

Acts Chapter 9 Continued

Acts 9:20 "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God."

“He is the Son of God”: The content of Paul’s message was that Jesus Christ is God (see notes on Heb. 1:4-5).

You can easily see that this transformation in Saul was immediate. Now he is just as strong for the Lord Jesus Christ, as he had been against Him. The difference is, now that his understanding has changed. Now he knows who Jesus is.

Saul will be bold in his preaching Jesus, because of this dramatic thing that has happened to him. Straightway means that just as soon as he received his sight, he went directly to the temple and preached. He had ready access to the temple. He was a Pharisee.

Acts 9:21 "But all that heard [him] were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?"

The amazing thing to those who heard Saul was that just a few days before, he had been capturing and punishing the followers of this Jesus that he now proclaimed so openly. People who had never believed before would believe now, because of where this came from.

Acts 9:22 "But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ."

Who would be better to confound the Jews than one of their very own? Even more than that, He had been so strongly against Jesus as the Christ (Messiah). Now that this strong Pharisee of the Pharisees believes Jesus was the Christ (Messiah), perhaps, they had better take another look, too.

Saul knew the law; he had been trained in their schools. Saul could prove to them from their own Scriptures who Jesus was because He fulfilled every prophecy about Messiah from Genesis all the way through Malachi.

Acts 9:23 "And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:"

“After that many days were fulfilled”: A period of 3 years, in which he ministered in Nabatean Arabia, an area encompassing Damascus south to the Sinai Peninsula (see notes on Galatians 1:17-18).

The “many days” of this verse allow for Saul’s lengthy stay in Arabia (Gal. 1:17-18). Then after another brief ministry in Damascus he fled to Jerusalem, returning to that city three years after he first left from Damascus (Gal. 1:18).

They could not disprove what he was saying through the Scriptures, and suddenly the rulers in the temple become afraid that he will convert everyone, so they decide the only way to stop him is to kill him.

Acts 9:24 "But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him."

“Gates”: Damascus was a walled city; thus, the gates were the only conventional means of escape.

They felt at some time he would leave this town, and they would capture him as he left through one of the city gates. Saul knew of their plot to kill him.

Acts 9:25 "Then the disciples took him by night, and let [him] down by the wall in a basket."

“Let him down by the wall in a basket”: “Basket” was a large woven hamper suitable for hay, straw, or bales of wool.

The hunter had become the hunted, now that he was boldly proclaiming Jesus Christ is Messiah. The very people, that he had hunted and persecuted before, are the ones who let him down the side of the wall in a basket to safety. He was numbered among the disciples himself now.

Acts 9:26 "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple."

Assayed means he attempted to join the other disciples. He had been such a cruel pursuer of the disciples before that his name had been passed among the disciples as someone to avoid at all cost. His conversion to Jesus was so recent, that word had not reached Jerusalem yet, and the disciples did not believe him when he told them he was a disciple too.

Acts 9:27 "But Barnabas took him, and brought [him] to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."

“Barnabas” (see note on 4:36).

Many believe that the happenings spoken of (in Galatians 1:17-19), indicate that Saul had been a Christian hidden in the Arabian desert three years before this visit to Jerusalem occurs. We do know that Paul, in Galatians, says that he did not go to Jerusalem until after the three years.

For our study here, it doesn't matter when it happened, only that it did happen before the disciples believed Saul to be one of them. Barnabas believed Saul and took him to the apostles.

Acts 9:28 "And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem."

The apostles, after hearing his testimony, believed him. In fact, he stayed with them and went in and out of the city of Jerusalem with them.

Acts 9:29 "And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him."

“Grecians”: The same group Stephen debated (see note on 6:1).

Saul was an aggressive man and he spoke boldly. These Grecians were Jews and were caught up in the law. They had not accepted Jesus as the Christ. The boldness of Saul frightened them, and they tried to kill him to get him quieted down.

Acts 9:30 "[Which] when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus."

