

Acts Chapter 9 Con't

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Loving Father, it is a privilege to be able to gather together once again with a group of men of like precious faith and look at things that you've provided for us so that we might have a better understanding, so that our appreciation and obedience can be more full and more clear, and the service that we render to you will be more intelligent.

We thank you for the meal we'll be enjoying shortly, and for the day that lies ahead, and whatever opportunities you choose to bring our way, we give thanks for it all. In the worthy name of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

Well, if you will look at your sheet now, we are just into Acts chapter 9. This is one of the more pivotal chapters in all of the New Testament because it gives us a record of the conversion account of Saul of Tarsus, arguably one of the most dramatic conversions in all of Christianity, and it is significant that the Lord seemed to have started this way because, as is revealed in Paul's letter to Timothy, Paul the Apostle becomes a pattern.

He becomes a trailblazer. He becomes the first of many to follow. So, no one is going to occupy the position of strategy and prominence as regards the dissemination of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as is Paul the Apostle.

In fact, it is safe to say, and I wish more Christians understood this, that what Moses was to the nation of Israel, Paul the Apostle is to the church, which is the body of Christ.

[1 : 48] In each case, there was one primary vehicle or communicator, a revelator between God and man, and in the Old Testament, it was Moses, in the New Testament, it was Paul.

Some would say, well, now wait a minute. What about the Gospels, and what about Christ? Well, what Paul, you've got to understand, what Moses was all about was Christ, prophetically.

What Paul the Apostle is all about is Christ in reality. And the reason that Paul is so important is because he makes so much of Christ.

He defines Christ in a way that nobody else does in all of the New Testament. Matter of fact, Paul defines Christ in a way that Christ did not even define himself.

And the reason he didn't was because virtually all of Christ's teaching that came from him personally was given during his three and a half years of ministry here on earth.

[2 : 56] And he taught all kinds of wonderful things by way of straightforward teaching, parables and stories that he recounted, all of which are incredibly valuable.

But Christ did not give a lot of information as regards his death, burial and resurrection until it was right near the end. And even then, all he did was predict it, was prophesy it.

But it is the Apostle Paul who revealed information that the ascended Christ gave to Paul.

Information that was not available until after the death, burial and resurrection. And he gave this information to Paul for the exclusive purpose that he recorded, write it, preach it, teach it, wherever he went.

And we today are beneficiaries of it. So, as I've often said, if you want to get the real lowdown, the real scoop on what actually happened when Jesus Christ died for us, read Romans 3, 4, and 5.

[4 : 09] And it is just laid out so beautifully and in such detail. And the only reason and the only way that Paul knew that information that he records in Romans is the ascended Christ revealed it to him.

Paul didn't think this stuff up. He didn't philosophize it. He didn't dream it up. It was received by revelation and under inspiration he recorded it and we have it for our enlightenment.

So, I would encourage you to read those chapters in particular and you'll see what I mean when I say that Paul really defined the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in a way that no one else ever has.

So, here in chapter 9 we are just underway with his conversion account on the road to Damascus and when he is led into town and that's interesting by the way because back in Jerusalem he went to the religious authorities in the temple and he asked for a letter of introduction that would stand him in good stead with the Jewish authorities in the synagogue in Damascus.

Now, keep in mind this is clear out of the country. This is a foreign country. Syria is where Paul is going to go to Damascus to find these Jews who had fled from him and his persecution in Jerusalem.

[5 : 39] They took off and got out of town and he's going after them with the intent of bringing them back. And on the way he sees the risen Christ he is confronted by him he is absolutely stunned.

Here he came to Damascus just outside the city with the intent of going in and presenting this letter to the synagogue officials Jewish synagogue officials in Syria and gaining their cooperation in rounding up the Jews who were believers in Christ.

And where would you find them? In the synagogue. Because bear in mind that even though these Jews which now by this time numbered in the thousands we know there were thousands saved on the day of Pentecost now they number in the thousands don't forget these Jews are still Jews.

They did not become Christians. They are still Jews. When a Jew today places his faith and trust in Jesus Christ he doesn't cease to be a Jew.

He's still a Jew. He is just a believing Jew. A Jew who has embraced Yeshua HaMashiach as his Messiah. But he's still a Jew. If you are a German or a Frenchman or a Dutchman you don't cease being that when you become a Christian.

[7 : 03] You just add your Christianity to that. That doesn't change anything. Now he's not going to see the Jewish religion and the Jewish law etc.

as he did before because he will see how Christ is the fulfillment of those things. But we've got to bear in mind that for several years after the death burial and resurrection of Christ everyone that came to faith in Jesus as their Messiah was a Jew.

