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Peter—Acts 9:1-31

Paul's Conversion

I. Additional Scriptures/Notes...

- 01. 9:1... And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter**—“See [Act 8:3](#), from which the narrative is now resumed. As the great change in the life of Saul is now recorded, it is proper to state what can be known of him before his conversion. Probably about a year before he appears in the history at the death of Stephen. He was of the tribe of Benjamin ([Phi 3:5](#)); his father, though a Jew, had been admitted to Roman citizenship, and Paul was therefore a 'Roman' ([Act 22:28](#)); he was born at Tarsus, a Grecian city, the capital of Cilicia; there he had become familiar with Grecian literature, as well as educated in the law; at what time we know not, but while still young he went to Jerusalem to study in the great Rabbinical schools, and had the celebrated Gamaliel for his teacher ([Act 22:3](#)); he had, according to Jewish custom, learned a trade, being a tent-maker ([Act 18:3](#)); he was a Pharisee after the strictest manner of the sect ([Act 23:6](#)). How long he had been in Jerusalem when he appears in this history, whether he was there for the second time, or had not returned after his attendance at the school of Gamaliel, is uncertain, but when we first behold him he is a 'young man,' prominent and influential, active in his opposition to the church, and a trusted leader of its enemies” [B.W. Johnson, *The People's New Testament*].
- 02. 9:2... And desired of him letters**—“When the news reached Jerusalem that this dishonoring heresy had begun to spread in the ancient and celebrated city of Damascus, where thousands of Jews then lived, and had obtained a religious influence over a large portion of the population, the exasperation of the Pharisees knew no bounds, and Saul, with characteristic ardor, started in pursuit of the fugitives. He had reason, of course, to believe, that, upon requisition of the high priest, the authorities of Damascus, which was then embraced within the dominions of the Arabian king Aretas, would deliver up the disciples as fugitives from justice. That he was correct in this is sufficiently demonstrated by the zeal with which the governor afterward lent the aid of his guards to the orthodox Jews, for the purpose of seizing Paul himself. (compare [Act 9:23-24](#) with [2Co 11:32](#)” [J.W. McGarvey, *Original Commentary on Acts*]. ||||| “We are inclined to be a little surprised at the authority exercised by the Jewish hierarchy in so distant a place as Damascus. Of course, the Sanhedrin claimed over the Jews in foreign cities the same power, in religious questions, which they exercised at Jerusalem” [Coffman].
- 03. 9:5... Who art thou, Lord?**—“Paul asked, 'Have I not seen Christ?' (1 Cor. 9:1); and upon mentioning the appearances to the Twelve, he said, 'He was seen last of all by me' (1 Cor. 15:8). Ananias stated that our Lord 'appeared to (Paul) in the way' (Acts 9:17). Thus the New Testament affirms that this was a genuine appearance of Jesus of Nazareth to Saul of Tarsus” [Coffman].
- 04. 9:5... hard for thee to kick against the pricks**—“The idea is, that he is injuring himself, like the ox that kicks back on the goads used to urge him forward” [B.W. Johnson, *The People's New Testament*].
- 05. 9:7... And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man**—“Critics see a conflict between verse 7, and a later

account which asserts the others 'heard not the voice' (22:9). There is no discrepancy. The Greek word for 'voice' is PHONE. When the term is used with the genitive case (as in 9:7), it merely SPECIFIES that a sound was heard; when employed with the accusative case (as in 22:9), it suggests the EXTENT to which they heard, i.e., they did not understand the actual words (Blackwelder, 139)" [Wayne Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles: from Jerusalem to Rome*, p. 107].

06. 9:15... for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel—"The fact that Saul was to be a 'chosen' vessel does not mean that he was overpowered by God against his own power of choice; he had to exercise his personal free will in accepting Heaven's call. The statement does suggest, however, that his mission was previously known by the omniscient Lord (cf., Gal 1:11-12). Too, Saul is merely a 'vessel' in which the gospel is contained; he is not the source of it (2 Cor 4:7; Gal 1:11-12). Further, the Lord would reveal to Saul the fact that suffering for the name of Christ was a reality in his future" [Jackson, p. 110]. ||||| "There is no way to separate these words from the great prophecy of Isaiah regarding the new name to be borne by God's children. **And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name** (Isa. 62:2). Thus, Paul was specifically named in this passage, upon the occasion of his baptism, as the name-bearer of the new name that God would give unto his people" [Coffman].

