

Lesson 160: Saul Meets Jesus
Scripture: Acts 7-8
Memory Verse: For me, to live is Christ. Philippians 1:21

The Church (God's chosen people) continued to grow as Jesus promised from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and beyond. For example there was a man named Philip who was spreading the word and even had an opportunity to share the gospel with an Ethiopian man. This is significant, because back then, Ethiopia was considered to be the southern edge of the world!

Meanwhile, a Pharisee named Saul was uttering threats with every breath and eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest and asked for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there.

As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

"Who are you, lord?" Saul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men with Saul stood speechless, for they heard the sound of someone's voice but saw no one! Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.

The Lord chose a man named Ananias to go see Saul. Ananias was very afraid because he had heard about Saul and his persecution of Jesus' people. But God spoke to Ananias and told him that Saul would be God's instrument in bringing the Good News of Jesus to the Gentiles (Non-Jews). Ananias did as he was told. And when he found Saul, he laid his hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Instantly something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized.

From that point, on Saul (who was also called Paul) became a powerful voice for spreading the Good News of Jesus. To the point that the tables were turned. Now HE was the outlaw, and the Jews wanted to kill him! So some of the believers helped him escape from Damascus by lowering him in a large basket through an opening in the city wall.

Then Saul went to Jerusalem, and the believers were all afraid of him there as well. Then Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the way to Damascus and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. He also told them that Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus in Damascus.

So Saul stayed with the apostles and went all around Jerusalem with them, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. He debated with some Greek-speaking Jews, but they tried to murder him. 30 When the believers[f] heard about this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus, his hometown.

The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers.