

2/27/24, BIBLE STUDY / ACTS 9:1 > V:31

GOD ARRESTS SAUL / FROM TERRORIST TO EVANGELIST

BACKGROUND

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS, THE LEADING PERSECUTOR OF THE CHRISTIANS, WAS PERHAPS THE GREATEST EVENT IN CHURCH HISTORY AFTER THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT AT PENTECOST. THE NEXT GREAT EVENT WOULD BE THE CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS AND THE GENTILES IN ACTS 10 > SAUL (PAUL) WOULD BECOME THE APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES. GOD WAS CONTINUING TO WORK OUT HIS PLAN TO BRING THE GOSPEL TO THE WHOLE WORLD.

- THE ACCOUNT OF THE CONVERSION OF SAUL IS PRESENTED 3 TIMES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS > CHPTS.9,22, AND 26. IN ACTS 9, SAUL EXPERIENCED 4 MEETINGS THAT TRANSFORMED HIS LIFE.

1. V:1-9, SAUL MET JESUS CHRIST.
2. V:10-19, SAUL MET ANANIAS.
3. V:20-25, SAUL MET THE OPPOSITION.
4. V:26-31, SAUL MET THE JERUSALEM BELIEVERS.

TONIGHT IN OUR LESSON STUDY WE WILL EXAMINE THESE 4 MEETINGS.

1. READ V:1-9, SAUL MET JESUS CHRIST

- SAUL IN ACTS 9:1-2, WAS A ZEALOUS MAN WHO THOUGHT HE WAS DOING GOD A SERVICE BY PERSECUTING THE CHURCH. SAUL'S ATTITUDE WAS THAT OF AN ANGRY ANIMAL, WHOSE VERY BREATH WAS DANGEROUS, ACTS 8:3. HE BELIEVED THAT THE LAW HAD TO BE OBEYED BEFORE THE MESSIAH WOULD COME. HE THOUGHT > "WOULD GOD TAKE A CURSED FALSE PROPHET AND MAKE HIM THE MESSIAH? HIS FOLLOWERS WERE PREACHING THAT JESUS WAS ALIVE AND DOING MIRACLES THROUGH THEM, BUT THEIR POWER WAS COMING FROM SATAN, NOT GOD. THEY WERE A DANGEROUS SECT AND NEEDED TO BE ELIMINATED BEFORE DESTROYING OUR HISTORIC JEWISH FAITH".

- IN SPITE OF HIS GREAT LEARNING, SAUL WAS SPIRITUALLY BLIND. HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT THE OLD TESTAMENT REALLY TAUGHT ABOUT THE MESSIAH.

HE STUMBLED OVER THE CROSS **1 COR. 1:23**, BECAUSE HE DEPENDED ON HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND NOT ON THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

- THERE WERE A LARGE NUMBER OF JEWS IN DAMASCUS AND CLOSE TO 40 SYNAGOGUES. THERE WERE ALREADY BELIEVERS THERE, INDICATING HOW EFFECTIVE THE CHURCH HAD BEEN IN GETTING OUT THE GOSPEL. BELIEVERS WERE STILL IDENTIFIED WITH THE JEWISH SYNAGOGUES FOR THE BREAK WITH JUDAISM WOULD COME IN A FEW YEARS.

- **BUT**, ON HIS WAY TO DAMASCUS TO ARREST OTHERS, THE LORD ARRESTED HIM. AT MIDDAY, SAUL FOUND HIMSELF ON THE GROUND **V:4**, IN A PERSONAL MEETING WITH JESUS. THE MEN WITH HIM ALSO FELL TO THE EARTH **26:14**, AND HEARD THE SOUND, BUT THEY COULD NOT UNDERSTAND THE WORDS SPOKEN FROM HEAVEN. THE MEN STOOD TO THEIR FEET IN BEWILDERMENT **V:7**, HEARING SAUL ADDRESS SOMEONE, BUT NOT KNOWING WHAT WAS HAPPENING.

- **SAUL MADE SEVERAL DISCOVERIES THAT DAY.**

1. JESUS OF NAZARETH WAS ALIVE. IF JESUS WAS ALIVE, THEN SAUL HAD TO CHANGE HIS MIND ABOUT JESUS AND HIS MESSAGE. HE HAD TO REPENT, A DIFFICULT THING FOR A SELF RIGHTEOUS PHARISEE TO DO.

- SAUL'S CONVERSION EXPERIENCE IS UNIQUE BECAUSE SINNERS TODAY DO NOT HEAR GOD'S VOICE OR SEE BLINDING HEAVENLY LIGHTS. HOWEVER, SAUL'S EXPERIENCE IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED WHEN JESUS CHRIST RETURNS AND REVEALS HIMSELF TO THEM **ZECH. 12:10**.

2. HE WAS A LOST SINNER WHO IS IN DANGER OF THE JUDGMENT OF GOD.

V:5, "**I AM JESUS WHOM YOU HAVE BEEN PERSECUTING**". SAUL THOUGHT HE HAD BEEN SERVING GOD WHEN IN REALITY HE HAD BEEN PERSECUTING THE MESSIAH.

3. THE LORD HAD A SPECIAL WORK FOR SAUL TO DO. THE PERSECUTOR WOULD BECOME THE PREACHER AND THE PHARISEE WOULD BECOME THE GREAT PROCLAIMER OF THE GRACE OF GOD.

4. THE MEN LED SAUL INTO THE CITY V:8-9. THE ANGRY BULL HAD BECOME A DOCILE LAMB. THE LEADER HAD TO BE LED BECAUSE THE VISION HAD LEFT HIM BLIND. HIS SPIRITUAL EYES HAD BEEN OPENED, BUT HIS PHYSICAL EYES WERE CLOSED. GOD WAS HUMBLING SAUL AND PREPARING HIM FOR THE MINISTRY OF ANANIAS. HE FASTED AND PRAYED FOR THREE DAYS. HE HAD BEEN SAVED BY

GRACE, NOT BY THE LAW, THROUGH FAITH IN THE LIVING JESUS CHRIST. GOD BEGAN TO INSTRUCT SAUL AND SHOW HIM THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE TRADITIONAL MOSAIC RELIGION THAT HE HAD PRACTICED ALL HIS LIFE.

2. READ V:10-19, SAUL MET ANANIAS

- **IN V:10-14**, ANANIAS WAS A DEVOUT JEW, WHO WAS A BELIEVER IN JESUS CHRIST. HE KNEW THE REPUTATION OF SAUL AND THAT HE WAS COMING TO DAMASCUS TO ARREST BELIEVERS. IT WAS A WEEKS JOURNEY FROM JERUSALEM TO DAMASCUS. SOME OF THE JERUSALEM CHRISTIANS HAD ARRIVED TO THE CITY FIRST IN ORDER TO WARN THE SAINTS.

- **V:11**, ANANIAS WAS AVAILABLE TO DO GOD'S WILL, BUT HE WAS NOT ANXIOUS TO OBEY. THE FACT THAT SAUL WAS PRAYING AND NOT PREYING SHOULD HAVE ENCOURAGED HIM.

- **V:15**, IS A GOOD SUMMARY OF PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY. IT WAS ALL OF GRACE, FOR HE DID NOT CHOOSE GOD, IT WAS GOD WHO CHOSE HIM **1 TIM.1:14**. GOD'S NAME WOULD BE GLORIFIED AS HIS SERVANT WOULD TAKE THE GOSPEL TO JEWS AND GENTILES.

- **V:16-19**, ONCE CONVINCED, ANANIAS WENT TO THE HOUSE OF JUDAS AND MINISTERED TO THE WAITING SAUL. BY THE POWER OF GOD, HIS EYES WERE OPENED AND HE COULD SEE. HE WAS ALSO FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ORDER TO PROCLAIM CHRIST, BAPTIZED, AND THEN HE ATE SOME FOOD.

- **THIS SECTION EMPHASIZES SOME PRACTICAL LESSONS FOR ALL BELIEVERS.**

1. GOD CAN USE THE MOST OBSCURE SAINT > ANANIAS.

2. THE EXPERIENCE OF ANANIAS REMINDS US THAT WE SHOULD NEVER BE AFRAID TO OBEY GOD'S WILL.

3. GOD'S WORKS ARE ALWAYS BALANCED. GOD BALANCED A GREAT PUBLIC MIRACLE (THE BRIGHT LIGHT AND VOICE FROM HEAVEN) WITH A QUIET MEETING IN THE HOUSE OF JUDAS.

4. NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE VALUE OF ONE PERSON BROUGHT TO CHRIST. ANANIAS WAS SENT TO ONLY ONE MAN > SAUL.

3. READ V:20-25, SAUL MET THE OPPOSITION

- SAUL IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO PROCLAIM THE CHRIST THAT HE HAD PERSECUTED, DECLARING BOLDLY THAT JESUS WAS THE SON OF GOD. THE DRAMATIC CHANGE IN SAUL'S LIFE WAS A SOURCE OF WONDER TO THE JEWS AT DAMASCUS. IT IS LIKELY THAT SAUL'S VISIT TO ARABIA **GAL.1:17**, TOOK PLACE AROUND THIS TIME. WE DO NOT KNOW HOW LONG HE REMAINED IN ARABIA, BUT WE DO KNOW THAT AFTER THREE YEARS, HE WAS BACK IN JERUSALEM, **GAL.1:18**.

- WHY DID HE GO TO ARABIA? PROBABLY BECAUSE GOD INSTRUCTED HIM TO GO ALONE, SO THAT HE MIGHT TEACH HIM HIS WORD. THERE WERE MANY THINGS THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE CLARIFIED IN SAUL'S MIND BEFORE HE COULD MINISTER EFFECTIVELY AS AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST.

