

Part Eight of Dispensations.

There are a couple of things that I would like to point out once more about Paul's ministry. First, as we saw in **Acts 9v15**, Saul, as he was then known, was a '**chosen vessel**' unto the Lord, and the said Saul's ministry, as we see, was to cover three stages, namely it was to be '**to the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.**' That he was aware of these three different stages is shown by the fact that on three occasions he said that he would, from that time onwards, '**go to the Gentiles**'. His habit was '**to the Jew first**'. He didn't '**go to the Gentiles**' finally, until after his commission to the Israeli nation was complete. Even though Gentiles were being converted during those early days, the scriptures make it clear that the problems that arose amongst them – Jews and Greeks - centred upon the Law. Acts bears ample evidence of this. It was one of those '**reverse**' revelations, where 'the last shall be first'. As we see, he started with the Jews, witnessed to kings as the occasions presented themselves, and then, after the meeting with the Jewish elders in Rome, which meeting he called only three days after his moving into the house that was to be his prison, turned to the Gentiles – see Acts 28.

One of the interesting words in Saul's commission is the word 'must'. It is the Greek 'die' which is 'the third person singular active present' of a primary verb, meaning 'to bind'. It's very interesting when you follow it through – 106 times – for you begin to get the idea that there are certain **essentials** built into, or BOUND to, a ministry of God. This isn't surprising when we take a look at **Acts 9v6** and then **v16** where you find the word repeated. In Paul's case, what was **bound to him** was to involve much suffering. You are left with the impression that there seem to be **key points** that are vital in God's purposes. For instance, let's take the first three mentions we find of the word, the first being in **Matt 16v21**, which is quite a loaded verse. The ministry, we find, is settled. Jesus didn't just arrive and begin to preach. There is a definite plan to be walked out. But, when you think about it, it becomes obvious that the Bible cannot possibly contain every word that Jesus spoke during those three years. We dwell upon those that we have, we learn from them and seek to inspire others by them, just as we do with the things that Jesus **did**, but there must have been countless words and actions that we know nothing of. Yet the contents of v21 are a **MUST**. What He said when He chatted to His disciples in the evenings, may well have concerned things that happened during the day. I don't suspect the Lord of chit-chat, but I can imagine some lassitude in His leisure times. But, Jerusalem, the elders, being killed and the resurrection, were a MUST. If we pursue this portion to vv's 24 & 5, we see a piece of advice that explains a great deal about the state of the 'world church' throughout the centuries. There are a lot of us who are 'travelling light'. Not too many 'crosses' to be seen!

Next we find our word in **Matt 17v10**, and as we read through to the end of v13, we note that that 'sign' was also 'killed off' by Satan. So, we note a definite sequence of events and each **must** take its place. The third is in **Matt 24v6**, where we find that the full harvest begins to manifest. Satan's kingdom is 'fruiting' and it's a 'harvest of death' that is coming forth. This is what we find in those first three mentions – you are aware of that law? – and it is a necessary MUST in the **Justice** of God, as we shall see a little further on. Each of these is a definite signpost – but that's another study. However, don't miss a very important part in each of these first three mentions, and that is that they all involve some of God's people being killed. What these scriptures do for us, is open up the fact that, like Saul's new Master, all those who would be called to

carry His Word concerning the New Life, would find that the message he/she had been given was also **bound to a 'must'**, one that there was no chance of avoiding if you intended to complete your path. Whilst the **'must'** would not always carry the need for your personal **physical** death, there would be the need for the 'death' of some of the parts of your normal life. Things would **have to be sacrificed** at times. After all, when you think about it, the New Life can only come via resurrection. Jesus fulfilled the vital bit of the actual dying, but the presence of the Christ within cannot possibly succeed without that call for sacrifice as occasion will require. Our time, comfort, possessions, must always be available when He calls. It is a 'must' in any true ministry.

Brothers and Sisters, don't ever let yourself be fooled by crowds. The word 'few' found in Matt 7v14 is not compatible with the word 'crowd'. The Devil can produce one of those crowds, to kill a ministry, at any time he wants. You don't think so? Then I'll refer you to the greatest ministry there ever was, or will be, and I'll read you a scripture, which you'll find in the **sixth** chapter of John's gospel. We'll take it from **v66**. Did you get that? The gospel of John – the beloved – **6v66**. Oh, I know, it's just a co-incidence, but let's read it anyway. When we read around this, so as to pick up the context, we see that, in effect, Jesus deliberately thinned out the crowd. As you read down to the end of that chapter, the Lord still had the Twelve who constituted one of the 'musts' of His mission, knowing full well that one of them was 'a devil' – v70. The fulfilment of the 'must' was imperative to the success of the mission. There has to be death, of necessity, in order for there to be 'resurrection life.' So, the world's idea of success had to be pruned off. God wasn't looking for numbers, he was looking for the basic 'must' group. Those Twelve – and I'm well aware that Judas was one of them – were one of the 'musts' required for Jesus to be able to speak forth two vital bits of scripture, namely Jn 17v12 and Jn 18v9. Why do I tell you that? To show you the truth about the crowd that left, as recorded in Jn 6v66. The world of today would say that He had failed with that crowd, but if they hadn't been 'given', He didn't have to fight to keep them. Those two vv's in Jn 17 & 18 show success, not failure. Who would ever imagine that a huge crowd of **'converts'** were nothing, **at that time**, but a fickle crowd who would be quietly marked by a 666! Yet, many of them would have been at the feast yelling 'Crucify Him, crucify Him'. It had to be that way. Yet, at the appropriate time, when those arms were nailed open on that cross, THEN there would be room for them all, for **IT IS NOT GOD'S WILL THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH**.

'Seasons' also play a very important part in all of God's timings, even though they may not at first be obvious. An early example of it is seen in God's explanation to Abraham about the possession of the Land – see Gen 15v16. They were not allowed to occupy it at that time BECAUSE, 'the INIQUITY of the Amorites is not yet full' or, to put it another way, they hadn't yet come to fruition as a people, or 'fruited' to put it even more plainly. The 'reason why' of this is revealed, in principle, in Matt 12v33. (This is the reference I made earlier to the Justice of God. The fruit of the satanic tree is always DEATH. God's 'justice' gives Satan time to 'fruit' and when the Second Man arrived, Satan proved his nature, in that he sought to kill the Last Adam too. It's that law of two or three witnesses again!)

We'll just look at three scriptures where these 'musts' are referred to in connection with Saul's life. The first is in Acts 20v23, and we'll take it from v22 ---- 'And now, etc'. v23 shows us that the 'must suffer' was set up ahead of him – the Holy Spirit telling him ahead of time - and that it was necessary in order to accomplish his course. The key to it all lies in the twenty-fourth verse, which, with our hindsight, we can fit

in with his 'chief of sinners' position. It was a 'had to be' situation. Our next move can be to 2 Cor: 11v23-7. And there we have a list of 'musts' that were just the **outward** things, as he explains in v28--=. The third is 2 Tim 1v11-2. With that 'mind', nothing would have stopped him from heading for Rome, where another 'must' would be fulfilled – Acts 23v11. Once that duty had been fulfilled, he had the further duty of closing down one ministry and of opening up the next. It was quite a short period of time later that God, effectively, made it impossible for the Jews to be fulfilled in their religion any longer, for there wasn't a temple to worship in.

End of Session 8. Wed: 21/7/10.