

Acts Chapter 9 Con't

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[0 : 00] Okay, well, let's have a word of prayer, shall we? Accept our thanks, Father, for the night's rest and for this new day and for this new year and for all of the potential that is represented here for each of these men to honor and glorify you.

We are grateful for the opportunity and we are thankful for our first meeting of the new year and we ask that as we engage the material, you will use it to stimulate, encourage, and edify each of us.

Thank you for the meal we'll be enjoying shortly. Thank you for the day that lies ahead and for you being more than adequate for anything that enters our life. We bless you and thank you for it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. If you will take your current sheet that we are working from and look at page 491 down in the lower right-hand corner, we will see that the Apostle Paul is making quite an impact on the local scene.

He actually is not yet the Apostle Paul or designated as such. He is still Saul of Tarsus, but he is a changed man. He is a regenerated man.

[1 : 08] He is an utterly different man than the one who headed out en route to Damascus than he was when he arrived in Damascus. And the account of his conversion is perhaps still the most dramatic account in all of Christendom for someone having come to faith in Christ.

And we read in verse 29 that Saul of Tarsus spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus. And I want to emphasize that because the only thing that enables you to speak about an issue boldly is really knowing what you're talking about.

And you have no fear of contradiction. You have no fear of being countermanded. You know what you know and you know that you know.

And it gives you a confidence in speaking. This man knew what he had experienced. And he knew he had had a personal encounter with none other than Jesus Christ.

And that this Jesus, the Christ, was also the ascended Lord. He had every reason to speak boldly. In fact, he had no reason for not speaking boldly.

[2 : 25] Because when you know that you know, it gives you something to speak about with confidence and boldness. And he disputed against the Grecians. It's important to know who these people are too.

These are not just your typical run-of-the-mill Greek pagans. These were not pagans at all. These Grecians people were Greek-speaking Jews.

And it's really important to note that distinction. We do not have any Gentiles introduced into the Acts narrative until you get to Acts chapter 10. And that becomes a blockbuster item.

So, we've got to insist on the exclusive Jewishness. And some people look at this in the King James and they say, disputed against the Grecians.

Well, they are not Jews. Oh, yes they are. They are Jews. The thing that characterizes them is that they are Greek-speaking Jews.

[3 : 27] And you need to bear in mind that here in the Mediterranean world, if anybody had a second language, you can be sure that that second language, if not the first one, was Greek.

Because it was the language of culture. It was the language of commerce. It was the language of the marketplace. It was spoken freely. And it was introduced and promulgated primarily through Alexander the Great, who in his conquest of the whole Mediterranean world, brought the Greek language and Greek culture with him.

And they are still dealing with that. Even though Alexander the Great has passed off the scene a few hundred years earlier, the impact of the Greek language was still very, very powerful. So these are Jews.

In fact, the time is going to come, the time is going to come when such an enormous percentage of the Jews will not be able to speak Hebrew.

Because they will be speaking the language that they were reared in, and most of these Jews will be reared outside the nation of Israel. They will be scattered throughout all the Mediterranean countries in the Mediterranean world.

[4 : 38] And they will be speaking Greek. So, when they can't speak anything but Greek, they can't read anything but Greek. That means they couldn't even read their own scriptures.

And this brought into being the necessity for translating the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek. Greek. Because you've got so many Hebrews that can no longer read Hebrew or speak it.

So they did not have access to the Word of God. This gave rise then to the need for a translation that they could read in Greek. And that's what the Septuagint was.

It was a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language. And this is exactly what so many of them used throughout the world at that time. So the Grecians here, in fact, the 20th century New Testament, look at that, the TCNT, talking and arguing with the Greek-speaking Jews.

And sometimes they are called Hellenists because in the Greek, the word for Greek is Hellene. Hellene.

[5 : 49] And sometimes they are called the Hellenists. Yes? What does the footnote down there refer to? The word Jesus is now recognized as not as a footnote on the bottom.

That's in connection with verse 34 or verse 29. He spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus. They are simply saying that the word Jesus is now recognized as not adequately supported by original manuscript.