07. 9:17... and be filled with the Holy Ghost—"The reference to being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' was, we believe, an allusion to the Spirit's empowerment of this man as an apostle of Christ... Ananias was a preliminary instrument in the process that would lead to Paul's spiritual endowment, the Holy Spirit was not conveyed to the penitent Hebrew by means of Ananias' hands. As a non-apostle, the Damascus disciple did not have such power; that acquisition was to be provided directly by the Lord Himself (Mt 3:11; Acts 2:33; 2 Cor 11:5; 12:11). The New Testament does not cite the precise time when Saul was immersed in the power of the Spirit. The notion that the reception of Saul's sight and the endowment of the Holy Spirit occurred at the same time, is not demanded by the text under consideration (cf., Woods, I.62)" [Jackson, p. 111].

II. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: The Period of the Church.

9:23... And after that many days were fulfilled—"It is obvious that Luke did not here stress the exact chronology of the events narrated. Boles gave, as the probable chronology of the events in view here, the following: (1) Saul was struck down on the Damascus road (Acts 9:3-8). (2) Three days of blindness and prayer (Acts 9:8). (3) Sight restored, baptized and received the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:10-19). (4) Preached Christ and confounded the Jews (Acts 9:19-22). (5) Made a sudden departure to Arabia for further study and communion with God (Gal. 1:17,18). (6) Came back to Damascus and renewed his preaching with such force that the Jews decided to kill him (Acts 9:23). (This was three years after his baptism.) (7) The plot to kill Paul was discovered, and he escaped to Jerusalem (Acts 9:24,25). (8) The Christians were afraid of him (Acts 9:26). (9) Barnabas took up his cause and recommended him (Acts 9:27-29). (10) Paul began preaching where Stephen left off (Acts 9:29). (11) There was another plot to kill him (Acts 9:29). (12) The Jerusalem church sent him to Tarsus (Acts 9:30)" [Coffman].

III. Summary.

This reading provides information regarding the conversion of the most noted evangelist we read about in the New Testament. When we study about the conversion of Saul, it is important to remember that Paul gives a recounting of his conversion on two occasions: first before the Council in Jerusalem and then before King Agrippa (Acts 22:1-21; 26:1-20). His first exposure to THE WAY (followers of Jesus Christ), caused him zealously to oppose the movement. No doubt, Saul was convinced that it was God's will that he fight against the sect of the Nazarene (Acts 23:1). However, on the road to Damascus the Lord appeared to him and Saul's life made a 180-degree turn; now he would ZEALOUSLY defend Christianity and feel indebted to spread the saving message of forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Rom 1:14). The false idea that Saul was converted on the road to Damascus is easily seen to be false by a careful reading of the text. At first, after Saul's conversion, brethren still feared Saul, but Barnabas helped to convince the brethren that the power of the gospel had changed this devoted Pharisee into a Christian.

IV. Outline.

1. Saul seeks and obtains authority to imprison Christians (Acts 9:1-2).
2. The Exalted Christ appears to Saul on the road to Damascus (9:3-6a).
3. Saul is instructed to go into the city to be told what he must do (9:6b-9).
4. Ananias is sent to Saul (9:10-16).
5. Ananias lays hands on Saul and his vision immediately returns—Saul is baptized (9:17-18).
6. Saul preaches Christ (9:19-22).
7. Saul receives persecution and escapes Damascus in a basket (9:23-25).
8. Christians in Jerusalem are reluctant to welcome Saul into their fellowship (9:26).
9. Barnabas speaks up for Saul (9:27).
10. Saul preaches in Jerusalem and Tarsus (9:28-30).

V. Questions.**True or False**

01. _____ Saul was on his way to Damascus to bind Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem.
02. _____ In this text Saul fasted for 3 days.
03. _____ Saul immediately received a warm welcome from the brethren at Jerusalem.
04. _____ The term CHOSEN VESSEL is used in this text for Peter.
05. _____ Saul escaped from Damascus in a basket.

Multiple Choice (Select the BEST Answer)

06. _____ In this chapter Christianity is described as: (a) a sect; (b) this way; (c) heresy.
07. _____ Who, in this chapter, had a vision: (a) Ananias; (b) Saul; (c) Peter; (d) a & b; (e) a, b, & c.
08. _____ Christians are identified by what name(s) in this chapter: (a) disciples of the Lord; (b) saints; (c) the brethren; (d) the Grecians; (e) a, b, & c; (f) all of the above.
09. _____ What word was used to indicate WHEN Saul began to preach Christ: (a) quickly; (b) soon; (c) straightway.
10. _____ The meaning of the word ASSAYED is: (a) attempted; (b) desired; (c) thought about.