Gentiles were a real wild exception. The only the first one that we will have of any note that is actually brought to our attention is coming up in the next chapter and that's Cornelius.

and he was a Gentile but when he placed his faith in Jesus as the Messiah and as the Savior it really raised eyebrows.

To whom? To all of the Jewish community. They couldn't even believe that it was happening because Cornelius was not a Jew. So we've got a very dynamic thing that is taking place here and for decades guys keep this in mind for decades after the death burial and resurrection of Christ there were no churches.

[8 : 20] Did not exist. No church on the corner no church building. Those who were believers in Christ were Jews and they continued in the synagogue.

That's where their roots were. That's where their social connections were. That's where their educational connections were. That's where their fellowship connections were. That's where their religious connections family connections everything centered around the synagogue.

You and I have no idea how important that was. The synagogue was everything. It was their world. Remember in John chapter 9 when Jesus healed the man who was born blind and the text goes on to say that the Jews this is the religious establishment of Judaism they had already issued a warning that if anyone confessed confessed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah he would be put out of the synagogue.

That's excommunicated persona non grata you can't come to the synagogue that was the lifeblood for the Jew. If you can't go to the synagogue that means you can't have your children educated in the synagogue.

That means you can't attend a bar mitzvah in the synagogue. That means you can't go to the synagogue for circumcision service. That means you can't go to the synagogue to conduct business deals as often was the case.

[9 : 53] You were isolated cut off. It was almost like a death blow if you were excommunicated from the synagogue. So this was very very important and these people met in the synagogues constantly.

So when these Jews fled from Jerusalem under the persecuting hand of Saul of Tarsus and they headed for Syria outside the country a foreign land for Damascus where do you think they went when they got to Damascus?

Absolutely in the synagogue because they knew they would find other Jews there. Some of them may have even had relatives there. They knew they would find connections comfort acceptance etc.

and Paul knew Saul of Tarsus knew right where to go and he's going to go in to the leaders of the synagogue there in Damascus and say you've got a number of people here that have come to you from Jerusalem right?

Well yes matter of fact we've had a tremendous number of people show up from Jerusalem we're not real sure why they're here but they're welcome and Saul says let me tell you about these people let me tell you why I'm here my intent is to round up all of those people and to bring them in chains back well why what's going on you see these people aren't in the know and Saul of Tarsus explains to them about this dangerous movement this cancer that is growing on Judaism and he says and here I have official letters I have official letters from the chief rabbi and the chief priest in Jerusalem to locate these people and put them in bonds and march them back to Jerusalem and of course this man is going to help because he is a loyal Jew and he of course would not embrace Jesus as the Messiah so that's what he's going to find when he gets there only the whole process is short circuited and instead of even getting to Damascus and presenting his letter of introduction and authorization to the chief priest there

[12 : 06] Christ intercepts him on the road to Damascus and as they say the rest is history so he is absolutely stunned now he is sitting in the house of this man by the name of Ananias not to be confused with the Ananias in in Acts chapter 5 and instead of riding triumphantly into town to bring these people back he is blinded and has to be led by the hand into town and he goes to the house of this man by the name of Ananias and there he was in verse 9 he was three days without sight and neither did eat nor drink now I can promise you something Saul was not on a religious fast here is a man who is in shock emotionally psychologically religiously he is in shock he has just had a major bomb dropped on his head this one whom he regarded as the cancer growing on

Judaism appears to him with this brilliant overwhelming bright light and the voice from heaven Saul Saul why persecute us thou me and he is absolutely dumbfounded he hears this booming voice from heaven sees this bright light what is this and Christ identifies himself I am Saul I am Jesus whom thou are persecuting and he just can't believe it this is a major shock to his system it is so stunning and so powerful he is just befuddled by the whole thing his mind is racing a thousand miles an hour what is this how can this be is this for real am I dreaming am I imagining this and the men he's got with him are all discombobulated they hear a noise they hear a voice but they can't make out what it's saying they see the blinding light they are scared witless they have no idea what's happening this is a phenomenal thing nobody had ever experienced anything like this before and he's just dazzled by it all and then he is told arise and go into the city verse six and it shall be told thee what thou must do and he's just he's just in a trance he's just dumbfounded he's staggering he's blind can't see and they lead him by the hand into the house of