But that's somewhat controversial. So if that were the case, then you would have, and he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord. And you'll look at the ASV, that's the American Standard Version, right under it, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.

And they left Jesus off. But there is no question as to the identity of the individual that he's talking about. He's talking about Jesus Christ. So it is just a linguistic technicality as to whether or not Jesus is included.

In either case, we know who the person is. It is the person of Christ. And as he spoke and disputed against the Greek-speaking Jews, they went about to slay him.

[7 : 07] They decided that this man and what he is teaching is so contrary to the law of Moses and so contrary to traditional Judaism, he is a real threat.

He is a cancer growing on Israel. In fact, that's exactly how Saul of Tarsus regarded other of his countrymen who had come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

He saw them as a cancer growing on Judaism. And that's why he went to Damascus, to gather them together and bring them back and hold them accountable. So let's turn the page, if we may.

And we read that we're on page 492. And when the brethren knew it, that is, when they, these are other believers in Christ, and when they knew that these Greek-speaking Jews had set out to kill Saul of Tarsus, they brought him down to Caesarea.

They're just being protective of him. They know that he is on the right track with what he's believing. They also know that he is like a loose cannon. I mean, this guy is so infused with the person of Christ and having met him on this Damascus road and who he really is, he is just so powerfully speaking forth this message in such a convincing way because he knows what he knows.

[8 : 48] And he is really stirring up things. So they sought to bring him down to Caesarea, and they sent him forth to Tarsus. That's interesting because Tarsus was his hometown.

It is Tarsus of Cilicia, and that's where he is going to spend some time. And it's just as if they're saying, go home, go home, Saul.

Let's let things cool down a little bit because this area, religiously speaking, is like a tinderbox, and he's the one that lit the match, and everybody has got to be talking about it.

And I note with real amusement in verse 31, it says, Then had the churches rest. And the word here for churches, of course, means the ecclesia, the assemblies, the gatherings.

This is not the first congregational church and the first Methodist church and the first Baptist church on the corner. These are not those churches. You've got to understand Christianity as we know it did not even exist then.

[10 : 00] The thing that makes Christianity Christianity is not only Christ as the head of the church, but it is Jew, believing Jew, and believing Gentile melded together in one body.

That's what Christianity is. It's Jew and Gentile. This is so clearly spelled out in Ephesians 3. Jew and Gentile, the twain making one new man.

That doesn't exist here. And that won't exist until later. And it will be in connection with, and the thing that will start it, the thing that will start it will be coming up in the next chapter, which has to do with Peter using the key.

Remember, Christ said in Matthew 16 that, I give unto you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Now, he did not say, I give unto you the keys to the church.

He didn't say that. I give unto you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. And Peter is going to use that key. This is not a literal key. It's a figurative key.

[11 : 21] But it speaks of a key as being something that unlocks or opens. And that's exactly what's going to happen when Peter reluctantly, unwillingly, goes to Cornelius, who is a Gentile.

And he uses the key, and he opens the door to the Gentile. The significance of that is tremendous. We'll get there eventually. So the churches had rest, verse 31, throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified.

That means they were built up. The word edified is the word from which we get the word edifice, and it means structure. They were built up. They were encouraged.

They were stabilized. They were strengthened. Moffat renders it. They were consolidated. And William says they continued to be built up spiritually.

And all that means is they were receiving more and more information about this crucified Messiah. They were coming into more and more understanding about him.

[12 : 32] And they were growing in number and in their faith. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Stimulated, Goodspeed reads, stimulated by the Holy Spirit.

Philip surrenders it. In the strengthening presence of the Holy Spirit. They were multiplied. Their number is increasing. They are growing. Because these people who have come into contact with Jesus the Messiah have got answers.

Not all the answers. But they've got a lot of answers that nobody else had until this time. And that makes them valuable. It makes them sought out. It makes them pursued and looked after.

Because they had information that up until this time simply did not exist. And it came to pass. Verse 32. As Peter passed throughout all quarters.

He came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Aeneas.

[13 : 49] Which had kept his bed for eight years. And was sick of the palsy. We're not real sure what this palsy or paralysis was.

