

Come to Understanding

**They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24**

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The Word of God is Not Bound

The enemies of the Word of God sought to silence the apostles from preaching the Gospel by throwing them in prison. However, the prison could not hold them:

18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. -Acts 5

Frustrated in their efforts to stop the spreading of the Gospel, the religious leaders of Jerusalem finally listened to the sound advice of one of their own Pharisees. Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, said:

38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work is of men, it will come to nothing:

39 But if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it; lest perhaps you be found even to fight against God. -Acts 5

Nevertheless, the Greeks also sought to prevent the Gospel from spreading by complaining that the believing Hebrews were not taking care of their widows:

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. -Acts 6

That is when the twelve apostles sought help in taking care of the needy so they could continue their work in spreading the Word of God in Jerusalem:

3 Therefore, brethren, look you out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. -Acts 6

They chose seven able workers, which included Stephen and Philip, and the Word of God increased among a growing number of disciples:

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. -Acts 6

Stephen boldly stepped out from the physical duties to which he had been assigned and demonstrated the power of God through miracles:

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. -Acts 6

That is when certain Jewish religious leaders rose up against Stephen. They vainly disputed with him as they tried to quench the power of the Holy Ghost:

9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke. -Acts 6

Frustrated by the “wisdom and spirit” by which Stephen spoke, they sought to silence him by bringing him before the council with false accusations:

13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceases not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

14 For we have heard him say, that this Yahshua of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us. -Acts 6

As Stephen stood before the council, he appeared to those who saw him as though he had the “face of an angel:”

15 And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. -Acts 6

That was when the high priest asked Stephen the question that would ignite the spark unleashing the power of God that was in him, “Are these things so?”

1 Then said the high priest, Are these things so? -Acts 7

Speaking boldly, Stephen began to teach the Gospel, beginning with Abraham. Not fearing the potential physical repercussions to which he might be subjected, Stephen concluded his powerful sermon with pointed accusations against the council itself:

51 You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* you.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers:

**So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8**

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53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*. -Acts 7

The religious leaders were unable to fight against the truth of the Word of God, which was spoken under the anointing of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, they sought to stop the message by destroying the messenger:

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Yahshua standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, -Acts 7

They cast out Stephen and stoned him to death in the presence of a young man named Saul:

58 And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. -Acts 7

As he witnessed close up the brutal death of Stephen, Saul apparently agreed that his words were not of God. Therefore, Saul took a personal role in the efforts of the Jewish leaders to stamp out the Gospel of Yahshua the Messiah. It was as though he was trying to rid Jerusalem of some terrible plague that had come upon the city:

1 And Saul was consenting to his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the congregation which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the congregation, entering into every house, and dragging off men and women committing *them* to prison. -Acts 8

On the surface, it appeared that Saul and the religious leaders of Jerusalem were succeeding. They were arresting every believer they could find and dragging them off to prison. All the time, however, something was happening that was much bigger than they ever imagined. The believing Christian Jews who were escaping the

persecution in Jerusalem were being scattered abroad, where they were spreading the Gospel

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. -Acts 8

Like the embers of a growing flame in the wilderness, the Gospel was quickly spreading. Philip took it northward to Samaria and to Caesarea (see Acts 8:5, 40). Soon, it had even reached as far north as Damascus in Syria. Saul, still thinking he was doing God's will, was in hot pursuit:

1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. -Acts 9

Saul had no idea of the course that his life was now taking. However, just as God had a plan for the life of Stephen, He also had a plan for the life of Saul, which Saul was unable to see until after a great "light from heaven" shined upon him and he heard a voice speaking to him:

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why persecute you me? -Acts 9

Saul, who was later called Paul, recalled that the voice spoke to him in the Hebrew language! The One speaking to him identified Himself as Yahshua, whom Saul was persecuting! Saul had believed that he was persecuting heretics who had strayed away from the traditions of the religion of the Jewish religious system. However, according to Yahshua, when Saul persecuted them, he was actually persecuting Him:

14 And when we had all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking to me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecute you me? *it is hard for you to kick against the pricks.*

15 And I said, Who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Yahshua whom you persecute. -Acts 26

Ironically, Yahshua sent Saul to do the very thing that he had been trying to stop, which was to spread His gospel throughout the world. Even more, Yahshua did not send Saul (Paul) to the Jews. Instead, He sent him to the Gentiles, to preach the Gospel farther than anyone else before him, which was throughout the Roman Empire:

17 Delivering you from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, to whom now I send you, -Acts 26

Soon, Paul had adopted the Gospel as his own. Instead of persecuting others, he became the object of persecution:

8 Remember that Yahshua the Messiah of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:

9 Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, *even* unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. -2 Timothy 2

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