

**Paul's Terrorism: Murder of Stephen, Acts 7:57-60; Jihad against the Church, 8:1, 3; Maniacally Persecutes Christians, 26:9-11; Application to Islamic Terrorism**

25. The greatest challenge that divine grace ever confronted was history's worst sinner, Saul of Tarsus. Here are some of the crimes on his rap sheet:

1) He was complicit in the martyrdom of Stephen:

**Acts 7:57 -** But they [the high priest and members of the Sanhedrin] cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed him [Stephen] with one impulse [the emotion of religious hatred].

**v. 58 -** When they had violently driven him out of the city [Mosaic Law did not allow an execution within the walls of Jerusalem, Leviticus 24:13-16], they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul [the worst sinner in human history].

**v. 59 -** And while they were stoning Stephen, he was calling upon God, and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my human spirit.

**v. 60 -** And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this he fell asleep [physical death].

There are parallels between the last sayings of Stephen and of Jesus. The Lord verbally dismissed His human spirit into the hands of the Father (Luke 23:46) and, previous to this, He prayed for the forgiveness of the very same people for whom Stephen intercedes (Luke 23:34).

Note the sequence of events: Jesus prayed that those who crucified Him would be forgiven—Romans as well as Jews—but members of the Sanhedrin and other Jews were responsible for bringing the charges to the attention of Pilate who really wanted nothing to do with the case.

It is apparent that the Lord's prayer was answered since many of these same people were around to again assuage their murder lust, this time at the expense of Stephen.

While they were doing so, Stephen offers a similar prayer to the Lord's, that his executioners be forgiven and, on this occasion, one of those responsible was none other than Saul.

Note the sovereign plan of God: in eternity past God knew from omniscience that if He was patient enough with the worst sinner in human history that he would become the greatest believer, greatest apostle, and greatest intellect in the history of the Church Age.

Therefore, it was divinely decreed that Stephen must be allowed to die a martyr's death in order to spare Saul enough time to make it to the Damascus Road for the salvation of his soul and imputation of eternal life.

Such a sacrifice was uniquely honored by the Lord at the moment Steven was advanced upon by members of the Sanhedrin:

**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 usually 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 believers of the various churches against whom he declares a jihad:

**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): to 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 *lumainomai* describes Saul's disposition toward believers and he mounted a jihad against them without remorse.

**Acts 8:3 -** Saul began ravaging [*λυμαίνομαι, lumainomai*] 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, lumainomai*] 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 what he was like 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 ἐμμῖνομαι, 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.

26. 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.
27. 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.

28. 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.
29. Were it not for the Lord’s perfect patience toward Saul He would not have been able to use him as a demonstration of His grace.
30. Christians today face an extremely important test: the very acts of Saul toward the first-century church are beginning to emerge in twenty-first century America. Progressives view their ideology as the morally superior replacement for Christian theology. In extreme intellectual arrogance they have decreed that the Bible is far too politically incorrect by its categorizing of certain behaviors as sins that need restraint from society, culture, and law. Instead Progressives denounce (as blameworthy or evil) the Bible, diminish (lessen His authority and reputation) Christ, debase (reduce its intrinsic value and worth) the church, and denigrate (defame and belittle) believers. In the absence of a biblical moral code that is designed to “hold the centre,” Progressives insist on substituting their own ideologies which view people as so much clay which they can mold if only left alone to do so.
31. The propaganda of the Progressives used to be presented behind rhetorical veils which were designed to conceal while advancing their hidden agenda: the destruction of Western European heritage, Anglo-Saxon culture, and Judeo-Christian ethics. Now they unabashedly just tell bold-faced lies and repeat them incessantly until “tha Peepul” accept them as the truth.
32. “Tha Peepul” are defenseless to identify the lie because of fifty years of Progressive indoctrination in the Federal Schools. The only voices crying in the wilderness are doctrinally oriented believers who are shouted down as radicals and extremists in the same fashion as Islamic radicals.
33. The twenty-first century challenge for these doctrinally oriented believers is: “Will you be willing to stand fast against an increasingly maniacal establishment that is out to suppress you, your beliefs, your church, your Scripture, your God, and your Savior?”
34. This remains to be seen but make no mistake—proponents of Progressive ideology are reincarnations of Saul and their intents are the same: Operation *Lumainomai*: an ongoing campaign to destroy the church.
35. Whether they will be successful or not is dependent upon whether the Pivot can hold which means believers are going to require a source of courage that can sustain their confidence in God under pressure. This courage is founded on absolute confidence that you have eternal life, that you are secure in this fact, and that you will go to heaven when you die.

**Titus 1:2 -** In the confidence of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.

36. It is the Lord’s perfect patience that allows mankind the opportunity to believe in Christ and receive this promised eternal life:

**1 Timothy 1:16 -** Nevertheless, because of this I received mercy that in me, as the worst of all sinners, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience ...