

ACTS CHAPTER 9

The Conversion of Saul (Acts 9:1-19a)

In Acts 9:1 we read that Saul went to the high priest and asked for letters from him addressed to the synagogues at Damascus, nowadays the capital of Syria. This town is 217 kilometers (135 miles) from Jerusalem and was the nearest important city outside the Holy Land with a large Jewish population.

Map 2. Shows the location of Jerusalem and Damascus



With the letters he got permission to bring disciples of the Lord from Damascus to Jerusalem. These disciples were men and women who were followers of Jesus Christ and they were called the Way. They had to be brought to Jerusalem so that the full authority of the Council could be exercised in trial for either acquittal (free from the charge of an offense) or death.

As Saul was traveling and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him,

“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

And he said, “Who are You, Lord?”

And He said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.”

The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing. Therefore the men who travelled with him lead him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. There he was three days without sight and during that time he did not drink and did not eat.



Photo 1. The street called Straight in Damascus around 1900 which probably follows the same route as before.

Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias.

The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.”

And the Lord said to him, “Get up and go to the street called Straight. Ask there at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him, so that he might see again.”

But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints (sincere followers of Christ) at Jerusalem; and here in Damascus he has authority from the chief priests of Jerusalem to arrest all who call on Your name.”

But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles (non-Jews) and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized. In this he followed the example of all the early converts to Christianity, the ones who believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. They were water baptized immediately. After Saul’s water baptism, he took food and regained his strength.

Saul Begins to Preach Christ (Acts 9:19b-31)

Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”

And all that heard him continued to be amazed, and were saying, “Isn’t he the man who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on the name of Jesus, and who had come here in Damascus to bring them as prisoners before the chief priests?”

But Saul went on increasing in power, and the Jews in Damascus were not able to give answers to the arguments by which he made it clear that Jesus was the Christ, the Anointed one.



Photo 2. Bab Tuma gate in Damascus, one of the gates inside the historical walls of the city.

When many days had passed, the Jews made an agreement together to put him to death, but Saul was told about their plan. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death, but his followers took him by night and let him down through an opening in the city wall, lowering him in a large basket.

When Saul came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the followers of Jesus Christ; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a follower of Jesus Christ. But Barnabas (which translated means Son of Encouragement) took him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how the Lord had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had preached without fear in the name of Jesus.

And Saul was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, preaching in the name of the Lord without fear. And he was talking and arguing with the Greek-speaking Jews. So Saul not only preached that Jesus was the Christ in the presence of those Jews who lived at Jerusalem, and who spoke the Hebrew language. He also preached to foreign Jews who spoke the Greek language, and who had come up to Jerusalem. But the fellow believers of Saul found out that the Greek-speaking Jews attempted to put Saul to death, so they brought him down to Caesarea (a city rebuilt by Herod and with an excellent harbour) and sent him away to Tarsus, his hometown.



Map 2. Shows the location of Jerusalem, Caesarea and Tarsus

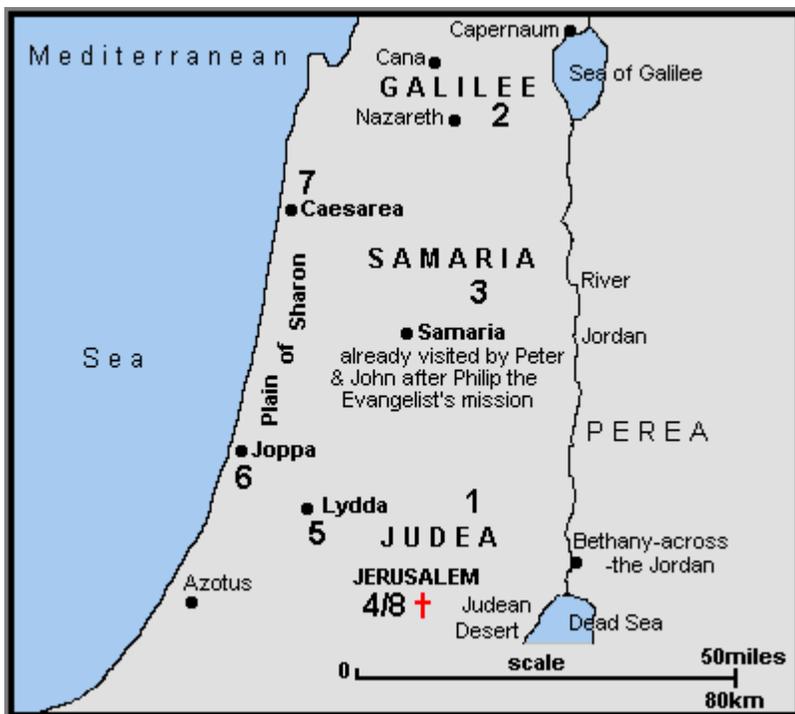
And so the assemblies of believers throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace. They also grew spiritually which means that they became more and more like Christ. Furthermore by living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they continued to increase.