But it may very well have been an advanced case of Parkinson's disease. And we all know how devastating that is. And how debilitating that is.

And there are hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world that suffer from this Parkinson's disease. And it is a neuromuscular tremor that goes on.

It's a brain function thing. And the brain simply loses control over the extremities of the body. And there is often a shaking. I know of a fellow who laments the fact that he cannot hold a coffee cup.

And drink a sip of coffee. Because his hand is trembling so much. He'd spill the coffee all over him. And this is Parkinson's disease. And there is a pharmaceutical company that has produced a medication called L-Dopa.

[14 : 53] And it's something that reduces the symptoms of that. But it also has side effects. We don't know that that's what this was. But it's entirely possible. Or it could have been something just related also that resulted in a paralysis of a kind.

And Peter, verse 34, This was evidence that was undeniable.

Because all of the locals there knew this guy. They had known him for years. He had been bed fast for eight years. Unable to do anything.

If this was Parkinson's, it was severely advanced. But you've got to remember, back in this day, they didn't have L-Dopa. They didn't have any medication of any significance. So it probably just reduced him to a bedridden state, whatever the disease was.

And everybody was absolutely amazed. They knew beyond any doubt who this man was, what his condition had been, how long he had been this way.

[16 : 15] And now he is just as normal as anyone else walking around. The evidence is undeniable. This is enough to make a believer out of the most hardened skeptic case.

And as a result, all that dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. Now, there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas.

This is just another translation of the name in another language. In the Greek, it is Dorcas. And this woman was full of good works and alms deeds, which she did.

And Dorcas had to have been a remarkable woman. If ever a woman in the Bible had the gift of helps, it was Dorcas. This was a gal who was always available for whatever the need was, whatever the cause, you could count on Dorcas coming through.

She was available to do whatever needed to be done. If there was a family that had just lost a loved one and was bereaved, Dorcas would be the first one there with a casserole for the family.

[17 : 34] She was a ministering machine. She loved people and loved to meet the needs of people. And we're told that she was full of good works and alms deeds, which she did.

And it came to pass in those days that she was sick and died. And it came to pass in those days that she was sick and died.

Desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. And I'm sure they are thinking, do you suppose Peter could do anything about this?

Dorcas was the kind of woman that when she passed on, everybody missed her. And I've often made this point because I've had funerals for a lot of people who distinguished themselves as servants.

These people are givers, not takers. Real givers. And nobody, nobody is missed from the body of Christ as much as a giver.

[19 : 08] The takers, we don't miss. But the givers, we really miss. And Dorcas was a giver. When this woman died, everybody felt a sense of loss.

Because everybody in the area had in one way or another benefited from the loving devotion and tireless efforts of this woman, Dorcas.

She was into everything. She was a dynamo. She was just energetic and everything, everything. If you want something done, get Dorcas.

Find Dorcas. She'll do it. And she can handle it. That's the kind of woman she was. So, when they sent for Peter, we are told that Peter arose and went with them.

And when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber, where, of course, Dorcas was. And all the widows stood by him, weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.

[20 : 19] And Peter put them all forth. This must have been some kind of a scene. And Peter says, here these women are lamenting and weeping and crying. And part of it is out of a sense of genuine loss.

And there's nothing phony about it. But we must also admit that part of it is out of the culture. And the culture demanded that when someone of value died, you showed your love and esteem for them by just carrying on and wailing and weeping.

And that was an expected thing. I remember Barbara telling me that when her grandfather passed away, this was a large Italian Roman Catholic family living in the Cascade Mountains in Washington State.

And the whole community was, well, it was virtually all European, first, second generation. And there were Serbs and Poles and Slavics and a number of Italians, which they belonged to.

And the one thing that virtually all of them had in common was a Mediterranean type background and culture. A second, at least first, second, and third generation.

[21 : 42] And they brought their culture with them when they came from Europe. They didn't leave it all behind. They brought their culture and their traditions and things like that with them. And Barbara said that when her grandfather passed away, her grandmother was, of course, just reduced to tears and went outside the house and ran around the house, literally ran around the house, picking up scoops of dirt and throwing it into the air and wailing and pulling at her hair.

