



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Record of the Beginning of Jesus' Reign

Chapter Twenty-Three

INTRODUCTION

NOTE: In this chapter the issues of “resurrection” and “life” are discussed.

By carefully examining the exchange between Paul and the Sanhedrin we find a definitive explanation ... and it is not the explanation we get from the churches.

This is an interesting, and important chapter. Read it carefully.

THE BOOK OF ACTS is mostly a chronicle of the experiences of the Apostle Paul. A full two-thirds of this book – from chapter nine to the end of the book – records events in Paul’s life after he met Jesus. In fact, looking through the whole New Testament, we find that approximately two-thirds of it is from Paul ... not including the gospels. In the scheme of things, Jesus used the Apostle Paul, more than any other apostle, to communicate His will and His good news in those early years of His Reign.

As we pick up the story in Chapter 23, Paul is beginning what might be called “the second stage” of his ministry. The first stage was proclaiming the Reign of Christ; the second stage was defending the Reign of Christ.

We, today, can relate to this. When we learn the good news of Christ’s Reign we share it with our friends and acquaintances. That usually leads to former friends avoiding us, and people we don’t even know hating us. Then we find ourselves defending the good news, wondering why people reject it. When this happens we should remember the admonition of our Lord:

18. If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.

19. If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but I chose you out of the world. Therefore, the world hates you.

Jn. 15:18-19

10. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingship of the Heavens.

11. Blessed are you when people reproach you and persecute you, saying wicked lies about you on my account.

12. Rejoice and be glad for your reward in heaven is great; for thus they oppose also the prophets before you.

Mt. 5:11-12

In this chapter Paul is in a Roman tribunal, being accused of sedition by the Sanhedrin. The charges hit at the core of Paul’s faith. Paul believed in one God and one Christ. Paul’s king was not Caesar. His High Priest was not Ananias. Paul’s King and ONLY High Priest was Jesus. Thus, Paul’s defense of himself becomes a political matter and a defense of the Reign of Christ.

ACTS 23:1-5 PAUL EXPOSES THE HIGH PRIEST

And Paul, fastening his eyes upon the Sanhedrin, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God to this day.

But the high priest Ananias ordered them that stood by him to strike him on his mouth.

Then Paul said to him, God is about to strike you, you whited wall. And you sit in judgment of me after the law, and order me to be struck contrary to the law?

And they that stood by said, Are you reviling God's high priest?

Then Paul said, Brethren, I do not perceive that he is the high priest: for it is written, You shall not speak badly of the leader of your people.

AS YOU recall, the events leading up to this hearing involved a Jewish riot and the Roman police arresting Paul. The Roman captain summoned the Sanhedrin to hear Paul in hopes of getting to the bottom of the case.

So Paul began his defense before the Sanhedrin and the Roman captain. When Paul proclaimed his innocence Ananias became infuriated and commanded the guard to strike Paul on the mouth for saying this.

Paul's next words accused Ananias of being a counterfeit and a typical tyrant much like the high priests (i.e., judges) in American courtrooms today. Paul quickly pointed out that Ananias' order was not lawful. Paul said, "You claim to judge me by the law, and yet you ordered your guard to strike me in violation of the law."

Paul then calls Ananias a "whited wall." This was a specific accusation against the so-called "high priest." The term "wall" in ancient times was used as a figure to symbolize "law." God's law is described as a wall of protection around people who followed Him. Walls have gates, and the term "gate" was also used in connection to law. "Gates"

symbolized courts, and thus courts of law were held at "the gate" of "the wall." The high priest presided as the chief judge and interpreter of law at courts held at "the gates."

The term "whited wall" indicated a wall that had been painted over to cover up rotteness. White paint covered it up and made it appear good. In other words, a "whited wall" was not really what it appeared to be. Paul was clearly alleging that the "high priest" was not what he held himself out to be. He claimed to be a priest of Yahweh, but in truth he was not. And since he was not God's high priest it was not unlawful for Paul to "speak badly" of him.

Actually, the man was a high priest, but not of Yahweh. He was a high priest in the Judeo/Babylonian religion that had supplanted the true faith of Israel. The Jewish religious establishment that had taken over Jerusalem was based upon Zoroastrian/Babylonian teachings, and was not the faith given to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. By the same token, the god of the Jewish religious establishment was a Babylonian god ... not Yahweh.

Paul replied to Ananias, the Jewish/Babylonian high priest, "God

is about to strike you."

Someone standing nearby asked Paul if he realized he was reviling the mighty and most reverend high priest of God. Paul replied, "I do not perceive that he is the high priest."

Because of the way this verse has been mistranslated in the KJV, and due to false church teaching, people misconstrue this statement to imply that Paul was caught in a mistake and thus issued his apology and disclaimer. They portray a contrite Paul replying, "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't realize that this man was the High Priest."

But Paul did no such thing.

It is ludicrous to think that Paul was unaware of this man's rank in the Sanhedrin. That would be as unlikely as an attorney being unaware of the judge or the opposing attorney in a courtroom. Who could imagine that Paul hadn't noticed the high priest's robes, or his ritualistic entrapments, or that he stood or sat in the conspicuous high priest position. This man certainly did not hide or disguise the fact that he was the high priest. He spoke as the high priest, giving orders, etc. It's just not possible that Paul would have been oblivious to all this.

