

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Lesson 8 w/Answers

Acts 9:1-31

Last week we read the story of Philip responding to God's call and his encounter on the road to Gaza with the Ethiopian Eunuch. We saw how God had anticipated the need of the Eunuch by calling Philip to make the trip, and how God had empowered Philip through prior training and experience to be able to respond to the need of the Eunuch. We also examined a variety of New Testament and Old Testament texts pointing to Jesus as the Messiah. As a result of Philip's teaching, the Eunuch accepted Christ as his personal savior and he was baptized.

This week, we will follow that conversion story with what is perhaps the best-known conversion story in all of the New Testament – the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus. After his conversion, we will consider the impact that all of his life experiences had on his ministry and his writings contained within the New Testament.

I hope that you will learn some things about Paul you did not know previously, and I continue to pray that God will use our studies of the book of Acts, and Paul in particular this week, to open our eyes to the opportunities to witness and minister as we respond to God's leading.

So, let's read Acts Chapter 9:1-31 and answer the following:

1. Verse 1 of Chapter 9 begins "Meanwhile". What two events is Luke tying together with his use this word?
 - a. ANSWER: While Philip was witnessing to the Eunuch on the road to Gaza, Saul was on the road to Damascus coming face-to-face with Jesus.
2. Damascus, the second oldest city in the world, is located in Syria. How far, in miles, is Damascus from Jerusalem; and how long would the trip have taken in those days to go by foot?
 - a. ANSWER: From Damascus to Jerusalem, the distance is 175 miles, and would have taken 6 days to travel on foot. Travel in those days provided plenty of time for reflection and thought. Saul would have had a lot to think about as he headed for Damascus, looking for any followers of "The Way".
3. In verses 3 and 4, Saul is described as seeing a light. At what time of day did this occur? (Acts 22:6)
 - a. ANSWER: This occurred at mid-day, around noon.
4. How did Paul describe the light? (Acts 26:13)
 - a. ANSWER: He described it as coming from heaven, and brighter than the sun.
5. Jesus spoke directly to Saul; and Jesus, the very person Saul was persecuting others for believing in, gave Saul a command. What was it, and did Saul follow it?
 - a. ANSWER 1: He told Saul to get up and go into the city.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Yes; he followed Christ's command.
6. Compare Saul's physical and emotional condition just prior to encountering Christ with his condition just after. What affect did Christ have on him?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Before his encounter with Christ, Paul was prideful, arrogant, zealous, and blinded to the truth. Saul was a man on a mission, headed to Damascus with extradition papers in his hand.
 - b. ANSWER 2: After hearing Jesus, Saul immediately became unable to function, physically blind, and exhausted. He had to be helped by assistants. Humbly, he accepted Jesus' command, and, with assistance, begins a new trip with a different mission on the same road.

7. Whose house does Christ initially lead Saul to, and where it is located?
 - a. ANSWER: He leads him to Judas' house, on Straight Street in Damascus.
8. Who does Christ send to Judas' house to get Saul after his three days of fasting?
 - a. ANSWER: He sends Ananias.
9. What is Ananias' response to Christ's command?
 - a. ANSWER: He was afraid of Saul, and did not want to go.
10. What were some of the reasons that Ananias did not want to go to Saul?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Saul had a reputation that was well-known for persecuting the followers of Christ.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Saul was carrying papers from the High Priest in Jerusalem authorizing him to arrest and bring back to Jerusalem any followers of Christ that he encountered.
11. What are some of the differences between the conversation that Saul had with Christ and the conversation that Ananias had with Christ?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Saul was almost speechless;
 - b. ANSWER 2: Saul was left blind and required physical assistance.
 - c. ANSWER 3: Ananias and Christ actually had a dialog;
 - d. ANSWER 4: Ananias was not rebuked for questioning Christ's call and fearing for his own safety. You see: it is okay for us to be fearful and to bring that fear to Christ; he understands our fears and will allay them if we ask him to.
12. In verse 15, what is Christ's stated purpose for Saul?
 - a. ANSWER: To proclaim Jesus' name both to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. Christ has a purpose for each of us as well.
13. Christ healed Saul's eyesight, nourished him, and provided for his care immediately following his salvation experience. After resting a few days, what did Saul do? (Acts 9:19-22)
 - a. ANSWER: ^{19b}Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹All those who heard him were astonished and asked, 'Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?' ²²Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah." [NIV]
14. What was Saul's message? (Acts 9:20-22)
 - a. ANSWER: That Jesus was the Son of God - the anointed one, the Messiah.
15. How long did Paul remain in Damascus? (Galatians 1:17-18)
 - a. ANSWER: 3 years
16. The Jews of Damascus, as with the earlier Jews in Jerusalem, did not want to hear the truth about Jesus. And they had an ally that would help them kill Saul, just as the Jews did when they wanted to crucify Jesus (Pontius Pilate). For the Jews in Damascus, who was their ally in trying to kill Saul/Paul? (2 Cor. 11:32-33)
 - a. ANSWER: The Governor of Damascus under Aretas IV the King
17. Saul, the proud representative of the High Priest had originally headed for Damascus to capture, persecute and purify the Jews. How did he leave? (Acts 9:25, 2 Cor. 11:33)
 - a. ANSWER: He was lowered in a basket at night through a window in the city walls.
18. So, Paul went to Jerusalem from Damascus, which we determined to be about a six-day trip. Who did he meet in Jerusalem, and how long did he stay in Jerusalem before being sent to Caesarea (then Tarsus)? (Gal. 1:18-19)
 - a. ANSWER: Paul was only in Jerusalem for a brief fifteen days, where he met James (Jesus' half brother) and Peter; but no other apostles.

19. Who ended up as pastor of the church at Caesarea when Paul arrived there three years after his conversion? (Acts 8:40)
- a. ANSWER: Philip, whom we just read about.
20. See if you can find out how much time elapsed between Paul's conversion at Damascus until his first missionary journey.
- a. ANSWER: Approximately 10 years.
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Saul had spent a lifetime becoming a "Pharisee of Pharisees". His reputation as a Pharisee, his adherence to the law, and his zealousness in fighting the new fledgling movement called "The Way" were well-publicized. His complete and total conversion is a dramatic illustration of the life-changing effect of hearing and receiving Jesus as your savior.

It also illustrates that our earthly life, before knowing Christ, can still haunt us; and it often affects the reaction of those who knew us before we received Christ. Paul's conversion also shows us how God took Paul's knowledge of the scripture, his knowledge of Roman and Jewish laws, and his ability to communicate in several languages and used them to reach the Gentile world.

It will take Paul ten years to prepare himself for the ministry that Christ has for him. Yet we see that, beginning on the first day of Paul's re-born life, he began telling others about Jesus. We don't need a degree from seminary or a complete understanding of God's Word to tell others about Christ; letting the Holy Spirit work within us is all that God asks. Surrendering ourselves to His calling and His leading is all that is necessary; God will do the rest.

In our next lesson, we will examine Paul's testimony and compare it with Peter's. From these two men, God will give us new insights regarding what it means to "not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ"; as these two men set examples for us about our testimony and what it should be as we witness to others. It promises to be another exciting lesson.

Have a great week working in the Kingdom everyone.

Yours in Christ,

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