

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS 9

Ver. 1. *And Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter*, etc.] The historian having given an account of the dispersion of all the preachers of the Gospel at Jerusalem, excepting the apostles, and of their success in other parts, especially of Philip's, returns to the history of Saul; who, not satisfied with the murder of Stephen, and with the havoc he made of the church at Jerusalem, haling them out of their houses to prison, continued not only to threaten them with confiscation of goods and imprisonment, but with death itself. The phrase here used is an Hebraism; so in (⁴⁹²⁷¹²Psalm 27:12) *smj j py*, "one that breathes out violence", or cruelty; and this shows the inward disposition of his mind, the rage, wrath, malice, envy, and blood thirstiness he was full of; and is observed to illustrate the riches of divine grace in his conversion. And wonderful it is, that that same mouth which breathed out destruction and death to the followers of Christ, should afterwards publish and proclaim the Gospel of the grace of God; that he whose mouth was full of cursing and bitterness, should hereafter, and so very quickly, come forth in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ. And this rage of his, who now ravened as a wolf, as was foretold of Benjamin, of which tribe he was, was against the lambs of Christ, and the sheep of his fold:

against the disciples of the Lord; not against wicked men, murderers, and thieves, and other evildoers, but against the harmless and innocent followers of Jesus, and which was an aggravation of his cruelty: and being thus heated, and full of wrath,

he went unto the high priest; Annas or Caiaphas, who, notwithstanding the Jews were under the Roman government, had great authority to punish persons with stripes and death itself, who acted contrary to their law.

Ver. 2. *And desired of him letters to Damascus*, etc.] Damascus was the head or metropolis of Syria, (²³⁰⁷⁸Isaiah 7:8) And so Pliny ^{f456} calls it Damascus of Syria: it was a very ancient city; it was in the times of Abraham; his servant Eliezer is said to be of it, (⁴¹¹⁵²Genesis 15:2) and some

say it was built by him the said Eliezer; though Josephus^{f457} makes Uz, a grandson of Shem, to be the founder of it; whose surname is conjectured, by some, to be Dimshak, seeing that and Uz differ not in sense: and Justin says^{f458}, it had its name from Damascus, the king of it, in honour of whom the Syrians made a temple of the sepulchre of his wife Arathis, and her a goddess; after Damascus, he says, Azelus, then Azores, Abraham, and Israel were kings of it. Some think it has its name from blood, and that it signifies a “sack” or bag, or, as Jerom explains, a cup of blood^{f459}, or one that drinks blood; who says, it is a true tradition, that the field in which Abel was killed by Cain, was in Damascus^{f460}: but it seems rather to be so called from the redness of the earth about it; for some very good writers affirm, that the earth in the fields of Damascus is like wax tinged with red lead; so if it be read Dammesek, as it commonly is, in the Arabic language, “Damma” signifies to tinge, and “Meshko” is used for “red earth”; or if “Dummesek”, as it is in (~~12160~~ 2 Kings 16:10 *marg), “Daumo”, in the same language, is “permanent”, what always abides, and “Meshko”, as before, “red earth”, and so “Dummesek” is never failing red earth; or if it be Darmesek”, as in (~~13185~~ 1 Chronicles 18:5 *marg) the same with Darmsuk”, it may be observed, that the Syrians call red earth “Doro sumoko”: so that, upon the whole, this seems to be the best etymology of the word^{f461}, and the rise of the name of this famous city, which Justin calls the most noble city of Syria. It is said^{f462} to be an hundred and sixty miles from Jerusalem. Here might be many Christians before, and others might flee hither upon this persecution; and Saul, not content with driving them from their native place, persecuted them, as he himself says, to strange cities: and that he might do this with safety to himself, and with the greater force and cruelty to them, he got letters from the high priest, and sanhedrim, at Jerusalem; either recommending him to the Jews at Damascus, and exhorting them to assist him in what he came about; or empowering him to act under his authority, or both: and these were directed to be delivered

to the synagogues; to the rulers of them; for the Jews being numerous in this place, they had more synagogues than one. Josephus says^{f463}, that under Nero the inhabitants of Damascus killed ten thousand Jews in their own city: and Benjamin Tudelensis^{f464} in his time says, there were about three thousand Jews (Pharisees), besides two hundred Karaites (or Scripturarians), and four hundred Samaritans, who lived in peace together. Now to these synagogues, and the chief men of them, was Saul recommended for assistance and direction,

that if he found any of this way; of thinking; that were of this sect of religion, and either professed to believe, or preach, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah:

whether they were men or women; without any fear of one, or mercy to the other:

he might bring them bound to Jerusalem; to be examined and punished by the sanhedrim there, as they should think fit; and for this purpose he must take with him a considerable number of men; and that he had men with him is certain from (^{<4007>}Acts 9:7).

Ver. 3. *And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus*, etc.] Some say it was a mile from Damascus: though, no mention is made of his obtaining letters from the high priest, only of his desiring them; yet there is no doubt but they were granted him; the design of the historian, under a divine direction, being to give an account of the temper and disposition of Saul; and he having got them, set out on his journey in high spirits, and proceeded on with the same wicked intentions, till he came near the city; where he designed to open and show his commission, and execute his wrathful purposes; but he is not suffered to go into the city with such a Spirit:

and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven; which exceeded the light and brightness of the sun, for it was at midday, (^{<4033>}Acts 26:13) and so the Ethiopic version here inserts this clause, “and it was noon time”; which circumstance shows that the light was very extraordinary; and it was an emblem of that inward and spiritual light which was now quickly communicated to him, light being the first thing in the new, as in the old creation; and of that Gospel light he was hereafter to spread in the world.

Ver. 4. *And he fell to the earth*, etc.] Not being able to bear the light, and still less the divine glory and majesty which he perceived was present; and therefore, in great confusion, amazement, and fear, he fell with his face to the ground, and lay there prostrate and so did also those that were with him, (^{<4034>}Acts 26:14)

and heard a voice, saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? this voice was the real voice of Christ in his human nature, and who visibly and in person appeared, and was seen by the apostle; (^{<4036>}Acts 26:16, ^{<4038>}1 Corinthians 15:8) the language he spoke in was the Hebrew tongue, and he

calls him by his Hebrew name Saul, and which is doubled to denote vehemency and affection; (See Gill on “~~4023~~ Luke 22:31”) he knew him as one of his sheep, though straying, and calls him by name, and expostulates with him, wherefore he should persecute him in his members as he did; for the union between Christ and his people is so close, that what is done to them is done to him. There seems to be a considerable emphasis on the word “me”; “me”, who have been they surety from everlasting; “me”, who hath loved thee and given myself for thee; “me”, who have shed my blood, laid down my life, and died for thee; “me”, who am now at my Father’s right hand, interceding for thee, that grace might be bestowed upon thee, the set time being now come.

Ver. 5. *And he said, who art thou, Lord?* etc.] For he knew not whether it was God, or an angel, or who it was that spake to him; he knew not Christ by his form or voice, as Stephen did, when he saw him standing at the right hand of God; he was in a state of ignorance, and knew neither the person, nor voice of Christ, and yet his heart was so far softened and wrought upon, that he was desirous of knowing who he was;

and the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. The Alexandrian copy, and the Syriac and Ethiopic versions, “read Jesus of Nazareth”; and one of Beza’s copies, and another of Stephens’, as in (~~4028~~ Acts 22:8) whose name thou art doing many things against, and whose people thou art destroying:

it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks; or “to resist me”, as the Arabic version renders it; and which is the sense of the phrase; it is a proverbial expression, taken from beasts that are goaded, who kick against the goads or pricks, and hurt themselves the more thereby; and Christ uses it, suggesting hereby, that should Saul go on to persecute him and his people, to oppose his Gospel, and the strong evidence of it, in doctrine and miracles, and notwithstanding the present remonstrances made in such an extraordinary manner; he would find himself in the issue greatly hurt by it, and could not rationally expect to succeed against so powerful a person. This clause in the Syriac version is placed at the end of the fourth verse.

