

# Book of Acts

## Chapter 9

*Theme: Conversion of Saul and  
Peter's healings of Aeneas and raising of Dorcus*

# Saul's Family

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✦ Saul owed three things to his father :

- 1) His status as a Roman citizen.
- 2) His status as a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin.
  - Likely called after the most illustrious member of the tribe, the first king of Israel, who lived over 1,000 years before.
  - Luke, who records Saul's Jewish name over 20 times says nothing of his tribal origin, whereas he, Saul, who tells us of his tribal origin, never mentions his Hebrew name in any of his many letters).
- 3) His father's example, which encouraged Saul to follow in his footsteps as a Pharisee.

# Saul's Family

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- ✦ He had at least one sister, whose son was used by God 35 years later to save him from a plot to have him killed - Acts 23:12-24

# Saul and Tarsus

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- ✦ Saul was born and raised here.
- ✦ Tarsus was a great trading center.
- ✦ It was the chief city of the Roman province of Cilicia.
- ✦ It was a seat of Greek learning – being one of the most prestigious university cities of the day.
- ✦ Saul owed the ease and proficiency with which he spoke, wrote and thought in Greek to the years he had spent at Tarsus, likely that there Saul became versed in the works of many of the great Greek philosophers and writers. (Acts 17)

# Saul and Jerusalem

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✦ Saul had been sent to Jerusalem, the heart and center of the Jewish faith – to study ‘at the feet’ of one Rabban Gamaliel.

- ✦ ‘Rabban’ being a more honorable title than ‘Rabbi.
- ✦ Rabban was a higher title than rabbi and was given to the Nasi (Prince of the Sanhedrin).
- ✦ Gamaliel, grandson of the famous Rabbi Hillel was the first Rabban.
- ✦ Only men related to Hillel by blood could be called Rabban.
- ✦ Rabban Gamaliel was, by far, the most respected Pharisee of his day.

# Saul and Jerusalem

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- ✦ At Gamaliel's feet Saul acquired much of the great man's piety and learning.
- ✦ Saul, however, imbibed precious little of Gamaliel's gentleness, tolerance and wisdom - Acts 5:14

# Saul and Jerusalem

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- ✦ Saul's crusade against the early church did not stop with imprisonment.
- ✦ When the saints then came up for trial, Saul did everything in his power to make them apostatize by denying the Lord Jesus.
- ✦ If this failed, and it therefore became a question of life or death for the prisoner, on every occasion he gave his vote against them.

# Saul and Damascus

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- ✦ Damascus, one of the most ancient cities in the world, now the capital of Syria, and a strategic location on the main trade route from Egypt around the Fertile Crescent to Mesopotamia.
- ✦ One of the oldest cities in the world. Tradition says it was built by Abraham or his steward, Eliezer. (Genesis 15:2)
- ✦ The longest street known in any Bible city was located in Damascus - the street called “Straight.”

# Saul and Damascus

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- ✦ Possibly, Saul regarded Damascus as an obvious escape route for the disciples dispersed from Jerusalem into such distant lands as Babylon and Assyria.
- ✦ There were several synagogues in Damascus, together with a sizeable Jewish population, numbering many tens of thousands.
- ✦ Saul fell into that category of which our Lord forewarned His disciples of in John 16, “the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service”.

# Introduction

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✦ “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