- THE IMPORTANT THING ABOUT HIS ARABIAN JOURNEY WAS THAT SAUL DID NOT CONFER WITH FLESH AND BLOOD. HE RECEIVED HIS MESSAGE AND MANDATE DIRECTLY FROM THE LORD, **GAL.1:10-24**. HE DID NOT BORROW ANYTHING FROM THE APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM, BECAUSE HE DID NOT MEET THEM UNTIL 3 YEARS AFTER HIS CONVERSION.

- WHEN SAUL RETURNED TO DAMASCUS, HE BEGAN HIS WITNESS AFRESH, AND THE JEWS SOUGHT TO KILL HIM, SO HE ESCAPED TO JERUSALEM. THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE "GREAT THINGS" HE WOULD SUFFER FOR THE NAME OF CHRIST, **V:16**.

4. V:26-31, SAUL MET THE JERUSALEM BELIEVERS.

THERE WERE 2 STAGES IN SAUL'S EXPERIENCE WITH THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM.

1. V:26, HE WAS REJECTED.

- THE BELIEVERS IN JERUSALEM WERE AFRAID OF HIM. THEY DID NOT BELIEVE THAT HE WAS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST, LET ALONE AN APOSTLE WHO HAD SEEN THE RISEN SAVIOR. WHAT RIGHT DID HE HAVE TO CALL HIMSELF AN APOSTLE WHEN HE HAD NOT BEEN SELECTED BY JESUS CHRIST.

2. V:27-31, HE WAS ACCEPTED.

- IT WAS BARNABAS (JOSEPH, "THE SON OF ENCOURAGEMENT" IN **ACTS 4:36-37**) WHO HELPED THE JERUSALEM CHURCH ACCEPT SAUL. WE WILL MEET BARNABAS AGAIN AS WE CONTINUE THROUGH THE BOOK OF ACTS. BARNABAS TOOK HOLD OF

SAUL, BROUGHT HIM TO CHURCH LEADERS, AND CONVINCED THEM THAT SAUL WAS BOTH A BELIEVER AND A CHOSEN APOSTLE, THAT SAUL HAD INDEED SEEN THE RISEN CHRIST, **1 COR.9:1**.

- **V:29**, SAUL BEGAN TO WITNESS TO THE GREEK SPEAKING JEWS, THE HELLENISTS THAT ENGINEERED THE TRIAL AND DEATH OF STEPHEN **6:9-15**. SAUL WAS ONE OF THEM, HAVING BEEN BORN AND RAISED IN TARSUS. NO DOUBT HE FELT AN OBLIGATION TO TAKE UP THE MANTLE LEFT BY STEPHEN, **22:20**. THE HELLENISTIC JEWS WERE NOT ABOUT TO PERMIT THIS KIND OF WITNESS, SO THEY PLOTTED TO KILL HIM.

- **READ ACTS 22:17-21**, GOD SPOKE TO SAUL IN THE TEMPLE AND REMINDED HIM OF HIS COMMISSION TO TAKE THE MESSAGE TO THE GENTILES. GOD URGENTLY COMMANDED HIM TO LEAVE JERUSALEM. SAUL SHARED THIS MESSAGE WITH THE CHURCH LEADERS AND THEY ASSISTED HIM IN RETURNING TO HIS NATIVE CITY, TARSUS.

- WE WILL NOT MEET SAUL AGAIN UNTIL **ACTS 11:25**, WHEN ONCE MORE IT IS BARNABAS WHO FINDS HIM AND BRINGS HIM TO THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH, WHERE THEY MINISTERED TOGETHER. THAT TOOK PLACE SEVEN YEARS AFTER SAUL LEFT JERUSALEM AND 10 YEARS AFTER HIS CONVERSION. SAUL USED TARSUS AS HIS HEADQUARTERS FOR TAKING THE GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES IN THAT PART OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, WHERE HE MINISTERED IN SYRIA AND CILICIA. SOON, THE CENTER WOULD BE ANTIOCH, NOT JERUSALEM. THE KEY LEADER PAUL, NOT PETER, AND THE GOSPEL WOULD BE TAKEN TO THE UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH.

- **V:31**, IT WAS A TIME OF PEACE FOR THE CHURCHES. THEY GREW SPIRITUALLY AND NUMERICALLY.

- THE DOOR OF FAITH HAD BEEN OPENED TO THE JEWS IN **ACTS 2**, THE SAMARITANS IN **ACTS 8**, AND SOON IT WOULD BE OPENED TO THE GENTILES IN **ACTS 10**. SAUL HAS MOVED OFF THE SCENE AND PETER NOW RETURNS IN **9:32-10:48**. SOON PETER WILL MOVE OFF THE SCENE IN **ACTS 11**, EXCEPT FOR A BRIEF MENTION IN **ACTS 15**, PAUL WILL THEN FILL THE REMAINING PAGES OF THE BOOK OF ACTS.

TAKE AWAY:

- **GOD CHANGES HIS WORKMEN, BUT HIS WORK GOES ON. AMEN 🙏**