

Acts Chapter 9:1-9

The Conversion of Saul

Acts 9:1-2 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, (2) And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

threatenings and slaughter... the phrase ***breathing out*** denotes the vehement anger Saul had towards those who followed Christ; this anger was expressed as *threatening and slaughter*.

Paul was living his life the best he knew how, yet something was missing, and he knew it.

Philippians 3:4-6 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: (5) Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; (6) Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

1 Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

high priest... The high priest presided over the Sanhedrin council as a president presides over congress, thus Saul's request for an executive order from the High Priest. See **Act_9:14**, and **Act_22:5**. The high priest in **Acts 4:6** was Annas (30 AD), in **Acts 23:2** was Ananias (60 AD).

The succession (or High Priests) was to be through one of his sons, and was to remain in his own family (Leviticus 6:15). If he had no son, the office devolved upon the brother next of age: such appears to have been the practice in the Hasmonean period. In the time of Eli, however (1 Samuel 2:23), the office passed to the collateral branch of Ithamar). But King Solomon is reported to have deposed the high priest Abiathar, and to have appointed Zadok, a descendant of Eleazar, in his stead (1 Kings 2:35; 1 Chronicles 24:2–3).

Only two High Priests, Annas and Caiaphas, are mentioned by name in the Gospels (**Luke 3:2**). They were both alive during Jesus' ministry and were instrumental in his murder (**John 11:51, 18:12 - 14, 24, etc.**). Caiaphas was also instrumental in the persecution of Christians after Jesus' resurrection (**Acts 4:6, 5:17, 21**). He aided a young Saul by granting him authority to persecute Christians in foreign lands (**9:2**).

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It was a High Priest named Ananias, who presided over the Sanhedrin, whom the Apostle Paul was brought before to explain a temple riot he seemed to cause (Acts 23:2 - 4). This request to murder men and woman was required by God in the Old Testament for anyone who served "strange gods".

Deuteronomy 13:6-11 If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; (7) Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; (8) Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: (9) But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. (10) And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. (11) And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

Annas and Caiaphas denied the truth they held and murdered the *very Christ*; so, Saul wrestled with truth as he carried out what he thought was a biblical response against the followers of *this Way*. See notes on **Acts 9:5**.

this way... A year or more has passed since the events of **Act 8:3**. "*The Way*" had become the accepted phrase for the early Church and its presentation of the truth, **Act_19:9; Act_22:4**.

The believers have spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, onto Galilee, and into Damascus.

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Joh_14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

It was called THE WAY because Jesus said HE was.

Acts 9:3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

Saul "saw the light". As we progress through the book of Acts, we will see three different accounts of Saul's conversion as God revealed the will for Saul's life progressively.

Acts 26:13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

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Acts 9:4-5 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? (5) And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

heard a voice... as Saul fell to the earth, he heard an audible voice speaking from heaven. The voice he heard sounded like a trumpet, as God spoke from his heavenly throne room.

The Apostle John also heard a voice from heaven. John was told to WRITE, or to testify, what the Word said unto him.

(Rev 21:3-5) And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying,... And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful..

(Rev 4:5) And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Out of the throne, which is in the midst of twenty-four seats, with a rainbow encircling both above and below, proceeds a thunderstorm, as the voice of God is uttered declaring his law and statutes. ***Ex 19:16; Job 37:4,5; Ps 18:13; Jn 12:39; 11:19.***



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Exo 19:16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

Hebrews 12:18-19 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, (19) And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

As Moses heard God speaking in Arabia at Mt Sinai, so did Saul.

