

Acts Chapter 9

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[0 : 0 0] This particular chapter is one of the most significant in all of the New Testament because it recounts the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, which is perhaps the most dramatic conversion account to Jesus Christ on record.

It was a traumatic experience that Saul of Tarsus is going to have, and it is safe to say that next to the person of Jesus Christ himself, it is most likely that this man, Saul of Tarsus, to become Paul the Apostle, has made a greater impact upon civilization, particularly Western civilization, than any other individual.

And the thing that makes Saul or Paul the Apostle so tremendously important is that this man reveals the character and nature and work of Jesus Christ like no one else, even more so than Christ himself.

Now, how can I make a statement like that? Well, I think I do so with very good record behind me. Dan? Do you have more sheets? This is the last one.

We're starting chapter 9. If you've got chapter 8 of Acts, chapter 9 is beginning at the top of the page, and it's page 488, and we've already distributed a bunch of those, but if we need more, we'll bring more next time.

[1 : 3 6] Chapter 9 is a real landmark chapter in the whole Bible because it deals with the conversion of Paul.

And no one as carefully and as completely defines Jesus Christ as does Paul the Apostle, even more so than Christ himself.

I realize that sounds like a strange statement to make, but I am convinced that it is true. And what I base that on has to do with the updating, the updating that Paul the Apostle gives regarding Christ, that he got from Christ in the abundance of revelations that were given to him, that he talks about when he writes the Corinthian epistle.

So, if you want to know, if you want clear-cut examples of what I am talking about regarding a definition of the person and work of Christ, read Romans 3, 4, and 5.

And you will find the person and work of Christ spelled out in those three chapters in a way that it is not anywhere else in all of Scripture. And it is quite remarkable.

[2 : 5 5] And where did Paul get that information? Well, I can assure you, he didn't dream it up. This is what he received from the risen Christ that enabled him to write this.

And it is just absolutely mind-boggling and very, very specific. Now, in the Gospels, in the presentation of Christ himself, we have John the Baptist who opens with a statement, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Now, I can tell you, that was a very prophetic statement. I do not know that John himself understood the significance of it. But it's there in John's Gospel, chapter 1, and he spoke it as an item of prophecy.

But it was very, very little understood. In fact, my opinion, not understood at all when John said that. Christ is and was the sacrificial Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

No doubt about it. But, when did people come into an appreciation of that? It isn't until we actually get into the book of Acts and almost up to where we are now before they ever grasp that.

[4 : 14] Because, and I hope you really pick up on this, guys, and get this with both ears because this is really important. Early on, and in connection with the death of Christ, it was always the plan and program of God that Christ would be the sacrificial Lamb.

That He would be the one who would balance the scales of justice in God's heaven by being made a sacrifice for us.

The innocent dying for the guilty. That was in the plan and program of God from eternity past. Wasn't clearly revealed until later. But it was always, apparently, in the mind of God.

However, when Christ came on the scene and presented Himself to the nation of Israel as their Messiah, never, in no way, did the Jews make any connection between the promised Messiah coming and the death of the Messiah on the cross for the sins of the world.

No way! They were thinking only in terms of the Messiah coming, the Deliverer, and being a rescuer of the nation Israel and putting down all of Israel's enemies and establishing the kingdom of heaven on earth.

[5 : 35] But they never had a clue about that which had to precede that, which was the death of Christ. Remember when Jesus explained that with crystal clarity to His own apostles that the Son of Man must needs go up to Jerusalem and there be subjected to the scribes and Pharisees and suffer all of these things and be crucified.

Remember when He told them that? And remember their response? What? They denied that. They said, No! What are you talking about? Now you're thinking very negatively.

And Peter actually took Jesus aside and said, God, stop talking like that. What's the matter with you? That's not going to happen. We'll never let that happen to you.

That's impossible. Don't talk like that. And Jesus said, Get thee behind me, Satan. He actually called Peter Satan. Not that Peter had somehow become Satan.

Not that he had somehow become indwelt by Satan. But because he was thinking in satanic human terms. And he said, You savor the things that are of man, not of God.

[6 : 49] And the things that were of man was, stop talking this foolishness about dying on a cross. There's no way that that's going to happen. And Christ put Peter straight when he said, You're thinking just like the devil wants you to think.

And just like man wants you to think. And you know something? They never did pick up on that. They never did buy that. They could not believe that this one, who was the Messiah of God, could actually end up on a Roman cross.

God would never let that happen. And for many Jews, fellas, for many Jews, once Jesus was on that cross, for many Jews, it was proof positive that he was not the Messiah.

Because there's no way in the world God would allow his anointed one to end up on a Roman cross. And yet, there's Jesus on that cross.

Well, we can write that off. No way that he could be the Messiah. And of course, nobody then anticipated his resurrection from the dead.

[8 : 02] And you've got to remember, the first people to deny that Jesus came back from the dead was the apostles. They couldn't believe it. So they were simply not really clued in at all to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world.

That is a truth that will come later. And this is why, as we saw in our last session, remember of the Ethiopian eunuch? Here is water.

