

ACTS 9

Introduction:

We now come to one of the most **important** chapters in the Bible. Paul, within Christendom, has been considered mostly as **just one of the apostles**. There has been **too little** importance given to Paul when Scripture itself gives more attention to his conversion than to anyone else's.

A. Saul's Background And Character

1. Saul is completely immersed in his **religion**, a true believer in O.T. Israel. Saul **lives** and **breathes** Judaism, the Mosaic Law, and the Temple. He is a Pharisee of Pharisees and of the tribe of Benjamin. He is of the **chosen** race, highly respected, and zealous of his father's traditions. His learning and knowledge in Israel's-Judaism's truths was the **best**. Remember, he had been brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of the great Gamaliel.
2. An important aspect to Saul was that he had **Roman citizenship**. Saul was **born** a Roman citizen, which allowed him to travel almost anywhere.

Acts 22:27-29 - Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. Acts 22:28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free* born. Acts 22:29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

*Evidently one of Paul's ancestors either **pur**chased or was **re**warded citizenship.

**Paul probably was born around the time of Christ's birth.

3. Saul felt that Jesus and His followers were trying to destroy the pillars of Judaism. This caused his **hat**red and passion against Christ and His apostles especially. Saul believed Jesus Christ to be an **im**poster. To destroy Judaism was to destroy what he had dedicated his whole life to!
4. Saul, who had helped have Stephen stoned, had become Israel's **leader** of persecution of the Messianic Jewish believers in Christ. He was consumed and **ob**ssessed with deadly ambition and a twisted religious zeal.

B. The Dispensational Significance Of Saul's Conversion

1. Remember, by Israel's **religious leaders'** act of stoning Stephen and their following persecution of Messiah-believing Jews, they declared they were **com**pletely **re**jecting Christ as their Messiah and opposed any Israelite who would believe in Christ. By doing this they, as a nation, were declaring **war** **ag**ainst God, Who had sent His Son - the Messiah of Israel.
2. By Abraham's own covenant, Israel was to bring blessings and salvation to the Gentiles and the world. This was to be accomplished **th**rough Israel as they accepted Christ as their Messiah. But now, Israel has **join**ed the world in open **un**belief and rebellion. Israel's message to God was:

Luke 19:14 - But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this *man* to reign over us.

*Saul wholeheartedly believed and endorsed this message.

3. Also, remember that the religious leaders had in Acts 1-6 suffered humiliating **de**feats from the apostles' miraculous workings among the Jewish people. Their prestige, positions, popularity, and **pos**sessions were being threatened by these followers of Jesus their Messiah (especially Jesus' resur-
rection).

* They needed some **one** to help them stamp out this new-to-them Judaism. Saul **gladly** would be
* their man to lead the persecution of those in the Little Flock.

Acts 26:9-11 - I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Acts 26:10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*. Acts 26:11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities.

Acts 8:1, 3 - And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. Acts 8:3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

Galatians 1:13-14 - For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: Gal. 1:14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Philippians 3:6 - Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

C. Some Questions?

1. What would now happen to the prophesied purpose of God to bless the Gentile nations through Israel's **rise**? How could blessings go to the Gentiles when Israel **her**self had joined the Gentiles in their rebellion against God?

Answer: The answer to these questions is the most amazing story **ever** told. It is the secret story revealed about God's grace flowing from Calvary's Cross! God temporarily set aside His prophesied program to Israel and reached down in His unbelievable infinite mercy-grace-love to save Israel's fierce leader **Saul**.

a. Dr. Stam: "The world's and Israel's rebellion was to result in God's wrath (Ps. 22, Ps. 110:1). But God's love **de**fers, puts on **hold**, His judgment (Jesus standing?) to usher in a **new** dispensation of grace."

b. God did not offer the riches of His grace apart from Israel and to all who would receive it by faith, **until** Saul's conversion that marked the beginning of God's new dispensation of grace.

2. The unfolding and unveiling of this **new** revelational truth about the mystery emerged through Paul **grad**ually.

Acts 26:16 - But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

II Corinthians 12:1 - It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

Acts 26:15-16 -And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. Acts 26:16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

*The studied believer sees that the Pentecost Jewish-only program (promises-covenants-kingdom hope) did not suddently go off the scene. From the Kingdom message to the Body message was a process that allowed for better understanding and acceptance of God's new hidden truth to be re-vealed.

