



Saul meets Jesus on  
the road to Damascus



## The Parish of Parish Peasedown St John

**Acts 9:1-9 - God will use our past and present so we may serve him with our future**

### Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

#### 1. Talk Passage – Acts 9:1-9

*[1] Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest [2] and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. [3] As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. [4] He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" [5] "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. [6] "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." [7] The men travelling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. [8] Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. [9] For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.*

#### 2. Talk Notes

##### 2.1 Introduction – Transformational events

- Paul remembers a key life changing, transformational moment in his life as he writes his letter to the church in Galatia. He looks back to a moment in time when he met with the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus. And as he does so he remembers that key transformational moment in his life: *"I want you to know brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ."* (Galatians 1:11-12)
- What have been the key life changing, transformational moments in our own lives?
- To fully understand how transformational that moment was for Saul, we need:
  - i) To learn more about Saul's character, before he meets Jesus.
  - ii) To consider what happened at the meeting itself.
  - iii) To see how Saul was transformed as a result of that meeting.

##### 2.2 Before - Acts 9:1-2

- The first time we meet Saul, in the Bible is at the martyrdom of Stephen in Acts 8 verse 1: *"And Saul was there, giving approval to his death."*
- Two verses later we learn that Saul is the person leading the charge against the early church Acts 8 verse 3: *"Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison."*
- The very reason that Paul is going to Damascus is to destroy the emerging church in that city too Chapter 9 verses 1-2: *Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.*

- Why is Saul so against this newly emerging church?
- The answer lies in his views and the views of his fellow Pharisees about Jesus.
- They had put Jesus to death because he, a mere man, had claimed to be the son of God John 19 verse 7: *The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law Jesus must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."*
- Paul and his fellow Pharisees thought that with Jesus crucified on a cross all the talk of Jesus being the Son of God would die down. Things got worse, not better, Jesus' disciples began to claim that not only was Jesus the son of God but that he had been raised back to life and that the Pharisees and the religious authorities had his blood on their hands Acts 5 verses 30-31: *The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead-- whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.*
- Saul and his fellow Pharisees are so stuck in their traditions and ways of thinking that they cannot see what God was doing. Are we like wise stuck in our traditions and ways of thinking that we too may be missing what God is doing?

### 2.3 Saul meets with Jesus on the Damascus Road – Acts 9:3-5

- Saul is a religious man clearly headed for great things.
- He is a student of Gamaliel, trusted by the Sanhedrin, a man of considerable intellect and learning.
- Saul is therefore in many ways simply the most unlikely candidate to become the spiritual giant of this newly emerging church that he is busily squashing.
- Why would God call Saul the very person who is so vehemently against everything that God is doing?
- God always seems to call the most unlikely candidates for leadership. Look at Moses a man brought up in the court of Pharaoh, a murderer who has run away from his homeland and yet God chooses him to perform one of the greatest rescues in history, to bring his people out of Egypt.
- If God can call Moses and Saul for great tasks he can also call each one of us for great tasks as well, even though we may feel thoroughly unqualified.
- There are other encouragements for us from this encounter too. If Jesus can meet Saul, a renegade and persecutor of the church, then he can meet us too, wherever we are and however we are feeling at the moment.
- At the centre of this encounter with Jesus is 'change.' *"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asks. The answer Saul receives in three devastating words is: "I am Jesus."*
- In those three words Saul receives a revelation that is central to the Christian faith.
- Saul knew his Bible. The words "I am (YHWH)" would have rung bells in his head about the encounter that Moses had with God in Exodus 3 verse 14: God said to Moses, *"I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*
- For Saul to hear the words 'I am (YHWH) Jesus' underlines in language that Saul would understand that Jesus was the son of God.
- Saul discovers in this encounter that he has been spiritually blind and God underlines this for Saul by making him physically blind for three days verse 9:

*For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.*

- But Saul also discovers in these three little words that Jesus is the son of God and that Jesus was indeed alive, and not dead.
- How often are we blinded to truth by our own arrogance and beliefs? How often do we think we are doing the things that God wants when actually we are doing the complete opposite. How willing are we to embrace 'change'. Only when we are in relationship with Jesus can we be certain that we are doing his will.
- May I challenge each one of us today? What is it that Jesus would wish us to be doing at the moment in the kingdom? And is what we are doing what he would have us to be doing?

### 2.4 After – (Acts 9:6-9) - 'For three days he was blind' Acts 9:9

- Saul's encounter with Jesus that day on the road to Damascus and those three little words 'I am (YHWH) Jesus' were to be central to everything that Paul went on to do. It was certainly a day that Saul was never going to forget!
- Paul never forgot the central truths, he learnt that day. He realised that Jesus was the son of God and that he was indeed alive and at the centre of it all was the Cross.
- To the church in Corinth he wrote: *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. (1 Corinthians 15: 3-8)*
- This is the same message we have to tell today however unpalatable it may be. This message turned Paul's world upside down. Are we prepared like him to go out and share this message with others?

### 3. Questions to consider at home

- 3.1 Why is Saul so vehemently against the early church?
- 3.2 Why does God choose to meet Saul on the Damascus road? What can we learn from this encounter?
- 3.3 Why is Saul physically blind for three days?
- 3.4 How can we as individuals and as a church be sure that we are doing God's will?
- 3.5 A friend of yours says that it was fine for Saul because he met Jesus. Why doesn't Jesus meet us like that today?

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