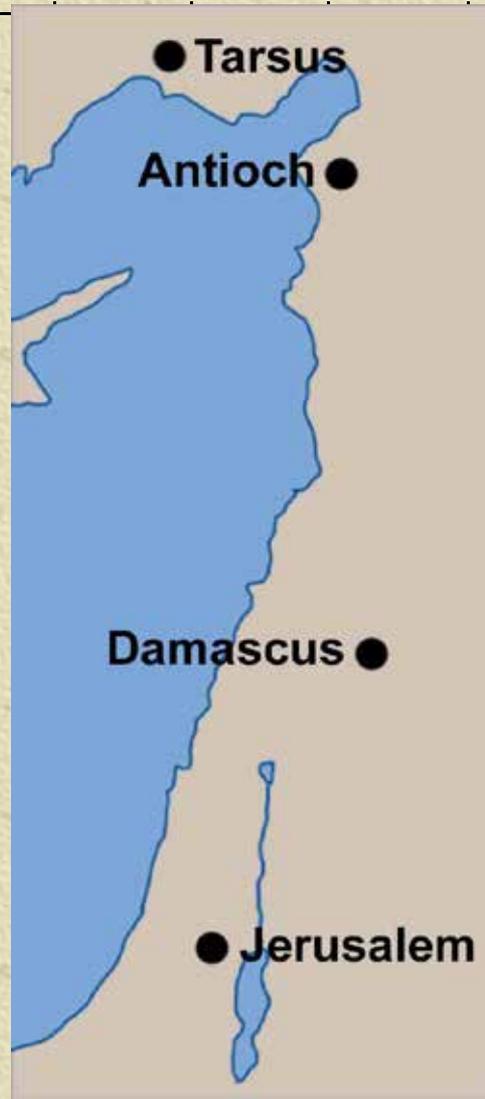
Acts 1:8

- ◆ Acts 8 – An African becomes a Christian (Ham)
- ◆ Acts 9 – An Asian becomes a Christian (Shem)
- ◆ Acts 10 – A European becomes a Christian (Japheth)

✦ IF: Acts 2 – reversal of “confusion of languages”, Gen 11:7, via speaking in tongues.

✦ THEN: Acts 8-10 – obliteration of continents and colors, Gen 11:8, via the Gospel of Christ.

# Basic Geography



# Acts 9:1

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- ✦ Saul's crusade against the early church did not stop with imprisonment.
- ✦ Intending to arrest every follower of Christ he could trace, he was, himself, arrested by the Living Lord.
  - ◆ Paul later spoke of this very occasion as the time when "Christ Jesus ... laid hold of me" – literally "apprehended" or 'arrested'. Phil. 3:12
- ✦ 'Breathing out' - really says, "Breathing hard still."
- ✦ He rejoiced in their death, and joined in condemning them. (Acts 26:10-11)

# Acts 9:1

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## Who was the High Priest?

✦ Likely Caiaphus. Held the post from 18 AD to 36 AD.  
(F. F. Bruce)

✦ If so, it is no small irony that it was Caiaphas, who had said, without realizing it, prophesying “that Jesus would die for the nation, and not *for that nation only*, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad”. (John 11: 52)

# Acts 9:1

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✦ In accordance with decrees passed by Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar long before, the High Priest and the Sanhedrin exercised jurisdiction over all Jews living abroad in the Roman Empire.

# Acts 9:2

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- ✦ Saul's title would have been 'an apostle' of the Sanhedrin.
  - ✦ His carrying of letters from those who commissioned him was in line with his 'apostleship'.
  - ✦ Interestingly, Three times *women* are specified as objects of his cruelty, as an aggravated feature of it (Acts 8:3; 22:4; and here).

# Acts 9:2

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## “The Way”

✦ Used 8x in Acts giving proof to its common use and a phrase of the disciples’ own choosing.

✦ Possible Origins:

1) The Lord Jesus taught about two ways – Mt. 7:13-14

- 1) The broad way that leads to destruction.
- 2) The narrow way that leads to life.

2) The Lord Jesus claimed to be the Way – Jn. 14:6

- 1) The Way to truth and life.
- 2) The only way to the Father.

# Acts 9:3

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- ✦ Damascus was 135 miles (215 km) northeast of Jerusalem, a six-day journey by foot.
- ✦ Saul and his party had almost completed their journey when he met the risen Lord.
  - ◆ It was kind of the Savior to time this as He did.
  - ◆ So often the Lord meets those who are resistant to the Gospel in ‘convenient’ place.