Ananias and in verse ten we are told there is a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias and to him said the Lord in a vision Ananias and he said behold I am here Lord and the Lord said unto him arise and go into the street which is called straight by the way I have not had the pleasure of seeing it but I've been told by a number of tourists who have been there the street is still there and it's still called the street called straight where Ananias' house is it's still identifiable and it would be a thrilling thing to see it the street which is called straight and inquire in the house of Judas and again don't confuse this Judas with any of the other Judas because Judas was a very common name in

New Testament times and there were a number of Judases just like there were a number of Johns inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus for behold he prays now this same one of whom this is spoken Saul of Tarsus is going to utter those words under inspiration in Romans chapter 10 for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved pretty prevailing and precious promise why would anyone call on the name of the Lord only one reason you have an admitted sense of need you call because you have a need you call because it is a need that you cannot meet you appeal to God for something that you cannot do and that's exactly what

Saul of Tarsus is doing here he's been confronted by this risen Christ he is just in shock he is sitting in the house of Ananias I can see him there I told you before I can see him there holding his head in his hands and shaking his head and blind as a bat and they try to give him something to eat or something to drink has no interest in food no interest in drinking anything he's just shocked and he sits there and says to himself how can this be is this real am I imagining what I saw on that road to Damascus how could I have been so wrong Stephen Stephen whom we stoned to death he was right he was right Jesus really is oh I can't believe it how could I have missed he's just he is beside himself you just can't imagine what a traumatic thing it is to this man's whole system never has there been such a radical 180 in the life of anybody and he is just shell shock trying to absorb all of this and the implications

[18:28] I've been so wrong all of those people that I persecuted people that I put to death they were right all the time and I was wrong then this means our priests and our rabbis are wrong how can that be I can't he was just trying to get his brain around this no wonder he didn't eat or drink for three days food water had absolutely no appeal to him at all the Lord said to him to Ananias in verse 11 go to the street which is called straight he prays and he has seen in a vision now this is the risen Lord telling Ananias that Saul has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in in other words he is telling

Ananias don't you be concerned Saul of Tarsus is going to be looking for you because I have already told him that you are coming he will be expecting you putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight and Ananias answered Lord I have heard by many of this man I mean this guy is brutal you know I tend to think of Saul of Tarsus as being one of the original Gestapo that's exactly what he was isn't that ironic how the Jews suffered so much from Hitler's Gestapo tactics in World War II how they were rounded up and sent off to concentration camps and many of them put to death in the gas ovens and all the rest suffered brutally under

Nazi Gestapo here was an original Gestapo type guy Saul of Tarsus and he was performing these nefarious deeds upon fellow Jews his fellow countrymen and Ananias said I have heard by many of this man now he is in Damascus where is Damascus if my geography serves me correctly if you've got a map you can check this out but I think Damascus is in excess of 75 miles north and east of Jerusalem so that's a fur piece you know that's a long way especially when you're traveling on foot or on horseback you're not going to go there in a couple of hours this is quite a trip and yet information about Saul of Tarsus and how brutal and what a difficult man he is his reputation has preceded him and he has authority verse 14 and verse 14 is really important because what he's saying and not only is this guy brutal but he's got the law behind him he's got the law on his side he holds all the cards that's what he means when he says that he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name and the

Lord said to him Ananias you go your way do as you're told he is a chosen vessel unto me I've often thought in trying to understand why in the world would Jesus Christ choose the likes of Saul of Tarsus to be his apostle one would think if there was anyone on the planet that Christ would not want anything to do with it would be Saul of Tarsus keep your distance from that guy no favors for him but fellas this is perhaps premier example in the Bible of what grace is really all about the grace of God that settled on a man the likes of Saul of Tarsus Paul says unto me was this grace given that

I should be chosen to bear the gospel to the Gentiles I who am less than the least of all the apostles to me was this grace given that I should bear the name of Christ to the Gentiles he never got over it he was the premier example of the grace of God and it is almost as if God looks down on all of Judaism to whom his son came to present himself a sacrifice and in the midst of all of the Jews there were those minorities that embraced Jesus as their Messiah but the vast majority did not and it is as though God of heaven looked down on all of Judaism and says to himself who is the least likely candidate to ever be a proclaimer of

[24 : 17] Jesus of Nazareth who would be the least likely and I think Saul of Tarsus won the honors hand down and God said I want him and he chose him that's the primary example of the grace of God he revealed himself to him the likes of him this just amazing go thy way he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel here are the great classes of people that exist Old Testament and new and the line of demarcation has never changed everybody in the whole world I don't care who they are what language they speak or what color they are or what their background is everybody in the world falls into one of two categories they are either a

