

Acts 9:1-22

- **DEFINED BY JESUS...**
 - The Desert...
 - In the midst of the REVIVAL in Samaria...
 - An ANGEL came to PHILIP and commanded him to go to GAZA by way of the DESERT...
 - PHILIP did NOT hesitate - he got up and went as he was told - **II Corinthians 5:7**
 - Seeking God...
 - A rich and powerful ETHIOPIAN was traveling back from Jerusalem...
 - He was reading from the scroll of ISAIAH - about the SUFFERING servant - **Isaiah 53**
 - PHILIP ran up to him - OPENED his mouth - and beginning at that passage told him about Jesus...
 - The ETHIOPIAN wanted to be BAPTIZED - Philip said as long as he BELIEVED with all his heart...
 - Coming up out of the WATER - the Spirit RAPTURED Philip - the ETHIOPIAN went way rejoicing!
 - Definition...
 - PHILIP had been a faithful SERVANT - a powerful EVANGELIST...
 - OBEDIENT to go into the DESERT to reach ONE - and in the end a good FATHER...
 - Because he never got stuck in ONE role - he was open to however God wanted to use him!
- **1ST - FIGHTING GOD... vs. 1-9**
 - 1st - Hating Christ... vs. 1-2
 - The Disciples... vs. 1
 - Then Saul still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord!
 - The hate Paul had for the DISCIPLES [μαθητής] had multiplied since the death of Steven...
 - Every BREATH from his mouth was full of THREATS and MURDER [φόνος] towards them...
 - He was so convinced his RELIGION was right - and the DISCIPLES were wrong...
 - He went so far as to TORTURE Christians to get them to DENY Jesus!
 - **Acts 26:11** - "I had them punished in the synagogues to get them to curse Jesus." [NLT]
 - The problem with all RELIGIONS is they can do NOTHING to change the heart...
 - They only give RULES - that make a person look good on the outside...
 - Since God sees the HEART - He condemns the HYPOCRISY of RELIGION!
 - The Epistles... vs. 1-2
 - [He] went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus.
 - If he found any who were of the Way - whether men or women.
 - He might bring them bound to Jerusalem!
 - When SAUL ran out of DISCIPLES in Jerusalem to persecute and imprison...
 - He went to the High Priest and asked for permission to hunt them in other cities...
 - He was given LETTERS [ἐπιστολή] for the SYNAGOGUES in Damascus...
 - If [subjunctive] he found ANY of the WAY [ὁδός] - he could bring them bound to Jerusalem!
 - Saul BEGAN by delivering LETTERS [ἐπιστολή] to try and DESTROY the church...
 - But he would FINISH by sending LETTERS [ἐπιστολή] to ENCOURAGE the church!
 - We might think we are the ones in CONTROL of our lives...
 - But it is the LORD who is the one working - even when we do NOT see it...
 - Preparing us for the WORK that He wants to do in our lives!
 - 2nd - Meeting Jesus... vs. 3-5
 - Bright light... vs. 3
 - As he journeyed he came near Damascus and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven!
 - Damascus is about TWO hundred kilometers north of Jerusalem [modern day Syria]
 - There is only ONE road between the two cities [to this very day]

