

Chapter Nine

Chapter 9

- As this chapter begins the story of the Apostle Paul, it is necessary to research a little bit of what the Scriptures teach regarding his background and identity.
 - Along with being a Jew, what was Paul's other citizenship status?
 - See Acts 22:27,28
 - What city was his citizenship based in?
 - See Acts 21:39
 - Were both his parents Jews?
 - See Philippians 3:5
 - Would Paul have worn the types of clothing that were common in his day according to the Torah?

- See Numbers 15:37-40
- What languages did Paul speak?
 - See Acts 21:37
 - See Acts 22:2
- What was Paul's background in terms of marketable skills?
 - See Acts 18:3
- Paul had always had two names from birth.
 - His Hebrew name, given at his circumcision, was Sha'ul, or Saul.
 - His Roman name, since he was born a Roman citizen, was Paulus.
 - The Apostolic writings record both his Hebrew and Roman names. See Acts 13:9.
 - There is no support from the Scriptures for the concept that Yeshua "changed his name from Saul to Paul". That is a later invention of Christianity.
- What was his educational background?

- See Acts 22:3
- Paul's education in Tarsus and under Gamli'el proved to be a high level of understanding of the prevalent philosophies of his day.
 - In Acts 17, Paul demonstrates he is conversant with Stoicism – a focus on the denial of pleasure, Epicureanism – a focus on the indulgence of pleasure, and even quotes a pagan philosopher Aratus from Cilicia.
 - In Titus 1:12, he quotes another pagan source, Epimenides.
 - In 1 Cor 15:33, he quotes another pagan source, Meander.
 - Can you see why God chose Paul to be His Apostle to the Gentiles?
- After coming to faith in Messiah, Paul still acknowledges his heritage by claiming "I am a Pharisee" in Acts 23:6.
 - Why is it significant that he does not repudiate his status and identification as a Pharisee?

- As Acts chapter 9 opens, we see Saul going to the high priest and asking for letters of authority to persecute this rapidly enlarging group of Messianic believers.
 - As a Pharisee, how significant is it to see him “cross party lines” to ask authority from the Sadducean authority to persecute these believers?
 - Consider the previous counsel of the learned Pharisee Gamli’el in Acts 5 against such actions. What drove Saul with such intensity to ignore the wise counsel of his teacher?
- In Acts 9:3-9 we see the story of Saul’s experience with the revelation of Yeshua to him.
 - How surprising do you think this experience was for Saul?
 - Why do you suppose Saul’s fellow travelers were not permitted to experience this vision, but only Saul?
 - What do you suppose was going through Saul’s mind during three days of blindness as he fasted?
- In verse 10, we are introduced to a believer living in Damascus named Hananiah.

- How does Saul later describe Hananiah in Acts 22:12?
- How significant to your understanding of this early believer is it that he is described this way?
- It appears that Luke, the writer of Acts, is consistent in portraying these early believers in Yeshua as devoutly Torah observant. How does this impact your opinion regarding the authority of the Torah in the lives of believers today?
- What was the mission given to Hananiah from the Lord?
- Hananiah expressed his concern about this assignment based on an accurate understanding of the history and present reality of the situation. His response to the Lord did not indicate any refusal but an acknowledgment of the danger. How did the Lord's answer to him alleviate his fears? What did he do?
- According to verse 16, does being a believer guarantee a lack of suffering?
- Saul was the first among a long line of people throughout history who once persecuted believers and who

subsequently came to faith in Messiah.

- Saul began to publicly proclaim Yeshua as Messiah and publicly confounded his opponents. His zeal-ousness was apparently redirected in support of the truth instead of in opposition to it as before.
- Do you think his effectiveness in ministry was enhanced by his background?
- How would an understanding of opposing view-points assist you in effectively countering those views?
- In Galatians 1:12, Saul refers to the gospel and states, “For I didn’t receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Yeshua the Messiah.”
 - How important do you think it was to Saul to have this experience of direct communication to establish a baseline of theology in understanding the gospel?
- When Saul’s opponents could not refute his teaching, they resorted to physical threats against him forcing him to escape for his life.

- Do you see any contemporary examples of this same response in use today in our culture?
- According to Galatians 1:17-18, Saul tells us that another three years passed before he went up to Jerusalem.
 - What can you imagine were Saul's fears and apprehensions about being back among his former colleagues and people he previously prosecuted?
 - When he finally returned, what was his reception like?
 - Do you think there was a rational basis to question the validity of Saul's claim to having accepted the gospel message?
 - How was the tension resolved?
- Later in Acts 22:17-21, Saul relates another visionary experience with Yeshua directing him to leave Jerusalem. According to Galatians 2:1, it would be another fourteen years before Saul returned to Jerusalem.
- Verses 32-35 record the healing of a paralytic named Aeneas. How is this similar to the healing mentioned in Acts 3?

- Do we see a continuity here in the methodology and the message?
- Verses 36-43 record the resurrection of a believer named Tavita. Two men were sent to bring Peter. Since Tavita was already dead and prepared for burial, what do you think was their expectation from Peter?
 - What was the end result of Peter praying for her?
 - According to verse 42, what was the consequence of this miracle in terms of the advancement of the gospel?