What hinders me to be baptized? And Philip said, Well, you may be if you believe with all your heart. And what did he say? He said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Well, what was wrong with that? He was the Son of God. But is that all that is necessary to be believed?

No. But back then, it was. Now, this is a really important distinction. Because, as long as this kingdom concept was available to Israel for their taking and their accepting, everything was contingent upon the identity of Jesus.

[9 : 19] And this is why, in Matthew 16, when Jesus said, Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? They said, Well, some think you're Elijah. Some think you're John the Baptist come back from the dead.

Some think this. Some think you're that prophet. Jesus said, Who do you say that I am? And remember, Peter spoke up. This is the Cetera Philippi with that magnificent confession. And Peter said, Thou art the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

And he was right. And he was. And he still is. But that's as far as Peter went. Because that was all that the kingdom information required at that time was correctly identifying Jesus of Nazareth.

He was the Messiah. This is the whole essence of Peter's message. In Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost, and I don't want to split hairs, but this is a distinction, guys, that has to be made.

Peter did not preach the gospel of the grace of God at Pentecost. He didn't. Read the text carefully.

[10 : 30] We tend to read back into Peter's message what we assume he said. But he didn't say that. What Peter did was he delivered a stinging indictment, an accusation.

He said, God delivered Christ. He was delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

And you have taken and with wicked hands have crucified and slain the Lord of glory. And what he charged them with on the day of Pentecost was murder.

He charged them with the crime of murdering their Messiah. and they said, what can we do? Okay, we admit it.

We did that. We blew it. We were wrong. Peter said, you repent, you change your mind and you be baptized in the name of this one whose crucifixion you demanded.

[11 : 29] And that will indicate the genuineness of your about face. And we know that 3,000 did. And then as you go on through the early acts, again, the one single burning issue was, was Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah or not.

But there is no expression given about death, burial, resurrection for the sins of the world. That is not going to be appreciated nor understood until later.

And this is a very, very important distinction to make. They are not coming into this truth until later, when it is revealed. I'm not sure exactly when, but I suspect, I suspect, this is just a Wiseman opinion, that the Apostle Paul, by the information that was given to him, was the first one to really connect the dots regarding the substitutionary death of Christ.

Because from time immemorial, it had always been in the mind of God to effect reconciliation between God and man through the man, Jesus Christ.

But man is not going to appreciate nor understand that. And this is why, guys, this is why, listen, it is not adequate today, it is not adequate today for salvation, for someone to say, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

[13 : 01] God, well, that is great for a starter, but you have got to address the work of Christ, not only the person of Christ, and the work of Christ is what did he do on that cross and how does it affect you?

And what he did on that cross is he died for the sins of the world. You have got to deal with the sin issue and you have got to deal with your own personal sin issue before you can experience regeneration.

If you do not make a connection between what Jesus Christ did on that cross and your own personal sin, that he was there for you, he died for you in your place, that is personalizing the work of Christ.

And that doesn't come until later on in the book of Acts. And this is going to become the watchword of the apostle Paul. So he is going to say when he writes to the Romans, I determine to know nothing among you.

except Jesus Christ and him crucified. That's the ticket. It is, I delivered unto you that which first of all I received, how that Christ died for our sins.

[14 : 18] And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. It is not simply that Christ died, it's why he died.

God, you've got to make the connection. That's why he's called Savior. Savior from what? Savior from your sin. And when you believe that, that personalizes the gospel, that appropriates, you place your faith and trust not only in who Jesus was, but in what Jesus did for you.

So we cannot separate the person of Christ from the work of Christ. and no one is going to connect the dots or put this together in a clearer fashion than the apostle Paul.

And the only reason he is going to be able to do that is because Christ himself, as the ascended Lord, is going to update Paul the apostle with the abundance of revelations that he is going to give to him, and Paul is going to write those things and incorporate them in his letters, and as I mentioned, Romans 3, 4, and 5 spell out in detail the death of Christ and what it accomplished and how all it applies to us, and it is a magnificent treatise.

So, we are ready now to open Acts chapter 9. Any questions or comments about what I've just shared? It's a very important distinction. John? Even though they did not understand the substitutionary death of Christ, they recognized that he was deity, that he was God's son.

[16 : 00] They were still saved even though they did not understand. Yeah, and I almost have to put this in a similar category with Old Testament saints, because all of this is happening under an Old Testament economy, really.

It's, well, there's a passage in Acts 17 where Paul, when he is preaching on Mars Hill, talks about the former times of ignorance which God winked at.

I still don't have a handle on that. I don't know exactly what that means. But, well, let me go there for just a moment. It's a really important passage. Acts 17, he is talking Mars Hill to a bunch of Athenian philosophers, and it's important to note that these are not Jews, and they are not familiar with the Old Testament.

They are pagans. They are a bunch of very intellectual pagans. And he talks about their idolatry and all of the different statues and the gods that they had and everything.

And in Acts 17, well, let's just jump in with verse 28. Paul says, for in him, for in him, this is in God, we live and move and have our being, as certain also of your own poets have said, for we also are his offspring.