Ver. 6. *And he trembling and astonished,* etc.] At the light and voice, and appearance of Christ, and especially at the words last spoken; he was now pricked to the heart, and filled with a sense of sin, and loaded with guilt, and had dreadful apprehensions of his state and condition, on account of his past wickedness, and the present course of sin he was in: so persons

under first convictions “tremble” at the sight of their sins, which rise up like so many ghosts, and stare them in the face, and load their consciences with guilt; at the swarms of corruptions they see in their carts, which appear to them an habitation of devils, a hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird; at the curses of a righteous law which threatens with damnation and death; at the future judgment, and the apprehensions of divine wrath; and at the voice and word of God, which strikes terror, cuts them to the heart, and like an hammer breaks the rock in pieces: and they are “astonished” at their own wickedness and vileness, which they had no conception of before; at the sparing mercy and forbearance of God, who has continued them in being, and not sent them to hell, to be among devils and damned spirits; at the light around by which they see their sins, the plague of their own hearts, the insufficiency of their own righteousness, their lost state by nature, and need of salvation by Christ; and at the doctrines of the Gospel, so far as they have light into them; and at the person of Christ, and at his Father’s love and his in procuring salvation for them:

said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? he was willing to do any thing he should him to, whereby he might make satisfaction for the injury he had done him, and by which he might be saved; for he was still upon the covenant of works, as persons under first convictions commonly are:

and the Lord said unto him; this, with all that goes before in this verse, is wanting in the Alexandrian copy, and Syriac version: “arise and go into the city”; that is, of Damascus, as the Ethiopic version reads:

and it shall be told thee what thou must do; what was appointed for him to do, (⁴⁰²¹Acts 22:10) and there it was told him both what he should do and suffer for Christ, but not to obtain salvation; and this was done internally by the Spirit of God, who instructed him in the doctrines and ordinances of the Gospel, and externally by Ananias: in two of Beza’s copies, and in the Syriac version, it is read, “there shall it be told thee”, etc.

Ver. 7. *And the men which journeyed with him,* etc.] Out of respect to him, to keep him company; or rather to assist him in his designs:

stood speechless: astonished and amazed, they had not power to speak one word, nor to rise from the ground, and move one step forward; they were as if they were thunderstruck, and fastened to the earth; for this standing is

not opposed to their being fallen to the earth, but to their going forward, and only expresses the surprise and stupidity that had seized them:

hearing a voice, but seeing no man; that is, they heard the voice of Saul, saying, who art thou? and what wilt thou have me to do? but saw nobody that he spoke to, which surprised them; for it is certain they did not hear the voice of Christ, that spake to him, (^{<427>}Acts 22:9) or if they heard the voice of Christ, it was only the sound of his voice, but did not understand what he said; but the former seems rather to be the sense, and the best way of reconciling the two passages.

Ver. 8. *And Saul arose from the earth*, etc.] As he was bid by Christ, (^{<406>}Acts 9:6)

and when his eyes were opened he saw no man; neither Christ, who appeared to him from heaven, whom he had before seen, nor even any of his companions, nor indeed any object: the Syriac version renders it, “he saw nothing”; not anything at all; and the Ethiopic version, “he could not see”: when he opened his eye lids, he perceived his sight was gone, and this showed it to be real blindness; and which was an emblem of the ignorance and blindness he had been in:

but they led him by the hand; the men that were with him, perceiving that he could not guide himself, took him by the hand, and led him on his journey;

and brought him into Damascus; and now was fulfilled, at least in part, the prophecy in (^{<300>}Zechariah 9:1).

Ver. 9. *And he was three days without sight*, etc.] Without bodily sight; for otherwise all this while his spiritual sight was increasing, and Christ was giving him by his Spirit a full view of himself, his state and case, and where his salvation was; and a clear insight into the doctrines of the Gospel, which he is said to have by the revelation of Christ, whereby he was fitted for the immediate preaching of it:

and neither did eat nor drink; having no regard unto, or time for either; being filled with grief and sorrow, and true repentance for sin, and taken up in prayer to God, and employed in attending to, and receiving the doctrines of grace, he was afterwards to publish.

Ver. 10. *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus*, etc.] Who perhaps came hither upon the persecution at Jerusalem, or rather might have lived here some time; (^{40B}Acts 9:13) that he was more than a private or ordinary disciple of Christ seems manifest, from his being sent to Saul on such an, important affair; from his putting his hands upon him, upon which he was filled with the Holy Ghost; and from his baptizing him: some think he was one of the seventy disciples; some say he was a deacon; but it is certain he was not one of the first seven; others affirm he was a presbyter, and some report that he was afterwards bishop of Damascus, and died a martyr there; but these are things not to be depended on:

named Ananias; a Jewish name, the same with Hananiah, (²⁰⁰⁶Daniel 1:6) there was an high priest of this name, (^{42B}Acts 23:2) and it was a name in much use among the Jews; frequent mention is made in the Misnic and Talmudic writings of R. Hananiah, or Ananias:

and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias; by “the Lord”, is meant the Lord Jesus Christ, as is evident from (^{40B}Acts 9:17) who appeared to Ananias in a vision; the Arabic version adds, “by night”; perhaps in a dream, as the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph the husband of Mary, and called him by his name Ananias, to which he answered:

and he said, behold, I am here, Lord; in like manner as Samuel did, when a child, when the Lord called to him; showing his readiness to hearken to his voice, to do his will, and obey his orders, be they what they would.

Ver. 11. *And the Lord said unto him, arise*, etc.] Quickly, directly, immediately, from off thy bed; the case required haste and dispatch:

and go into the street which is called Straight; a street in the city of Damascus so called; the streets of cities were called by different names, to distinguish them as ours now are. So in Jerusalem there was the street of the house of God, which led to the temple, (^{150D}Ezra 10:9) and the upper street, in which idolatrous Gentiles, and such as were fullers by trade, dwelt ^{f465}; and the street of the butchers; and the street of the wool staplers ^{f466}: and this street in Damascus might be called “Straight”; because it might be a long straight street, without any windings and turnings, which might go through the city. Whether or no this was one of the streets which Benhadad allowed Ahab to make in Damascus, (^{12B}1 Kings 20:34) cannot be said;

and inquire in the house of Judas; which was in that street: who this Judas was is not certain, that he was a Jew appears by his name, but whether a believing, or an unbelieving Jew, is not known; however, he was Saul's host, and if this was the house he was recommended to from Jerusalem, or designed to go to when he set out from thence, it is very probable he was an unbeliever; but if it was an house he pitched on after his conversion, it is likely this Judas was a believer, and whether the same with Judas surnamed Barsabas may be considered, who is mentioned in (^{<4152>}Acts 15:22,32) however, at this man's house Ananias was to inquire

for one called Saul of Tarsus; or Saul "by name the Tarsian". So it is said ^{f467} of Bigthan and Teresh, (^{<1782>}Esther 6:2) that they were *μυυσρj ync*, "two Tarsians", perhaps citizens of Tarsus, as Saul was. Tarsus was a city in Cilicia, and which Solinus ^{f468} calls the mother of cities, and is the same with the Tarshish of the Old Testament; here Saul was born, and of it he was a citizen; (^{<4213>}Acts 21:39, 22:3) and therefore is here called Saul of Tarsus, or Saul the Tarsian:

for behold he prayeth: so as he had never prayed before; now he prayed with the Spirit, and with the understanding, from a feeling sense of his wants, for spiritual blessings, such as he had no knowledge of, nor desire after before. God has no stillborn children; as soon as any are quickened by his grace, they cry unto him; prayer is the breath of a regenerate man, and shows him to be alive. He who before was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ, now breathes after communion with Christ and them. This is said, no doubt, to encourage Ananias to go to him. The Syriac and Arabic versions place this clause at the beginning of the next verse, "for behold, whilst he prayed he saw", etc. the Ethiopic version has it not.