- As SAUL was GOING - very close to the city of DAMASCUS...
- Without any warning [unexpected] - a LIGHT [ἄσθῆρ] shone around him from heaven...
- It was so powerful - it was BRIGHTER than the noon SUN!
- **Acts 26:13** - "At midday... I saw a light from heaven - brighter than the sun!"
- Persecuting God... vs. 4
 - Then he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him:
 - Saul - Saul - why are you persecuting Me.
 - He said: Who are You Lord? Then the Lord said: I am Jesus whom you are persecuting!
 - SAUL fell to the ground - overcome by the LIGHT...
 - And he HEARD a voice asking him - WHY are you PERSECUTING [present] Me...
 - It is worth noting - the voice spoke to him in HEBREW [heart language] - **Acts 26:14**
 - SAUL asked - who are you MASTER [κύριος]
 - The MASTER [κύριος] answered and said He was Jesus - whom SAUL was persecuting...
 - Yet SAUL had NEVER met Jesus- so how had he PERSECUTED Him!
 - **Matthew 25:42-45** - "[Jesus said] I was hungry and you did not feed Me... when you refused to help the least of these My brothers - you were refusing to help Me." [NLT]
 - The family with NO food – the NEW face at church – the neighbor who is SICK...
 - The SINNER waiting for us to come and tell them about the LOVE of God...
 - When we turn our back on the needs of others – it is Jesus we are ignoring!
- The Goads... vs. 5
 - It is hard for you to kick against the goads!
 - ONLY found here in Texus Receptus - but it is included in MGNT - **Acts 26:14**
 - Jesus told SAUL - it was HARD for him to KICK [present] against the GOADS...
 - GOAD [κέντρον] - a stick used to drive an OX forward when plowing a field...
 - When the OX kicks a GOAD – it gets hurt – but the GOAD is unharmed...
 - The GOAD that Saul was having a hard time with - was SIN and DEATH!
 - **I Corinthians 15:56** - "The sting [κέντρον] of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law."
 - People think RULES [religion] will give them VICTORY over SIN...
 - But the strength of SIN comes from the RULES [because we cannot keep the LAW]
 - No matter how much we KICK [κέντρον] at our SIN - we never have VICTORY...
 - Because the ONLY way to overcome SIN - is through Jesus!
 - **I Corinthians 15:57** - "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus."
- o 3rd - Blinded... vs. 6-8
 - What to do... vs. 6
 - So he trembling and astonished said: Lord what do You want me to do?
 - Then the Lord said to him: Arise and go into the city and you will be told what you must do!
 - TERRIFIED [present] - as he came face to face with the God he thought he was serving...
 - AMAZED [present] - that he could have been so WRONG...
 - SAUL surrendered and simply asked - WHAT is your WILL [θέλω] for me to DO [infinitive]
 - To which God gave him a SIMPLE command - get up and go [imperative] into the city...
 - He would find out LATER [future] what he was going to DO [infinitive]
 - Because it was ALL he could handle at the moment - to realize he had been WRONG!
 - Contradiction... vs. 7
 - The men who journeyed with him stood speechless - hearing a voice but seeing no one!
 - SAUL was NOT alone - the men with him were signing to each other [ἐννεόω]
 - They HEARD a sound [φωνή] - but did NOT see Jesus...
 - Yet PAUL would later say - the men SAW - but did NOT hear - **Acts 22:9**
 - This appears to be a contradiction - leading people to question the Bible...

- But if we take a closer look we will see there is NO contradiction...
- The men SAW a light – **Acts 22:9** – but did NOT see Jesus – **Acts 9:7**
- The men HEARD a sound – **Acts 9:7** – but did NOT understand His voice – **Acts 22:9**
- The Bible does NOT contradict itself – it is the inerrant Word of God...
- When we come across an apparent CONTRADICTION in the Bible...
- Dig a little deeper – we will always find the Bible is right!
- Led by the hand... vs. 8
 - Then Saul arose from the ground and when his eyes were opened he saw no one.
 - But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.
 - When SAUL stood up [passive] - his eyes were OPENED [passive]
 - AND [δέ] he realized that he could NOT [imperfect] see [blinded by the light]
 - Jesus blinded Saul [physically] - to show him he was blind [spiritually]!
 - **John 9:39** – “I have come to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind.”
 - We CANNOT convince a blind man that he is going the WRONG way...
 - Until we first help him to see – that he is blind!
 - Those who are RELIGIOUS think they are right – because they CANNOT see the truth...
 - Those who cling to their RULES - need to first see those rules CANNOT save them...
 - Then they will be willing to open their eyes and look to Jesus!
- o 4th - Three days... vs. 9
 - [Paul] was three days without sight and neither ate nor drank!
 - For THREE days SAUL was BLIND [imperfect] - and did NOT eat or drink...
 - You have to wonder what went through his mind during those days...
 - He now BELIEVED in the same Jesus - whom he KILLED others for [Stephen]
 - Just like Jonah was THREE days in the whale - and Jesus THREE days in the grave...
 - God gave Saul THREE days - to take him from death to life!
 - **Ephesians 2:1** - “You *He made alive* - who were dead in trespasses and sins.”
 - When God opens our EYES – He takes away our SIN – and we are FORGIVEN...
 - But being FORGIVEN does NOT take away the memories of our SINS...
 - Which is NOT a bad thing – it is good to REMEMBER what we were saved from...
 - In order to really appreciate what God has done - we need to look back at who we were...
 - Placed on the black backdrop of our past - we see Jesus how amazing His GRACE is!
- 2ND - CHOSEN BY GOD... vs. 10-22
 - o 1st - Answering the call... vs. 10-14
 - Here I am... vs. 10
 - Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias.
 - And to him the Lord said in a vision: Ananias. And he said: Here I am Lord!
 - There was [imperfect] a DISCIPLE [μαθητής] in Damascus called ANANIAS...
 - ANANIAS - his name means the LORD [יהוה] is GRACIOUS [חַנּוּן]
 - The Lord [κύριος] came to him in a VISION - ANANIAS replied - I am here MASTER [κύριος]!
 - Because the qualification for being used by God is to be ready to answer – Here I am!
 - **I Samuel 3:2** – “The LORD called Samuel and he answered: Here I am!”
 - **Isaiah 6:8** – “Whom shall I send... [Isaiah] said: Here I am!”
 - If we only turned on our phone for FIVE minutes a day – miss a lot of texts...
 - If we left your cell phone at home – we would not know if someone called...
 - For that reason we like to have our phones always on - always with us!
 - We never know when God is going to speak to us – we need to be ready...
 - We need to keep our Bible close at hand – in case God sends us a message...

