

# ACTS WEEK 30

## The Advancement of Paul's Ministry

**20 Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.**

**21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?"**

**22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.**

This is where we left off last week but these verses were not in your notes so I wanted to update your notes so we don't look as if we skipped over these.

We saw that as soon as Paul could see again he rose and was baptized. This is a very significant action in his life. He knew the importance of baptism, he was now shedding the old flesh and being raised in the new. Ephesians 4:22-24; covers extremely well what baptism should mean for all who are baptized.

**" Ephesians 4:1; I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.** We are able to glance back and look at the man Paul was and who he would become by God's grace. Hard and persecuting those he believed to be preaching a heresy he becomes a new man by the encounter with our Lord and the road to Damascus. Paul will prove himself worthy of the calling with which he had been called.

This change in Paul is what far too many people today miss when they are baptized. Baptism is not about a sudden moment of feeling good about yourself, it is a calling and commitment, to live a new way in surrender to our Lord. The believer who has just made a confession should look to fulfill the calling, as we see here in Ephesians. It is our Lord who called out to Paul, not Paul running out looking for the Lord. This is a perfect example of how the calling comes, it may not be on the road to Damascus as it was for Paul but the moment and same commitment must be the outcome.

We see it happening more and more in society today that we get excited about the next fad or new thing that comes along and with excitement we jump on that bus. Problem is, when the bus runs out of gas and we grow tired looking for another cycle of excitement, each time we do we lose a little bit more of our time and ourselves. We chase after the emotional high we have been loosing as we walk this earth, we should come to realize what it is we seek can only be found in one place, and that is in our Lord Jesus, the Father, and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Let's look here now at what Paul has to say.

**Ephesians 4:22-24; that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,**

**24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.**

Paul got this figured out right away, it would be so nice if we saw more of this today in our churches. I don't think it is the lack of proper teaching by the church, I think it is more the lack of understanding and commitment in the new believers. People are looking for places to feel good about themselves instead of putting others first, which is really quite backwards. When we learn to put others first we soon realize we feel better about ourselves, life has purpose beyond our own desires and needs, it feels fulfilling when we have the opportunity to serve. **“created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”**

Paul says put off your former conduct, can we really see change if we seek to remain in the old flesh and its desires? The world is what taints purity, creates biases and resentment, in these ways we can see our world as a place of torment instead of promises. I learned when my children were little to be careful of the promises you make. The world will throw constant changes in your way and the last thing we want to do as parents is let our children down by breaking one promise after another. Jesus said in **John 3:16; “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.** God gives to us faith to believe and He does not ever break a promise. Many will say that God made promises to His people but then allowed them to be attacked and overtaken.

What people fail to see is that God makes covenants with His people, He establishes boundaries and allows them to have freedom to choose. **Deuteronomy 30:19-20; I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”** It is never God's will to put people to death, God does not desire to send people to Hell, man chooses to follow whom he may. 2 Peter 3:9 in part, **“not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”** How can I say that God sends no one to Hell? Now we put this together with **John 3:18; in part, “but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”** So we have here the teaching of choice and freedom, right decisions and wrong decisions. God would much rather we live in obedience over sacrifice.

God comes and addresses Solomon again in 2 Chr. 7:12–22, we are looking here at what God forewarns of every time He offers another promise to Israel. **Verses 7:6-7; But if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, 7 then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight.** Paul received such a decision when Jesus met him on the road, although the words were not the same we must look at what we know of the results from

studying our bibles. Paul could have continued on to persecute the Way even though he was blinded, his words were persuasive to others especially since he had orders from the high priest, to do as he says. Until we can talk to Paul we will never know if he's changing his mind due to the encounter or the blindness. We can be assured his salvation has opened the hearts of millions of people to believe in our Lord.

So eternal damnation is the ramifications of bad choices. Again, we need to be reminded of what Peter wrote, **“not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”** **Ezekiel 33:11; “Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’”** Samuel had the responsibility to tell King Saul something that could have seen him slain, but it was a command from God. **1 Samuel 15:22; So Samuel said:**

**“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.”**

God would rather that all live but man has resisted this from the beginning. Jesus was the light but men preferred darkness because his deeds were evil.