Ver. 12. *And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias*, etc.] Some read this verse in a parenthesis, and take them to be the words of Luke the historian; but it is rather a continuation of the words of Christ, telling Ananias, for his greater encouragement to go to Saul, that he had seen him in a vision, and had knowledge both of his person, and of his name, and of what he was to do to him; for in the vision or dream, he had been represented to him as

coming in; to the house, and into the room where he was:

and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight; without which he had been three days, and which he did receive upon Ananias's putting his hands on him.

Ver. 13. *Then Ananias answered, Lord,* etc.] Though Ananias knew that it was the Lord that spoke, and acknowledged his power and dominion, and expressed his readiness to obey his commands; yet there was a timidity in him, and which was the more inexcusable, that it should appear after the Lord had told him of the vision which Saul had had of him; and yet still he was fearful of putting himself into his hands, who had been so violent a persecutor; and therefore obliquely excuses himself, by observing what Saul had done at Jerusalem, and the powers he came with to Damascus:

I have heard by many of this man; which shows that Ananias had been at Damascus some time, and was not an eyewitness of the havoc Saul made of the church, only had the account of it from others; and these many who fled to Damascus upon the persecution, which Saul was at the head of; and being so, was particularly spoken of, and his name was well known, and was become infamous for his cruelty and barbarity;

how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; by entering into their houses with violence, haling men and women from thence, committing them to prison, and persecuting them unto death. Believers in Christ are called his "saints", because separated by his grace for his service, and sanctified by his Spirit, and to whom he is made sanctification; and because they live holy lives and conversations; all which is an aggravation of the evil done them, and which will be avenged by Christ in his own time.

Ver. 14. *And here he hath authority from the chief priests,* etc.] His fury and madness against the saints did not stop at Jerusalem, but he had received a commission from the sanhedrim to go to Damascus, where he now was:

to bind all that call on thy name; to take up all such persons and put them in bonds, and carry them bound to Jerusalem, whom he should find either praying to Christ, as God, as the first Christians used to do, and which is no inconsiderable proof of the deity of Christ; or professing the name of Christ, or were called by it.

Ver. 15. *But the Lord said unto him, go thy way,* etc.] The Syriac version reads, "arise, go thy way"; make no delay, nor any excuse, there is no reason for it; nothing is to be feared from him:

for he is a chosen vessel unto me; a choice and excellent one, full of the heavenly treasure of the Gospel, full of the gifts and graces of the Spirit, and so very fit and richly qualified for the use and service of Christ; and was *htdmj yl k*, “a vessel of desire”, or a desirable one, as the Jews speak ^{f469}: or he was, to render the words literally, “a vessel of election”; both an instrument gathering in the election, or the elect of God, through the preaching of the Gospel; and was himself chosen of God, both to grace and glory, a vessel of mercy, and of honour prepared for glory; and was separated, predestinated, and appointed to the Gospel of God, to preach it among the Gentiles; which sense is confirmed by what follows:

to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel; by “the name” of Christ is meant his Gospel, which is a declaration of his person, perfections, glories, and excellencies, of his offices, grace, righteousness, and salvation; and to “bear” it, is to preach it, to carry it about, spread abroad, and propagate it; in allusion either to the prophets of old, whose prophecies are often called a “burden”, which they bore and carried to the several nations to whom they were sent; or to the Levites bearing the tabernacle of the Lord, and its vessels, “be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord”, (^{2821b} Isaiah 52:11). Upon which Aben Ezra has this note,

“they are the Israelites, *hrwth yaçwn*, “that bear the law”;

but Saul was a chosen vessel to bear the Gospel; or to the sower of seed, (^{4906b} Psalm 126:6) “before the Gentiles”, or nations of the world; and he was an apostle, and teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity; the Gospel of the uncircumcision was particularly committed to him: and before “kings”, as he did before Agrippa, king of the Jews, and before Nero, emperor of Rome; and his bonds for the Gospel, and so the Gospel through his bonds became manifest in all the palace, or court of Caesar. And before

the children of Israel; the Jews, to whom he first preached it; but when they put it away he turned to the Gentiles, and afterwards, before the Jews, he bore a testimony for it.

Ver. 16. *For I will show him*, etc.] In vision, and by prophecy, either now, or hereafter; or by facts, as they come upon him:

how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake; such as weariness, pain, and watchings, hunger, thirst, fastings, cold, and nakedness, perils on

various accounts, and from different quarters, stripes, scourges, imprisonment, shipwreck, stoning, and death, of which he himself gives a detail, (^{<4712>}2 Corinthians 11:23-28) so that Ananias had no reason to be afraid to go to him, and converse with him, and do unto him as he was directed.

Ver. 17. *And Ananias went his way*, etc.] He arose from off his bed or seat, where he was, went out of his house, and on the way to the place where Saul was; he had nothing more to say, his objections were answered; there was no room to excuse himself, nor did he now desire it, but quietly yields, and cheerfully obeys:

and entered into the house; or “that house”, the house of Judas, where Saul was, and whither Ananias was directed, (^{<4491>}Acts 9:11)

and putting his hands on him; on Saul, in the same form Saul had seen him, in vision, doing it: and which was done, either as a prayer gesture; or for the healing of him, the restoring him to his sight; or that he might receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost; and it may be on all these accounts: and

said, brother Saul; he calls him “brother”, not because he was of the same nation, but because he was now of the same faith; because he was a regenerate person, and belonged to the family of God, and was of the same household of faith: and this he said, not upon what he had received from Saul’s own mouth, for he addressed him in this manner as soon as he came to him; but upon what the Lord had said concerning him; though it was indeed common with the Jewish doctors to salute one another with this name.

“When R. Jose ben Kisma was sick, R. Chanina ben Tradion went to visit him; he said unto him, Chanina, *yj a yj a* “my brother, my brother”, etc. ^{f470}.”

So Shemaiah called Abtalion his brother ^{f471}. And in like manner R. Eleazar ben Azariah saluted R. Ishmael ^{f472}. And R. Joshua speaks of R. Tarphon in the same language ^{f473}:

the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest; that is, who appeared to Saul as he was in the way to Damascus; not that Jesus was in the way, for he was in heaven, and appeared from thence to Saul, who was in the way: and he mentions Jesus by name, and this

appearance of his, partly to assure him of his mission from him; for otherwise he could have known nothing of his appearance to him; and partly to show the love of Christ to him, and though he had persecuted him in so violent a manner, he had a compassionate regard for him; as also to encourage and comfort him, who had been trembling, and astonished at what he had heard from Jesus. This same glorious person, adds he,

hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight; his bodily sight, which he had been without three days, by the imposition of hands:

and be filled with the Holy Ghost; with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, such as speaking with divers tongues, healing diseases, and the like; for as for the graces of the Spirit, and even Gospel light and knowledge, and gifts for preaching it, he had received these already.