# Acts 9:3

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## 'The Light'

- ✦ The 'Light' from heaven indicating the Shekinah, God's presence (related to the concept of *yeqarah*, "glory"), as God often revealed His glory in the OT.
- ✦ Many have sought to explain the origin of this light. The 'Light' needs no natural explanation, it was a supernatural event.
- ✦ Luke uses the same expression in Acts 26, describing the 'Light' as that used to describe the 'glory of the Lord' which 'shone round' the shepherds of Bethlehem. (Luke 2:9)

# Paul's Time-line in Acts

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34 AD	Saul's Conversion	Acts 9
37 AD	Peter Preaches to the Gentiles	Acts 10, 11
42 AD	Barnabas Sent to Antioch	Acts 11:22
42 AD	Peter Led from Prison by the Angel	Acts 12
44 AD	Herod Agrippa Dies	Acts 12:20
48 AD	Paul's First Missionary Journey	Acts 13
48 AD	Paul preaches in Pisidian Antioch	Acts 13:14
48 AD	Paul and Barnabas in Iconium	Acts 14
48 AD	Paul and Barnabas in Lystra and Derbe	Acts 14:8
48 AD	Paul and Barnabas Return to Syrian Antioch	Acts 14:21
48 AD	Return to Syrian Antioch	Acts 14:24
48 AD	The Council at Jerusalem	Acts 15
49 AD	Paul's Second Missionary Journey	Acts 15:36
49 AD	Paul in Philippi	Acts 16
49 AD	Paul in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens	Acts 17
51 AD	Paul in Corinth	Acts 18
54 AD	Paul in Ephesus	Acts 19
57 AD	Paul in Macedonia and Greece	Acts 20
59 AD	Paul Returns to Jerusalem	Acts 21 - 23
60 AD	Paul imprisoned in Caesarea	Acts 24
62 AD	Paul Before Festus	Acts 25
62 AD	Paul Before Agrippa	Acts 26

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# Acts 9:3

‘The Light’ 3 accounts

✦ Acts 9:3 “a light” **34 AD**

✦ Acts 22:6 “a great light” **59 AD**

✦ Acts 26:13 “a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun (at midday)” **62 AD**

✦ Was it the light that changed?

✦ *No, rather his appreciation of that Light!.*

# Acts 9:3

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## Paul's Conversion 1<sup>st</sup> account

### ✦ Acts 9:3 “a light” **34 AD.**

- ✦ Historical narrative by Luke.
- ✦ Sir William Ramsay, who investigated Luke's writings in the light of archaeological data, contended: “Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness”.
- ✦ The purpose of this 1<sup>st</sup> account is to sketch the basic details of Saul's conversion.

# Acts 9:3

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## Paul's Conversion 2<sup>nd</sup> account

✦ Acts 22:6 “a great light” **59 AD.**

- ✦ Paul's “defense” of his change, from opponent to proponent of Christianity, to his Hebrew kinsmen.
- ✦ He wanted his Israelite brethren to realize that there was no conflict between Judaism and Christianity.
- ✦ He argued, Judaism was intended to be preparatory to Christianity (Gal. 3:23-25), and thus the lesser was to give way to the greater (as argued in the book of Hebrews).

# Acts 9:3

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## Paul's Conversion 3<sup>rd</sup> account

✦ Acts 26:13 “a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun (at midday)” **62 AD.**

- ✦ Argued before Agrippa II, a Jewish “king” – the last of Herod’s bloody line, and Festus a Roman procurator of Judea, under Caesar Nero.
- ✦ Paul’s “defense” here was to argue that Christianity was never intended to be a political rival to Rome.
- ✦ Hence the private statement “this man doeth nothing worthy of death or bonds”.

# Acts 9:3

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## Lord George Lyttelton (1708-1773)

- ✦ Oxford educated scholar, served in the Parliament.
- ✦ Highly skeptical of Christianity, decided to examine critically, Luke's record of Paul's "conversion", believing that Paul's radical transformation was grounded in motives of self-interest.
- ✦ He reversed his skeptical view, having concluded that "Paul's conversion was genuine and that the Christian movement was founded therefore upon the truth that Jesus of Nazareth in fact was raised bodily from the dead".

# Acts 9:3

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## Lord George Lyttelton (1708-1773)

✦ In 1747 Lyttelton published his book, *Observations of the Conversion of St. Paul*. Still in print today.