“Caesarea”: (8:40). An important port city on the Mediterranean located 30 miles north of Joppa. As the capital of the Roman province of Judea and the home of the Roman procurator, it served as the headquarters of a large Roman garrison.

“Sent him forth to Tarsus”: Paul disappeared from prominent ministry for several years, although he possibly founded some churches around Syria and Cilicia (15:23; Gal. 1:21).

“Tarsus” was the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia and was located in the southeast corner of Asia Minor, 10 miles inland from the Mediterranean. The extent of its ruins has caused some to estimate the population as exceeding half a million during Roman times. Tarsus was a noted academic center, being surpassed only by Athens and Alexandria.

It was known for its school of Stoic philosophers. Tarsus is mentioned only in Acts and always with reference to Paul’s life. Paul was born there (22:3), and though he spent much of his youth in Jerusalem, shortly after his conversion he returned and probably remained about 10 years (verse 30 with 11:25).

During those years, Paul no doubt helped establish many churches in Cilicia, including Tarsus. Paul implies this by stating that he went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia during this time (Gal. 1:21), and then confirms it by going back several years later (second journey) to strengthen those same churches (15:41).

Saul was known as Saul of Tarsus, so this had to be his home town. Caesarea was on the sea coast, and perhaps they sent him by ship. Tarsus was in Cilicia. Cilicia was in the south-east province of Asia Minor. He would be safe in Tarsus.

Acts 9:31 "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."

“The churches rest throughout all Judaea”: Paul’s conversion and political changes contributed to the rest. A stricter Roman governor and the expansion of Herod Agrippa’s authority restricted the persecution.

This verse summarizes a period of almost 10 years in the life of the early Jewish churches, during which peace and prosperity prevailed, and about which the Book of Acts is otherwise silent.

When Saul left for his home in Tarsus, it seems the Jewish rulers let up for a while on persecuting the Christians. It seemed they were just let alone, and they became strong in numbers and in the Holy Ghost. The beginning of wisdom is to fear the Lord.

They became almost a country within a country. They went about their worship as usual, but without as much fanfare as before, and the temple rulers almost forgot about their existence. It was a time of peace and rest for the church.

Acts 9:32 "And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all [quarters], he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda."

“Lydda”: Lod in the Old Testament. Located about 10 miles southeast of Joppa, it was a hub servicing roads from Egypt to Syria and from Joppa to Jerusalem.

About the time that Saul traveled to Damascus and Philip headed toward Caesarea, “Peter” had an itinerant ministry throughout Judea and Samaria which ultimately brings him to Caesarea.

It appears Peter was travelling through the countryside proclaiming Jesus Christ the Messiah to all who would listen. The reason for the peace was possibly because most of this ministering now was outside Jerusalem.

Lydda was a town about 11 miles out of Joppa. Two other names Lydda was called by was Lod or Lud. These saints were those converted to Christianity. Lydda was an area of working people. This had been a pagan city before.

Acts 9:33 "And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy."

“Aeneas”: Apparently, an unbeliever (verse 36), whose paralysis was incurable by the limited medical knowledge of that day.

Peter was so full of the power of God, that he just spoke the name of Jesus Christ to this man who had been sick of the palsy eight years, and the man was immediately healed. Palsy is a disease of the central nervous system that gets worse as time passes.

Acts 9:34 "And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately."

We see the power in the name of Jesus Christ. He was immediately healed.

Acts 9:35 "And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord."

“Sharon”: The plain surrounding Lydda and Joppa and extending north to Caesarea.

We see here the results of such a miracle. It caused all who knew to believe. Jesus said, if you didn't believe for any other reason, then believe because of the miracles.

Acts 9:36 "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did."

“Joppa” was the seaport city that before the time of Christ served as the harbor for Jerusalem and Judea (Jonah 1:3). It is about 35 miles northwest of Jerusalem, south of Tel Aviv. Shortly before the birth of Christ, Caesarea with its harbor was developed and the commerce of Palestine shifted from the Jewish city of Joppa to the Gentile city of Caesarea.

