

Saul's Conversion on the Road to Damascus

Acts 9:1-31

Main Street

April 29, 2012



bible verse

COMMITTING TO MEMORY

Acts 9:6 NKJV

Lord, what do you want me to do?



story lesson

BIBLE STORY

During the stoning of Stephen, a young man named Saul was present. Saul was a Pharisee who became impassioned to suppress and thwart this "unauthorized" new movement surrounding a man named Jesus.

"Saul was breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found anyone there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem" (Acts 9:1-2).

While on his way to Damascus, a brilliant light from heaven surrounded Saul. This light knocked Saul to the ground and then he heard a voice say to him: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4). Since this voice came from nowhere, Saul asked: "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting... now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what to do" (Acts 9:5-6).

The men who were traveling with Saul heard the sound, but did not see anyone. When Saul got up and opened his eyes, he discovered that he was blind. He was then led by hand in Damascus where he remained for three days, eating and drinking nothing.



Meanwhile, in the city of Damascus, a disciple named Ananias heard in a vision from the Lord: "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight" (Acts 9:11-12). Naturally, the disciples of Jesus had heard about Saul and they feared him. Ananias told the Lord as much.

However, in a typical God and human interaction, the Lord says: "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name" (Acts 9:15-16).

Ananias obeyed the Lord and went to the house where Saul was staying, laid his hands upon him and prayed: "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17).

Immediately, Saul could see again. He was baptized and ate and regained his strength.

Big Picture

The Israelites were a very nationalistic people. I mean, who could blame them? They had the God of the Universe on their side. The people of Israel were the people of God. And that made them very proud—almost to the point of acting superior to the rest of the world. They stood from a false vantage point of safety and looked upon the rest of the "pagan" world and criticized and judged and hated them.

This was not to be so. Israel's mandate (mission – constitution) as a nation, as a people, was to bring blessing and light and hope to the rest of the world. Israel was to be God's mouthpiece, His model of holy living and relationship with God to the world. They failed. Partly because they thought God had picked them for their uniqueness as a people; partly because they were easily swayed by the dominant imagination of current, pop culture; partly because they were just high and mighty and proud. They thought that the God of the Universe was there for them to bless the nation of Israel, keep her in power and influence, and to keep her very secure. In the writing of the prophets in the Old Testament, God reserves his harshest criticism and judgment upon Israel in this arena—on their prejudice, on their ethno-centric pride, on their blatant racism and disdain for the future of other people and nations. Israel wanted safety and security and power and dominance at the cost of the rest of the world's destruction. In God's sight – NOT GOING TO HAPPEN!

All to say, when God stopped Saul in his tracks on his war-path to persecute Christians, He had in mind Saul's mission: Jesus wanted Saul to take the message of the cross and resurrection and Messiah-ship and imaginative kingdom language to the Gentiles (that is Bible-speak for anyone who is not a Jew). Jesus wanted Saul to send word to the rest of the world that being a Christ-follower is not just a Jewish religious movement. It is a Jewish Messiah who died for the sins of disobedient Israel for what she couldn't do for herself. As God to Israel, so Jesus to the world. It was not just about Israel and Jews. It is about the fate and future of the entire world. And Saul was the man God chose to deliver this important message.



life application

MAKING IT REAL

Obey God

Two people had to obey God in this story—Saul and Ananias. Saul was confronted with his hatred and persecution of the church until God “woke” him up! After this “awaking” Saul led an entirely different life! Ananias, on the other hand, was a follower of Jesus, but when he was told by God to go and help Saul of Tarsus, Ananias was afraid because of who Saul was. Ananias had to get over his fear and trust that God was protecting him.

God’s Concern for the World

God chose Saul to be his spokesperson to the Gentiles (that’s Bible language for non-Jews), to their kings, and to the scattered Jewish nation. Up to this point in the divine story, God was trying to use Israel as a means of hope and blessing and salvation for the world. With their failure came Jesus’ triumph. Jesus did for Israel what she could not, nor was willing, to do. This meant that the message of Jesus could not stay just within the borders of the Jewish people. This Good News was to be carried to the ends of the earth, and Saul was God’s chosen person to kick off this process.



questions

REMEMBERING

- 1. Who was present at Stephen’s stoning?** A young man named Saul
- 2. What happened to Saul on his way to Damascus? What did he see and hear?** Saul saw a brilliant light from heaven surrounding him and he heard a voice saying: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4) ... “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting... now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what to do” (Acts 9:5-6)
- 3. When Saul got up, what was wrong with him?** He couldn’t see—he was blind
- 4. What did Saul do in Damascus for three days?**
Nothing; he ate and drank nothing
- 5. Who did God send to lay hands on Saul?** Ananias
- 6. What happened to Saul after Ananias laid his hands on him?**
Saul could see again. He was baptized, he ate and regained his strength



coloring sheet

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