- ✦ The apostle was not an imposter who deliberately advocated that which he knew to be false; indeed, why would he suffer so much persecution for what he knew to be a lie?
- ✦ He was not an enthusiast who was given to “an overheated imagination”; he was a disciplined logical scholar of the first magnitude.
- ✦ He was not deceived by the fraud of others for he claimed his revelation to be independent of the other apostles. Even his critics acknowledged his rugged independence.

# Ten Double-Callings of Names

1. **Abraham, Abraham** (Genesis 22:11)
2. **Jacob, Jacob** (Genesis 46:2)
3. **Moses, Moses** (Exodus 3:4)
4. **Samuel, Samuel** (1 Samuel 3:10)
5. **Lord, Lord** (Matthew 7:21-22) \*\*
6. **Jerusalem, Jerusalem** (Matthew 23:37)
7. **My God, My God** (Mark 15:34)
8. **Martha, Martha** (Luke 10:41)
9. **Simon, Simon** (Luke 22:31)
10. **Saul, Saul** (Acts 9:4)

# Acts 9:4

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✦ This verse is grammatically very similar to another:

- ✦ Acts 9:4 “Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me”.
- ✦ Matt. 27 “My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

✦ 3 Key differences:

- 1a) Acts – Lord in Heaven speaks to someone on earth.
- 1b) Matt – Lord on earth speaks to Someone in Heaven.
- 2a) Acts – Lord speaks of His spiritual body.
- 2b) Matt – Lord speaks of His physical body.
- 3a) Acts – Lord takes Paul to task for his persecution.
- 3b) Matt – Lord is silent before those who persecute Him without a cause.

# Acts 9:4

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- ✦ The word “Me” shows the union of Christ with His church.
- ✦ The Lord gives Saul his first glimpse into the great doctrine of Christians being in Christ.
- ✦ A revelation Saul himself would later expound in his epistles to the Corinthians, “and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ”. (I Cor. 12:12)

# Acts 9:5

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✦ Spurgeon says of Paul:

- ✦ Paul was possibly the most brilliant man of his day.
- ✦ He was probably a graduate of the University of Tarsus, the greatest Greek university of that day.
- ✦ He was a student in the school of Gamaliel, the great Hebrew scholar.
- ✦ He was trained in all the details of the Jewish religion.
- ✦ **But he did not know the Lord Jesus Christ!**

✦ This was much like the bombshell dropped on the brethren in Egypt.

- ✦ “I am Joseph”. Gen 45:4

# Acts 9:7

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## Presumed Inconsistencies:

- ✦ Acts 9 – hearing the voice but seeing no one.
- ✦ Acts 22 – those who were with me indeed beheld the light, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.
- ✦ Thus in totem: Saul’s travelling companions were fully aware of both the exceedingly bright light and the sound of a voice speaking. But, although they ‘beheld the light’, they did not, as Saul, see the Lord Jesus.

# Acts 9:7

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## Unintended Eyewitness Support Statements:

### ✦ The Lord Jesus before Caiaphas

- ◆ Matt. 26:67-68 “prophesy unto us”.
- ◆ Luke 22:63-64 “when they had blindfolded him”.

✦ James W. Wallace – “reliable eyewitness statements vary due to many factors, but they do not contradict.” In fact it is this variability that proves their veracity.

✦ “I am not a Christian because I was raised that way or because it would satisfy some need or accomplish some goal: I am a Christian because it is evidentially true.”

# Acts 9:9

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- ✦ Many have speculated about Paul's blindness.
  - ◆ Was this the the beginning of his "thorn in the flesh"?
  - ◆ Would this be the Lord's tool to teach him lessons here and throughout his life?
- ✦ One thing is certain, Paul was changed morally, spiritually and physically by his encounter with the risen Lord – as should we all.

# Acts 9:10

✦ The first of 2 “double visions”, God’s dovetailing:

- ✦ Acts 9 – Ananias and Paul
- ✦ Acts 10 – Peter and Cornelius
- ✦ Both Ananias and Peter were not keen at first due to natural fears. But ultimately acquiesced to divine guidance.
- ✦ Both Paul and Cornelius were waiting, sincerely desiring the Word of the Lord.
- ✦ Both visits end with the filling of the Holy Spirit (Saul) and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Cornelius).
- ✦ Both Paul and Cornelius were key in the spread of the Gospel into the Gentile world.

