



# Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



## The Acts of the Apostles

### Chapter 9

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# Introduction

In This Chapter We Will Study:

- The conversion of Saul, comparing St. Luke's account in this chapter with Saul's own words recorded later on in chapters 22 and 26
- The two miracles by St. Peter, and the affect they had on many people who heard about them

# The Damascus Road: Saul Converted (9:1-9)



- Saul was not satisfied with what he had done, Acts 8:3
- He granted authority by the high priest
- The high priest at that time was Theophilus, the son of Annas
- He was a Sadducee
- While aggressive in persecuting disciples of the Lord
- Intensely desiring to put to death as many Christians as possible
- With letters to the synagogues in Damascus
- Damascus. Situated about 140 miles northeast of Jerusalem, east of Mt. Hermon, in Syria
- To find those of "the Way" and bring them bound to Jerusalem
- The way of Christ, a phrase applied to Christianity

# The Damascus Road: Saul Converted (9:1-9)



- It would require six or seven days to make the journey
- It was probably made on foot
- Approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven shone around him
- Brighter than the sun (Acts 26:13)
- It was the splendor of the glorified Savior as seen at the Transfiguration (Mt 17:2; Mk 9:3; Lk 9:29), or by John at Patmos (Rev 1:16)

# The Damascus Road: Saul Converted (9:1-9)



- In order to get the full history of this revelation of Christ and St. Paul's conversion, we must compare the accounts given by St. Paul himself in Acts 22:3-21 and 26:10-20 with Luke's account here
- Falling to the ground, he hears a voice: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"
- Not a sound merely, but words that he could understand
- Observe how Christ sympathizes with his persecuted followers
- The blows that fall upon them, fall upon him
- If Saul strikes the disciples in Damascus, Christ feels the blows in heaven

# The Damascus Road: Saul Converted (9:1-9)



- Saul asks, "Who are you, Lord?",
- Sure that it was a supernatural communication, though he might possibly suspect its source, he did not yet know that it came from Christ
- Perhaps at times he had had misgivings that he might be wrong, but he was sincere
- I am Jesus
- It is not said, the Christ, but Jesus, the crucified one against whom Saul was raging
- Had the answer been the Christ, or the Son of God, Saul might still have doubted whether this was Jesus

# The Damascus Road: Saul Converted (9:1-9)



- "It is hard for you to kick against the goads."
- The idea is that he is injuring himself, like the ox that kicks back on the goads used to urge him forward
- When asked what to, he is told:
- "Arise, go into the city."
- "You will be told what you must do."
- The Lord had appeared to him in order that he might be qualified for apostleship by having seen Christ, but he must learn the way of the gospel from one of its preachers
- Christ never told a mortal how to be saved after he gave the Great Commission to the church

# The Damascus Road: Saul Converted (9:1-9)



- His companions stand speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one
- His eyes were blinded by the brightness of the Lord
- He who had come with such power to Damascus had to be led helpless into the city
- His companions lead him by the hand into the city
- Saul submitted without reserve, desirous to know what the Lord Jesus would have him to do
- For three days Saul took no food, and it pleased God to leave him for that time without relief
- His sins were now set in order before him; he was in the dark concerning his own spiritual state, and wounded in spirit for sin



# Ananias Baptizes Saul (9:10-19)



- The Lord appears in a vision to Ananias, a disciple in Damascus
- Many have supposed that he was one of the 70 disciples
- But nothing more is certainly known of him than is related here
- He had very probably been some time a Christian Acts 9:13, and had heard of Saul, but was personally a stranger to him
- In Acts 22:12, it is said that he was a devout man according to the Law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there
- There was wisdom in sending such a Christian to Saul, as it might do much to conciliate the minds of the Jews there toward him

# Ananias Baptizes Saul (9:10-19)



- As in the case of Philip sent by the angel to the eunuch (Ac 8:26), so he is sent by revelation to Saul
- A revelation was needful from the fact that Saul was a terror to the church and all would avoid him
- Instructed to go to house of Judas on the street called Straight
- This street ran in a direct line from gate to gate, east and west, and was anciently 100 feet wide and celebrated for its magnificence
- He is praying, An assurance that Ananias would be favorably received
- Besides, in his prayer, the vision came that Ananias would come

# Ananias Baptizes Saul (9:10-19)



- Where Saul is praying and has seen a vision in which Ananias restores his sight
- While God prepares Ananias, by a vision, to go and minister to Saul, he at the same time prepares Saul, by another vision, to profit by this ministry
- Ananias is reluctant, knowing of Saul's persecution of the saints
- Saul had been a notorious persecutor; many could testify of his outrageous acts against the poor followers of Christ.

# Ananias Baptizes Saul (9:10-19)



- Ananias is commanded to go, for Saul is a chosen vessel
- This is often the only answer that we obtain to the suggestion of our doubts and hesitations about duty
- God tells us still to do what he requires, with an assurance only that his commands are just, and that there are good reasons for them
- He is a chosen vessel—a word often used by St. Paul in illustrating God's sovereignty in election (Rom 9:21-23; 2 Cor 4:7; 2 Tim 2:20,21)
- Who will bear the Lord's name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel
- His mission as the apostle to the Gentiles is pointed out

# Ananias Baptizes Saul (9:10-19)



- He not only bore witness before the Roman rulers, but before King Agrippa (Ac 26:1) and the emperor Nero (Acts 28:19; Phil 1:13 ; 4:22)
- Who will be shown how many things he must suffer for His name's sake
- This seems to be added to encourage Ananias
- He had feared Saul
- The Lord now informs him that Saul would not merely profess repentance, but would manifest the sincerity of it by encountering trials and reproaches for his sake
- The prediction here was fully accomplished, Acts 20:23; 2 Corinthians 11:23-27; 2 Timothy 1:11-12

# Ananias Baptizes Saul (9:10-19)



- Ananias goes to Saul
- This knowledge by an inhabitant of Damascus of what had happened to Saul before entering it, would show him at once that this was the man whom Jesus had already prepared him to expect
- Laying hands on Saul as he explains his purpose in coming
- That Saul might receive his sight
- And be filled with the Holy Spirit
- This shows that the blindness as well as the cure was supernatural
- Substances like scales would not form naturally in so short a time
- And the medical precision of Luke's language here is to be noted

# Ananias Baptizes Saul (9:10-19)



- Saul's sight is immediately restored, and is baptized
- Note (1) that tarrying for weeks or months before baptism was then unknown; (2) that there would be no necessity of arising, if water was applied in baptism, but there would be if he had to go to a place suitable for immersion; (3) that the term wash implies more than a sprinkling or pouring; (4) that neither Ananias nor St. Paul (Acts 22:16) understood that his sins were remitted before baptism, Compare Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16
- He resumes eating and spends some days with the disciples
- In worship and intercourse with them
- He must learn more experimentally of the church before preaching

# Saul Preaches Christ (9:20-22)



- Saul immediately preaches Christ as the Son of God in the synagogues
- Saul was now convinced that Jesus, whom they had crucified, and who had appeared to him on the way, was the Son of God, or Messiah; and therefore as such he proclaimed him
- To the amazement of all who heard and knew his background
- They had heard of his former zeal against the church and of his being sent to Damascus but as yet had not learned of his conversion
- He grew continually in power to preach Christ
- Confounding the Jews who dwelt in Damascus
- Proving that Jesus is the Christ



# Saul Escapes Death (9:23-25)



- Saul is forced to leave Damascus
- After many days, the Jews plot to kill him
- A long period, probably at least three years
- Luke's narrative is very condensed
- He is not writing a history of Saul, but of the founding of the church
- We learn from Paul that he spent at this time a long period in Arabia, and after this returned to Damascus (Gal 1:16-18)
- It was at his return that this persecution broke out
- When the plot is revealed, they watch the gates day and night to kill him
- The disciples help Saul escape at night by letting him over a wall in a basket

