**Acts 9:1-2**

\*The Lord’s institution of the Baptist assembly was moving worldwide with the help of Deacons Stephen and Philip and the Sanhedrin henchman Saul! Chapter Nine is a continuation of Chapter Seven with Chapter Eight as a blessed interlude.

\*The *“my church”* movement was not going to be stopped by the “best” agents Satan had (Simon and Saul), since Christ’s Gospel is more powerful than the devil’s devices (Eph. 6:11; II Cor. 4:4).

\*The time was probably the summer of AD 30/31, and young and vigorous Saul, trained in the *Tanak*, and probably in his thirties was in attack mode. In the sixties he called himself *“Paul the aged”* (Phile. 1:9). Under the power of darkness (Col. 1:13) he persecuted the church of God (I Cor. 15:9; I Tim. 1:13; cf. Acts 8:3; 26:10-11).

\*Saul, as an enraged Hebrew of the Hebrews (Phil. 3:5-6), wanted to threaten and slaughter the disciples of the Lord and sought “legal’ warrants to bring members of *“the way”* (Jn. 14:6; Acts 19:23; 22:4; 24:22) back to Jerusalem for another “Stephen session.”

**Acts 9:3**

\*All future Christian history hinged on stopping mad Saul! With great zeal he journeyed 136 miles to Damascus. How would the merciful and gracious Lord handle this impending destruction of His divine institution? *Simply, by a heavenly encounter!* Any other questions?

\*He obtained the attention of Saul with a *“light,” “a great light”* (Acts 22:6), *“above the brightness of the sun”* (Acts 26:13).

**Acts 9:4**

\*Saul fell down and heard a voice coming from the brilliant resurrected and glorified Jesus (Rev. 1:12-15). The words of the voice were in the Hebrew language (Acts 26:14), the language of Heaven (*Alleluia* [Rev. 19:1-6]).

\*Using double iteration, the Lord addressed his Hebrew name *“Saul”* (cf. Gen. 22:11; 46:2; Ex. 3:4; I Sam. 3:10).

\*The stark assertion in the question *“why persecutest thou me”* was pointed and convicting! He had been persecuting “Christians” (= “little Christs”), such as Stephen and Christian men and women.

**Acts 9:5-6**

\*Dazed, Saul used the non-descript “Lord” for identification. The Lord used the “hated” name of *“Jesus”* (cf. 4:7, 12, 17-18, 28, 40). Further, He said *“I am”* (*ego eimi*), identifying with Jehovah of the *Tanak* (Ex. 3:13-14; 6:3; Jn. 18:4-7).

\*Saul was under great pricking conviction, trembling and astonished. He immediately surrendered to the Lord having had a change of heart. 1. He repented of his sins. 2. He believed in the Lord. 3. He called on the Lord. 4. He had *“fruits meet for repentance.”* 5. He submitted to service > *“do?”* The CT/Modern versions omit 5b-6a! The text is true since it is in Acts 26:14!

\*His conversion becomes the *“pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting”* (I Tim. 1:12-16). He preached repentance (Acts 17:30; 26:20) and faith (Acts 16:31) for the elect to obtain salvation (II Tim. 2:10). He believed and preached the Gospel (I Cor. 15:1 ff.)

**Acts 9:7**

\*His colleagues saw the light (Acts 26:13-14), heard but did not understand the voice (Acts 22:9), and did not see Jesus. The supernatural phenomenon was public but the message was private.

**Acts 9:8-9**

\*The glory of the resurrected Lord had blinded Saul and he needed his Jewish cohorts to lead him to the city of Damascus. Living in spiritual darkness, Saul was now experiencing physical darkness. The imprisoner of Baptists was now imprisoned to blindness. Saved Saul had the opportunity to contemplate his regeneration in blindness while fasting for three days. The blindness testified to the brilliance of the resurrected Jesus (Lk. 24:34; Mk. 16:2; Mal. 4:2; Rev. 1:12-16) and nullified any thought that this was a dream, vision, or hallucination, and his companions could testify as well (Acts 22:9)!

**Acts 9:10**

\*Just as the Lord had orchestrated the meeting of Philip and the eunuch (8:26-27), He likewise orchestrated the meeting of the Baptist with the Christian. The disciple Ananias, from the Damascus Baptist Church (cf. v. 18), received a vision with a commission to which he responded in faith, *“Behold, I am here”* (Isa. 6:8-9). He did not know that the task would be strange and difficult!

