

## *Building on the Foundation*

### Chapter 1

I want to think about the introduction of Paul's revelation of Christ and the expansion that it brings to the scriptures. After Paul's ministry began and he went up to meet with the apostles in Jerusalem, they had a difficult time understanding his doctrine and accepting him as an apostle. In fact, we have Peter's testimony in his epistle where he said there are many things that Paul says that are difficult to understand, but at the same time, he acknowledged that they were just as valuable as the other scriptures. It would be good to take a look at what the difficulty was and try to bring that forward in our understanding of Christ in the New Testament, much of which Paul wrote. So, I want to do a brief introduction on Paul and take a look at some of the things that he wrote about his process in the understanding he gained of Christ.

In the initial view of Paul, he was raised as a Pharisee in a family of Pharisees. He was taught under one of the leading teachers of that time named Gamaliel, and he was the type of person who gave himself completely to whatever it was that he wanted to pursue. He said of himself in some of his writings that concerning the law he was without offense, so he gave himself very forcefully to the Jewish tradition. When the church began to rise in the area around Jerusalem after the day of Pentecost (when 3000 were added to the church in one day), Paul felt that the teachings of the apostles were contrary to the Jewish traditions. Since the Jews had a history believing themselves to be the people of God, Paul thought the teaching of the church to be contrary to God as well. As far as Paul was concerned, the apostles were the enemy of all that was God, and following the tradition of those that hated what God hated, he persecuted the church.

From the book of Acts, we know that Paul held Steven's coat as he was being stoned to death for being a Christian. Following Steven's execution, he went to the priests and the Sanhedrin to get further permission to persecute the Christians even more. Having these permissions to persecute Christians even unto death and hearing there was quite a group of them up in Damascus, he set out to go to Damascus in order to cause trouble for the church. I say all of this to begin the story of Paul's relationship with the things of the spirit of God because up until this time he had a pursuit of the religion that was based on tradition, but he had no relationship with God's spirit himself. So, he was on his way to Damascus and an extremely bright light appeared to him. The experience that he had was not only so strong that it blinded him, but he had a sense that there was a life that that light represented and that it was something that was far more powerful spiritually than he was. He didn't identify it as a thing; he identified it as a "who" or a person.

The book of Acts tells us that he said, Who are you, Lord, and he fell on his face. The response came, I am Jesus whom you persecute.

I want to identify this experience, not because we don't all know the story pretty well, but that the first encounter that Paul had with Christ was as Jesus after the resurrection and after the ascension. He did not see something that was still framed by the earth but something that was from far above all heavens. We know after this that he went up to Damascus – he had to be led there obviously; he was blind – and while he was there, the Lord sent one of his servants to heal him and to talk to him about his future. The one who was sent by the spirit of God to heal him was very worried about meeting this man because of his reputation, but after his eyes were opened (and it was quite a while prior to that happening), Ananias found a man who was converted and his intensity was as strong for the things of Jesus as it had been for the things of the law. The Lord already had twelve apostles whose ministry was to establish the church in the earth, and their testimony was based on the death and resurrection of Messiah and that Jesus was the Messiah and that he died for the sins of the world. The Lord was not primarily seeking to add Paul to that group for that testimony. As happens many times with servants that God calls for a particular purpose, Paul was separated into the desert of Arabia. We don't know much about that time. I personally don't know what there is in the dessert of Arabia: how he ate, what he slept in, who took care of him, or how he lived. We know that there were things that took place there and that he encountered the Lord by the spirit and the spirit of revelation revealed to him many things that had not yet been known.

I want to pick this story up in Galatians in the first chapter and read some scripture there for commentary, beginning in the 11th verse, But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel that was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my conversion in times past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many of my equals of my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. And this to me is the most important verse of the night because the 15th verse says this, But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his son in me that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately, I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

The contrast that is between the road to Damascus and Paul's experience that we've been talking about here in Galatians is that on the road to Damascus he saw something that was outside of him. But his testimony here in Galatians in the 16th verse says, God revealed his son in me. Let's take a look in II Corinthians the 5th chapter, and I'll start reading in the 16th verse, Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more after the flesh. What should be apparent based on what we are talking about and the scripture we read is that the Christ that we do know after the flesh is Jesus and he is not here. Paul met him on the road to Damascus, but he had the life that is Christ revealed in him while he was in the desert of Arabia.

What Paul was saying here was although there is a Jesus, the important thing for us is not that we know him as an historic figure but that we begin to understand that the life that is quickened in us when we are born again is Christ. What Paul was leading to in his gospel was to reveal Christ as hope in us. Probably one of the most stunning verses in all of scripture is when Paul concluded this transition from Jesus to Christ and stated that Christ in you is the hope of glory.