# Saul at Jerusalem (9:26-30)



- He endeavored to get closely united to them, to be in religious fellowship with them
- Though at first they were afraid and did not believe him
- They did not suppose it possible that such a person could be converted to the faith of Christ
- The full power of Divine grace, in the conversion of the soul, was not yet completely known
- Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them
- How he had seen the Lord on the road, who spoke to him
- Of his bold preaching in Damascus

# Saul at Jerusalem (9:26-30)



- Saul is accepted and circulates freely among the disciples in Jerusalem
- Saul is forced to leave Jerusalem
- He speaks boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus
- Disputing against the Grecians
- The Jews in Jerusalem who had been born in foreign countries and spoke the Greek language
- The same class of Jews who had raised the persecution against Stephen now sought the death of Saul
- By the aid of the brethren he was taken to the seaport of Caesarea and sailed for his old home at Tarsus

# The Church Prospers (9:31)



- Four or five years pass before the next mention of Saul in Acts 12:25, an interval passed in preaching Christ (Gal 1:22,23), and resulting in the planting of churches in Cilicia (Acts 15:23,41)
- The churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria then enjoyed peace and grew as they walked in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit
- They lived upon the comfort of the Holy Ghost, not only in the days of trouble and affliction, but in days of rest and prosperity



# Aeneas Healed (9:32-35)

- St. Peter comes to the saints visiting the churches of Judea
- Lydda is a town in the seacoast plain, now called Ludd, not far from Joppa
- He meets Aeneas, paralyzed and bedridden for eight years
- St. Peter does not pretend to heal by any power of his own, but directs Eneas to look up to Christ for help
- All who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord
- The long affliction of this man had been well known; and his cure, consequently, became a subject of general examination
- It was known to have been performed by the grace and mercy of Christ; and the consequence of all this conviction was that all these people became Christians

# Dorcas Restored to Life (9:36-43)



- At Joppa, a certain disciple named Tabitha (Dorcas) dies
- Joppa was a sea-port town on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, about a day's journey from Jerusalem
- Tabitha, or Dorcas in the Greek (meaning gazelle ), a saintly Christian noted for her deeds of love
- She was very kind and beneficent to the poor; she wrought with her hands much for their sakes, Her body was washed and laid in an upper room
- Two men were sent to Peter in nearby Lydda
- Why they sent is not affirmed. It is probable that they desired his presence to comfort and sustain them in their affliction
- It is certainly possible that they expected he would restore her to life

# Dorcas Restored to Life (9:36-43)



- He is brought to the upper room, where weeping widows showed garments by Dorcas
- They had lost a benefactress; and it was natural that they should recall her kindness, and express their gratitude, by enumerating the proofs of her beneficence
- Each one would therefore naturally dwell on the kindness which had been shown to herself
- Sending the widows out, Peter kneels down and prays
- It was on his knees that he was made to feel that the Lord had given him power
- In his prayer he called on the name of Christ, was answered, and only needed to say, Tabitha, arise, and she opened her eyes
- It was the first miracle in which death was overcome at the hands of an apostle

# Dorcas Restored to Life (9:36-43)



- Peter presents her alive to the saints and widows
- As it became known throughout Joppa, many believed on the Lord
- This was the first miracle of this kind that was performed by the apostles
- The effect was that many believed
- It was not merely a work of benevolence, in restoring to life one who contributed largely to the comfort of the poor, but it was a means of extending and establishing, as it was designed doubtless to do, the kingdom of the Savior
- Peter remains in Joppa with Simon, a tanner





# Conclusion

- What did Saul desire from the High Priest? What would these letters help Saul do?
- Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” what truth does this verse reveal?
- How many times, in the book of Acts, does St. Paul mention the account of his conversion?
- Did St. Paul’s companions hear the voice on the Damascus road? (Acts 9:7;22:9)
- Saul was how long without sight? (Acts 9:9)



# Conclusion

- God told Ananias that Saul was a chosen vessel to bear His name before what three groups of people? (Acts 9:15)
- What truth does Acts 9:18 reveal?
- Who took St. Paul and declared him unto the disciples as a disciple himself?
- St. Paul spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputes against whom & they wanted to slay him? (Acts 9:29 contrast Acts 6:1)
- Tabitha was full of what two things? (Acts 9:36)