And people who don't know anything about the culture that they came from, what is wrong with this woman? Is she going nuts or what?

Is she going over the edge or what? This was their way of showing extreme grief and anguish of soul over the loss of this loved one.

It is a venting. It is not only an expression, but it is a releasing of the built-up tension and emotion that is inside when this death occurred.

And you find that in Bible scenes that goes all the way back to the time of Christ. It was a common thing to really make a demonstration.

[23 : 04] And some people even went so far as to provide in their will for professional mourners. And a professional mourner was somebody who was paid to come to your funeral and make a big scene and cry and weep and carry on and everything.

Now, we look upon that as bizarre and kind of unacceptable and phony. But you've got to appreciate what these people were dealing with and what they were steeped in in their culture.

And for the most part, different cultures are not right or wrong unless there is somehow a moral issue entwined in it.

But for the most part, culture is simply different. And it depends on what you are reared in and what you are accustomed to. That's your cultural background.

And most cultures, we could not assign any kind of immoral behavior to or particularly moral behavior.

[24 : 06] It's just different behavior. So we tend to think, of course, that our culture is the best. But everybody who has a culture thinks that theirs is the best.

And we ought not to put down one another's culture because people act in accordance with what they've been reared with. And it's a variable thing from nation to nation and area to area.

And you don't even have to go from nation to nation. You can just go down south. And the culture is really different. I remember one time we were down. I don't remember where it was. I think we were in. I don't know if it was Georgia or where it was.

But anyway, we just listened to the radio. I thought, well, turn on the radio and get a little bit of local news. And there was soft organ strains in the background playing in organs like a funeral dirge.

And all at once, this voice came on. This guy was reading obituaries. From the local newspaper, he was reading the obituary of who died the day before and who the survivors were and where the funeral was going to be held and where the interment was going to be held and who the pastor was who was going to be preaching.

[25 : 21] And I looked at Barb and I said, what is this? And she said, honey, you've got to remember, you're in the south now. And down south, they do things differently. There is a southern culture that is different from a northern culture.

And you're not going to turn on WHIO and hear them read your obituaries. Not here in Columbus or Springfield or Dayton, Ohio, because the culture is different. It's a local thing. And it was certainly that way in Bible days, too.

So it's a very legitimate thing. And it's just different. It's local flavor as opposed to a foreign flavor. So Peter kneeled, put them all forth.

And I don't know why that was. But you know, Jesus did that, too. In one of the Gospels, there was this young maiden who had died and her parents were beside themselves.

And Jesus arrived on the scene. And remember, he said, she is not dead, but sleeps. And the locals actually laughed at him.

[26 : 30] They laughed him to scorn. And their thinking was, this guy is so out of it. He doesn't even know death when he sees it. She's dead.

And they knew what death looked like. She's dead. And Jesus put them all out except her parents and Peter, James, and John.

Everybody else, he said, all right, let's leave. You folks go on clear out now, if you will, please. Just leave the room. And everybody's mumbling and grumbling and they don't know what's going on. But they exit.

And then he turns to this little female corpse. And he says, Tabitha, arise.

She opens her eyes, sits up. The parents are beside themselves. What is this? And he instructed, give her something to eat.

[27 : 32] And that is one of the best signs of death come to life, is the ability to take food. And they, of course, were all amazed. I wonder if Peter is simply using that as an example.

I don't know why he objected to having all of those people in there. Maybe it was just confusing. I don't know. But at any rate, he shoos them all out. Tells them to leave.

And then he kneels down and prays. And turning him to the body, said, Tabitha, arise.

And she opened her eyes. And when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and lifted her up.

This must have been mind-bending. Can you imagine being a fly on the wall and being able to look on to a scene like this?

[28 : 34] This had to have been absolutely incredible. And we look at this. And some of our naturalists, naturalists are people who believe that everything is explainable through the natural.

And they exclude even the existence of the supernatural. Our naturalist friends would look upon this and say, that can't be.