Ver. 18. *And immediately there fell from his eyes, as it had been scales*, etc.] Which were little thin skins or films, like the scales of fishes, which were formed from the defluxions that fell from his brain, through the excessive light that shone around him, and the surprise he was thrown into by it: these, as soon as Ananias put his hands upon him, dropped off; which were an emblem and representation of the scales of ignorance, of himself, of sin, of righteousness, of the law, of the Gospel, and of Jesus as the Messiah; and of unbelief in him, and of pride, malice, and envy, and of superstition and bigotry, and of error and false doctrine, which, upon his being enlightened by the Spirit of God, fell from him:

and he received sight forthwith; his corporeal sight, which was an emblem of that spiritual sight he had also received: the word “forthwith”, or “immediately”, is not in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions, but seems necessary; and indeed, if it was not expressed, it would be understood; for as soon as the scales fell from his eyes, he must receive his sight: the Ethiopic version places it after the word “baptized”, in the next clause:

and arose, and was baptized; that is, after Ananias had appointed it to him, as his duty, had pressed him to it, and called upon him to submit to it without delay, (⁴²¹⁶Acts 22:16) And this shows that baptism was performed by immersion; for had it been done in any other way, either by pouring or sprinkling a little water, Saul might have kept his seat, and water might have been brought to him, and so the ordinance might have been performed; but he arose and went, either to a bath that might be in Judas’s

house, fit for such a purpose; for the Jews had their baths to bathe their whole bodies in on certain occasions; or he went to some certain place of water without doors, convenient for the administration of baptism, where it was administered by Ananias unto him. And this also may suggest to us, that only enlightened persons are the proper objects of this ordinance; such as have the scales of darkness, ignorance, and unbelief removed from them, and have a spiritual sight and sense of divine things: hence the ancients used to call baptism by the name of φωτισμος, “illumination”, and baptized persons “enlightened” ones.

Ver. 19. *And when he had received meat*, etc.] Which was set before him when he had received his sight, and after he was baptized, of which he had not tasted for three days:

he was strengthened; in body, being before very weak and feeble; not so much through fatigue of his journey, as through the fear and surprise the appearance of Christ to him, and his words, threw him into; as also through his fasting so long, and his continuance and constancy in prayer all this while, and the attention he gave to the divine instructions which were communicated to him, internally and externally:

then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus; who came from Jerusalem upon the persecution raised against them there; with these Saul continued some few days after his conversion and baptism, for quickly after he went into Arabia, as appears from (Gal 1:17). These disciples, with the new converts afterwards, it is highly probable, formed a church state in Damascus; Ananias is said to be the bishop or pastor of it, and which remained in several ages. In the catalogue of the council of Nice, which was held in the beginning of the “fourth” century, Damascus is mentioned as the seat of a church; in the “fifth” century a bishop of Damascus was in the council at Ephesus; and in the same century it was reckoned a metropolitan church in Asia; in the seventh century it appears there was a church in this place; and even in the “eighth” century, though the Arabians ravaged in those parts, yet still a church continued here for some time, till Ulid, the prince of the Saracens, took away the temple from the Christians of this place, and dedicated it to Mahomet; after which we hear no more of the church at Damascus ^{f474}.

Ver. 20. *And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues*, etc.] The Syriac version adds, “of the Jews”; that is, which were in Damascus, (~~Acts~~ Acts 9:2) from whence it appears, that he was immediately, as soon as

converted, qualified for the work of preaching the Gospel: nor did he confer with flesh and blood, or stand disputing and debating with himself and carnal reason, what was best for him to do; but as soon as he knew Christ himself, he preached him to others, and whom he always made the subject of his ministry; and particularly,

that he is the Son of God; the only begotten of the Father, the eternal Son of God, truly and properly God, of the same nature and essence with God his Father, and equal to him. His design was to assert and maintain the dignity of his person, which is the foundation of his office, as Mediator, and of all the wonderful things he performed: had he meant no more than that he was the Messiah, the sense would only be, that he preached that Christ was the Christ; but the meaning is, that he preached that Jesus of Nazareth, the true Messiah, was not a mere man, but a divine person, even the Son of God: he set out in his ministry, with the principal and most fundamental article of the Christian religion, that which Christ asserted, and for which he suffered, and which all the apostles, and first Christians believed. The Alexandrian copy, the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions read “Jesus”, instead of “Christ”.

Ver. 21. *But all that heard him were amazed*, etc.] Not the disciples that believed in Christ, but the unbelievers, as appears from their words:

and said, is not this he that destroyed them that called on this name in Jerusalem? they do not express the name of Christ, out of malice and ill will; which shows who they were that said these words, and were astonished to hear Saul preaching in this name, and proving him to be the Son of God, and the true Messiah; when it was but a little while ago he consented to the death of Stephen, made havoc of the church, wasted and destroyed it as much as was in his power, and persecuted unto death such as called upon the name of Christ, or were called by his name, he could find in Jerusalem: nor did this satisfy him, for it follows,

and came hither, that is, to Damascus,

for that intent, that he might bring them bound to the chief priests: whom he should find professing or invoking the name of Christ, or bearing it; now to see and hear him preach this same name, was surprising to them.

Ver. 22. *But Saul increased the more in strength*, etc.] Not of body, but of mind; his gifts and graces, and spiritual light and knowledge increased; his abilities were greater; his fortitude of mind, boldness, and freedom of

speech, every day increased: he got more, and new, and fresh arguments, by which he himself was confirmed, and he confirmed others in the truths of Christ. Some copies read, “he was more strengthened in the word”; either in the word of God, having a clearer understanding, and being more confirmed in the truth of it; or in speech, being more ready and powerful in speaking it.

And confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus; confuted them, and put them to silence, so that they had nothing to say for themselves, or against the truth:

proving that this is very Christ; by joining and knitting passages of Scripture in the Old Testament together, by producing and citing express testimonies from thence, and by comparing the prophecies and the characters of the Messiah in them, with Jesus of Nazareth, he proved to a demonstration that he must be the Messiah.

Ver. 23. *And after that many days were fulfilled*, etc.] This phrase is used by the Septuagint on (^{4021b}Exodus 2:11,23, 4:18) for a considerable length of time, for many years. The Jewish writers observe ^{f475}, that the phrase, “many days”, signify at least three days; for by “days”, in the plural number, two must be designed, and many signifies a third, or that one at least is added to them; but here it signifies three years, as it also does, (^{4180b}1 Kings 18:1) where it is said, “and it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year”; and such a space of time is designed by the many days here; for when the apostle had stayed a little while at Damascus, and preached Christ in the synagogues, he went into Arabia, where he continued about three years, and then returned to Damascus, where what is related happened to him; (^{4017b}Galatians 1:17,18 ^{4713b}2 Corinthians 11:32,33).

the Jews took counsel to kill him; being filled with indignation at him, that he had changed his religion, and from a persecutor was become a preacher of the Gospel; this they had meditated some time, and now upon his return to Damascus attempted to put their counsel into execution.

Ver. 24. *But their laying await was known of Saul*, etc.] Either by divine revelation, or by some friends, who had got knowledge of it, and gave him information, as in (^{4236b}Acts 23:16) and they watched the gates night and day to kill him; that is, the Jews, together with the governor of the city, and the garrison of soldiers in it. These all watched at the several gates of the

city, night and day, that Saul might not make his escape, and that they might take him, and put him to death.

