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MINISTRIES

“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”

Addressing Paul’s Road to Damascus Experience

Critics of the Bible say there are some inconsistencies in the three accounts of Paul’s Damascus experience. For example:

Who fell? Paul Only (Acts 9:4, 22:7) or Everyone (Acts 26:14)?

Who was in the light? Paul Only (Acts 9:3, 22:6) or Everyone (Acts 26:13)?

These three accounts can be found in Acts 9, Acts 22, and Acts 26.

Now, these particular accounts in Acts were not written by Paul, but nonetheless, they are used to question the credibility of Paul.

In reading these accounts, chapters 9 and 22 are virtually identical except in one instance, if reading the King James Version.

Why does Acts 9:7 say that those traveling with Paul heard a voice, but in Acts 22:9 it says that they heard no voice?

As Paul relates his conversion experience to an audience in Jerusalem, he says,

Acts 22:9, KJV

“They that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me”

However, Luke, in relating the same event, says, “The men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.”

So, which is it? Paul says “they heard not the voice,” and Luke says they were “hearing a voice.”

First of all, the word for “voice” in these verses is the Greek word *phone*, which means “a sound, a tone, a speech, a voice, or a natural sound.”

With such a wide-ranging definition, the context must determine the most accurate meaning of the word. Most commonly, *phone* is applied to a voice from God, a human, or an angel. However, *phone* can also refer to sounds in general. It is translated “sound” in John 3:8:

“The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound. . . .”

Paul uses the word to refer to the “sound” of a trumpet in 1 Corinthians 14:8.

The flexibility of the Greek *phone* is quite evident in Revelation 1:15:

Revelation 1:15

his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice [*phone*] was like the roar [*phone*] of many waters.

Here, the identical Greek word is translated two different ways.

These examples illustrate how confusion can arise in the comparison of Acts 9 and Acts 22.

Paul heard a voice as Yeshua communicated directly with him. The men with Paul heard the voice speaking to Paul but, to them, it was just an unintelligible sound.

Did they hear the voice? Yes, in the sense that they heard something. But, since they could not understand what the voice said, it was nothing more than a sound—in other words, they couldn’t really “hear” Yeshua.

The ESV clears up the seeming contradiction nicely:

Acts 22:9

“Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me.”

And,

Acts 9:7

“The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.”

This is a good description of what happened.

This difficulty is one of several minute problems that occur during the translation process.

In chapter 26 we see that there is no mention of Paul being blinded.

In chapter 26, Paul is speaking to King Agrippa and appears to be giving an overview of the whole scenario.

Now, it appears that Paul is saying that Yeshua spoke to him and gave him all of the instruction there in the street. Especially if one is reading from a “red letter version” Bible.

We would suggest that he was just giving the king a quick accounting of what happened in relation to Yeshua.

He doesn't mention being blinded...and he gives both what Yeshua said on the road, and then what he was told once he was in Damascus via Ananias.

Either way, both messages came from Yeshua, but related to the purpose of the vision—Ananias served as the means of that communication.

Thus, it does not really appear to be different versions. Instead, chapter 26 is simply a quick summation of the whole situation without giving all of the details, as the details were not necessary given the audience.

The context would appear to support this as well. Paul is answering the charges brought against him.

For example, suppose you were in a car accident. When describing the car accident to a friend you might go into a lot more detail regarding your experience. You would describe how it happened, what you saw, how you felt, the color and make of the car, etc. However, if that car accident becomes involved in a legal trial, you would leave out the details that were not really relevant to the circumstances at hand. You would not focus on the color or make of the car, but perhaps how the other car ran a red light and leave out the other details.

In conclusion, the apparent inconsistencies between chapter 9 and 22 are resolved when we consider the range of meaning of the Greek word phone. The apparent inconsistencies in chapter 26 are resolved when we consider that the account is just a quick summation rather than a detailed account.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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