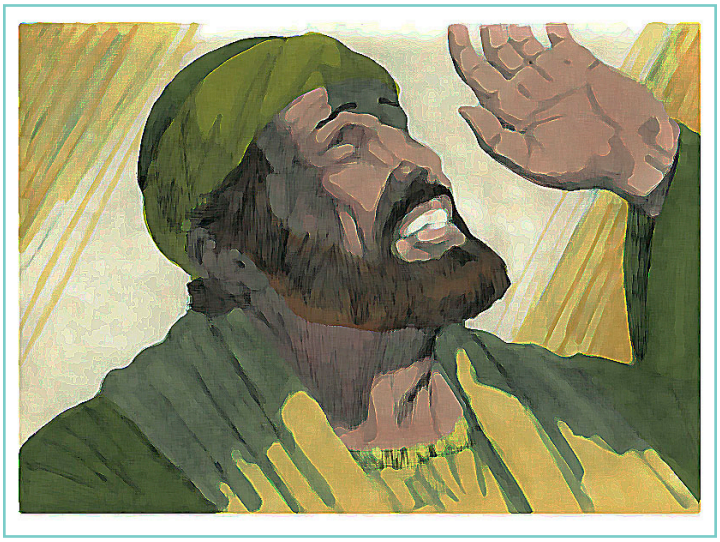
Lesson 4: Transformation



Introduction

Saul (later called Paul) was trying to put an end to the Christian faith by arresting believers wherever he found them. But on his way to the city of Damascus, Jesus himself appeared to Saul in bright light. Saul lost his sight and was humbled, but Jesus had chosen him for an important task.

Read: Acts 9:1-19

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?



Where in the Bible?

The Book of Acts shows how the Gospel spread to other lands.

The New Testament: Understanding

God used the first Apostles to bring the message of Jesus to many people across the ancient world. The Holy Spirit created faith through the power of God's Word, and people's lives were changed. The early Church continued to grow.

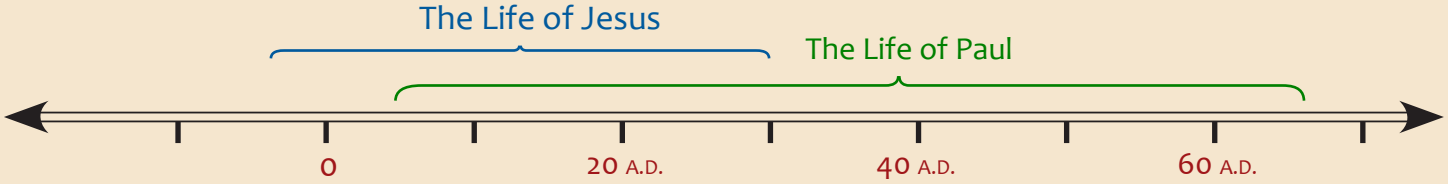
Biblical Background

This lesson is another instance where Scripture shows the difference faith can make in our attitude and approach to life. As as a devout and zealous student of the Hebrew Scriptures, Saul saw Christians as a threat to the Jewish faith. Saul didn't realize that *he* was the one working against purposes of God.

It took the direct intervention of Jesus himself to turn Saul around. This was not Saul's decision; it was the risen Jesus who transformed Saul's life by choosing him to be an apostle. From that day on, Saul was a new man with a new name: Paul. In the same way, God is always at work opening up new possibilities for us.

When in Time?

While there are not specific dates mentioned in the Bible, scholars suggest the Apostle Paul lived from about 5 A.D. to about 66 A.D. (when he died for his faith in Rome). Paul's life did overlap the earthly life of Jesus, but Paul did not become a Christian until *after* Jesus' death and resurrection, when he encountered the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus.



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Discuss: Acts 9:1-19

1. By what name or descriptor are the disciples of the Lord referred to in verse 2? Where do you think this name comes from? (For a hint, see John 14:6.)

2. How did Saul feel about Christians? Knowing that he was a very religious person, why do you think he felt this way? What was he missing?

3. Describe what happened to Saul as he traveled along the road to Damascus. How do you think he felt as all this was happening? What do you think he felt like immediately *after* this encounter?

4. Reread what Jesus said to Saul in verses 4-5. In what sense was Saul persecuting Jesus himself? How does this match what Jesus said in Matthew 25:31-46?

5. How did Ananias feel about meeting Saul? Why? Why do you think he obeyed the Lord's instructions anyway? What would you have been thinking if you had been in Ananias' shoes?

6. In verses 15-16, what two things did the Lord foretell would happen to Saul? In what way do these things usually go together? Have you found that to be true in your own life?

7. How did Saul's life change after all this happened to him? In what way(s) has having faith changed your life or made you a different person?

8. Read Galatians 1:11-16a. Why do you think Paul emphasized that he did not come to faith in Christ on his own? How is that true of all of us?

Where in the World?

The region we call the Holy Land is on the eastern side of what the Bible calls the "Great Sea." In modern days, this body of water is known as the Mediterranean Sea, from the Latin meaning "sea in the middle of the earth."

a) Label the **Mediterranean Sea** (be careful to get the spelling correct).

b) Label the two dots as the cities of **Damascus** *and* **Jerusalem**.

c) Traveling from Jerusalem to Damascus, what direction was Paul heading?

☐ North ☐ South

☐ East ☐ West

d) In what **region** *is the city of Damascus located?*



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