Ver. 25. *Then the disciples took him by night*, etc.] The Alexandrian copy reads, “his disciples”; the disciples of Saul, such as he had been instrumental in making at Damascus: but it is not usual for the saints to be called in Scripture the disciples of any man; therefore the common reading is best, and designs the disciples and followers of Christ; who being concerned for the preservation of so valuable a life, took Saul in the night season,

and let him down by the wall in a basket. Damascus was a walled city; hence we read of the wall of Damascus, (^{<24927>}Jeremiah 49:27). And the house where Saul was, and which very likely was one of the disciples, was built upon the wall, as the house of Rahab was upon the town wall of Jericho; and as she let down the spies from thence by a cord through the window, (^{<40215>}Joshua 2:15) so the disciples let down Saul in a basket with cords through the window of the house, as appears from ^{<47133>}2 Corinthians 11:33. (See Gill on “^{<47133>}2 Corinthians 11:33”): no doubt, the disciples were directed by the overruling providence of God, in order to preserve the life of the apostle, who had much work to do for Christ in several parts of the world, and therefore must not fall into the hands of his enemies and die, his time not being yet come; and this shows, that it is lawful to make use of all prudent means and proper methods to prevent the designs of wicked men, and escape out of their hands, and preserve life when in danger; by which means Saul escaped their hands.

Ver. 26. *And when Saul was come to Jerusalem*, etc.] After he had escaped out of Damascus, in the manner before related, and which was three years after his conversion:

he assayed to join himself to the disciples; not to the private members of the church, or ordinary disciples, as distinct from the apostles, but to the whole society, as consisting of apostles and private Christians; for his chief view in going to Jerusalem was to see Peter; and the Ethiopic version reads, “to the apostles”: the sense is, that he tried either to get into a free and familiar conversation with them, or to become one of their body, and a member of the church. He did not return to the high priest from whom he had received letters to Damascus, to give him an account of the execution of his commission, or what use he had made of the letters he gave him, but to the disciples, against whom he had breathed out threatenings and

slaughter. Grace had made a strange alteration in him; those whom he hated, and was exceeding mad against, he now loves; they are the excellent ones in the earth in whom is all his delight; and whom he persecuted to strange cities, he now courts their company, and attempts to get among them; accounting it his greatest honour and happiness to be one of their society. It is the duty and interest of every gracious soul to join himself to a church of Christ, which consists of the disciples of Christ, as the church at Jerusalem did; of such who have learned Christ, and the way of life and salvation by him; who have believed in him, and have been taught to deny themselves for his sake, and to take up the cross and follow him, in the way of his ordinances and appointments; and to be “joined” to a church, is to become an open subject of Christ’s kingdom, a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, one of the family of God, and a member of the body of Christ visibly. The phrase is expressive of that strict union there is between the saints in church relation, and of that close and intimate communion they have with each other, and shows that their incorporation together is by mutual consent and agreement. And a great privilege it is to be in such a relation, having the grace of God; for such have the best of company, and the most refreshing ordinances; are in the greatest safety, being under the watch and care of ministers and members, of angels, and of God himself; and shall never be disfranchised, or become foreigners and strangers; they may expect the presence of God, fresh supplies of his grace, and even life for evermore, and need fear no enemy. That which qualifies for church membership, is not natural descent from religious parents, nor a religious education, nor mere morality and civility, nor even a constant attendance on the word of God, but faith in Christ Jesus, and a profession of it; and according to the order of the Gospel it is necessary that baptism in water should go before it; and these qualifications the apostle had.

But they were all afraid of him; knowing him to have been such an enemy to Christ, and so violent a persecutor of his church in times past:

and believed not that he was a disciple; or a true follower of Christ, but only pretended to be one, having some wicked design upon them in attempting to get among them: the reason of their not knowing anything of his conversion might be, because not only of the distance between Damascus and Jerusalem, and the continuance of the persecution in the latter place, which might occasion few comers to and fro of the Christians; but because the apostle, soon after his conversion, went to Arabia, where he had been all this while. Hence it appears, that the primitive churches

were very careful in the admission of persons into fellowship with them; as they could not bear them in their communion who were evil, so they would not admit any among them but such as they looked upon to be the true disciples of Christ: and this is a method worthy of imitation; and such persons who, before a profession of religion, have been either very scandalous in their lives and conversations, or notorious enemies to Christ and his Gospel, ought to be thoroughly examined into, and full satisfaction obtained concerning them, ere they be received into the bosom of the church.

Ver. 27. *But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles*, etc.] To Peter and James, the brother of our Lord, for no other apostles did he see at this time, (Gal 1:18,19). It is probable that Barnabas had been at Damascus, and had there related to him, the whole account of Saul's conversion and entrance on the ministry, which he gives a particular relation of, as follows:

and declared unto them, how he had seen the Lord in the way; he told the apostles, Peter and James, how that Christ had appeared to him in person, as he was on his way to Damascus:

and that he had spoken to him; and expostulated with him about his persecution of him in his members, and bid him go into the city, where it should be told him what he should do:

and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus; that he had used great freedom of speech, and had shown courage and greatness of mind in preaching Christ at Damascus, both as soon as he was converted, and now upon his return thither. Hence it is manifest, that previous to admission into a church of Christ, and in order to satisfy the members of it, and gain their assent to such an admission, there ought to be a declaration made of the work of grace upon the souls of such, who propose to be joined to it; as how the Lord has met with them, and shown them the evil of their ways, and given them repentance unto life; and how they have had a sight of him by faith, and have looked to Christ and believed in him for the salvation of their souls; and how they have embraced the doctrines of the Gospel, and have found much sweetness and comfort in them; and that from a principle of love to him, and faith in him, and with a view to his glory, they are willing to submit to his ordinances, and to walk in holy fellowship with his people; and such an account of Saul being given by Barnabas, who had had it from him; and this being, no

doubt, declared and attested by Saul himself, he was received into fellowship with the disciples: hence it follows,

Ver. 28. *And he was with them*, etc.] Peter and James, and the rest of the disciples; he lived with them, conversed with them, and joined with them in all religious exercises; which is signified by his

coming in and going out at Jerusalem; no one of the apostles or disciples forbidding or hindering him.

Ver. 29. *And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus*, etc.] He spoke the Gospel of Christ boldly, as it ought to be spoken; he spoke it openly, publicly, freely, and faithfully, not fearing the faces or revilings of any: the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions add, “to the Gentiles”; but this is not in any of the Greek copies: and disputed against the Grecians; or Hellenists, that is, the Hellenistical Jews; by whom are meant, not Greeks proselyted to the Jewish religion, but Jews who had been born and brought up in Greece, or at least had learned the Greek language, and used the Greek Bible; and so the Syriac version renders it, “he disputed with the Jews that knew Greek”; perhaps the same persons, of the synagogue of the Libertines, Alexandrians, Cyrenians, and of Cilicia and Asia, who disputed with Stephen, with whom he had before joined, (^{<406B>}Acts 6:9,10)

but they went about to slay him; he being an over match for them; and they not being able to resist him, but being confuted, and confounded, and put to silence, they were filled with indignation; and since they could not conquer him by arguments, they were for slaying him with the sword.

