



Conducted by
James Gardiner

“Could you please explain Acts 9:17 where Ananias said ‘Brother Saul, the Lord that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me’ Why did Ananias address Saul as ‘brother’ even before his baptism?”

The sons of one father and mother are brethren in the natural, material sense. In

Gen. chap. 42 we read of Joseph who, when interviewing his brothers who sold him, was told by them (v. 32) "We be brethren, sons of our father"

In Gen. 13:8 neighbours and kinsmen closely banded together are also described as "brothers": "And Abram said unto Lot, 'Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between my herdmen and thy herdmen, *for we are brethren.*'" The Mosaic law (Deut. 23:7) said to the Jews "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother; thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian, because thou wast a stranger in his land." The Jews, of course, looked upon themselves as brethren: "Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto *thy brother* shalt thou not lend upon usury" (Deut. 23:20). They could lend to other nations (strangers) and charge interest, but they could not charge interest on a loan to a brother Jew, neither upon money, food, nor any other things (v. 19).

We therefore call a man "brother" on account of a physical tie, brothers in the flesh; on account of shared racial or national roots; or in a religious and spiritual sense.

In Acts 1:16 (*before* the coming into being of the Lord's body and *before* the formal announcement to the world of the terms of entry) Peter could address those in the upper room as "men and brethren." "Brethren" in the Jewish sense, albeit becoming brethren in another sense. Again in Acts 2:29 Peter addressed that mighty throng of "Jews . . . out of every nation under heaven" (v. 5) as "Men and *brethren.*" They were not "brothers in Christ" for he had not yet even preached the gospel which made them so, but were brother Jews.

When Paul made his defence speech to that murderous mob of Jews, from the stairs of the castle prison in Jerusalem, he addressed them as "Men and *brethren.*" They were certainly not his "brothers in Christ" for they had just tried to beat him to death. They were, however, his *brother Jews* (Acts 22:1). Similarly in Acts 23:1 Paul addressed the Council in exactly the same way. Such instances could be multiplied, but these should suffice in showing that many times in the New Testament, after Pentecost, the term "brother" was used in the sense indicated, between Jew and Jew.

Thus Ananias addressed Saul as a *brother Jew* and not as a brother in Christ. Ananias would know, better than anyone at that time, that Saul was not yet entitled to such a description.

"For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them *brethren.*" (Heb. 2:11).