# Street Called Straight



# Acts 9:13

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## ✦ “Your Saints”

- ✦ This is the first time Luke calls believers saints.
- ✦ Men have disciples (vs 25). Only God has saints.
- ✦ Ananias acknowledged who’s flock is being scattered.

# Acts 9:15-16

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## Irony of the changed Man

- ✦ The man who had set out to inflict suffering was to suffer ‘many things’ himself. (II Cor. 11)
  - ✦ “Besides those things that are without, that which comes on me daily, the care of all the churches.” (II Cor. 11:28)
- ✦ The Name that he targeted for suffering, he would now bear.
- ✦ The man who was preying on the people of God would be found praying to the God of His people.

# Acts 9:18-19

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- ✦ The miracle of restored sight is followed by immediate identification with the risen Christ – in baptism. Evidence of his conversion to the Lord and love for His people.
- ✦ Saul’s heart and soul was filled with the Holy Spirit before ever his stomach was with food.
- ✦ Ananias an “ordinary” believer chosen for this task.
  - ◆ Not an apostle, held no office in the church.
  - ◆ Never heard of before in scripture and only once after 22:12.

# Acts 9:18-19

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- ✦ Likely Paul was baptized in the river Alba. It runs parallel to the street called Straight.
- ✦ This river may not have been able to cure Naaman of old but it did serve all Saul needed.
- ✦ Neither man was healed by the water but by obedient faith!

# Acts 9:23-24

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- ✦ We know from Gal. 1:17 Paul broke up his stay in Damascus to go to Arabia (possibly for 3 years or more).
- ✦ On his return he meets a city wide plot to kill him.
- ✦ How was such a plot possible?
- ✦ At this time, Damascus was under the rule of King Aretas. Who was in fact Aretas IV, the king of Nabatea (the Arabian Kingdom).
- ✦ Explaining why the plot was so wide in its scope (“watching the gates”) and so dangerous.



0 50 km 250 km

Conception: F. Villeneuve, L. Nehmé.

# Acts 9:25

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## Was this a humiliating exit?

- ✦ As the apostle of the Sanhedrin he arrives in Damascus blind and lead by the hand of a mere traveling zealots.
- ✦ But as the apostle of the the Lord Jesus Christ he leaves via caring hands in the night but with both natural and spiritual sight granted from above.
  - ✦ He was also in good company: 2 Israelite spies from Jericho and of young David from Gibeah.

# Acts 9:27

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- ✦ Barnabas – “son of encouragement or consolation”.
  - ✦ Few among us bear this name today, but Oh that we would bear its character!
    - ◆ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. John 13:35
    - ◆ Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Gal. 6:2

# Acts 9:28-30

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## Why the Hellenists?

- ✦ These were Greek-speaking Jews, as in Jerusalem.
- ✦ This word ‘disputed’ is used by Luke in only one other place, in Acts 6:9.
- ✦ The Hellenists were on the offensive in Acts 6, “disputing against Stephen”.
- ✦ But now, Saul takes up the charge, left by Stephen, and “disputes against them”. Evidence of repentance.
- ✦ Though Stephens voice had been silenced, Paul’s took its place!

# Acts 9:32

## Acts Chapters 2-12 – Peter

- 2:22-47 1<sup>st</sup> Sermon recorded
- 3:1-11 Lame man healed
- 5:12-16 Influence shadow
- 8:5-25 Simon the sorcerer
- 8:17-19 Laying on of hands
- 9:36-43 Tabitha Raised
- 10:23-33 Peter worshipped
- 12:5-19 Peter imprisoned

## Acts Chapters 13-28 – Paul

- 13:14-43 1<sup>st</sup> Sermon recorded
- 14:6-11 Lame man healed

handkerchief

- 13:6-13 Elymas the sorcerer
- 19:1-7 Laying on of hands
- 20:6-12 Eutychus raised
- 14:6-18 Paul worshipped
- 28:1-31 Paul imprisoned