MATCHING

- | | |
|--------------|------------------|
| A. JERUSALEM | E. CHIEF PRIESTS |
| B. BARNABAS | F. DAMASCUS |
| C. JUDAS' | G. ANANIAS |
| D. SAUL | H. PETER |

11. _____ Saul had authority from them.
12. _____ Peter lived here a while.
13. _____ Where Ananias found Saul.
14. _____ Destination of Christians Saul would bind.
15. _____ Confounded the Jews.

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week's handout

ANSWERS to Acts 8 Questions... [01—False, Acts 8:34; 02—True, Acts 8:8; 03—False, Acts 8:27; 04—False; 05—True, Acts 8:20; 06—b, Acts 8:18; 07—c, Acts 8:39; 08—c, Acts 8:31; 09—a, Acts 8:22; 10—b, Acts 8:1-40; 11—great, lamentation, Acts 8:2; 12—kingdom, God, Jesus, Christ, Acts 8:12; 13—purchased, money, God, Acts 8:20; 14—The, Spirit, Acts 8:29; 15—Isaiah, Acts 8:28, 35.]

VI. Lessons & Applications.

1. **...BREATHING OUT THREATENINGS AND SLAUGHTER AGAINST THE DISCIPLES OF THE LORD** (Acts 9:1). Misguided But zealous enemies of Christ WILL oppose the truth with great force! The question is, WILL Christians use the POWER available to them (Rom 1:16) to resist and overcome that force (cf., Rev 2:7)???
2. **A PHILIP builds up the church; a SAUL makes havoc of it** (Acts 8:3). Are YOU a PHILIP or a SAUL?
3. **...ARISE, AND GO INTO THE CITY, AND IT SHALL BE TOLD THEE WHAT THOU MUST DO** (Acts 9:6). The idea that Saul was saved ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS is **false!!!** He was not even told the answer to his question—“**LORD, WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO**”—until Ananias came to him IN Damascus.
4. The primary purpose of Saul's arrest was not to make him a Christian, but to make him an apostle (cf., Acts 26:16-18). Obviously enough, he could not become an apostle without first becoming a Christian. [Frank L. Cox, *Treatises of Luke*, p. 172].
5. **...HE PREACHED CHRIST IN THE SYNAGOGUES, ... IS NOT THIS HE THAT DESTROYED THEM WHICH CALLED ON THIS NAME IN JERUSALEM...** (Acts 9:20-21). Paul, himself, is one of the finest personifications of his own writing about walking **IN NEWNESS OF LIFE** (Rom 6:4).
6. **...BUT BARNABAS TOOK HIM, AND BROUGHT HIM TO THE APOSTLES...** (Acts 9:27). Barnabas, the great encourager, is encouraging one who was yet to be proved. He was willing to extend MERCY and take a chance with Saul. What about us today? Study James 2:13.

VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.

T W C M U L T I P L I E D X S W E S D T
 S V H F R T P G B N H Y V U J M K P I H
 I L O S M N R B V C X Z A I Q W S A X R
 R O S A U L O F T A R S U S L D P K O E
 H I E I U Y V T R E M W Q L K E J E H A
 C G N N F D I S A M N A B V C L X B Z T
 D P V A O I N U Y T R E Z W Z L M O M E
 E N E N B V G C G X Z P M E Y I M L N N
 H B S A S T O N I S H E D T D F V D C I
 C X S Z L K I J H G F D I S A E A L P N
 A O E I U L Y T R E W C Q M N B B Y V G
 E C L X B Z L K J H E T G F D S A P O S
 R I N M I U Y T R H E E Q T H I S W A Y
 P A E Z X S W E T D C K V F R T U B N M
 L R O I U Y T O R E W S Q A Z X C C D E
 T C D E R F T V B G T A N H Y U S M N B
 V D E W Q N A Z X S W B C D E R A V F R
 V F R T I B X B A R N A B A S X M S W X
 X S W O C D E R F V B N B G T Y A Z A Q
 X C G A F R A I D O F I X S W V D D R L

[The words (or word locaters) listed below are to be found in the text of our lesson. They also are found in the puzzle above. This is just one more way to reinforce what you have studied from the text. Why not read the whole verse where the word is found one more time as you do the puzzle? Thank you for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. Let's desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow (1 Pet 2:2). DRL]

Acts 9:1-31

threatenings, 1
 this way, 2
 Damascus, 3
 trembling, 6
 astonished, 6
 go into the city, 6
 Ananias, 10
 Saul of Tarsus, 11
 evil, 13
 chosen vessel, 15

be filled, 17
 preached Christ, 20
 amazed, 21
 proving, 22
 in a basket, 25
 afraid of, 26
 Barnabas, 27
 spake boldly, 29
 multiplied, 31

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