Ver. 30. *Which when the brethren knew*, etc.] When the members of the church heard of it, by some means or another:

they brought him down to Caesarea; not that which was before called Strato’s tower, the same as in (^{<408D>}Acts 8:40) but Caesarea Philippi, mentioned in (^{<406B>}Matthew 16:13) the Syriac version adds, “by night”, and some copies, “and sent him forth to Tarsus”; a city of Cilicia, his own native place, where he might be more safe, and also useful among his friends and acquaintance; (^{<402I>}Galatians 1:21).

Ver. 31. *Then had the churches rest*, etc.] Meaning not spiritual rest in Christ; this they had before, even in tribulation, but rest from persecution; not so much because of the conversion of Saul, the great persecutor of them, for his conversion had been three years before; but rather because of

his removal to other parts, the sight of whose person, and especially his ministry, had afresh stirred up the Jews to wrath and fury. The Alexandrian copy, and some others, the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions, read in the singular number, “the church”: but the several countries hereafter mentioned shows that more are designed: for it follows,

throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria; for by means of the dispersion, on account of persecution, the Gospel was preached in these several places, and churches gathered, and which shared in the persecution until this time, when they began to have rest; (^{<A112>}Galatians 1:22) (^{<A114>}1 Thessalonians 2:14) and were edified; or built up on the foundation Christ, and their most holy faith, through the ministry of the word and ordinances, and their mutual love and holy conversation; and had an increase of members, and of grace, and of spiritual knowledge:

and walking in the fear of the Lord; which was always before their eyes, and upon their hearts, continuing in religious exercises, and in the discharge of every duty, both to God and man. Not in a slavish fear of the wrath of the Lord, and of damnation for sin committed against him; for this is not consistent with their characters, as Gospel churches, made of persons who had received not the spirit of bondage to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, nor with their edification in faith and holiness; for “he that feareth is not made perfect in love”; (^{<A115>}1 John 4:18) which edifies; nor with the comforts of the Holy Ghost, they are afterwards said to walk in: but in a godly fear, which has the Lord for its author, is not of a man’s self, but of the grace of God, and is encouraged and increased by the discoveries of his grace and goodness: and which has the Lord for its object, whose name is holy and reverend, and is to be feared by all his saints: it shows itself in an hatred of sin; in a departure from it; in a carefulness not to offend the Lord; in withholding nothing from him, though ever so dear and valuable, he calls for; and in attending to all the parts of divine worship: and walking in it denotes a continuance in it, a constant progression in all the acts of internal and external worship, which are both included in the fear of the Lord; and it requires strength, and supposes pleasure and freedom. It is said of Enoch, that “he walked with God”; which the Targum of Onkelos paraphrases, “he walked in the fear of the Lord”, (^{<A116>}Genesis 5:22,24) the same phrase which is here used.

And in the comfort of the Holy Ghost: which he communicated by shedding abroad the love of God in them, taking the things of Christ, and

showing them to them, applying covenant blessings and Gospel promises to their souls, owning the word and ordinances, and making them useful to them, thereby leading them into fellowship with the Father, and with the Son. In all which he acts the part of a Comforter, and answers to the character he bears, and the office he is in: the love of God, which he directs into, and sheds abroad in the heart, refreshes and revives the Spirit of God's people; it influences and encourages every grace that is wrought in them; and makes them easy and comfortable under all providences, even the most afflicting ones: the things of Christ he takes and shows unto them are his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; which being applied, and interest in them shown, produce abundance of peace, joy, and comfort: the promises of the covenant, and of the Gospel, he opens and applies, being such as hold forth the blessings of grace unto them; and being exceeding great, and precious, and suitable to their cases; and being absolute and unconditional, immutable, and sure, afford them much pleasure and satisfaction: and the word and ordinances being attended with the Holy Ghost, and much assurance, are breasts of consolation to them: and "walking" in those comforts which he administers, by such means, denotes a continuance of them, a long enjoyment of them, which is not very common; for, generally speaking, these comforts last but for a small time; and also it intimates much delight and pleasure in them, (^{f476}Psalm 94:19) and so "were multiplied"; both in their gifts and graces, and in the number of converts added to them.

Ver. 32. *And it came to pass, as Peter passed through all quarters,* etc.] The Arabic version reads, "all the foresaid places", as Judea, Galilee, and Samaria; through which he took a tour, in order to visit the new churches here planted, fix pastors over them, and confirm the Gospel by miracles, which they had received:

he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda: a city which lay on the west of Jerusalem, and is said ^{f476} to be a day's Journey from it; and a day's journey were ten parsas, or forty miles ^{f477}: it was but thirty two miles from Jerusalem, and was a place famous for Jewish doctors; for which reason it is frequently mentioned in the Talmudic writings, under the name of Lod or Lud. Mention is made of R. Simlai, who was of Lydda ^{f478}, and of the chambers of Beth Nithzah, and of Arum in Lydda ^{f479} where the doctors disputed; there was a school here, of which R. Akiba was president ^{f480} here also the sanhedrim sometimes sat, since we are told that Ben Sutda was tried and stoned at Lud or Lydda ^{f481}; and here likewise they

intercalated the year ^{f482}, it being in Judea: this place was situated in a plain; so says Jerom ^{f483},

“they that dwell in Sephela, that is, in the plain, Lydda and Emmaus, which design Diospolls and Nicopolis, shall possess the Philistines.”

And with this agrees the account the Talmudists ^{f484} give of it,

“the country of Judea was divided into three parts, the hill country, the plain, and the valley; from Bethhoron to Emmaus was the hill country; from Emmaus to Lydda was the plain or champaign country; and from Lydda to the sea, the valley.”

Hence also we read ^{f485} of *dwl tl pç*, “the plain of Lydda”: and now Peter coming from Jerusalem, and the hill country of Judea, into this plain and champaign country, is properly said to come down to the saints there. So Quadratus in Josephus ^{f486} is said to come up from Lydda to Jerusalem. This place was near the Mediterranean sea; and was in Jerom’s time called Diospolis ^{f487}, and in the time of R. Benjamin ^{f488} Seguras; it is the same with Lod in (^{<1923>}Ezra 2:33, ^{<1675>}Nehemiah 7:37) The builder of it was Shamed the son of Elpaal, (^{<1382>}1 Chronicles 8:12). It was in the times of Josephus ^{f489} a village, yet not inferior to a city for greatness. It is now called S. Georgia. And here it seems some saints or Christians dwelt, whom Peter, among the rest, visited; and which is mentioned for the sake of the miracle he there wrought, next related. And these saints at Lydda very likely were converted under Philip’s ministry, as he passed from Azotus to Caesarea, (^{<408>}Acts 8:40) and, it may be, were in a church state, or, however, were afterwards. Zenas the lawyer, the Apostle Paul speaks of in (^{<5083>}Titus 3:13) is said to be bishop of Diospolis, or Lydda; in the beginning of the fourth century Aetius was bishop of this place, who assisted in the council of Nice; and in the same century, anno 331, Dionysius, another bishop of this place, was present at a council at Constantinople; and in the fifth century Photinus wrote himself bishop of Lydda, in the Chalcedon council, anno 451 ^{f490}.

Ver. 33. *And there he found a certain man*, etc.] In a house in that city, into which he entered:

named Aeneas; which is a Gentile name, and so might the person be; though there is mention made of this name among the Jews. We read of

one R. Samuel Bar, *ayyna* “Aenea, or Aeneas”^{f491}; but it was more common among the Greeks. Aeneas the Trojan is well known in history, who, after the destruction of Troy, went into Italy, and settled there; and from him the Trojans are sometimes called Aeneadae. The name comes from the Greek word *αἶνω*, “ainoo”, which signifies “to praise”; and Aeneas is one “worthy of praise”: though Jerom^{f492} takes it to be an Hebrew name, which he interprets “one that answers”, or a “poor man”, or “misery”; as if it came from the Hebrew word *hn* [, “anah”, which signifies “to answer, or to afflict”.