Joppa is mentioned in the New Testament only (in Acts 9 – 11). At Joppa Peter raised the godly woman Tabitha from the dead. Shortly thereafter he received a vision of a sheet let down from heaven, which God used to prepare him to take the gospel to Gentiles at Caesarea.

Until that time no one had taken the gospel to uncircumcised Gentiles. Cornelius would be the first to accept the gospel (11:1, 18; 15:7, 14). Today, Joppa is a major city named Jaffa and is part of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality.

“Tabitha”: She was more commonly known by her Greek name, “Dorcas”. Both names mean “gazelle.”

Remember, Joppa is eleven miles from Lydda. Notice here, that a disciple can be a woman, as well as a man. This Dorcas was not just a Christian in word only, but was a doer of the Word, as well. Verse 36 says she was full of good works. Her belief was her life. Her Jewish name was Tabitha and her Greek name was Dorcas.

Acts 9:37 "And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid [her] in an upper chamber."

“Upper chamber”: This arrangement was similar to that of the upstairs room (in 1:13; 2:1). While it was customary to bury a body immediately, the believers in Joppa had another plan.

Acts 9:38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring [him] that he would not delay to come to them."

“Nigh to Joppa”: 10 miles southeast.

Notice that she was not embalmed. She was Jewish and they do not embalm their dead. She was washed. These disciples here, did not have enough confidence in their own prayers. They knew that Peter was close by, and that Peter could call on God to raise Dorcas from the dead in the name of Jesus Christ. They sent two men to get Peter.

Acts 9:39 "Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them."

“Coats and garments”: Close fitting undergarments and long outer robes.

She would be greatly missed, because she had made beautiful clothing for all of them. She was a very unselfish woman. She had ministered to all of them.

Acts 9:40 "But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning [him] to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up."

Notice the humbleness of Peter, he kneeled. His prayer was to the Father in the name of Jesus. He spoke to her in Jewish since she was Jewish and he was Jewish also. Peter did not do this for show. He sent the women out. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James 5:16). Tabitha arose and sat up.

Acts 9:41 "And he gave her [his] hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive."

What a time of rejoicing. This wonderful unselfish child of God is now alive. The revival was overwhelming

Acts 9:42 "And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord."

If anything would cause someone to believe, this should be it. Revival broke forth in Joppa.

Acts 9:43 "And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner."

“One Simon a tanner” (10:5-6). Peter breaks down a cultural barrier by staying with a tanner, an occupation despised by Jewish society because the tanner dealt with the skins of dead animals. The local synagogue probably shunned Simon.

Acts Chapter 9 Continued Questions

1. What message did Saul preach in the Synagogue?
2. What were the people in the temple amazed about?

3. In verse 22, we find that Saul increased in _____.
4. What did he prove to the Jews at Damascus?
5. After many days, the Jews took counsel to _____ him.
6. Where had they planned to capture Saul?
7. How did the disciples help Saul to escape?
8. What does the word assayed mean?
9. Why did they not want to join Saul?
10. Who was the one who believed Saul and took him to the apostles?
11. What did he tell the apostles about Saul?
12. What does Galatians 1:17-19 indicate?
13. Saul spoke boldly in what name?
14. Who did he dispute against?
15. What did the local authorities want to do with Saul?
16. Where did the brethren take Saul to help him escape?
17. What was the name of Saul's hometown?
18. Where was Cilicia located?
19. Verse 31 tells us the church had rest where?
20. They walked in the _____ of the Lord and the _____ of the Holy Ghost.
21. Peter came to what city?
22. How long had Aeneas been sick?
23. What disease did Aeneas have?
24. Who did Peter tell Aeneas made him whole?
25. What effect did this miracle have on the people of Lydda and Sharon?

26. What was the Jewish name of the lady disciple in verse 36?
27. What was her Greek name?
28. What had happened to her?
29. Why was everyone so grieved over her?
30. How do we know she was not embalmed?
31. What did Peter do besides pray for Dorcas?
32. When she was raised from the dead, what effect did it have on the people?
33. Who did Peter stay with in Joppa?