Thus, Paul was alleging that Ananias was NOT God's high priest. After carefully reading these verses, you can't logically conclude that Paul was surprised and contrite. Being an astute man, Paul knew very well that the man strutting before him was the high priest. Paul's remark was most definitely a sarcastic response calculated to convey his point that the man was nothing more than a lawless high priest of a heathen religion.

More importantly, Paul was making a point. The point was that Paul had a different High Priest: Jesus. Could Paul accept a Jewish Pharisee high priest? No! Can we today accept another high priest? No!

We have only one High Priest. That one is Jesus.

The man who stood before Paul, calling himself a high priest, was NOT God's high priest. He was the high priest of the heathen Jewish establishment in Jerusalem. Of

course, that Jewish establishment in Jerusalem at that time was not the same establishment God gave Moses, although the Pharisees claimed that it was. First-century Jerusalem was a product of Zoroaster, not of Moses.

By the same token, high priests still flourish today - in churches, in governments. Yes, Reverends, Priests, Congressmen, Judges all stand in the place of, and demand to be treated as, "high priests." Paul did not acknowledge the heathen high priest. By his sarcastic remark, Paul said, in essence, "No, I'm not reviling God's high priest! I'm reviling a pagan counterfeit!"

QUESTION: Are you saying Pastors are not sanctioned by God? And are you also saying we should not have leaders to guide us in accordance with the Bible, God's Word? Don't we need priests of a higher caliber devoted to the study of theology to bridge the gap between us and God?

ACTS 23:6-8 THE SANHEDRIN AND "THE RESURRECTION"

But Paul, knowing that the one part was Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, cried out in the Sanhedrin, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I am on trial because of the hope and raising of the dead.

Because he said this, the Pharisees and the Sadducees took stands, and the multitude was split.

For the Sadducees say there is no raising, neither messenger, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess them all.

WHAT happens now is an interesting exchange. Those with eyes that see and ears that hear will learn something from this.

Paul announced clearly that the issue at hand, for which he was on trial, was "the hope and raising of the dead." Paul was on trial before the Sanhedrin because he had been teaching that the dead were being raised. Few people actually stop to analyze this.

There were two factions of Jewry in the Sanhedrin. One faction was Sadducee; and the other faction was Pharisee. And even though they were both Jewish, there were differences in their doctrines - like two different

churches. The Pharisees taught the dead would be raised at some future date, and the Sadducees believed that the dead would not be raised.

Paul said the issue at hand was about the raising of the dead. He spoke these words to the Sanhedrin knowing it would incite conflict between the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

Pharisees were generally more superstitious than Sadducees. Pharisees were big into Angelology and Demonology. They believed that demonic or angelic spirit beings were behind nearly every event that occurred. Those beliefs were common in Babylon, and were carried with them to Jerusalem. The

Sadducees, however, leaned toward politics. Thus, the Pharisees were into religious priestcraft, and the Sadducees were into political priestcraft.

Paul pitted them against one another in an effort to distract them and weaken their resolve. Further, Paul knew that neither the Sadducees nor the Pharisees wanted to discuss this issue publicly.

Now, here's the interesting part. Think for a moment on this. The Pharisees believed in a "raising of the dead." Why then was Paul on trial for proclaiming a "raising of the dead"? Why would the Pharisees condemn Paul for proclaiming this if they already believed it?

In the past, I attended churches, went to seminary, and pastored churches for several years. All these led me to think that Paul and the Pharisees had similar beliefs regarding the “raising of the dead” (the churches call it “resurrection”). This glaring contradiction went unnoticed by me for several years.

Winston Churchill is quoted as having said, “*Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened.*” Nowhere is this truer than in the churches.

Think about it. Paul was teaching “the hope and raising of the dead,” and the Pharisees considered this blasphemy. Why? How many times have people read this in the Scriptures without noticing the implication?

The only feasible reason for the Pharisees’ animosity on this issue was that “the raising” that Paul proclaimed was a different “raising.” Otherwise, why would the Pharisees object?

Following this logic, we must now ask ourselves what sort of “raising” have we believed? Have we believed the Biblical “raising,” or have WE believed the Pharisees’ doctrine of “the resurrection”? They are not the same!

How have WE interpreted this blessed event of which Paul spoke? Have you misunderstood Paul’s teaching about “the raising of the dead”? This is an important and basic question.

Notice I am referring to two different terms. The Bible speaks of “the raising,” but the churches speak of “the resurrection.” These terms are NOT interchangeable. They do not mean the same thing. So, which is right? With the help of a dictionary and a lexicon we can get to the bottom of this quickly.

The actual Greek word in question is “*anastasis,*” which means, “raise up.” But most English Bibles translate it as “resurrection.” “Resurrection” means “raise again.” Literally, to “raise to your former state.” “Resurrection” implies a dead man being restored to his former mortal life. But, that is neither the term nor the concept for which the Sanhedrin wanted Paul killed. The actual term was “raise up” – not “resurrect.”

The term “raised” signifies something higher than restoration. Being RAISED means a move to a higher state, not merely reclaiming a former state. “The raising” for which Paul was being persecuted was one that raised men higher, not one that merely restored (returned) them to where they were before.

When church-hired translators inserted the word “resurrection” to replace the word “raising,” an essential element of truth was lost, and English readers of the Bible were blinded to the fact that Paul taught a different “raising” than was being taught by the Pharisees. The upshot is that millions of unwitting churchgoers have been robbed of a vital element of The Good News.

The Greek word *anastasis* means “raise up,” NOT “raise again”; not “restore.”

“Anastasis” is not a life restored. It is a life lifted higher. The choice to use “resurrection” instead of the correct word was a deliberate manipulation of the text of

the Bible to keep people confused and off track. In the first-century synagogues, as in modern churches, the true “raising” – “the LIFE” that Jesus gave – was covered up.

Jesus, John, and Paul taught of a present active LIFE, called “the raising.” It was also called “eonian life.” The Pharisees covered it up, and churchgoers have been blinded to it. Churches have taught basically the same lies the first-century Pharisees were teaching at Jerusalem.

The lies today are much the same as the lies back then ... and for the same reasons. Unregenerate man is lawless. He rejects God, he rejects God’s law, and he rejects the Kingship of Jesus. He prefers to think of Jesus far away in outer space, but with a promise to return at some distant future time. Thus, this doctrine leaves man with no hope for the present time. It takes away God’s power and gives it to a few men (like the Sanhedrin), and allows God only a future time slot in the plan of man’s world.

As former churchgoers, most of us have been brainwashed to think like Pharisees concerning the doctrine of “the resurrection.” As long as a man holds to this doctrine he will be blind to the “life” Jesus offers him. This deserves serious consideration!

The Book of Acts is about “the raising.” It is about “THE LIFE” and the phenomenon it caused at that time and place. LIFE is what Paul was teaching. LIFE is the theme of the New Covenant. Jesus came that we might have LIFE and have it MORE ABUNDANTLY (Jn. 10:10). Jesus told Martha that He is “the Raising and the LIFE” (Jn. 11:25). Paul received LIFE from Jesus (Acts 9). Paul taught LIFE (2 Cor. 4:10-11; Gal. 2:20).

John had a lot to say about the LIFE:

4. *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

(Jn. 1:4)

21. *For even as the Father is raising up the dead and making them alive, thus also the Son is making alive whom He wants.*

25. *Truly I am saying to you that the hour is come, and now it is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.*

26. *For even as the Father has life in himself, He gave life to the Son also to have in himself.*

27. *And He has given him authority to judge, because He is the Son of man.*

28. *Do not marvel at this, because the hour is come in which all that are in the grave will hear his voice,*

29. *And those that do good will go forth into the raising of life, the ones that do wrong into the raising of judgment.*

(Jn. 5:21-29)

1. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we observed, and our hands touched, concerning the communication of life.*

2. *That life was manifested, and we have seen it. And we bear witness and are reporting to you the eonian life that was of the*

Father and was manifested to us;
3. [*the life*] Which we have seen and
have heard, we report also to you in
order that you also may share [in it] with
us; ...

(1 Jn. 1:1-3)

God gives life to man. Not only biological life. He also gives man the capacity for higher life: spiritual life. This life was called holy spirit. Thus man was equipped to receive a higher life in addition to biological life. In this specific capacity (i.e., the capacity to have holy spirit) Adam reflected his Creator's image (Gen. 1:27).

Man has, a choice to honor the life given him by his Creator, or to not honor it. Those who do not honor it lose it. Adam lost it (Gen. 3). Israel lost it (1Sam. 8).

The society into which Jesus was born had lost that life. Israel had died spiritually, as symbolized by the "dry bones" of Ezekiel 37. She needed new life. For that purpose, God gave his Son.

Jesus offered LIFE to Israel; He infused LIFE into men. He infused LIFE into Paul. Paul was sent to testify of that LIFE, and of the NEW COVENANT KINGSHIP, and of its KING (Jesus).

The Pharisees murdered Jesus, covered up his message, and spent the next several decades chasing down and eliminating disciples and apostles of Christ (like Paul). They wanted to destroy evidence of "THE LIFE." The churches today are carrying on the Pharisee's work.

This new "LIFE" was referred to as "new birth," "holy spirit," "born of the spirit," "born from above," and "the raising" ("*anastasis*"). It was occurring in Paul's day. Paul had been "raised." Paul told people that he had been "dead," and was now "raised," and that Christ was offering life to the dead. It wasn't a promise of an event in the distant future – although that too was part of Paul's teaching. There is also a future raising that will transform man into immortality (I Cor. 15:19). However, the thing that the Pharisees did NOT like, was that Paul taught that the

dead (spiritually dead) WERE BEING RAISED TO NEW LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS.

Through Jesus, God was breathing life into Israel's "dry bones" (Ezekiel 37).

The Pharisees didn't like this teaching because it implied that their claim to truth was invalid. Not only did Paul's message explain a present active "raising," it showed that Christ was raised and alive, and that He was causing it. If "the raising" phenomenon was real it obviously validated Jesus (whom they murdered) as well as Paul (whom they were planning to murder).

Paul's message was undermining the power and credibility of the religious/political establishment in Jerusalem. The implication was this: if God raised Jesus to give LIFE to Israel, it meant Judaism (Pharisaism) was not the faith delivered to the saints. So, you can see why the Pharisees fought against the notion that "the life" (the phenomenon) was from God. They preferred to think of it as a political rivalry problem.

But just think of it. The "death" and "life" of which Paul spoke were NOT biological death and life, but rather spiritual "death and life." People were biologically alive but spiritually dead. Old Israel had died, and New Israel (the "manchild"; "New Jerusalem") had been born.

Thus the Pharisees denied and covered up evidence of the present "raising," and they maintained that a "resurrection" would happen sometime in the future. Paul's teachings, if left unchecked, could undermine their hold on the people.

To clarify ... people were not being raised to immortal life at that time. Thus far, Jesus is still the only man to have received immortality. The "hope and raising" (the "hope of Israel") for which Paul was being persecuted was "eonian life"; "life of the age" ... not immortal life.

In the book of John, chapter 11, we find some instruction about "the life." In other scriptures this "life" is also called "the first raising," "life in Christ," or "being born again." Several terms are used to describe

this "raising." In John 11 we find an interesting exchange between Jesus and some people who had only heard the Pharisee's version.

Lazarus had died, and Jesus was going to Bethany to comfort his family. On that occasion Lazarus' sister Martha had a conversation with Jesus about "the life."

11. ... and afterward He said to them (*the disciples*), *Our friend Lazarus is asleep; but I am going, that I may wake him out of sleep.*

12. *Then the disciples said to him, Lord, if he is asleep he will do well.*

Jn. 11:11-12

The disciples had known that Lazarus was sick. They commented that sleep would strengthen him.

14. *Then Jesus said to them plainly, Lazarus died.*

Jn. 11:14

Lazarus was dead. There is a great deal of confusion among religious people as to what is meant by "life" and "death." Ever since man began trying to second-guess God this confusion has been rampant. Our first record of this is in Genesis 3. Part of the Serpent's sales pitch in the Garden of Eden was a trick to get man confused about life and death ("*... dying you will not die*").

Some churches teach that "death" as merely a dormant state of existence. This doctrine is called "soul sleep," and basically teaches that man's essence (i.e., soul) does not cease to exist, but only goes dormant (i.e., sleeps) awaiting the so-called "resurrection."

Others teach that man's true essence is an immortal "spirit" that is temporarily confined inside a physical body. According to them, "death" of the body releases the spirit from the confines of his corporeal cage of flesh, giving him freedom to roam as an invisible "spirit being". They see "death" as merely a passage from one form of life to another.

You can see why people get

confused ... if at "death" one doesn't really die but only changes form.

Some of these people also believe that their "spirit" (or "soul") goes straight up to "Heaven" or straight down to "Hell" at or near the time of death. Either way they believe the true essence of a man keeps on living and doesn't really die – it merely changes form. One example of this belief is the reincarnation doctrine of Hinduism.

Atheists offer yet another answer by claiming there is nothing beyond biological life and death.

There are many variations of the Serpent's lie. Over the centuries the deception has spread and multiplied. But, for truth we must go not to the churches but to the Bible.

The Bible teaches that when a man dies he is truly dead ... in every way. Man is NOT immortal – neither his spirit nor his soul. The so-called "immortal soul" does not exist. It is a figment of pagan imagination. In fact, the words "immortal" and "soul" are mutually exclusive by definition. The term "soulish" is used in Hebrew literature (including the Old Testament) to connote "low" or "base" elements – hardly compatible with "immortality." And "spirit" is a motivation; a disposition. It is not a disembodied life form.

Herein we see the folly of teaching "resurrection" as opposed to the true "raising." At death, man ceases to exist as a life form of any kind – mortal or otherwise. After biological death, when God raises us out of our literal graves we will be NEW LIFE FORMS, not just restored life forms. That is why the term "resurrection" is not used in the Bible. It is not appropriate for either reference: it doesn't express "the present raising" to new LIFE in Christ here and now (i.e., the "new birth"), nor does it express "the future raising" when God RE-CREATES us as a new form of life immortal. You see, we are not talking about a "restoration," or a "revivification." We are talking about a NEW CREATION: a new form of LIFE. The term "resurrection" does not express it,

and those who speak only of "the resurrection" are not only mistranslating the word, they are missing the great picture.

Part of the reason that the confusion exists is because sometimes the word "sleep" was used in the Bible as a figurative expression to mean "dead." People who were dead were sometimes said to be "asleep" in the sense of lying down (the Greek word is "koimao": *to lie down*). It didn't mean that they continued living like a sleeping man in a dormant state. It was simply an idiomatic expression that meant "dead." Jesus understood that "dead" meant DEAD - not living, not sleeping, not changing form, but DEAD! When you are dead, you are not alive in ANY form! And Jesus said plainly in verse 14, Lazarus was not merely asleep, or changed into another life form. He had died.