Which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy; so that the distemper was grown stubborn, and thought incurable; nor perhaps had he, or his friends, any hope of his ever being restored to health again.

Ver. 34. *And Peter said unto him, Aeneas*, etc. He called him by his name, which he might without divine revelation know, though he was a stranger to him, by the people of the house, where he was:

Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; Peter knew, by some secret impulse upon his mind, that Christ would cure this man by him as an instrument at this time, and therefore said these words; not as a prayer, as some render them, “may Jesus Christ heal thee”, though was it so, it was a prayer of faith; but as a promise that he would, or rather as a declaration of the then present exertion of his power to heal him; which he ascribes not to himself, but to Christ, in whose name, and by whose power the apostles wrought all their miracles; (^{<44B2>}Acts 3:12,14, 4:9,10) “arise, and make thy bed”; which would be a full demonstration that he was perfectly whole:

and he arose immediately; and also, no doubt, made his bed, as the man at Bethesda’s pool was bid by Christ, to take up his bed and carry it, as a proof of his soundness.

Ver. 35. *And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron*, etc.] Saron, which is here joined to Lydda, is the name of a fruitful country on the borders of the Mediterranean sea, between Joppa and Caesarea, beginning at Lydda. There were two countries in the land of Israel called Saron, as Jerom observes^{f493}; there was one between Mount Tabor, and the lake of Tiberias; and there was another which reached from Caesarea of Palestine, to the town of Joppa; the former was inhabited by the Gadites, and was beyond Jordan, (^{<43E6>}1 Chronicles 5:16) the other was on this side Jordan, near Lydda. And this is what is here meant; and of which the same writer

elsewhere says ^{f494}, the whole country by Joppa and Lydda is called Saron, in which are large and fruitful fields; and on (²³⁵⁰Isaiah 65:10) which the Vulgate Latin renders, “and the plains shall be for folds of flocks”, he observes, that “Sharon”, in the Hebrew text, is put for plains or champaign country; and adds, all the country about Lydda, Joppa, and Jamnia, is fit to feed flocks: and agreeably to this, in Jewish writings, the calves of Sharon ^{f495} are spoken of as the best; and the word is by the commentators of the Misna interpreted ^{f496} by *rçym* “a plain”, or champaign country; for this was not the name of a single town or city, but of a country, bordering on Lydda, and the above mentioned places; in which were several towns and villages, and the inhabitants of those that were nearest Lydda are here designed. It was such a fruitful and delightful country, that the Targum on (²³¹¹Song of Solomon 2:1) has rendered it by the garden of Eden: it had its name either from *rwc*, “Shur”, which signifies to behold afar off, from the fine and large prospect that might be taken on it; or from *rç* “Shar”, which signifies the navel, because it was a valley or plain surrounded on every side with mountains and hills: it abounded in flowers and fruits; hence mention is made of the rose of Sharon, (²³¹¹Song of Solomon 2:1) and in vines; hence we frequently read of the wine of Saron ^{f497}, and which was so very good, that they mixed two parts of water with one of wine ^{f498}. It was a country, the Jews say ^{f499}, whose earth was not fit to make bricks of; and therefore houses made of them did not stand long, but needed repairing often in seven years: hence the high priest, on the day of atonement, used to pray for the Saronites, that their houses might not become their graves ^{f500}. Now when the inhabitants of this place, as well as of Lydda,

saw him; that is, Aeneas, made whole, who had been ill of a palsy, and had kept his bed eight years, they were so impressed with it, that it issued in their conversion:

and turned to the Lord: they believed in Christ, embraced his Gospel preached by Peter, professed faith in him, and submitted to his ordinances; being turned by powerful efficacious grace, they turned their feet to keep his testimonies.

Ver. 36. *Now there was at Joppa*, etc.] The same with Japho, (⁴⁸⁹⁶Joshua 19:46) a sea port town in the tribe of Dan, said by some historians ^{f501} to be a very ancient one, even before the flood. It is now called Jaffa, and its name, in the Hebrew tongue, signifies beauty: some say it had its name from Jope, the daughter of Aeolus, the wife of Cepheus, the founder of it;

and others derive it from the name of Japhet, because it looks towards Europe, which is inhabited by the sons of Japhet. It was built upon a hill, as Pliny^{f502} says; and so high, as Strabo^{f503} reports, that Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judea, might be seen from thence, which was distant from it forty miles; as may be concluded from what Jerom,^{f504} says, who lived at Bethlehem many years: his words are; from Joppa, to our little village Bethlehem, are forty six miles; now Bethlehem was six miles distant from Jerusalem, to the south of it, and Joppa was to the west of it. The place is well known by Jonah's taking ship there, and going for Tarshish, when he was cast into the sea, and devoured by a fish; from whence the Ionian sea might have its name: and this was the occasion of the fable of Andromeda being exposed to a fish of a prodigious size at this place; the bones of which, Pliny^{f505} relates, were brought to Rome from hence, being forty foot long; and, the stones, to which she was bound, Jerom^{f506} says, were shown in his time on this shore: and here also, the inhabitants report, may be seen some stones in the sea, on which Peter stood and fished, when he dwelt in this place.

A certain disciple, called Tabitha; this was a woman's name, the masculine name was Tabi. R. Gamaliel had a manservant of this name^{f507}, and also a maidservant, whose name was Tabitha^{f508}; yea, every maidservant of his was called mother Tabitha, and every manservant father Tabi^{f509}:

which by interpretation is called Dorcas; which signifies a roe in the Greek language, as Tabitha does in the Syriac:

this woman was full of good works; was constantly employed in doing good; her works were both many and good:

and alms deeds which she did; she was very kind and beneficent to the poor; she wrought with her hands much for their sakes, as appears by what follows.

Ver. 37. *And it came to pass in those days*, etc.] While Peter was in those parts, and particularly at Lydda, which was near:

that she was sick and died; fell ill with some disorder, and died of it:

whom, when they had washed; as was the manner of the Jews; and this they did, even though it was on a sabbath day: for so their canon runs^{f510},

“they do all the necessaries for the dead (on the sabbath), they anoint him, װײַ ײִדמװ, “and they wash him”.”

yet that of Maimonides deserves some notice ^{f511};

“it is forbidden to anoint part of the body, as the whole body; but if it is to remove filth, it is lawful; and so it is forbidden to wash part of the body with hot water, but with cold water they may wash his face, his hands, and his feet, but not the whole body.”