Jew or a Gentile and the Gentiles outweigh the Jews when it comes to numbers by about 99.5 to .5 I mean they don't even comprise 1% of the world's population that's how tiny a minority this is and yet they are going to be the principal ones who will bear the name of Yeshua Hamashiach and that is amazing in and of itself but it all started in Genesis chapter 12 with Abraham and I will show him verse 16 how great things he must suffer for my name's sake have you ever thought of yourself as being called to Christ in order to suffer and would there be any takers if we knew that was what was involved suffer what's the point of that what is it that's accomplished by suffering the answer is a whole lot that cannot be accomplished by a life of ease metal is tested in suffering perseverance is realized in suffering stability is gained in suffering maturity is gained in suffering and the suffering may be physical may be mental may be emotional may come in any way shape or form but it has to do with an adversity and I don't think anybody in their right mind is going to volunteer to suffer okay how many of you want to suffer today can I have some volunteers what's the matter are you a bunch of wimps or what aren't you going to sign up for suffering nobody in their right mind is going to do that but I'll tell you what it's coming it's coming and it is not coming in order to punish you it is coming in order to mature you and to deepen you and to prove you a faith that is untested and unproven is a worthless faith suffering does things for us in a positive way that we would never volunteer for you got to be crazy you think

I volunteer for this says someone whose body is racked with pain who can't get out of bed without help you think I suffer I volunteer for are you nuts what's the matter with you nobody in their right mind well physical suffering and physical pain is just one avenue that these things can take but when we respond to suffering in the right way then we get with the program and we can get the benefits from it but as long as we kick against the pricks like Saul of Tarsus was doing then we become slow learners and God uses a different course yes Scott yeah yeah you're right he did he was chosen he was the chosen vessel and yet at the same time

I never get the impression I never get the impression that Saul later to become Paul would ever reflect the opinion or the attitude you know what I quit I quit you can just take your gospel and go hang it I've had enough I mean these people don't appreciate it I preach my heart out and what do they throw stones at me they beat me they put me in jail and you're supposed to be in charge of all this and you're letting this stuff happen did you forget I'm on your side why am I going through this what are you trying to prove anyway and you know we we learn through the things that we suffer and we learn through the things that others have suffered whatsoever things are written before time Paul said were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the others might have hope that means might have confidence might have stability might have staying power and it's only when we are put in the crucible of pain and suffering and difficulty and adversity that you find out what you're made of and you won't know otherwise this is the

Job thing and boy the lessons to be learned there when it comes to suffering Job was so perplexed because he couldn't figure what's all this stuff coming on me for here I've been worshipping God and I've been teaching my children right and you let the roof fall in on me what's going on and we know that Job became the incredible pattern the blueprint the test case for human suffering you think Job volunteered for any of that stuff of course not and Saul of Tarsus when he was picked for this job I'll tell you why I think I don't believe for a moment I don't believe for a moment that Saul of Tarsus who becomes the apostle Paul I don't believe for a moment that his volition was ever overwritten by God I don't believe God imposed his will on

[31 : 24] Paul so that he had no choice in the matter but what I do believe was Paul was so overwhelmed by the love and the grace of God that he couldn't do anything else he did it out of compulsion he says woe is me if I preach not the gospel what's that mean means this is something I have to do I have to do this the love of Christ constrains me compels me drives me motivates me because I have a glimpse of who he is and what he did for me so bring on the shipwrecks bring on the beating bring on the stoning bring on the deprivation

I don't care I gladly suffer whatever for him and happy to pay the price wow that's a man who is properly overwhelmed and in tune with the grace of God marvelous Frank I think on the road to Damascus where Paul was happily bopping along the road I don't think he had a choice when God visited him because it don't seem like it to me no I would agree he doesn't have a choice in so far as he had a choice when his eyes were opened when he was sitting there before his eyes were opened yeah yeah that's absolutely right he didn't exercise a choice in so far as Christ appearing to him and anything like that that was strictly one sided Christ did that arbitrarily but at the same time when he realized who

Jesus Christ really was and what he had done for him and the fact that he was appearing to him and the fact that the forgiveness of God was available to him he was so absolutely overwhelmed by the grace of God that he refers to himself constantly when he writes his epistles a bond slave of Jesus Christ sometimes it's translated a servant as Paul a servant of Jesus Christ sometimes it's in the King James as Paul a slave of Jesus Christ and the word in the Greek there is a bond slave and a bond slave was one who had been enslaved to another person and by the way biblical slavery is entirely different than the slavery here during the Civil War totally different biblical slavery had nothing to do with skin color it had everything to do with debt and with economics and if you had debt you couldn't pay you sold yourself to be somebody's servant to work it off that's exactly an indentured servant that's exactly what

Jacob did when he sold himself to his uncle Laban to work seven years for Rachel and then he got Leah remember then he had to serve seven more years and what he was doing was he was paying Laban for the loss of his daughters he was compensating him with seven years of wages and when the seven years is up then he's free to go and in the Hebrew system of indentured servitude when they didn't have a debtor's prison or anything like that like they had in England in the 1700s 1800s you would work it off and you would serve this man and when the time came that you were free for the amount of time the debt was paid you were free to go but a bond slave was one who would go with his master to the town square and they'd have a little ceremony a little public ceremony in the public square and he would say the slave would say

I am so and so and I am a servant of so and so he is my master and today is the day of my freedom my tenure is up I am now a free man but I choose I choose not to exercise my freedom I want to remain in service to my master for the rest of my life and everyone would acknowledge that and of course his master would be in agreement with it and it involved room and board and other amenities and they would have this little ceremony it would be capped off they would go over to a nearby house and the servant would put the lobe of his ear on the doorpost of the house like that and the master would take an awl and bore a hole through the lobe of his ear into that doorpost and insert a gold ring in his ear and that gold ring was a sign to everyone who saw that man that he was a bondservant that is he was a willing servant and Paul the apostle repeatedly in his epistles describes himself as a bondservant of Jesus

[37 : 05] Christ I am a willing slave to Jesus Christ and happy to be that Dan my question regards the Jews once a Jewish person accepted Jesus Christ as his savior does that go against the grain of what the Jewish believe that the Messiah has not yet come of course are you saying they remain a Jew because they still remain in the culture the lifestyle well he remains you know the thing that really makes a Jew a Jew is his biology that's the thing that really makes a Jew a Jew in fact the Jews themselves they have a huge disagreement among themselves today as to what constitutes Jewishness and the general opinion that is accepted by most

Jewry worldwide is that Jewishness is determined by maternity not paternity and one of the main reasons for that is because maternity cannot be called into question and is not as open to doubt as paternity is in many cases so it is one's mother that determines their Jewishness and if you are and then of course it goes without saying that a Jew in order to be a Jew biologically has to be a descendant not only of Abraham and not only of Isaac because Isaac had Jacob and Esau and the descendants of Esau are not Jews they are

Edomites so he has to be a descendant of Abraham and Isaac and not only Abraham and Isaac but he has to be a descendant of Abraham Isaac and Jacob and it is Jacob that fathered the twelve sons that became the twelve tribes of Israel that's what makes you a Jew and if you want a fascinating study get into the genealogies of Jesus Christ and see his Jewishness there through the line of David the royal line the tribe of Judah it's in Matthew chapter one and Luke I think it's chapter four and it's a beautiful thing Luke is Mary's genealogy and Matthew is Joseph's genealogy and they are just beautiful the way they are laid out other questions or comments anybody yeah yeah yeah yeah well but you know

Jews today and I've met a number and by the way more Jews have come to faith in Jesus as their Messiah and Savior over the last 20 years probably more in the last 20 years than in the preceding 200 years and that may very well indicate that something is afoot you know and the Jews that I have talked with and there are a number of Christian organizations Christian Hebrew organizations I've taken a magazine for years and years called Israel My Glory it's a Jewish Hebrew magazine and many of you are familiar with Jews for Jesus and organizations like that and Moisho Rosen but every Jew that I have talked to who has embraced Jesus as his Messiah does not consider himself a converted Jew but he does consider himself a completed

Jew and there is a huge difference and I want you to think of this but this will we'll try to wrap it up but this is this is going to sound like a weird statement but I'm convinced that it is true after studying the scriptures for 55 years I'm convinced that it is true Christianity biblical Christianity is really Judaism that has come to full flower that's exactly what it is Christianity everybody recognizes that Judaism is the cradle of Christianity you don't get any argument there but when the Jew moves from the Old Testament revelation that Moses gave into the New Testament revelation that Christ gave in the Gospels and that Paul gives in his epistles and embraces that it is a graduation and a completion of that which went before so Christianity is really a completed kind of

[42 : 29] Judaism that has come to fruition that has matured fully and matter of fact this is the burden of the writer of Hebrews it is let us go on not stay here in this Judaism but let us go on to full flower of faith in Christ as the Messiah