- Keeping in constant prayer – just in case the Lord gives us a call!
- The details... vs. 11-12
 - The Lord said to him: Arise and go to the street called Straight.
 - Inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus - for behold he is praying.
 - In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him.
 - So that he might receive his sight!
 - The Lord [κύριος] proceeded to give ANANIAS very DETAILED instructions...
 - He was to go to a STREET called straight - to the HOUSE of Judas...
 - There he would find SAUL of Tarsus [5x in NT] - who is PRAYING [present]
 - SAUL had [aorist] seen in a vision [he was still blind] - ANANIAS coming into the house...
 - And he laid his [aorist] hands on SAUL - that he might [subjunctive] see!
 - I do NOT think the Lord has EVER given me that many details...
 - There could be NO doubt exactly WHERE - WHO - and WHAT Ananias was to do...
 - Yet rather than GO - he questioned the Lord - because it was SAUL!
- Doubting... vs. 13-14
 - Then Ananias answered: Lord I have heard from many about this man.
 - How much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.
 - And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name!
 - BUT [δέ] - ANANIAS had heard from MANY people about SAUL [reputation]
 - How much EVIL [κακός] he had done to the SAINTS [ἅγιος] in Jerusalem...
 - And [καί] he had power [ἐξουσία] from the Chief Priest to arrest ALL [πάντες] who call on Jesus...
 - ANANIAS had EVERY reason to REJECT the command of the Lord [he could have died]
 - But because he OBEYED - we have the Apostle PAUL!
 - Mordecai Ham was little known preacher in rural America [1930s]
 - But through him Billy Graham got saved – who preached to 215 million in 185 countries!
 - If we answer YES Lord - we never know how God might use those we reach...
 - If we are willing to share Jesus with just one person - millions can be touched!
- o 2nd - The Choice... vs. 15-16
 - For Grace... vs. 15
 - The Lord said to him: Go for he is a chosen vessel of Mine!
 - The Lord [κύριος] was quick to reply - GO [imperative]
 - Because [ὅτι] SAUL was His CHOSEN [ἐκλογή] vessel [cay pot] - **II Corinthians 4:7**
 - FIRST - chosen to be an example of the power of the GRACE!
 - **I Timothy 1:16** - “God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners.” [NLT]
 - Paul was used by God as a powerful example of how GRACE works...
 - If God can choose to save a sinner as EVIL as Paul [murdered Christians]
 - Then NO one is beyond the reach of His GRACE - God can save ANYONE!
 - For Apostleship... vs. 15
 - To bear My name before Gentiles - kings - and the children of Israel!
 - SECOND - chosen to be an apostle the Gentles – **Romans 11:13**
 - He would bring the Gospel to the NATIONS [ἔθνος] – stand before Kings [Caesar]
 - He wrote THIRTEEN books of the New Testament – and his impact can still be seen today...
 - It is even argued that he is the TWELFTH Apostle [replacing Judas]
 - Because unlike Mathias [chosen by lots] - he was CHOSEN by Jesus!
 - **John 15:16** – “You did not choose Me - but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit - and that your fruit should remain!”
 - When God is the one who CHOOSES – He is the one who does the WORK...