Jesus continues:

15. For your sake I am glad that I was not there. But let us go to him so that you may believe.

Jn. 11:15

Jesus had not gone to Lazarus to heal him when he was sick. But now something was going to happen to strengthen the faith of his disciples.

17. Then having arrived, Jesus found him [Lazarus] having been in the tomb now four days.

20. Then Martha, as she heard that Jesus was coming, met him, but Mary was sitting in the house.

21. Therefore Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died.

22. But I know even now that as many things as you ask of God, He will give to you.

23. Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise up.

24. Martha said to him, I know that he will rise up in the raising at the last day.

Jn. 11:17-24

Martha didn't understand what Jesus meant. She was repeating the Pharisee's resurrection doctrine. She assumed that future raising was the only raising. But Jesus gave her another answer that didn't fit the futurist paradigm.

For those with eyes to see and ears to hear, the whole issue is masterfully summed up and answered in Jesus' response to Martha. It was the reason for Paul's trouble with the Sanhedrin. This is the GREAT TRUTH about THE LIFE that Paul was proclaiming, and that the Pharisees feared:

25. Jesus said to her, I am the raising, and the life: he that is believing in me though he were dead, he will live.

Jn. 11:25

No doubt these words were hard for Martha to grasp. Jesus was teaching about New Covenant LIFE, and he was about to give a demonstration that would symbolize the LIFE that was flowing through Him into men, giving them new life by the spirit of God. Men who had been "dead in their trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) were being raised to new life in Christ. In other words, people who had been spiritually dead were receiving EONIAN LIFE and faith in Jesus. Jesus was going to use Lazarus as a figurative example. He was about to resurrect Lazarus back to his former state, but the lesson was about a GREATER LIFE that day.

If you doubt this explanation, and prefer to stick with the churches' paradigm of "resurrection," then you must explain how a dead man can believe in Jesus Christ. That is what the verse would indicate if you take it to mean a physical "resurrection." Read it again: "... he that is believing in me, though he were dead he will live." This kind of "dead" man can be taught to believe in Christ. This would have been impossible of men who were biologically "dead." However, if He was referring to men who were "dead in trespasses and sins" (i.e., alive biologically but dead spiritually) then it was possible. They

could learn to believe and repent. It would have made sense.

Now, if the Pharisees' physical resurrection was the point of all this, Jesus would have said "You are right, Martha ... Lazarus WILL resurrect on the last day." But Jesus did NOT say that, because it was NOT the point! Besides, He did not use the word "resurrect" (i.e., "raise again). He used the word "anastasis" ("raise up").

He said, "No, Martha, the RAISING and the LIFE are here, now. I am the RAISING and the LIFE! Through Me, men who were spiritually dead will LIVE!"

As an empirical demonstration of his power to give "life," Jesus raised Lazarus back to mortal life (a true "resurrection"). Lazarus returned to his mortal life, lived for some years, and died again later. Of course, it is understood that he will yet be "raised" in the great future raising to life immortal.

But Lazarus' biological death and resurrection was not the point of Jesus' reply to Martha! Jesus was making a point about the present eonian life. He was teaching Martha an important theological concept: a concept lost to most people today due to the Pharisees and the churches.

The Jews were accusing Paul of blasphemy because they didn't like him teaching the same "raising" that Jesus taught. Jesus said "I am (NOW) the raising and the life: he that is (NOW) believing in me, though he were dead, he will live (in this age)." It's hard to ignore the fact that the entire sentence deals with something that was occurring right then. And it is hard to ignore the fact that this sentence doesn't fit the doctrine of the Pharisees and the churches.

This doctrine of a present spiritual raising is absolutely essential to understanding the Gospel of Christ's Reign. And, at the same time, this message was hated and opposed by the Pharisees who wanted to crucify Paul.

Continuing in verse 26:

26. *And for this age, everyone living and believing in me does not die. Do you*

believe this?

Jn. 11:26

Now that's an important statement! If it refers to biological life and biological death it would mean that nobody has believed in Jesus, because up to now no man (except Jesus) has ever escaped death. All men, including these apostles who heard and believed the Lord Jesus Christ and His teachings, have died. They are all dead. And yet Jesus said, "... *everyone living and believing in me does not die.*"

What was Jesus talking about? Churches explain it away by saying He was using some form of expression wherein He meant that a time would come in the very-distant future when those who have believed in Him would acquire a life that would not end. But an honest examination of Jesus' statement makes the church explanation unacceptable.

There is only one possible answer. Jesus was talking about something other than biological "life."

He was talking about spiritual life and spiritual death: the difference between those who had eonian life and those who didn't have it. He was talking about LIFE that was being added to biological men. Jesus was giving "life" to them. The "life" (spirit) was changing them, giving them an awareness; a higher mentality and a greater purpose. That was "the raising" proclaimed by Paul.

Because of that raising, Paul was on trial for his biological life.

The Pharisees hated both Jesus and Paul for this teaching, and because of the "raising" phenomenon that was occurring. The same is true today, in the sense that the churches hate us who teach this truth. They prefer to stay in the Pharisees' "resurrection" paradigm.

