them:

And when they had withdrawn, they talked one to another, saying, This man has done nothing worthy of death or of imprisonment.

Then Agrippa said to Festus, This man could have been released, if he had not appealed to Caesar.

PAUL reminded Festus and Agrippa that the events around Christ had not occurred in secret. He had not died in secret, nor had He raised in secret. Christ’s disciples had not witnessed in secret.

Also, King Agrippa had inside knowledge of Jewish religion and politics. Agrippa was an Edomite Jew of the lineage of Herod. He also knew of the prophets’ writings. The Herod dynasty had held power in Judea for several generations.

But Agrippa was a Jew by culture, and unsympathetic toward Paul. Agrippa’s idiomatic statement to Paul, in verse 28, has been misunderstood. A literal translation is: “In little you are persuading me to be a Christian.” Agrippa’s intent was sarcasm. He was an Edomite who followed Judaism. He was saying, in essence, “So, Paul, you seem to think that your little words can turn me to be a Christian.” Obviously, Agrippa had no intention of converting from Judaism to Christianity.

Paul replied that he hoped to bring many to know Christ.

Paul had been taking the gospel to Israel. Israel was dispersed among the nations. Paul declared his message publicly so that the “sheep” who could “hear God’s voice” would come to him. Paul DID NOT hide the message from non-Israelites. But he was sent to Israel in accordance with God’s promises to them. Israel was scattered in Asia Minor, Europe, and the far corners of the world. The good news of the Reign of Christ was a fulfillment of prophecy to Israel, and they needed to hear it. His message was expressly for covenant people ... but if others heard and appreciated it they were blessed by it too. Truth is truth no matter who hears it. Truth can bless any people!

It could have benefited even King Agrippa, an Edomite Jew, if he had appreciated it. Obviously he didn’t.

It seems that most of them who call themselves Jews (Judaists) never have, and never will, accept the Kingship of God. That’s not to say that it is impossible for an anti-Christ to repent and become a child of God. Paul was turned from Jewry to Christ. This conversion, in itself, was a large part of Paul’s testimony.

After the hearing, King Agrippa, Governor Festus, Bernice, and their entourage got up and left the hearing room. As they were leaving, they admitted that Paul had done nothing worthy of death or imprisonment. However, Paul had appealed to Caesar. Therefore, they agreed to send him to Rome to be tried there.

In the next chapter we will follow Paul to Rome. God has more surprises in store for Paul.

QUESTION: Why does God make the truth so hard to see? What’s going to happen to all those people who live their lives believing in fantasies and deceptions instead of the truth? They think they know the truth, and they only know error. That isn’t fair, is it?

END OF CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

FOR ANSWERS AND NOTES, SEE ENCLOSED "ANSWER SECTION."

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. One of the reasons for conducting this kind of study is to re-examine our method and our interpretation; to sort out possible mistakes in the way we have been reading Bible text. No one is immune to possible error in interpretation ... especially in light of the brainwash and bias exerted by the churches on Bible text and doctrine. Thus, it behooves us to regularly check ourselves by researching back as far as we can in the history and text of the Bible to keep our interpretation as close as possible with the original writings.

2. We must be unbiased and unintimidated if we are to find the unchanged message intended by God in the books of the Bible. If we allow ourselves to sit back and let the church establishment do our thinking for us we will be participating in the churches' sin of adding or taking away from the words of this book.

3. The Book of Acts puts us (the readers) right on the scene of the greatest event in New Testament history. It puts us where the action is, and it provides a unique opportunity to get to the bottom of several doctrines. It lets us check our interpretations against solid, clear evidence.

4. The doctrine of "the raising of the dead" was very controversial. It was hated by the typical Pharisee, and especially by the Sanhedrin. The Pharisees had their own doctrine of "the raising" which differed substantially from the doctrine Paul taught. This doctrine was the crux of the dispute between Paul and the Sanhedrin.

5. The correct Bible word for this event is "the raising." The churches have substituted the word "resurrection" (to raise again), connoting a return to mortal life. The term "raising" differs from the term "resurrection" in that it connotes an upgrade to a HIGHER level rather than a return to a former level.

6. The "twelve tribes" (Acts 26: 7) (i.e., Israel) are referred to separately from the Jews of Jerusalem. The Jews hated Paul and tried to kill him for bringing the gospel of the Kingdom. This tells us clearly that there was a distinct difference between Jew and Israelite.

7. It is important to know how kingdoms come into existence. The Jews apparently expected a kingdom to arrive with trumpets and fanfare. Jesus told his disciples that God's Kingdom exists "without observation." By that, He meant that it is not of this world (Jn. 18:36), and is seen when men believe in it. He said it exists among (inside) the people.

ANSWERS:

pg.6

If you are under the illusion that man's law system is "clearly spelled out" and understandable, then you need to open your eyes. Man's government creates thousands of new laws every year to add to the myriad of laws already on the books. Not one lawyer or judge in the world can understand them. Clearly spelled out and understandable? Hardly!

The laws of God, on the other hand, are short, concise, understandable and few. An average intellect can grasp God's laws. And, yes, God's laws cover every imaginable crime or problem ... and they do it without enslaving us. (The ungodly think of slavery as security.)

pg.8

Being "raised" does great good ... because it enables you to see reality and appreciate truth. Life is not about avoiding enemies and problems. It is about knowing how to deal with them. Without truth we cannot overcome these common problems, or even discern them. Having truth is infinitely better than stumbling along in the darkness of lies, errors and illusions.

pg.9

The mythical scenario of an outer space paradise is pagan nonsense. The silly idea that it is a sacrifice to follow God's laws is ridiculous. Churches teach this, but any thinking person knows better.

God created this Earth a perfect place for his people to thrive. There is nothing wrong with Earth. The only thing wrong is when people refuse to recognize God.

pg.12

You ask why Jesus would establish such an "unattractive" kingdom. The question should be, rather, why do you consider Jesus' Kingdom unattractive?

Read the Book of Acts that we've been studying. The anti-Christ Pharisees and the Sanhedrin thought their kingdom was more attractive than the one Jesus and Paul proclaimed. However, "the twelve tribes" welcomed and turned to Jesus' Kingship and Kingdom.

Perhaps you should re-evaluate your grasp of The Kingdom. If you think the church's kingdom is superior to the biblical Kingdom, then perhaps you need new "eyes to see, and ears to hear."

2. *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped,*

3. *For I was envious at the foolish, I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

Ps. 73:2-3

pg.13

God does not make truth hard to see. On a level playing field, truth is easier to see than a lie.

Blindness makes truth hard to see ... and blindness is caused by sin.

It is sin – not God – that makes truth hard to see.

Sin and error exact a toll in the lives of people. It makes them weak, lost and enslaved. The only remedy for sin and error is truth and repentance.

God does not hide his truth from men. But blind men cannot see it.