Romans 11:12 - Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

3. So Saul marked the beginning of the unfolding of God's mystery truth of the Body of Christ - the cross' accomplishments and His purpose in this super-abounding grace. The fact that God calls another apostle, apart and distinct from the 12 apostles, definitely shows a new dispensation was being ushered in.

4. Quotes:

- a. Dr. Arno C. Gabelein: "Superficial readers of the Word of God make no difference between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Grace."
- b. I.R. Dean: "Why was it necessary for Paul to have a new revelation of the gospel if he was to preach the same gospel that John the Baptist and Christ and His disciples had preached? Wherein lies the difference?"

"John the Baptist and Christ and His disciples offered Israel as Messiah.....Paul's gospel does not offer Israel a Messiah at all; God is not offering anyone a Messiah now."

Note: Dean is right. Under Saul-Paul, God is not offering a Messiah now. But, God is offering salvation by grace to all who will believe - in a world that still rejects Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

Romans 11:30-33 - For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Rom. 11:31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. Rom. 11:32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. Rom. 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

D. Again, Saul-Paul The New Apostle Is Now The Pattern Of Salvation By Grace

I Timothy 1:15-16 - This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 1Tim. 1:16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

1. Most, because the Pentecost-Prophetic program was not abolished at once and it was a prominent force during the early ministry of Saul-Paul's ministry, think-assume that God was simply continuing His people's program. But we know that with Paul's conversion, Israel began her decline and the Body Church began its incline.



2. I Corinthians 15:8 - And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Today, when Jewish people, or Gentiles, are saved, they are placed into the Body of Christ - certain of heaven. We can say that **both** are saved out of due time. This is because they are not saved based upon the covenants-promises-or prophecies. But they are saved according to the Mystery Program of Grace, revealed through Paul. He was the **first** into the Body!

E. Saul to Paul - (To clear up any confusion about his name)

1. It is interesting that in **none** of his epistles does Paul ever refer to himself as Saul. He always calls himself Paul. His name Saul appears **22** times (only in Acts); whereas, the name Paul appears **157** times in the K.J.V.
2. The name Saul is Hebrew and the name Paul is his Roman name. Saul in Hebrew (Shaul) means **asked**-desired-wished. Paul in the Greek is Paulos, meaning "little" and is closely related to "pauo", meaning to **pause**-to cease.

a. * This fits Paul's ministry. God has paused Israel's prophetic program and began our mystery program. To pause has the idea that it will start up **again**. It conveys that Christ's return in wrath to destroy Israel's enemies has been **delayed**.

b. Just by Paul's name, it shows we have **not** replaced Israel. We, the Body, are **not** a continuation of the Mosaic-Messianic Church. We are **not** an extension of the nation Israel. But, we are a **new** creature - the one new man, a brand-new entity called the Church Body of Christ.

II Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Ephesians 2:15 - Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace;

*The mystery program is **unrelated** to Israel's prophetic program.

c. Since Paul's apostleship and message involved God's transitioning **from** dealing with Israel (Jews) only **to** dealing with all nations (Gentiles), it was right for God to use a man who has **both** a Jewish nature (Saul) and Roman Gentile nature (Paul). Paul, a Roman and a Jew, is the perfect reflection of the Church **Body**.

*Isn't it amazing how God can have so much meaning in one name?

F. Paul's Continued Obsession

1. **Much** suffering had transpired from 8:1 to 9:1. Saul had "made havoc of the church" (Messianic),

Acts 9:1-2 - And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, Acts 9:2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

persecuted "beyond measure" and "laying to waste" (Acts 8:3; Gal. 1:13).

*We do not know how much terror and bloodshed Saul caused, but it must have been **un**believable. Saul worked day and night to stamp out "any of this way."

2. Verses 1-2 picture a man who is **enraged**, heart-racing, threatening violence and murder with every breath.

*Saul wanted, and received, **official** orders to go to Damascus and into the synagogues to find these turncoat Jews (followers of Christ), in order to enslave them....even have them **killed**. Damascus was the old capital of Syria.

3. **Remember**, God is showing Israel that since she would not embrace Messiah, He would not permit them to keep salvation **from** the Gentiles. However, He would **not be using them** (Israel) to reach the world at this time.

God would by grace save Saul, the nation's **hero** - but the Messianic Church's greatest **enemy**. Through Paul, God charts **a new** direction with **a new** message. God **begins** to reveal His hidden plan to His grace-converted Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles.

Acts 20:24 - But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.