This custom still continues, and their usual method is to wash the body with hot water, in which they put dried roses and camomile flowers: likewise, they take an egg, and beat it up in wine, and therewith anoint the head; and this washing and anointing are done by some at the house before the corpse is carried out (as here); but in some places, especially where there is a large number of Jews, all this is done in the burying places; where they have a little house, whither they carry the corpse, and put it on a table, and there wash it; and after washing, put, it into a coffin, and inter it ^{f512}: and this has been the custom of other nations, if not of all nations: the custom with the Turks is this ^{f513}; the body being laid upon a board, and covered with a linen cloth, one of the ecclesiastical elders washes it with hot water and soap, another being present to hand the water; but they do not suffer others to look on: the body is thrice washed; and the third time they mingle camphire with it; and being washed, it is put into a coffin. And Ludolphus ^{f514} reports of the Abyssines, that their bodies being well washed and perfumed, they wrap them up in garments, and then are put upon a bier, and buried. And this was the practice both of the ancient Grecians and Romans, that as soon as ever anyone was dead, the body was immediately washed and anointed. Thus Creon is said to fetch Jocaste to wash her dead son; and Antigone requests of Creon, that she might wash her brother ^{f515}. It has been the custom of some countries to wash their dead bodies in rivers: and some people, in the northern parts, have chose, for this reason, to have their burying places near the banks of rivers, that their dead bodies might be washed in running water: and the Indians, which live at a distance from the river Ganges, will go fifteen or twenty days journey thither, to wash their corpse in it, though then putrefied, and then burn them; yea, they take their sick alive when they think they will die, and put them up to their middle in rivers, that they may die in pure and clear water; and they enjoin a very severe penance on those who omit to bring such as are near death, to a river to be washed ^{f516}:

they laid her in an upper chamber. The Ethiopic version reads quite the reverse; “they put her in the lower part of the house”: which is not likely. Dr. Lightfoot conjectures that this upper chamber might be the common meeting place of the saints; and that they put her here, that if Peter should work a miracle all might be spectators of it; and certain it is, that the Jewish doctors used to meet in upper rooms, and confer together; (See Gill on “^{<4004>}Mark 2:4”), and such there were in Lydda; (See Gill on “^{<4003>}Acts 1:13”) and such there were in Lydda; (^{<4002>}Acts 9:32).

Ver. 38. *And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa,* etc.] Some say it was six miles distant, but it must be eight; since from Jerusalem to Joppa were forty miles, and from Jerusalem to Lydda thirty two, and therefore it must be eight miles from thence to Joppa:

and the disciples had heard that Peter was there; and also no doubt that he had healed Aeneas of his palsy, and which might induce them to do as follows:

they sent unto him two men; very likely of their own company or church; for it is certain here were disciples or believers in Christ, and very likely were formed into a church state; these seem to be converts under Philip’s ministry, who when he went from Azotus, preached in all the cities, and so in Joppa, till he came to Caesarea, (^{<4000>}Acts 8:40) though we read nothing in ecclesiastical history of this church at Joppa, until the fifth century, when it appears there was a church in that place ^{f517}; and in the same century we read of Fidus bishop of Joppa, that was present in the synod held at Ephesus, anno 431 and in the sixth century of Elias bishop of the same place, in the council at Jerusalem, anno 536 ^{f518} and in the same century a bishop of the church here assisted in the synod of Rome and Constantinople ^{f519}.

desiring him, that he would not delay to come to them; they entreated he would not refuse to come, and think it too great a burden on him, or make any difficulty about it, or show any aversion to it; but that he would with all readiness and cheerfulness, and without delay immediately come unto them; for the case they wanted him for required speed and haste.

Ver. 39. *Then Peter arose and went with them,* etc.] After the messengers had delivered their message, and made their request to Peter in the name of the brethren, he at once agreed to go with them, and accordingly did; whether he went to restore Dorcas to life, whose death the messengers had

informed him of, and whether this was the view of the brethren with respect to that, is not certain. However, he might go with them on other accounts, as to comfort them under the loss of so valuable and useful a person, and to strengthen and establish them in the faith, and to exhort and animate them to the discharge of their duty.

When he was come; that is, to Joppa, and to Dorcas's house there:

they brought him into the upper chamber; where the corpse of Dorcas lay:

and all the widows stood by him weeping; these were poor widows, to whom Dorcas had been very liberal and beneficent, who stood about the apostle lamenting the death of their benefactress, and by their tears expressing their desire of her return to life, if it could be:

and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them; the Vulgate, Latin, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read, "which Dorcas made for them"; and the Syriac version renders it, "which Tabitha gave unto them, while she was alive"; which last clause aptly explains, "while she was with them"; for now she was not, with respect to her better part, her immortal soul: the coats and garments were the inner and upper ones, wore in these countries; and it seems that she did not buy these garments, and give them unto them, but that she made them up herself for them, or at least wrought with them in making of them; which shows her diligence and industry, as also her humility, as well as her beneficence: and these the widows produced, and are shown as proofs of the same; which was expressive of gratitude in them, and was done with a design to move Peter to be concerned for restoring so useful a life.

Ver. 40. *But Peter put them all forth*, etc.] As he had seen his Lord and Master do, when he raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead, (~~1084~~ Luke 8:54)

and kneeled down and prayed; it may be, as yet, he had not the mind of God in this matter, and therefore betook himself to prayer, in which he chose to be private and alone:

and turning him to the body; the corpse of Dorcas, after he had prayed, and was well assured that the power of Christ would be exerted in raising of it:

said, Tabitha, arise; which words were spoken in the name and faith of Christ, and were all one as, if Christ himself had spoken them; for to his power, and not to the apostles, is the following miracle to be ascribed: and she opened her eyes; which, upon her death, had been closed by her friends; and perhaps the napkin was not yet bound about her face: or if it was, she must remove it ere she could open her eyes and see Peter:

and when she saw Peter; whom she might know:

she sat up; upon the bed or bier on which she lay.

Ver. 41. *And he gave her his hand, and lift her up*, etc.] Off of the bed or bier where she was:

and when he had called the saints and widows; the disciples, brethren and sisters, who were come together on this occasion, as well as the poor widows she had been kind to; the Ethiopic version reads without a copulative, “the holy widows”; and so might these widows be, even such as are described in (⁵⁴⁵⁰1 Timothy 5:10)

presented her alive; as Christ did the widow’s son of Naam to her, (⁴⁰⁷⁵Luke 7:15) and which no doubt was matter of great joy as well as astonishment to all the saints, and especially to the poor widows.

Ver. 42. *And it was known throughout all Joppa*, etc.] The report of such a miracle, and wrought upon a person of note, was soon spread all over the place, which was very large, for it was a city, as it is called, (⁴¹¹⁵Acts 11:5), and it had, as Josephus ^{f520}says, villages and little towns or cities round about it; all which might go by the name of Joppa, and throughout which the fame of this miracle might pass:

and many believed in the Lord; in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom Peter preached, and the saints in Joppa professed, and in whose name, and by whose power, this miracle was done.

Ver. 43. *And it came to pass*, etc.] Or so it was;

that he tarried many days in Joppa; conversing with the saints, confirming the disciples, and preaching the Gospel, to the conversion of sinners; and his abode

was with one Simon a tanner; it seems as if persons of this trade used to dwell in towns near the sea, as fit for their business; so we read of some at Sidon, a city on the sea coast, as Joppa was;

“it happened at Sidon that a certain **ysrwb**, “tanner”, (the same word here used, adopted into the Hebrew language,) died, and he had a brother a tanner, etc. ^{f521}”

where the Gemara ^{f522} distinguishes between a great tanner and a little tanner; the latter, the gloss says, is one that is poor and has but few skins: which of these Simon was, cannot be said. This business was very contemptible with the Jews; they say ^{f523},

“woe to him whose trade is a tanner:”

and further observe ^{f524} that they never make one a king, nor a high priest: but their doctors many of them were of as mean trades, as shoemakers, skimmers, etc. (See Gill on “~~40B~~ Mark 6:3”) and Simon the Athenian philosopher was **σκυτοτομος** “a leather cutter” ^{f525}; and according to the Ethiopic version, this our Simon was a shoemaker; with him Peter chose to abide, and not with Dorcas.