**How much does God want for us to get it right, to appreciate Him and honor Him in obedience?**

So much so He sent His Son to die in our stead. Was this the plan from before the foundations of the world? Could Jesus have lived His life fully aware of His pending persecution? Let's look back for a bit at how the story of Jesus was foretold. We read numerous verses in the Old Testament that teach us of the coming Messiah, but Jesus was not recognized by His own people for being the Messiah. God had a plan and in His time He would divulge it that we might believe. Our Lord Jesus came as the Lamb of God the first time, He taught of faith, perseverance, patience, Love, surrender, trust, serving, and so much more. We learned more about the attributes of the Father and the Holy Spirit due to Jesus' teachings and examples. But most important is that He died to save us from ourselves.

Before He was born, John the Baptist, the last prophet of the Old Testament was teaching of the one to come and when he finally saw Jesus coming he was ready to step aside and become less that Jesus would become more. Building others up above ourselves is a rare trait in people today, so many seek to be well known and praised, but the person of God saves that praise for our Lord and lives in humbleness.

There is a good book about finding Jesus in the Old Testament by David Limbaugh on Amazon. Here you can look to see how Jesus was represented throughout the bible, the characters that displayed who He would be, by the world witnessing God in the incarnate

Daniel's prophecy of 470 years earlier to the very day Jesus would enter Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey was fulfilled. The chances of this happening are far beyond my ability to figure out and

give you a percentage. However, although I cannot give you the odds, we rest assured they would be astronomical. I have copied the calculations and sequence of events given in a simple understandable manner below, and how and where the time frame from Gabriel's prophecy to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

My attention is more focused on the event of the day and what happened when our Lord came into Jerusalem. We find as He was making His entry the people outside the city believed and worshiped our Lord as He entered riding on a donkey. **Zechariah 9:9; "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey."** Are we to understand that the people knew this prophecy of old? I would imagine a good majority knew of it or perhaps it became something widely taught once Jesus' ministry began. Remember, these people were taught those things of the Old Testament so there is a good chance that what we are reading renders affirmation for the prophecy in Zechariah.

But how was our Lord treated once inside the walls of the city and then in the temple. We do not find praise and celebration once Jesus enters the city, in fact once He enters the temple we find much the opposite. Unrecognized Jesus stands to the side of everything happening and according to John He braided the whip He would soon use to cleanse the temple.

We can follow the events through to Jesus' death and see just how much disdain there was toward our Lord by those who refused Him as the Messiah. Jesus stood opposed to all that was taking place in the temple, the money changers were to be reproached and so He did, but let's not miss what the people had come relaxed in doing. We can go all the way back to Cain and Able to see the importance of heart felt offerings between the two brothers. Able brought his best, he honored our Lord with his sacrifice, but Cain only came with what appears to us as just an offering, not of his best.

We see Paul much as representing the people within the city as he first set out to conquer and condemn the Way. There was a division between those outside the walls of Jerusalem and those inside. The people no longer seemed to bring their best but just brought money to buy (an offering) not knowing anything about it to satisfy the commands but not the Lord. Paul, after being brought to his knees and blinded, realized just how blind he had been once healed. We find from the Scripture the immensity of conversion that took place in Paul's heart. I can't help but believe that the three years of which Paul went away were not filled with repentance and sorrow for all he had done. Could he see the face of Stephen as he took the torture and still asked not for God to condemn those who persecuted him. We can only imagine what it must have been like for Paul to realize what he had done, it was obviously strong enough to change him to a point of giving his life for others. He once took life, but then came to bring life.