Peter’s Ministry (Acts 9:32-43)

Now as Peter was traveling through all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been in bed for eight years, for he was paralyzed.

Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed.”

Immediately he got up. And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they became followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The fertile plain of Sharon runs about 80 kilometers (50 miles) along the Mediterranean coast, roughly from Joppa to Caesarea. The reference here, however, may be to a village in the neighbourhood of Lydda, instead of to a district.



Map 3. Shows the location of Judea, Galilee, Samaria, Lydda, plain of Sharon and Joppa

Now in Joppa (the main seaport of Judea, nowadays known as Jaffa, a suburb of Tel Aviv) there was a follower of Christ named Tabitha. This Aramaic name translated in Greek is called Dorcas and means gazelle. This woman was full with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did. And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room. The washing of the body is a Jewish custom in preparation for burial. If burial was delayed, it was customary to lay the body in an upper room.

Since Lydda was about 19 kilometers (12 miles) from Joppa, the followers of Christ, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, begging him, “Do not delay in coming to us.”



Photo 3. Skyline of Jaffa, an ancient port city believed to be one of the oldest in the world.

So Peter arose and went with them in order to arrive before the burial. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them.

But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, “Tabitha, arise.”

And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints (sincere followers of Christ) and widows, he presented her alive. It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner *named* Simon. A tanner is a skilled worker who treats skins and hides with tannic acid so as to convert them into leather.

QUESTIONS OF ACTS CHAPTER 9

ALL ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND IN THE TEXT OF CHAPTER 9

1. In which country can we find the city of Tarsus nowadays?

2. Under what famous Jewish teacher in Jerusalem had Saul been studying?

3. How many days was Saul without sight in Damascus?

4. What is Saul of the Lord (check conversation between the Lord and Ananias)?

5. Who sent Ananias to Saul so that he may regain his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit?

6. Who were not able to give answers to the arguments by which Saul made it clear that Jesus was the Christ, the Anointed one?

7. In Jerusalem, who brought Saul to the apostles?

8. Who attempted to put Saul to death in Jerusalem?

9. What city was closer to Jerusalem: Lydda or Joppa?

10. What is the Greek translation of the name Tabitha?

ACTS CHAPTER 9 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

The Conversion of Saul

1Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, **2**and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. **3**As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; **4**and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" **5**And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He *said*, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, **6**but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." **7**The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. **8**Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. **9**And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." **11**And the Lord *said* to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, **12**and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight." **13**But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; **14**and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." **15**But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; **16**for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." **17**So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." **18**And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; **19**and he took food and was strengthened.

Saul Begins to Preach Christ

Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, **20**and immediately he *began* to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." **21**All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and *who* had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" **22**But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

23When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, **24**but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; **25**but his disciples took him by night and let him down through *an opening* in the wall, lowering him in a large basket.

26When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. **27**But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. **28**And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. **29**And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic *Jews*; but they were attempting to put him to death. **30**But when the brethren learned *of it*, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

Peter's Ministry

32 Now as Peter was traveling through all *those regions*, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. 33 There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed. 34 Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up. 35 And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

36 Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated *in Greek* is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did. 37 And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room. 38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, "Do not delay in coming to us." 39 So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. 40 But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. 42 It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. 43 And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner *named* Simon.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE(r),

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