That's impossible. And our response is, of course it's impossible. That's what makes it a miracle. If it were possible, it wouldn't be a miracle.

A miracle is the impossible. A miracle actually rescinds laws of nature. Reverses them.

Makes them inapplicable. And the only one who can do that is the one who established them. And he's the one whose power is at hand here.

[29 : 38] He gave her his hand and lifted her up. And when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

And it was known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. Well, for time's sake, and because we'll be in the new material with what we've got coming up here starting in verse 43, we'll just terminate this for now and entertain any questions or comments you may have, because I'm sure there probably are some.

Anybody? Bob. My comment is only related to what you're saying as far as the biblical part. In a few days, I will be meeting with a lady to do some tax work.

She's going to do it for me. Her name was Dorcas, and I always thought that was a strange name. And now it's a very old name. Oh, yeah.

I had no idea. Yeah, it is a very old name. And in all the years that I've lived, I've never met a Dorcas. Never come across one in the flesh. But you have.

[30 : 46] But it is a very unusual name. No doubt about it. Yeah. Yeah. Scott. Yeah. Mark, what's the significance of him giving her his hand? She didn't need it.

She was perfectly well and capable of getting up. Was it just a courtesy? I would suspect that it was just a courtesy. He just reaches out his hand, and she takes his hand. He didn't get up.

I would suspect that it was a very normal kind of thing to do under the circumstances. Yeah. I'm sure, like you said, she didn't need his help to get up. But he just offered her his hand, and she took it and rose.

How many of you reached out first? She may have. We don't know. You won't have. Yeah. She may have. She may have. Yeah. We just cannot fathom this.

I can't, at least. As opposed to Jesus saying, Lazarus, come forth. You know. Yeah. Dana? Verse 37.

[31 : 44] They had washed, and they laid her in an upper room. Is there any significance to upper rooms? They mention upper rooms other places in the Bible also.

Yeah, well, upper rooms were generally sleeping quarters. And a lot of houses didn't even have an upper room. It usually depended on the wealth or lack thereof of the people who owned the home.

I mean, some had larger homes. Some had smaller homes. Some had an upper room, like a loft leading up to it. And sometimes the upper room was also like the roof, the housetop.

All of the housetops were flat. And they had a parapet built around them, like a wall around them a couple of feet high.

But the housetop is where a lot of activity took place. And a lot of times the family would go up on the housetop to have a meal because it was too warm in the house and it would be cooler up there.

[32 : 50] And they dried grain on the housetop. Children played on the housetop. And it was a very common thing for people to be up on the housetop. In fact, it was even a way of disseminating information in a hurry.

Because people could pass information along from housetop to housetop and get clear around the town. Remember what our Lord said, That which you have heard in secret, proclaim from the housetops.

Which is an oriental idiom. And it's speaking of the time that they spent. Peter will go up on the housetop in Acts chapter 8 when he goes to the housetop at the time of prayer.

And that's where he sees this sheet let down from heaven containing all manner of four-footed beasts. That was on the housetop. And he went up there at the time of prayer. So there were prayer sessions held.

There were Bible studies held. Lots of things happened on the housetop. Because one reason was because it was a larger area and expanded, covered the whole of the house.

[33 : 52] As opposed to just the size of a room or two below. So it was larger. Children played up there. People sunned themselves up there. All kinds of things on the housetop. Any other comments? Roger?

I'm sorry? No. But the likelihood is they were very small.

Most of the communities were very small. Jerusalem was about the size of any real size. And all of the other towns were very small.

Many of them had no more than a couple of thousand people population. And some just a few hundred, you know. And virtually everything was agricultural back in those days.

Apart from a few tradesmen who were carpenters and things like that. The vast majority of them raised their own food. Yes? Well, yeah.

[35 : 01] We don't know for sure if that meant every last single person. Or if it meant all in the same sense that we had a party last night.

Who was there? Everybody. Everybody. Well, everybody wasn't there. But you know what I mean. So it might have been a relative term. We don't know that for sure. Thank you all for being here. Especially on a cold, brisk morning.

I appreciate your presence. Thank you.