**Reasons to Believe** - by Don Olson

<https://reasons.org/explore/publications/articles/was-jesus-s-arrival-accurately-predicted-in-the-bible>

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In 538 BC, the angel Gabriel gave Daniel a prophecy pinpointing when the Messiah would arrive. “Know and understand this,” Gabriel told him (Daniel 9:25). While Daniel may have understood it, somewhere along the way that insight has been lost. Old Testament scholars have long been debating the prophecy’s meaning, but one scholar, Harold Hoehner, had a particularly astounding interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

While in Babylon, Daniel read the Scriptures, learning that Jeremiah had foretold both the Babylonian captivity and the Israelites’ return to their homeland after 70 years. In response, Daniel confessed the sins of the nation in prayer, inciting the angel Gabriel to visit and deliver this message:

Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.<sup>2</sup>

### **Breaking Down the Daniel Prophecy**

In taking a closer look at the Daniel passage, one thing is clear: it is about the Messiah. We see that the term “Messiah,” or “Anointed One,” is capitalized. It is also clear that a formula of sorts is provided to calculate when the Messiah will appear. The difficulties come in interpreting the formula. One such difficulty is determining the meaning of “weeks,” which is used in a number of translations. (NIV uses the term “sevens” instead of “weeks.”) In ancient Hebrew, “weeks” had a number of meanings, which scholars can determine by the context. The context in the Daniel passage shows that “weeks” means “seven units.” Using this definition, we can calculate when the Messiah will arrive:  $(7 \times 7) + (62 \times 7) = 49 + 434 = 483$  years.

The prophecy further says that after the Messiah arrives, he will be “put to death and will have nothing.” The word “after” is very important. After the Messiah arrives, he will be put to death. Jesus’s crucifixion fulfills that prophecy.

We now know that the Messiah would arrive 483 years in the future. But does the prophecy specify a beginning date? The prophecy tells us: “From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.” So, who ordered this decree to restore Jerusalem, and when was it ordered? There are several possibilities, but the decree that best fits the evidence was made by the Persian king Artaxerxes to Nehemiah on March 5 of 444 BC (Nehemiah 2:1–8). (In this article, a number of biblical dates are used, all of which have been under debate by scholars for

hundreds of years. Harold Hoehner makes a strong case for each of the dates. For those details, please refer to Hoehner's book *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*.)

Before we can make some calculations, we need to know how Daniel's civilization counted time—by a solar year or a lunar year. A solar year has 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 46 seconds, or 365.2422 days. A lunar year has exactly 360 days: 12 months of 30 days. [A lunar year has 12 rotation periods, or lunar months, which equal 354.367 Earth days (12 x 29.53059). However, ancient peoples rounded off the lunar month to 30 days. Thus, their lunar year would equal 360 days (30 days x 12).] Since the lunar year was commonly used in ancient biblical times, it makes the most sense to use the lunar year in calculations.

We must also decide how to define the arrival of the Messiah. Do we use Jesus's birth date, the date he began his ministry, the date of his crucifixion, or some other date? The date that many scholars have accepted as the time of the Messiah's arrival is Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The reason for choosing this date is that this is when Jesus publicly declared that he was the Messiah. Before then, he told only select people, like his disciples, and he often reminded them to keep his identity secret. History chronologists have estimated that Jesus's triumphal entry fell on Monday, March 30, AD 33.

### **Calculating Gabriel's Formula**

Now we're ready to do some math to determine if Gabriel did in fact predict Jesus's arrival. We'll start by determining how many days are in 483 lunar years:  $360 \times 483 = 173,880$  days. Next, we'll convert those days back into solar years:  $173,880 \div 365.2422 = 476.068$  years. After converting the decimal part (0.068) to days ( $0.068 \times 365.2422 = 24.8$  days), the time prophesized for the Messiah to arrive comes out to be 476 years and 25 days.

Adding this number to March 5, 444 BC—the date on which the decree to rebuild Jerusalem was issued—brings us to March 30, AD 33, the very day of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Is this match not remarkable? The remarkable accuracy of the predictions in the prophecy in Daniel [assuming the estimates are correctly interpreted and accurate] supports the truth of the prophecy, which in turn builds confidence in the authority and reliability of the Bible.

<https://reasons.org/explore/publications/articles/was-jesus-s-arrival-accurately-predicted-in-the-bible>