It is also symptomatic of another problem. In Revelation 20 we find mention of a "first raising." By calling it "the first raising" it seems to indicate there are more than one. Thus, we assume there is a "second raising," although that exact wording is not found in the Bible. We do find

mention of a "second death," but no "second raising." Nonetheless, a second is definitely implied.

The churches take this to mean two future physical resurrections – one at the beginning of a so-called Millennium, and another at the end of it. Thus, churches misinterpret the spiritual raising that Paul taught. They fail to understand that it was "the new birth" or "being born again" that has always been the great feature of the New Covenant. Consequently, this has contributed to their blindness toward the present Kingship and the present Reign of Christ. The churches reject the idea of a present-active King with a present-active Reign. They always put it off until the future: always future. They go their merry way and give the world over to men and a mythical "Satan" (whom they call "the god of this world"), and they put Jesus off until sometime in the future. Thus, they deny their King and his Reign.

QUESTION: Don't you believe in a physical resurrection? And if you say these verses which we have always understood to indicate a future physical resurrection are instead an on-going "spiritual" resurrection, then what Bible verses are left to prove that there is a physical resurrection at all?

QUESTION: How can you imply that angels and spirits are superstitions and pagan ideas when their existence and actions are discussed in the Bible?

ACTS 23:9-11 PAUL'S STRATEGY SUCCEEDS

And there arose a great outcry: and some of the scribes that were part of the Pharisees stood up and fought through [the crowd], saying, We find nothing bad in this man: but perhaps a spirit or a messenger spoke to him.

But so much contention broke out that the captain feared lest Paul should be torn in two by them. So he commanded the soldiers to go down and take him from their midst, and bring him back into the headquarters.

And the following night the Lord came to him, and said, Take courage: for as you testified about me in Jerusalem, thus you must also bear witness in Rome.

PAUL introduced the issue of “the raising” before the Sanhedrin and that had its intended effect. His strategy revived the contention and mania among the Sanhedrin and forced the Roman captain to rescue him for his own safety.

So Paul was kept in Roman custody to protect him from the maniacal Jewish mob which might have, literally, ripped him to pieces.

That night, in jail, Paul received encouragement from Jesus who spoke to him, telling him to not lose faith and that there were more things for him to do. Paul learned that this controversy would lead him all the way to Rome to bear witness of Christ's Reign before the rulers of the Roman world.

QUESTION: Do you believe Jesus appears to people today as He appeared to Paul while he was being held in Roman custody? Does He appear to you, a minister of God's word? Could He appear to someone like me?

The reason I ask this is because the Bible is difficult to understand. People interpret the Bible any way they want, and doctrines become contradictory and confusing. Wouldn't it be better if we could physically see Jesus and talk IN PERSON to Him to find out directly from Him what we should do in this world?

ACTS 23:12-35 CONSPIRACY & VIOLENCE AGAINST THE REIGN OF CHRIST

And when it was day, the Jews bound themselves together under a vow, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

And there were more than forty who made this vow;

And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have sworn ourselves under a vow, to eat nothing until we kill Paul.

Now therefore you notify the Sanhedrin along with the captain that he should bring him [Paul] down to you, as though you would inquire to know more accurately concerning him: and we, before he comes near, will be ready to kill him.

But when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the (Roman) headquarters and reported to Paul.

Then Paul called one of the centurions to him, and said, Take this young man to the commander: for he has something to report to him.

Therefore, having taken him to the captain, he said, Paul the prisoner called me to him, and asked me to bring this young man to you, who has something to say to you.

Then the captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside to his own quarters, and asked him, What is that you have to report to me?

And he said, The Jews have conspired to get you to bring down Paul tomorrow into the Sanhedrin, as though they would inquire more accurately concerning him.

But do not let yourself be persuaded by them: for over forty of them lie in wait for him, who have sworn themselves with an oath to neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now they are

ready, waiting for a commitment from you.

So the captain then released the young man, having charged him, Tell no one that you have showed these things to me.

And having called two centurions to him, he said, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen, at the third hour of the night;

And provide them animals (mounts) that, having set Paul upon, they might bring him safe to Felix the governor.

And he wrote a letter having this form:

Claudius Lysias, to the most mighty governor Felix, Greeting:

This man was seized by the Jews, and was about to be killed by them. I came upon them with soldiers, and took him, having learned that he is Roman.

And wishing to understand fully the cause of their accusations against him, I brought him down to their Sanhedrin:

Whom I found to be accused of questions of their own law, but of no charges worthy of death or of bonds.

And when a future plot against the man was disclosed to me, that very hour I sent him to you, and charged his accusers to speak to you about him.

Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and led him by night to Antipatris.

The horsemen, having gone with him, returned to the headquarters the next day.

But, having entered Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and presented Paul to him.

Who, having read the letter, inquired what province he was from, and ascertained that he was from Cilicia;

I will thoroughly hear you, he said, when your accusers are here. And he commanded that he be guarded in Herod's judgment hall.

THE Sanhedrin had been trying to get rid of Paul. They even conspired to assassinate him. This is the common method whereby political and religious powers “work out” their problems. Deceit and murder are the tools of their trade.