**Acts 9:11-12**

\*The Lord gave specific geographical details to Ananias (except zip code), including the street *“Straight,” “the house of Judas,”* and someone named not just Saul, but *“Saul of Tarsus,”* for him to find in the large city of Damascus. The man was praying, and by the way, he was the infamous persecutor of Baptists, Saul of Tarsus!

\*Trying to encourage with information, the Lord revealed to the Baptist that the man had seen in a vision a man named Ananias who would be coming to put his hand on him to allow reception of sight!

**Acts 9:13-14**

\*What if the Baptist Ananias disobeyed? Obedience brings great blessings! The hesitant Ananias questioned with objections, such as knowing his fearful name, his murderous testimony, and devilish purpose to bind all Christians!

\*Of course, why was there a Baptist church in Damascus? Because Saul caused the Baptists (*“saints”* [Acts 9:41; Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:2; Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:2]) in Jerusalem to scatter (8:1)!

\*Luke’s focus was upon the doctrine of God Who is the “Great Reverser” in human history (Lk. 4:18). He used the great doer of evil to the *“my church”* movement to become the great doer of good. **Saul** went from being the **great persecutor** of Baptists to **Paul** being the **great promoter** of Baptists (Rom. 8:28)! See again Paul’s testimony (I Tim. 1:12-16)!

**Acts 9:15**

\*The Lord remonstrated as He revealed to the Baptist church member the will of God for the saved but un-baptized, non-church member. Saul was in the Kingdom of God (realm of regeneration) but Ananias was in the Church of God (Baptist assembly). The will of God can only be known in the place of Truth!

\*Paul was prepared chosen vessel to bear the name of Jesus to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15-16; Acts 13-19), and to kings (Acts 26:1-2; 28:19), and to Jews (Acts 13:5, 16; 22:1 ff.).

**Acts 9:16-19**

\*Revealed to Ananias and eventually to Paul, that he would suffer greatly (II Cor.11:23-28). Ananias found him, laid hands on him, called him *“Brother Saul,”* testified to him, facilitated in his sight and Spirit-filling, and was involved in his church membership immersion and his eating/strengthening.

\*Converted and baptized, Saul of Tarsus became an active Baptist in the body of Christ at Damascus (Rom. 6:3-5; 12:1-8)!

**Acts 9:20**

 \*What would the converted and baptized Baptist church member do now? He testified before King Agrippa, saying, *“I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision”* (Acts 26:19). Paul obeyed the Lord Jesus and followed His example (Jn. 1:11) by going to the Jew first with the Gospel (Rom. 1:16).

\*He recognized his reasonable service (Rom. 12:1), using his gift of prophecy (I Cor. 13:2), and preached (Greek imperfect tense) Christ Who was *“the Son of God”* (1x in Acts) in the synagogues (Heb. 1:2; 2:9).

 \*Initially, Christians met in synagogues (Acts 9:2) on the Sabbath to testify from the *Tanak* about Jesus as the Christ; on Sundays they met for Baptist church services!

**Acts 9:21**

 \*No doubt Saul/Paul’s visits to the synagogues were always controversial and even shocking. Was he a Christian-hater or a Christian? The Christian persecutor became the Christian preacher!

 \*His diabolical testimony preceded him (cf. Acts 26:11). Jews and Christians knew his original intent and were amazed at his radical change! Wait! The ultimate Jewish henchman was now the ultimate Jewish apostate! Death to the apostate (see v. 23)!

**Acts 9:22**

 \*Having recovered from blindness, converted Saul increased in spiritual strength, being knowledgeable in the *Tanak* and now enlightened to its truth about Jesus the *“Nazarene”* (Mt. 2:23; Acts 6:14).

 \*The LORD gave Saul valuable pre-conversion training from Gamaliel which now the LORD energized (I Thes. 2:13). He easily *“confounded”* (imperfect) the Jews at Damascus, finding significant passages read in the synagogues as they all pointed to Jesus (Lk. 24:44)!

**Acts 9:23**

 \*Luke broke his narrative with the unusual expression *“and after that many days were fulfilled.”* Literally, two time frames > *“*1. *that…*2. *many days.”* Paul testified later*, “but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years”* (Gal. 1:17-19). Arabia included the south of Damascus.

 \*Once the Baptist Saul returned to Damascus, having been given the mysteries of Christ (cf. I Cor. 11:23 ff.), he expanded his Christological teaching and infuriated the Jews.

