

Outline

1. Saul's persecution leaves Jerusalem
 1. Seeks letters from the Sanhedrin to the synagogues of Damascus
 2. Purpose is to extradite Jewish Christians to Jerusalem
2. Saul meets Jesus
 1. Light shines around him
 2. Discussion with Jesus
 3. Told to go to Damascus where he would be told what to do
 4. Encounter leaves him blind
3. Ananias and Saul
 1. Vision of Jesus sends Ananias to Saul
 2. Saul's sight restored with the laying on of Ananias' hands
 3. Saul is baptized
4. Saul's post-baptism actions
 1. Begins preaching Jesus in the synagogues
 2. Flees when the Jews plot to kill him
 3. Eventually goes to Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Tarsus
5. Status and growth of the church
6. Peter travels to Lydda
 1. Heals Aneas
 2. Restores Dorcus to life

Commentary

We introduced Paul in Acts 7 as the person who held the coats of those who stoned Stephen to death. When next we see him in Acts 8, he is going door-to-door in Jerusalem intent upon stamping out this "Way." In Acts 22:10, Paul further describes approving the murder of Christians during this time. Now, he desires to take this persecution into other cities.

Some have taken the difference between Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:9 to create a discrepancy that cannot be resolved. David Brown describes the resolution which makes the most sense to me:

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Paul himself says, “they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me” (Ac 22:9). But just as “the people that stood by heard” the voice that saluted our Lord with recorded words of consolation and assurance, and yet heard not the articulate words, but thought “it thundered” or that some “angel spake to Him” (John 12:28, 29)—so these men heard the voice that spake to Saul, but heard not the articulate words. (Jamieson, 183).

Any number of reasons can be posited for Ananias’ response to the Lord. Common sense tells us that it could be a degree of hesitation because of Saul’s immediate past actions in Jerusalem. It could also be given to demonstrate that the saints in Damascus were fully aware of his mission to their city. Finally, at least one commentator suggests that Luke could be illustrating the change which was wrought in Saul’s life (Longenecker, 9374). It could be any of those issues or some combination of them.

Saul immediately begins to speak out in support of Christ where he had once been a detractor and a persecutor. Acts 9:21 tells us that this fact was not lost on those who heard him. As he continued to grow, eventually persecution arises against Saul, but this took “many days” (Acts 9:23).

Galatians 1:18-24 places about a three-year gap between Acts 9:22 and Acts 9:23.

Acts 9:31 is perhaps one of the most important verses in the New Testament when talking about the formula for church growth.

The last two miracles recorded in this chapter also give the result: “all...turned to the Lord”

(Acts 9:35) and “many...believed on the Lord” (Acts 9:42). In both instances, the faith of those who would pay attention to the evidence was such that they were forced to acknowledge what they had seen and its importance.

Thought Questions

Please consider the following questions:

1. Why does Saul respond to the voice he heard by asking “Who are you, Lord?” (Acts 9:5)
2. Why does Saul fast for three days (Acts 9:9)?
3. Even if he was not afraid of Saul, would Ananias have had reason to fear for his safety when going to see Saul?
4. Why does Luke not record what happened in Saul’s trip to Arabia?
5. What are some practical ways that we can create the circumstances conducive to church growth?