This is business as usual in politics and religion. We regularly see political crime and cover-up – more than we care to think about. If we read the Book of Acts accurately we should be equipped to understand the science of religion and politics ... with all its dirty tricks and wicked schemes. Killing, plotting, lying, stealing: these are the elements of politics. This describes the political/religious establishment in Jerusalem just as it describes the political/religious establishment in America today. Anyone who does not realize that government consists of murder, plotting, stealing, and lying is naive. Dead bodies lie in the wake of most politicians in high office.

In Jerusalem, a conspiracy of over 40 Jews plotted with the high priests to assassinate Paul. This is politics-as-usual. For the people who prefer not to consider the existence of political conspiracies this may be hard to accept. Nonetheless, it is there in black and white in the New Testament. Conspiracy is a synonym for politics.

Fortunately, Paul's nephew happened to overhear this particular political plot and went directly to Paul who had the information reported to the captain.

After hearing the details of the plot to assassinate Paul, Claudias Lysias, the captain, immediately mobilized almost 500 soldiers! This was a serious predicament and a serious response! Obviously, the Jewish threat was greater than just the few men in the Sanhedrin. Otherwise, the Romans wouldn't have needed 500 soldiers to guard Paul. The captain penned a letter to Felix, the governor of the province, explaining his concern about the threat by the Jews.

He said he had found nothing in Paul that deserved death or imprisonment as demanded by the Jews. Thus, the Roman captain turned jurisdiction of this case over to Felix the governor, a powerful man with control over a vast area.

Later that night under cover of darkness the large deployment of soldiers escorting Paul moved out to

Antipatris, a town between Jerusalem and Caesarea where Felix was.

The Romans were more honest than the Jews. Rome was bad enough, but compared to Jerusalem it didn't look so bad. They actually deployed nearly 500 soldiers to protect Paul from hostile Jews who wanted to kill him.

Felix determined Paul was indeed a Roman citizen from the province of Cilicia, in Asia Minor. He took Paul into custody and said that he would hold him there until the Sanhedrin arrived with their accusations, and then he would hear the case.

This is enlightening history. We should learn from Paul's persecution. We may find ourselves in similar situations one day.

QUESTION: Is there any relation between these "Jews" and the people we call "Jews" today? Or were they simply a group of bad people? In other words, should we just assume that all Jews are like these who wanted to kill Paul?

PONDER THIS: Today, many people scoff at the term "Conspiracy Theory." The term has been so sensitized that anyone who gives credence to any conspiracy theory is automatically categorized as "paranoid," or "a kook," or simple minded.

Imagine someone back in Paul's day spreading the "theory" that a large number of Jewish thugs in league with the Sanhedrin – the highest political/religious council in Jerusalem – were illegally plotting to assassinate a political adversary who opposed their agenda.

To the Jerusalem citizen of that day this conspiracy theory might have seemed paranoid, kooky and unsound – possibly like the theory today that John Kennedy was assassinated by a conspiracy of powerful men connected with the government in 1963; or that George Bush was connected with international banking and oil corporations and shared common commercial interests with the bin Laden family, Manuel Noriega, and Saddam Hussein; or that Bill Clinton and friends conspired to kill people to cover up his White Water scandal and the massacres at Waco and Ruby Ridge, or that the Bush/Cheney neocons conspired to pull off the 9-11 attacks on the New York World Trade Center and then the U.S. invasion of several Muslim nations, etc.; ... or that the world system (the Beast) is controlled by a small number of international bankers.

The fact is, for the common people it is always more comfortable to dismiss conspiracy theories, and trust the established system (the Beast System).

Some things never change.

END OF CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

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

These lessons are produced by ACM, PO BOX 740, GRANGEVILLE, IDAHO 83530.

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. Paul was not haggling with the Jews over fine points of doctrine. He was fundamentally at odds with the established religion and government of first-century Jerusalem.

Paul was a representative of the Reign of Christ, and that put him at odds with rulers in Jerusalem. He was exposing the antipathy between man's reign and Christ's Reign.

Kingdoms were at war, and Paul was on the opposite side from the Kingdom of the Jews.

2. The question at stake was ... who has the right to make law? Paul was saying that only God can rightly make law. The Jews and the Romans both were saying that they had the right to make law.

3. The Sanhedrin was the council of priests in Jerusalem who made and enforced law. They were the gods of Jerusalem. Paul said that they were false gods.

4. The reason that old Israel had died many years earlier was because she had opted to recognize men as gods (lawmakers) like the other nations (I Sam. 8). This is comparable to the United States of America with her lawmakers in Washington D.C..

5. Jesus was given authority to raise the spiritually dead (Rom. 7:4; 8:9-17).

6. Paul proclaimed Jesus as King, and confirmed that the "life" phenomenon that was occurring at that time was due to Jesus ... whom the rulers had crucified.

7. The field of battle was set. Paul was fighting for Christ's Kingship, determined to "fight the good fight."

ANSWERS:

pg.3

The actual definition of "pastor"

is: shepherd; feeder.

Yes, God does give us shepherds to feed us with knowledge and spiritual strength. However, some think of a "pastor" as the leader of a church. A church "pastor" is not the same as a Biblical "pastor." Church leaders don't feed the sheep, but rather prey upon them.