 \*The Jews at Damascus hated this Sanhedrin apostate and planned to kill him. This apparently began the severe attacks to kill him (Acts 23:12-13) as Paul testified later about his life of suffering (II Cor. 11:32-33).

**Acts 9:24**

 \*The LORD took care of his saint as He promised (cf. Ps. 37:23). Paul was made aware that the Jews were *“laying await”* to kill him. In similar fashion, the LORD revealed to Jeremiah the plot against his life (Jer. 11:18). The Jews were diligent day and night watching the city gates!

 \*Later, Paul rejoiced that he could suffer for the Gentile churches (Col. 1:24-29).

**Acts 9:25**

 \*The Baptist disciples took two actions to help their dear brother in Christ. First, they devised and facilitated a plan to utilize the darkness of night, and second, they let him down in a basket by a window in the wall of the city.

 \*Later, Paul reflected on the escape to the Colossians, *“you life is hid with Christ in God”* (Col 3:3).

**Acts 9:26**

 \*When writing to the Galatians, the recently converted Saul and divinely called Apostle Paul emphasized his complete independence from the Twelve Apostles (Gal. 1:1; 11-24). He was neither approved nor appointed by them. He recognized his privilege (I Cor. 9:16) and office (II Cor. 12:11).

 \*Luke’s account dealt with the aftermath of Paul’s escape from Damascus and his journey to Jerusalem.

 \*He recognized that the apostolate was the leadership of the *“my church”* movement and *“assayed”* (imperfect) continually to join with the remaining disciples in Jerusalem.

\*Obviously the apostles were reluctant to meet with this murderer who had terrorized and almost destroyed the Jerusalem Baptist Church. They were wary of his possible tricks and feared him. \*Certainly, the power of the Gospel **was not sufficient** to penetrate this wicked sinner’s heart and effectuate biblical conversion! Right?! (II Cor. 4:4; I Tim. 1:11; Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Heb. 2:14; I Pet. 1:23)!

 \*Finally, Paul met Peter *“to see*” (“to historicize”); he and Peter confirmed truth (Heb. 2:3)! He also met with James (salvation has resultant works) versus Peter (no works but faith alone)!

**Acts 9:27**

 \*The Baptist Ananias revealed the will of God to Paul. The Baptist Barnabas (Acts 4:36; 11:22-25) recognized the conversion of Paul and defended his biblical testimony: Saul saw and heard the Lord Jesus, and preached Jesus in the synagogues at great risk, showing fruit of salvation!

**Acts 9:28-29**

 \*With the encouragement of Barnabas (gift of exhortation), Paul with the gift of prophecy had liberty in the Jerusalem Baptist Church to move in and out of Jerusalem. Imagine Paul attempting to minister to the families of Christians he had persecuted or killed. God’s grace was sufficient for all parties.

 \*Presumably, Paul transferred church membership! Now he began preaching in the name of the Lord Jesus (see v. 27; Acts 4:10, 18; 5:40) and boldly refuted Jews in the synagogues.

 \*Now, Paul began preaching against the Greek-speaking Jews in preparation for his evangelization of Greek Gentiles as he would later go to Greco-Roman Asia and Europe. Deacon Stephen defended Greek-speaking Jewish widows and preached against Greek-speaking Jews from various locations (cf. Acts 6:9). Was Paul the replacement for Stephen?!

 \*The Lord began to reciprocate on Saul/Paul the threat, persecution, and stoning he gave out to Christians but now on Paul. The Jews wanted to kill him! Sins forgiven but consequences remain!

**Acts 9:30**

 \*Paul had to run and hide from the vicious Jews! The Baptists were concerned about his safety and took him to Caesarea. He began to learn the truths he later espoused: *“I die daily”* (I Cor. 15:33) and *“for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (Phil. 1:21).

 \*From the coast of Israel they sent him to his hometown, Tarsus. They knew and Paul no doubt wanted to minister to his family and friends.

 \*Presumably, Saul would have to meet his father, if still alive, who was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6) and explain to him about the education under Gamaliel and his conversion to the hated Jesus of Nazareth!

 \*While at Tarsus in Cilicia he would need to plant a church which he apparently did, since there were churches there (Acts 15:41; Gal. 1:21). There he ministered for several years (Acts 11:25).

**Acts 9:31**

\*After his conversion churches had rest, were edified, and multiplied. Text issue in CT: “church”!