

Saul - Paul

The Unseen Interval

It is said that the custom of the Jews of the Dispersion was to give their children both a Hebrew and a Gentile name. It is not intended to question whether this is accurate, but rather to point out the aptness of the two names which the Scriptures use to designate Saul of Tarsus, who was called Paul.

In the use of the two names in the Scriptures we note that they lie either side of his severance as given in Acts thirteen, and none of the epistles coming through this person use the name Saul. Further, a close attention brings out the fact that the name Paul is associated with three ministries--Justification, Conciliation and the Secret Economy--which are the great doctrines characterizing the present administration.

Those who use the CONCORDANT VERSION will be acquainted with the meanings of the name Paul. It comes most probably from the element PAU, meaning CEASE, which is responsible for our English word pause. God *ceased* direct dealings with His people Israel. At present Israel is thrust aside, but in the future God will take them back and He will consummate to them His promises. There is a pause in the ways of God with Israel; the ensuing interval between God's past and future dealings with them is filled by the ministries of a person whom the Scriptures begin to name CEASED (Paul). The cessation of God's operations with and for Israel is an essential feature required by such teaching as equality of blessing amongst believers, whether out of Israel or out of the Nations; God's promises of old, the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Twelve, necessitate the continuance of Israel's ascendancy amongst the nations of the earth. But there is a hiatus, and this idea is enshrined in the name Paul.

However, the first name in the Scriptures which brings this person before us is Saul, and the meaning of this is likewise notable and distinctive, both at the moment of its first occurrence and in other connections.

The name Saul is Hebrew, and it occurs in a Greek declined form, and also a form following the undeclinable Hebrew, the latter used only by the Lord when meeting Saul on the Damascus way, and Ananias when visiting Saul.

Students will be familiar with the Hebrew word pronounced *sheol*, but may not realize that Saul in Hebrew only differs from that word by the pointings of the Massorettes, being Shaul. If we omit the pointings, then we have exactly the same letters for both, i.e. *Shaul*.

Each of these words belong to the Hebrew word-family represented by the root SHAL, the meaning of which is ASK. The *u* (or *vav* of the usual grammarians) is a frequent feature of Hebrew words, and often changes the verb to a noun, thus *shal* is the verb, and *shaul* is the noun; other members of this word-family are formed by adding *e* to *shal*, thus *shale*, which gives the feminine; another form of this group prefixes *m*, which is largely equivalent to our nouns ending in "ing," hence ASKING. Though Saul is used as a proper name, yet its meaning remains.

We *ask* regarding that which we do not possess, or that which is unknown, or is not immediately within the range of the senses; it is unseen. The Hebrew "sheol" is the same as the Greek "hades," the imperceptible, the unseen. A king was unseen in Israel; they did not have a king as other nations, so they *asked* for a king, and Saul was given. The name marked the details of the situation. So also Saul of the Acts. He was not seen at the beginning of the record, nor was he seen with the Twelve, and even when introduced into the account, he is largely unseen so far as association with the Twelve is concerned; in fact it was years before he met them, and the name had been dropped long before the occasion when he goes to Jerusalem for the conference.

Saul's doings at the point in the record when he becomes seen (Acts 7:58-8:3) are such that he would be unseen in the kingdom, for Saul's attitude against that Prophet like unto Moses was such as to lead to his utter extermination from among the people.

In Acts thirteen Saul is severed (FROM-SEEIZED) for special work. The literal Greek of this word "severed" is very suggestive when considered together with the meaning of the name used at that point, Saul, *unseen*. Saul has

been brought on the *horizon*, (SEEIZED when transliterated) in Acts nine, but now (Acts thirteen) he is taken *from* the *horizon* (FROM-SEEIZED when transliterated), and definitely defined to become Paul, the *interval*. Thus the prior name, together with the second, suggest an *unseen interval*, making possible a ministry such as has arisen through the Apostle to the Nations.

The foregoing is offered as an alternative to the customary explanation which sees little beyond domestic reasons for the duplicate names.

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