

The Lord Salutes Stephen, Acts 7:55; Why Diasporas Are Good; *Lumainomai*: Saul's Ongoing Terrorist Campaign against the Church, Acts 8:1, 3; 26:9-11

Acts 7:55 - But being filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

This is the highest tribute. Jesus Christ is normally seated by the throne of God from which He controls history. But for Stephen, Jesus rises indicating that the martyr will be personally received into heaven by Him.

- 2) In the meantime, Saul turns his hatred toward the believers in the various churches whom he begins to persecute:

Acts 8:1 - Saul consented to his [**Stephen's**] death and there began a great persecution against the church that was in Jerusalem. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles.

v. 3 - Saul began ravaging [*λυμαίνομαι*, *lumainomai*] the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

A diaspora is often good. The “scattering of a people away from an ancestral homeland” is a means by which God has protected not only His Chosen People the Jews but also Church Age believers. Believers in the Jerusalem church were afraid to remain in the city so they scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.

Saul did track many of them down but he had it to do, otherwise he could have just concentrated his efforts in Jerusalem and wiped out a large contingent of believers and sent fear into the souls of those outside the city.

When political and religious circumstances force *believers* to move away from their culture and heritage into another geographic location, then God permits this to happen for a reason: their protection.

And in this case it was protection from Sanhedrin sponsored terrorism with Saul acting as their field agent in the mold of Jack Bauer. However, Jack is after the bad guys while Saul was after the church. We see his maniacal obsession against believers in Luke's use of the word *λυμαίνομαι*, *lumainomai*. It is an *hapax legomenon* and has a host of meanings, all closely related:

The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (4:312): “To treat disgracefully,” “to do an injury,” “to hurt,” “to imperil,” “to destroy,” “to devastate,” “to treat infamously,” “to injure,” “to corrupt,” “to disfigure,” “to shame,” “to annihilate with a suggestion of the arbitrary, irrational, and wanton.” The fierce and relentless nature of the persecution depicted in Acts 8:3, 9:1, 22:4 is reflected in the choice of this word. Derived from the noun *λύμη*, *lumē* in the sense of “shameful treatment.”

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (481): harm, injure, damage, spoil, ruin, destroy. Saul was trying to destroy the church in Acts 8:3.

The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (383): To affix a stigma, to dishonor, spot, defile. To treat shamefully or with injury, to ravage, devastate, ruin. Said of Saul as the cruel and violent persecutor, Acts 8:3.

In Acts 8:3, *lumainomai* is in the imperfect middle indicative:

imperfect: Ingressive (also called Inchoative or Inceptive):

Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 544:

Ingressive Imperfect. Definition: The imperfect is often used to stress the beginning of an action, with the implication that it continued for some time.

Clarification and Amplification. The imperfect stresses beginning, but implies that the action *continues*. Thus the translation for the inceptive imperfect ought to be “began *doing*.”

Semantic Situation. The ingressive imperfect is especially used in narrative literature when a change in activity is noted. It is possibly the most common imperfect in narrative because it introduces a topic shift.

middle: Indirect: Paul acts for himself and in his own interest.

indicative: Declarative: this is an historical fact.

This verb indicates that the murder of Stephen marked the beginning of Paul’s campaign against the church which continued without pause all the way to the Damascus Road incident. Virtually every word used to define *lumaínomai* describes Saul’s disposition toward believers and he mounted a jihad against them without remorse.

Acts 8:3 - Saul began ravaging [*λυμαίνομαι*, *lumaínomai*] the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

The translations in the NIV and NASB bring out the ingressive imperfect: “Saul began ravaging the church.” A better translation would read:

Acts 8:3 - Saul began an ongoing campaign to destroy [*λυμαίνομαι*, *lumaínomai*] the church, entering house after house [*occupied by believers*], and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

Following his salvation, Paul on occasion would testify of his crimes as an illustration of who he was before his conversion and also to amplify the assertion that he was the world’s worst sinner.

- 3) Paul admits to King Agrippa his crimes against Christians in Acts 26. His first confession is of a propaganda campaign against Christ:

Acts 26:9 - “I was convinced that it was necessary I should do many things hostile [*ἐναντίος*, *enantios*: in opposition to, opposite, against, contrary, counter] to the name of Jesus the Nazarene.”

- 4) Paul then describes how he pursued Christians to the death:

Acts 26:10 - “This is the thing I did in Jerusalem: Many of the saints did I incarcerate in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests of the Sanhedrin, and when they were put to death, I voted against them.”

- 5) One of the challenges American believers are going to face in the twenty-first century is the denouncement of Christ and His doctrines. Within this century Christians will be punished if they do not in essence blaspheme by denouncing doctrine in favor of politically correct laws that are designed to protect minorities under the assumption that Christian theology is not only the majority religion but also intolerant. Saul mounted a vicious jihad against the original Christians of the first century:

Acts 26:11 - "And I avenged myself upon them often in every synagogue, I forced them to blaspheme; and being excessively maniacal ["**furiously enraged**" (NASB): *περισσῶς ἐμμαινόμεναι*, *perissōs emmainomai*: **an extreme state of psychosis, i.e., murder lust driven by the hatred of religious arrogance—Paul was a terrorist who declared a personal jihad against any and all Christians**] against them, I kept on persecuting them even into other cities."

27. All of these atrocities define Saul as the world's worst sinner. Note that what the Bible considers the most evil of acts are not only murder (the destruction of another's free will) but also the murder of the mind through persecution, brutality, threats, fear tactics, intimidation, propaganda, and delusion.
28. Principle: If the church is destroyed in client nation America then the sins that its theology is designed to restrain will be unleashed and civilization will devolve into chaos. This is described beautifully by William Butler Yeats in his poem "The Second Coming" (1921):
- Things fall apart: the centre (Pivot) cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.
29. Had Saul and the Jewish hierarchy been successful in fomenting a "blood-dimmed tide" against incipient Christianity then the Luciferian rebellion would have been victorious in the appeal trial.