True biblical leaders/shepherds are good to have ... and they have nothing to do with churches.

The only one who stands between us and God is Jesus. No man, or men, hold that position. Such a gap does not exist since Jesus took his place at the right hand of his Father.

pg. 7

a) As I've explained, the word "resurrection" (or its possible counterpart in Hebrew or Greek) is not found in the Bible. Instead, the Bible word is "anastasis" ("raise up"). So, no I do not hold to any doctrine of a "resurrection."

Rather, I believe in "the raising." In fact, I believe in more than one "raising."

One "raising" is what's known as "the new birth," "receiving holy spirit," or "eonian life." Another "raising" is scheduled for a time yet future, when all in Christ, both alive and dead, will be "raised" to immortality.

Don't confuse the pagan doctrine of "resurrection" with the Bible doctrine of "raising." Compounding the term only compounds the confusion.

Jesus and Paul did not teach a "resurrection." They taught a "raising."

In terms of immortality, Jesus is our only example thus far. But that could hardly be called a "physical raising." In his raised state He wasn't typically "physical" because He could walk through walls, disappear, and was no longer subject to death. There are greater physics at work here than man can identify as "physical."

Most of the scriptures that refer to being "raised up" deal with the "new birth": the current "eonian life." There are a few passages, however, which

refer to the future "raising" to life immortal – for example, I Cor. 15:19-28.

b) I don't imply that "angels" and "spirits" are always pagan ideas ... although pagans believe in supernatural angels and demons. I only point out that most religions define the terms wrongly, and misuse them. An "angel" is a messenger. Any messenger. And a "spirit" is a motivation. Any motivation. Use the terms correctly and they have real meaning and significance.

pg. 8

I cannot affirm that Jesus has appeared visually to anyone lately. I know of no modern appearances, as such. That is not to say it hasn't happened, or that it cannot happen. I do know that He has not appeared visually to me ... although His presence is with me always, and He protects me and reveals things to me on occasion. He certainly could appear visually to anyone should He decide to do so.

Jesus apparently sees this option differently than most of us. We tend to think his appearance would be beneficial. He obviously does not ... otherwise He would be doing it. His reasons are known to Him, even if not to us.

History reveals that physical appearances and contacts have not produced the results we might expect. Yahweh made direct contact with the Children of Israel at Mt. Sinai, and in the wilderness. They went on sinning, possibly worse than before. Jesus was known face-to-face in Galilee and Judea. Those who saw and heard Him murdered and abandoned Him.

There are clearly some elements to this question (i.e., being visible, or not visible) that we tend to overlook.

There is also a tendency of man to look for excuses to ignore Christ – i.e., "I can't obey Him because He hasn't communicated clearly enough." If this is your excuse, read Dt. 30:11-20 and Lk. 16:30-31.

The Jews of Paul's day were the forerunners of the people called "Jews" today. The Judaism of Paul's day was essentially the same religion that is today called "Judaism."

We must remember that the term "Jew" signifies one who is associated with a religion or culture. It is not a racial designation.

Also, any religion or culture – including churches – that oppose Christ, or attempt to replace Christ with a different deity, are rightly labeled "anti-Christ."

The tenets of Judaism are hostile to Christ. Therefore, adherents to Judaism are hostile to adherents of true Christianity. Adherents to Judaism murdered Jesus, and their virulent legacy of anti-Christ mentality and religious influence upon the world continues to this day.

While this is distasteful, the same can be said about churches that claim to be "Christian" but in fact are not. These profess a different "Jesus" ... one that resembles Mithras rather than the real Jesus.

Therefore, the question comes down to this: "What should we think of those who wish to dispose of, or replace, Christ?" Is it bad to be opposed to Christ? You answer.

The Church of Rome (Roman Catholicism) has historically persecuted and murdered men who attempted to make the Bible available to the public. In the 1300's the church persecuted John Wycliff, burned John Hus alive, and then dug up Wycliff's bones and burned them publicly. In the 1500's the Church of England (Anglicanism) carried on the tradition by burning William Tyndale at the stake. To this day, neither the Church of Rome nor the Church of England has repented or recanted these, and countless other, cruelties and horrendous sins. They obviously are still against Christ.

If Wycliff, Hus, or Tyndale had had descendants, how should they think of the Churches of Rome and England today? How should they think of Catholics, Anglicans, or Protestants who adopt similar beliefs ... beliefs that murdered their ancestors? How should we who benefit from the written Word of God today think of church organizations that hide God's word from the people? You answer.

Catholicism and Anglicanism stand for murdering sincere men who wanted to give God's word to the public. Jews (ancient and modern) stand for murdering Jesus who wanted to communicate God's word.

How should we think of Jews?
You answer!

18. Children, it is the last time, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, many antichrists have come to be; by this we know it is the last time.

19. They came out from among us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would have remained with us.

20. But so that all of them might be manifested that they are not of us, you have anointing from the Holy One. You all know.

21. I write you not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie comes out of truth.

22. Who is the liar if not the one denying that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antechrist, the one denying the Father and the Son.

23. Everyone denying the Son has not the Father. The one confessing the Son has also the Father.

1 Jn. 2:18-23

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