

LESSON 11



JESUS APPEARS TO PAUL

Scripture Text: Acts 9:1-20

Compare our Scripture text with Acts 22:1-16. Similar to Stephen in fearlessness, zeal, and sincerity was the young man whose name was Saul. But he was on the other side. When Stephen was stoned to death, Saul was consenting to it. After that, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison, and killed some. He was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin and was a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5). He was born a Roman citizen in Tarsus (Acts 22:27-28). He studied in Jerusalem under Gamaliel, a leading teacher of the Law. He may have been one of them of Cilicia who disputed with Stephen.

MEMORY VERSE: *I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.*

Acts 26:19

Saul's Character and Zeal

Acts 9:1-2 Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord—so full of hatred toward followers of Jesus that it came out in words, actions, and attitude. Saul's persecutions had mostly been confined to the city of Jerusalem. The murder of Stephen had caused the enemies of the Jerusalem church to step up persecutions so severe that the saints had scattered, seeking safety. Probably nothing else could have spread the Gospel so fast. They **went every where preaching the word** (Acts 8:4). Now he **went unto the high priest, and desired . . . letters—permits—if he found any of this way—Christ's way—might bring them bound—take them prisoners**. Now he had proper authority to go beyond the bounds of Jerusalem—**to Damascus to the synagogues**—a Syrian city located 150 miles away. This indicated the unmercifulness of Saul's zeal.

Saul's Vision of Jesus

Acts 9:3-9 Suddenly there shined round about him—it came suddenly—a **light from heaven**—over him from above. It was about noon, and the light was above the brightness of the sun. No doubt, this was the same light which had shown on the face of Moses and later was seen in the transfiguration. It blinded Saul. **Fell to the earth**—powerless—a **voice . . . Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?** Jesus and His people are so closely united that harm to them strikes Him. Saul thought he was persecuting Jesus' followers only. When people persecute Christians, they persecute Christ. **Who art thou, Lord?**—knew it was One greater than himself. **I am Jesus**—he saw Jesus and heard Him speak to him (Acts 9:27), and in 1 Corinthians 9:1, he declares to have seen Jesus. What a revelation to Saul! He had thought Jesus an imposter, a mere man claiming to be the Messiah, attempting to overthrow the Jewish religion. **I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus** (Acts 26:9). **Hard for thee to kick against the pricks**—as an ox kicking back against the goad would but injure itself. Saul was beginning to be pricked in conscience, and he was opposing the stirring of conscience and reason which God had set moving in his heart by Stephen's example and the spirit in which other saints had met Saul's persecutions. There was conflict in Saul's mind. He was not at peace, even with the papers of authority. The long journey to Damascus had given him time to think over his actions, and he was in a good state of mind to receive the vision and the call.

Trembling and astonished—greatly affected by fear and astonishment—**Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?**—complete surrender, no conditions. This was the turning point in Saul's life. It was here that he turned from

doing what he thought he ought to do, and did what the Lord wanted him to do. From persecuting Jesus, he turns to serving Him. Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee—instead of Jesus telling him Himself, He had a man there to do it. He reserved that work for one of His followers. He uses men and women to do this work, making it an opportunity for both the giver and receiver to have a blessing. **The men . . . with him . . . speechless, hearing a voice . . . seeing no man**—they heard the voice but did not understand the Words. Saul only, saw Jesus and understood the Words. (Read Acts 26:13-15.) **Saul arose . . . saw no man—blind—led him by the hand . . .** The one who led others, bound, to prison, is now being led to Damascus.

The Street Called Straight

Acts 9:10-16 And the Lord said . . . go into the street . . . called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for . . . Saul. Ananias was in shape spiritually for the Lord to use him. The directions are given in detail. Nothing is left to chance. Ananias knew exactly what he was supposed to do. **For, behold, he prayeth.** Saul, being a Pharisee, had said many prayers; now he was praying. He was praying in the right spirit and for the right cause. God was preparing Saul to receive Ananias and preparing Ananias to go to Saul. When God sends us, He prepares the way before us. Ananias knew all about Saul, how he had persecuted the Christians even unto death. Nothing short of a vision from God would have motivated Ananias to go and call upon Saul. **The Lord said unto him, Go . . . he is a chosen vessel unto me.** God chooses the best. **To bear my name before the Gentiles . . .** Saul was to be an apostle first to the Gentiles. He stood before Gentile kings, and many Jews were saved under his ministry also.

Saul Received Sight

Acts 9:17-20 Ananias went—he believed and obeyed. **Putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul**—Blessed title! He was a brother now, born into the family of God. **Jesus . . . hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight**—physical sight—**and be filled with the Holy Ghost**—spiritual sight, the Holy Spirit would lead and direct him **from now on. Immediately . . . fell . . . scales . . . he received sight . . . arose . . . baptized**—no hesitation. Saved people want to obey. **Straightway he preached Christ . . . that he is the Son of God.** Saul had just learned this, and he could not keep it still. It was burning in his soul.

When Was Saul Saved?

Who can know for certain when Saul was saved? Salvation is a change from a condition of danger to one of safety, a transfer from the power of darkness to the kingdom of his dear Son, from serving Satan to serving God, from death in sin to life in Christ. Between the time Saul **fell to the earth** and when he **arose from the earth** a mighty change took place. He fell in rebellion against Jesus; he rose submitted to Him. He fell an unbeliever; he rose a believer. He fell a persecutor; he rose to pray. Saul received his sight. Have you received yours?

JUST A THOUGHT

**A church membership does not make one a Christian
any more than owning a piano makes
one a musician.**