

LESSON 8

A PERSECUTOR IS CONVERTED— AND SOME JOURNEYS OF PETER

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL (9:1–19a)

Three chapters in Acts tell of Saul's conversion: chapter 9, when it happens, and chapters 22 and 26, when the apostle tells others about it. This threefold telling testifies to the importance of this event. It was Luke's practice not to duplicate himself. Planning to record Paul's sermons later, Luke left out details in chapter 9 he would later supply. It should be noted that the accounts vary a little because different facts were emphasized to different audiences. The three accounts are not contradictory, but complementary.

1. What is known about the life of Saul before his conversion?
2. Under what circumstances was Saul travelling to Damascus?
3. On what legal tenets was Saul's strategy against Christians dependent?
4. What facts, revealed in the New Testament, make the claim that Saul merely had an epileptic fit on the road to Damascus ridiculous?
5. Why did Paul have to wait three days before Ananias came to him?
6. How is the word "saints" used in 9:13 and throughout the rest of the New Testament?
7. Since Ananias called Saul "brother" and told him that he had come so that he could "be filled with the Holy Spirit," was Saul saved at that moment? Why or why not?
8. Why might the Lord have chosen Saul to be His apostle to the Gentiles?

THE EARLY LABORS OF SAUL (9:19b-31)

When Saul was baptized, he was added by the Lord to the church (see comments on 2:41, 47) and instantly was accepted into the fellowship of the congregation in Damascus. Ananias was probably able to quell any misgivings the brethren may have had. We do not know on what day of the week Saul was baptized, but on the next Sabbath day he was present in the synagogue. One reason this babe in Christ had the *courage* to preach was that he had been *encouraged* by his new brothers and sisters in Christ.

9. In what two ways did Saul receive his knowledge of Jesus?
10. In 2 Cor. 11:32, who was king Aretas, and why was he guarding Damascus?
11. Since the disciples had been driven from Jerusalem three years before, who were the disciples who were afraid of Saul in Jerusalem?
12. What factors might have contributed to the Christians in Jerusalem not having heard of Saul's conversion?
13. How did Barnabas know so much about Saul?
14. What lessons did the Lord take seven years in Tarsus to teach Saul?

FURTHER JOURNEYS OF PETER (9:32-43)

Acts 9:32—11:18 has been called "The Acts of Peter." Two episodes of healing (9:32-43) are introductory to one of the most important events of Peter's apostolic ministry: preaching the gospel to the Gentiles for the first time (ch. 10). In 9:32-43, we get a glimpse of the activity of the early church, how more isolated congregations shared themselves and their faith.

15. What were the reasons for Peter's missionary trip?
16. How did the reaction of the people from Lydda to Aeneas' healing (9:35) reflect the primary purpose of miracles?
17. Why were the brethren in Joppa so anxious that Peter arrive even though Tabitha was already dead?

18. How was Peter's raising of Tabitha similar to Jesus' raising of Jairus' daughter?
19. What was the climax of the story involving Tabitha?
20. How did Jews regard the work of tanning?