



MZBMP

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TITLE:

Paul's Conversion

TEXT:

Acts 9:1-9

PAUL'S PLAN TO GO TO DAMASCUS

- Paul made plans to go to Damascus.
- We can assume from Acts 26:11 that he had already taken the inquisition into other places ("strange cities") outside Judea.
- Even so, Damascus was probably the farthest city he had aimed at yet.
- As in other places, Paul needed official documents from the Great Sanhedrin addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, certifying that he was authorized to act as an official representative of the Sanhedrin, to arrest those regarded as heretics and bring them to Jerusalem for trial.

THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

- Damascus was an ancient and large Syrian city. It is the capital of Syria, the oldest capital in the world and, according to some, the fourth holiest city in Islam.
- There was a large Jewish population as evidenced by Josephus's report that ten thousand Jews were massacred there in A.D. 66.
- There was two major trade routes Paul could have taken to Damascus:
 1. From Jerusalem directly north through Samaria and Galilee, turning north-east above the Sea of Galilee. (But, would a Pharisee want to "go through Samaria?")
 2. From Jerusalem east across the Jordan in Perea, then north to Damascus.
- The distance from Jerusalem to Damascus was just less than 150 miles (218 km), and a journey would normally take between five and six days.
- The fact that Paul was going to Damascus in pursuit of Christians indicates that there was a church there.
- It was not a "refugee church," because Ananias had only heard about Paul (Acts 9:13) - he hadn't experienced the persecution himself.
- Since Jesus and/or his disciples never went to Damascus, we must assume the church at Damascus was started out of the church at Jerusalem. This would be in keeping with Christ's command - Acts 1:8.
- Ananias was probably a pastor of the Damascene church. He was in touch with the Lord and ready to serve - Acts 9:10.
- Ananias was given the name of a "prospect." What a contact! Whenever we talk to someone about spiritual matters, instead of prejudging them based on the circumstances, see them for what God can do in and through them.
- Ananias found it hard to believe a man like Paul could be saved. The Lord can save even the "chief of sinners" - I Timothy 1:15.
- The first human face Paul saw after he was saved was that of Ananias' - Acts 22:13b. What must he have seen? A face of reassurance and compassion? Our demeanor will speak to the new convert!

LIKE ANY AND EVERY SALVATION EXPERIENCE:

- Paul's conversion involved:
 1. A definite time - about midday (Acts 22:6; 26:13).
 2. A definite place — near Damascus (Acts 9:3; 22:6).
 3. A definite event - he was confronted with his sin and he received Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour!
- Paul did not gradually develop into a Christian over a period of time. The new birth is an instantaneous event.

UNLIKE ANY OTHER SALVATION EXPERIENCE:

- Paul's conversion was attended by:
 - A sudden blinding light - Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:13.
 - This was more intense than the sun. See: I Timothy 6:16.
 - The audible voice of Jesus Christ - Acts 9:4-5; 22:7-8; 26:14-15.
 - A discrepancy has been imagined on this point:
 - Acts 9:7 - those traveling with Paul heard the voice.
 - Acts 22:9 - those traveling with Paul heard not the voice.
 - Answer: They heard the noise of the voice, but could not understand the words.
 - The sight of the glorified Christ — I Corinthians 15:8.
 - Paul literally saw Jesus Christ — I Corinthians 9:1; Acts 9:17,27; 22:14.
 - He was physically blinded by glory of this sight — Acts 9:8-9; 22:11.
 - This experience may have damaged his eyesight, giving him his "thorn in the flesh" – 2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Galatians 4:15; 6:11.