- Which is why we SEEK the will of God for our lives – open to how He wants to work...
- God does NOT care about our PAST - our MISTAKES just magnify His GRACE...
- There is no greater EXAMPLE of this - than the life of SAUL [Paul]!
- For Suffering... vs. 16
 - For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My names sake!
 - THIRD - chosen to SUFFER [πάσχω] for the name of Jesus...
 - The Lord would SHOW [future] him - just how much his calling would cost!
 - SAUL would be thrown in prison at least FIVE different times - **II Corinthians 11:23-28**
 - FIVE times he was scourged [39 lashes] - THREE times beaten with Rods...
 - Once he was stoned to death – but God brought Him back - **Acts 14:9**
 - Yet SAUL was willing to go to prison - scourged and beaten - even stoned for Jesus!
 - The way to find out how valuable something is - how much would we pay for it...
 - How valuable is the Lord to us - what are we willing to give up for Jesus!
- For Jesus...
 - **Colossians 1:24** - “[I] fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.”
 - FOURTH - chosen to complete the work of Jesus...
 - Not that there was anything LACKING in the AFFLICTIONS of Jesus [the cross]
 - When the work was done Jesus said – it is FINISHED – nothing needed to be added...
 - But we were NOT there to see the cross – we did NOT see Jesus die...
 - So SAUL was allowed to SUFFER so others could see Jesus in him!
 - It is easy to worship Jesus when everything is going well – NO one notices...
 - But when we get SICK - when BAD things happen [as they do to everyone]
 - And rather than complaining – we REJOICE in the goodness of God...
 - Then people stand up and take notice – through our SUFFERING - they see Jesus in us!
- o 3rd - Open eyes... vs. 17-19
 - Holy Spirit... vs. 17
 - Ananias went his way and entered the house - and laying his hands on him he said:
 - Brother Saul - the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road as you came.
 - Has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit!
 - ANANIAS obediently went - and laid hands on SAUL - calling him BROTHER [ἀδελφός]
 - Seeming to confirm that SAUL at this point was a BELIEVER...
 - And the same Lord [κύριος] Jesus - who APPEARED to him in the WAY [ὁδός]
 - Had SENT [ἀποστέλλω] him to receive his sight - and be filled [subjunctive] with the SPIRIT!
 - Ananias was NOT sure [subjunctive] SAUL would be filled with the Spirit...
 - Any more than we could believe a murderer could become a Pastor!
 - Baptized... vs. 18
 - Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales.
 - And he received his sight at once - and he arose and was baptized!
 - The moment ANANIAS laid hands on SAUL - something LIKE scales fell from his eyes...
 - He IMMEDIATELY [παραχρῆμα] received his SIGHT...
 - Seeing Saul HEALED - ANANIAS took him and BAPTIZED him as a believer in Christ!
 - He had good reason to doubt the conversion of greatest persecutor of the church...
 - But the PROOF was OBVIOUS to see - God had OPENED his eyes...
 - Because God does NOT look at who we were – He sees us in light of eternity!
 - God first... vs. 19
 - So when he had received food he was strengthened.
 - Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus!
 - AFTER he was given some food - it gave him STRENGTH [2x in NT] - **Luke 22:43**

- And SAUL stayed with the DISCIPLES [μαθητῆς] for many days...
 - But what I find remarkable - is that the BAPTISM came before the FOOD...
 - It really shows how radical the conversion of SAUL was...
 - Having NOT eaten in THREE days - he still prioritized his CONFESSION of FAITH over FOOD!
 - Some of most RADICAL Christians - are the ones who were the HARDEST to reach...
 - Because once they make the choice to follow Christ - they are ALL in...
 - There is NO compromise - they put Jesus above everything else!
- o 4th - Preaching Jesus... vs. 20-22
- Son of God... vs. 20-21
 - Immediately [Saul] preached the Christ in the synagogues - that He is the Son of God!
 - Then all who heard were amazed and said:
 - Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem.
 - And has come here for that purpose so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?
 - Right way SAUL began to PREACH [imperfect] Christ [Χριστός] in the SYNAGOGUES...
 - Telling the people that he is [present] the SON of God...
 - EVERYONE [πᾶς] who heard him was ASTONISHED [imperfect]
 - Because they ALL knew Saul had KILLED those who called on Jesus in Jerusalem...
 - And he had come to Damascus to ARREST anyone who believed there!
 - Taught by God... vs. 22
 - Saul increased all the more in strength.
 - And confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus proving that this Jesus is the Christ!
 - But [δὲ] SAUL continued to increase in STRENGTH [δύναμις]
 - And continued [imperfect] to STIR up the Jews in Damascus...
 - Showing them that Jesus is [present] he MESSIAH [Χριστός]
 - But the question has to be asked - HOW did SAUL learn about the Lord!
 - After getting saved - SAUL went to Arabia for THREE years - **Galatians 1:17**
 - There Jesus [not men] taught him and disciplined him in the WORD...
 - After which he came back to Damascus - to PREACH Jesus!
 - There are plenty of people who are willing to give us their IDEAS about the Bible...
 - But the question is are they right - or is it just their OPINION...
 - God has given each of us His Holy Spirit - He is the one to teach us...
 - We can be absolutely certain that what the Holy Spirit gives us - it the truth!
 - **John 14:26** - "The Holy Spirit... will teach you all things."