

Before leaving the discussion of James, let us affirm that he was, indeed, the brother of Jesus (see Mark 6:3). Some have desperately tried to make James and the other siblings of Jesus into cousins in order to prop up the unscriptural doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. However, the New Testament word for cousin is not used in regard to Jesus and James. Besides, there is no reason for Joseph and Mary to have had anything but a normal marriage, including sexual intimacy. Marriage is honorable, and the marriage bed is undefiled (Hebrews 13:4).

Because it was so crucial for the Galatian Christians to understand that he was a bona-fide apostle and that the gospel he preached was legitimate, Paul took the unusual step of confirming what he had just written with an oath: "Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie" (Galatians 1:20). The Jews were inclined to swear oaths in regard to relatively insignificant matters, and Jesus prohibited such (see Matthew 5:33-37). But this was no small matter, and Paul did not violate Jesus' teaching by using an oath.

Due to persecution from the Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jews) in Jerusalem, the brethren took Paul to Caesarea and put him on a ship going to Tarsus (Acts 9:28, 29). This was the will of God, who wanted Paul to evangelize among the Gentiles (Acts 22:17-21). Paul wrote of this in Galatians 1:21 – "Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia." Tarsus, Paul's home town, was in Cilicia (Acts 22:3). Little is known of his work in Cilicia, but who can imagine Paul not preaching there? Acts 15:23, 41 mentions churches in the region; Paul may well have planted them during the years he spent there. When Barnabas wanted Paul to join him in the work at Antioch in Syria, he "departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people" (Acts 11:25, 26). From Antioch God called them to the first missionary journey.

Everything we have seen thus far in this section supports Paul's contention that he is a genuine apostle of Christ and that his gospel is the true one. He didn't even go to Jerusalem for three years after his conversion, yet during those years he was preaching Christ. When he finally went to Jerusalem, he wasn't there long enough to receive an education in the gospel from Peter or the other apostles, or from James, the Lord's brother. (He didn't need it anyway, having received it by revelation from the Lord.) Then he spent several years in Syria and Cilicia, where again he received

nothing by way of education or authorization from the other apostles.

Now Paul further argues: "And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ" (Galatians 1:22). Paul used the "imperfect tense" for the verb "was." The imperfect tense indicates an action that was ongoing in the past. Therefore, Paul is affirming that he remained unknown by face. There were congregations in the region of Judea besides Jerusalem; the Christians in those congregations would not have known who Paul was if he had walked into their assembly. Since they didn't even know him personally, they obviously could not have instructed him in the gospel or done anything to make him an apostle.

Although they did not know what Paul looked like, those brethren "were hearing only, 'He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy'" (Galatians 1:23). "Were hearing" is in the imperfect tense just as in 1:22. They kept on hearing that Paul was preaching the faith. Preaching the faith is the same as preaching the gospel (see 1:11). When Acts 6:7 says that a great many of the priests were "obedient to the faith," that simply means they obeyed the gospel, which would make them Christians. Christ's gospel, when it is believed and obeyed, produces followers of the religion of Christ.

Paul (Saul of Tarsus) had formerly destroyed the church. "Tried to" in Galatians 1:23 and 1:13, NKJV, is italicized, indicating that the words are not Paul's, but have been added by the translators in an effort to clarify the meaning. "Destroy" means to waste; a kindred word is "sack," as we would speak of barbarians sacking a city (i.e. demolishing buildings, looting, burning, etc.). Previously, Saul had wasted the church (see Acts 9:1). But now he was preaching the gospel, exhorting people to obey it and become followers of the religion of Christ. Note that Paul was not preaching circumcision and Mosaic Law-keeping. Like the Judaizers in Galatia.

"And they glorified God in me" (Galatians 1:24). Though they did not know him by face, the Judean brethren knew Paul by reputation – and they heartily approved! The enormous power of the gospel was demonstrated in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, transforming him from a Christ-hating church destroyer into a great preacher and proponent of the religion of Christ. No wonder they glorified God! By contrast, the Judaizers in Galatia, some of whom came from Jerusalem, despised Paul for evangelizing Gentiles while refusing the legalists' demands to circumcise Gentile converts and bind the Mosaic Law upon them. Further proof against the Judaizers will be covered in the next chapter.

Review Questions (Lesson #4)

Answer T for true, F for false

1. Tarsus was Paul's home town and was in the region of Cilicia.
2. We know James was a cousin of Jesus because Mary remained a virgin for life.
3. Paul sinned by swearing an oath in Galatians 1:20.
4. Paul stayed with Peter for fifteen days while in Jerusalem.
5. All the brethren in the Judean churches knew what Paul looked like.

Give short answers:

1. Why did Paul take the unusual step of swearing an oath in 1:20? _____
2. Why did Paul leave Jerusalem so soon? _____
3. How does spending only a short time in Jerusalem help to support Paul's apostleship? _____
4. What is "the faith" that Paul (Saul) had once wasted (destroyed)? _____
5. What can we say with reasonable possibility about Paul's work in Cilicia? _____

Fill in the blanks:

1. Arriving in _____, Paul tried to _____ himself to the _____, but they were all _____ of him. Finally, with _____, assistance, he was able to visit the _____.
2. While _____ is mentioned as an apostle, Paul uses the same word he used in 1:6, meaning _____ of a _____ kind.
3. Though they did not know him by _____, the Judean brethren knew _____ by _____ and they heartily _____.
4. Paul's defense was not to _____ himself personally, but to _____ the one true _____ which he preached from being _____ by the _____ who advocated _____ and other elements of the _____ of _____.
5. "See" in 1:18 is used only here in the _____; it does not mean merely to _____ with the eyes, but to _____.

Galatians: Guarding the Gospel of Grace

Lesson #4 Further Defense of Paul's Apostleship (Galatians 1:18-24)

Prior lessons have shown that false teachers were casting doubt upon the legitimacy of Paul's apostleship. Therefore, Paul defended himself as being an apostle by divine appointment, not by human authority. Remember that his defense was not to magnify himself personally, but to protect the one true gospel which he preached from being corrupted by the Judaizers who advocated circumcision and other elements of the Law of Moses. That defense continues now:

"Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days" (1:18). The three years would be measured from his conversion in Damascus. Had Paul been dependent upon the apostles or anyone else in Jerusalem for his own apostolic authority, he certainly would have beaten a path to that city long before three years had passed! Instead, he "went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus" (1:17). Persecution finally drove him out: "In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands" (2 Corinthians 11:32, 33; compare Acts 9:23-25). Saul the persecutor had become Paul the persecuted!

Arriving in Jerusalem, Paul "tried to join himself to the disciples, but they were all afraid of him" (Acts 9:26). We can hardly blame them! Finally, with Barnabas' assistance, he was able to visit the apostles (Acts 9:27). Paul was particularly interested in becoming acquainted with Peter (some Greek manuscripts read Cephas, which was another name for Peter, see John 1:42). The Greek word for "see" (Galatians 1:18) is used only here in the New Testament, and does not mean merely to perceive with the eyes, but to become acquainted. Paul stayed with Peter fifteen days before persecution again drove him away. That would not be nearly enough time for Paul to have received his gospel from Peter.

Nor did he receive it from James, the brother of Jesus (1:19). While James is mentioned here as an apostle, Paul uses the same word he used in 1:6, meaning "another of a different kind." In what sense James was an apostle is not specified, but he was not one of the twelve. Certainly he was a key figure in the Jerusalem church (see Acts 12:17; 15:3; 21:18). But Paul did not receive his gospel from him.