[17 : 46] For as much then as we are the offspring, and he's talking about humans being the offspring of God simply by virtue of the fact that God created our first parents, Adam and Eve, and they are offspring of God, and we are offspring of them.

So, he says, we ought not to think that the Godhead is likened to gold or silver or stone or anything that you can make graven by art and man's device.

In verse 30, in the times of this ignorance, God winked at. The ASV says, God overlooked.

20th century New Testament says, true, God looked with indulgence on the days of man's ignorance.

And Moffat says, such ages of ignorance God overlooked. God has shut his eyes to these passing follies of ours. Berkeley says, however, while God paid no attention to those seasons of ignorance, Philip says, nor while it is true that God has overlooked the days of ignorance, but now, see the contrast?

[19 : 09] From between the days of ignorance and but now, commands all men everywhere to repent. Why? What happened?

What changed? We almost get the impression, I don't know how else to put this, and I'm not comfortable with this explanation, but it's the only thing I can offer. It appears that God cut previous generations some slack.

He gave them some leeway. They are called the times of ignorance. That's another way of saying back in the days when men didn't know any better.

They were apparently evaluated and judged by God on some kind of a different standard. And I don't know what that was. It is not at all clear in my mind what exactly constituted a plan of salvation in the Old Testament.

If someone came up to you a thousand years before Jesus Christ was ever born and said to you, how can I come to know God?

[20 : 24] How can I become right with God? What would you tell him? I know what you tell him today. It's believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. But they didn't have that information. What was it?

And when you read in Ephesians 2 about the plight of Gentiles who were strangers from the commonwealth of Israel having nothing to do with the covenant without hope without God separate from God their plight was pretty bad.

It was really bad. That was true of the whole Gentile world. And the Jew was the only one who had an inside track with God. And that was through the Old Testament, the law of Moses, the sacrificial system, and all the rest.

But the vast majority of the world didn't have that and didn't know anything about it. So they were really steeped in ignorance and paganism. God did and I did not hold them to the same standard that he is going to hold man later.

What's going to make the difference? What's going to create the transition? What is it that is going to occur that will make God look upon the generation that Paul was talking to here on Mars Hill?

[21 : 41] what makes them different and more accountable than those who went before that God winked at? Let's read on. The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now, but now, in contrast, commands all men.

And in case you didn't get that, it is all men everywhere. It's almost as if he wants to make this crystal clear that you understand this is for all of humanity, all men everywhere, to repent.

Repent of what? The only thing to repent of is being wrong. The only thing to repent of is our sin. That's what we need to repent of.

We need to change our minds regarding our sin and its judgment, etc. Because, here is why you need to do this, because, he, God, has appointed a day.

A day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man. That's Jesus Christ.

[22 : 57] By that man whom he hath ordained. And, that means the man that he has selected, anointed, appointed, chosen, and that, of course, is the person of Christ.

Whereof he has given assurance unto all men, in that he, God the Father, hath raised him, Jesus Christ, from the dead.

Wow. that's it. That's it. He has appointed a day wherein all men are going to be judged.

That's why all men everywhere are commanded to repent. And the item of news, the item of information that changes, the transition point between God winking and God holding more accountable, is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That event has provided us with a gospel to preach. That's the good news. That's the connection. This is the gospel that we preach now.

[24 : 08] But this gospel, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for our sins, was not immediately obvious to those who were actual contemporaries of Christ and who actually saw him on that cross.

They didn't make that connection. I don't think even his mother did. Mary, as she stood there at the foot of the cross with her son hanging on that cross in agony, do you think Mary was thinking it's a terrible thing that my son is there, but after all, it's a wonderful thing he's doing.

He's dying for the sins of the whole world. Do you think she understood that? Not at all. She was a mother who was absolutely heartbroken over what was happening to her son.

And she did not foresee the resurrection, she did not see what was being accomplished on that cross, she did not understand that, and would not, until well after the fact. So what we've got to do when we read the scriptures is make sure we don't take our insight and understanding and read it back into those passages and say, well, because we know and understand this, they all knew and understand.

No, they didn't. That's why it is so important, guys, to remember that revelation is progressive. It is doctrine on the move. As you go through the Bible, it is unfolding and you're getting more and more and more information.

[25 : 34] That's a really critical point. Any other questions before we... Roger? chapter 18 when Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos' side, he was preaching Jesus according to the baptism of John.

Yeah, yeah, they updated him. They updated him. Apollos was apparently doing a great job with the information he had, but I can just see Aquila and Priscilla looking at each other and saying, this guy needs to know something, you know.

I mean, we need to bring him up to speed and that's exactly what they did. That's a beautiful thing. Beautiful thing. Yeah? Did Paul ever see Jesus when Jesus was alive on earth?

We don't know. We don't have any reason to believe he did because he makes no mention of that. We know that he saw the ascended Lord after, but there is no record that he saw or witnessed Christ during his three and a half year ministry.

He doesn't indicate that he did. Okay, thank you all for being here. Well, we didn't get into chapter nine, but we will next week. All right? Thank you.