I am Jesus... by persecuting the followers of the way, Saul was in fact persecuting Jesus. As those who were "saved" at this time were in fact "*in Christ*". **Rom 16:7.**

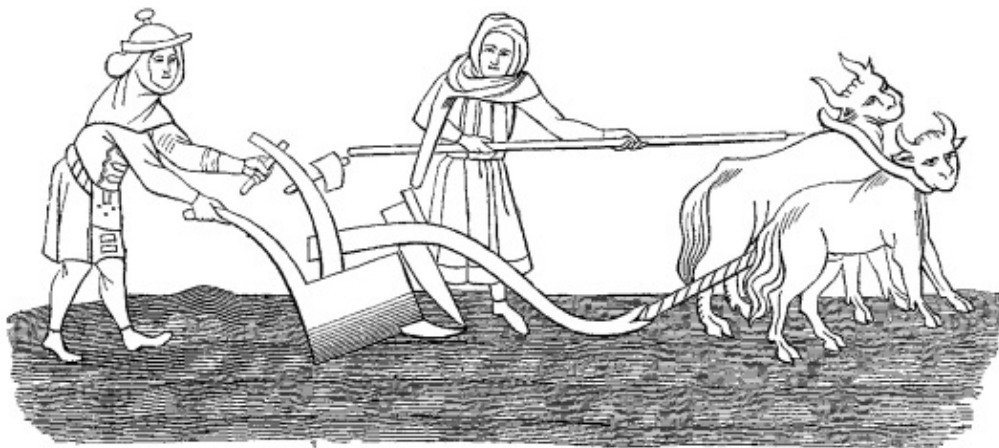
Saul addressed Jesus Christ as Lord, which marked the birth of his salvation. **Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; 15:8.**

1 Corinthians 15:8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

kick against the pricks... The word "*pricks*" means properly "*A slender pointed instrument or substance, which is hard enough to pierce the skin; a goad; a spur*", as the sting of a bee, etc.

It is commonly referring to an ox-goad, a sharp piece of iron stuck into the end of a stick, with which the ox is urged on. These goads among the Hebrews were made very large. Thus, Shamgar killed 600 men with one of them, **Jdg_3:31.** Compare **1Sa_13:21.**

The expression "*to kick against the prick*" is derived from the action of a stubborn and unyielding ox kicking against the goad.



The *prick* in this case is symbolic of the TRUTH which Saul was persecuting; in continuing to murder Christians he was fighting against what he knew to be true.

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The more Saul tortured and killed Christians, the more they flourished; and the more his teacher's words possibly rang in his head. - Fighting against God is similar to *kicking against the pricks*.

Act 5:39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

I am sure everywhere Saul went, Stephen's face appeared in him in his dreams. Stephen's face was the "face of an angel"; and it probably haunted him daily. **Acts 7:60, 8:1.**

Acts 9:6-7 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. (7) And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

what wilt thou have me to do... Saul's response was proper. Once you acknowledge Christ as Lord, the proper thing to do is ask how you can be helpful.

Isaiah 6:8-10 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. (9) And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. (10) Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

Isaiah 6 is quoted five times in the Gospels and Acts and one time by Paul in Romans.

Mat_13:14-15; Mar_4:12; Luk_8:10; Joh_12:40; Act_28:26-27; Rom_11:8.

Acts 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

The proper response to worldly apostasy is to ask God what you can do for Him. **II Thessalonians 2; II Timothy 4.**

voice... As the voice was from the third heaven and throne room of God, they heard it audibly; but they did not understand it and they saw no one speaking. **Acts 22:9; 26:14.** God's voice is as a trumpet speaking. **Rev 1:4; 4:1.**

Exodus 19:16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

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Acts 9:8-9 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. (9) And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

when his eyes were opened... The natural response to light, when coming from darkness, it too close your eyes. When Saul "saw the light" it blinded him for a time.

As they say - *the darker the night the brighter the light.*

three days without sight... Saul's three days of blindness is symbolic of the three days our Lord was buried. Saul remained blind and hungry. As the nation of Israel will spend two+ days in blindness and be restored in the third day; *In the third day* Saul received his sight. **Acts 9:18.**

Hosea 6:2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

See notes on Acts 2:1.

The two days of blindness is symbolic of the missing two days between John 1:51 and John 2:1.

Joh 2:1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee;