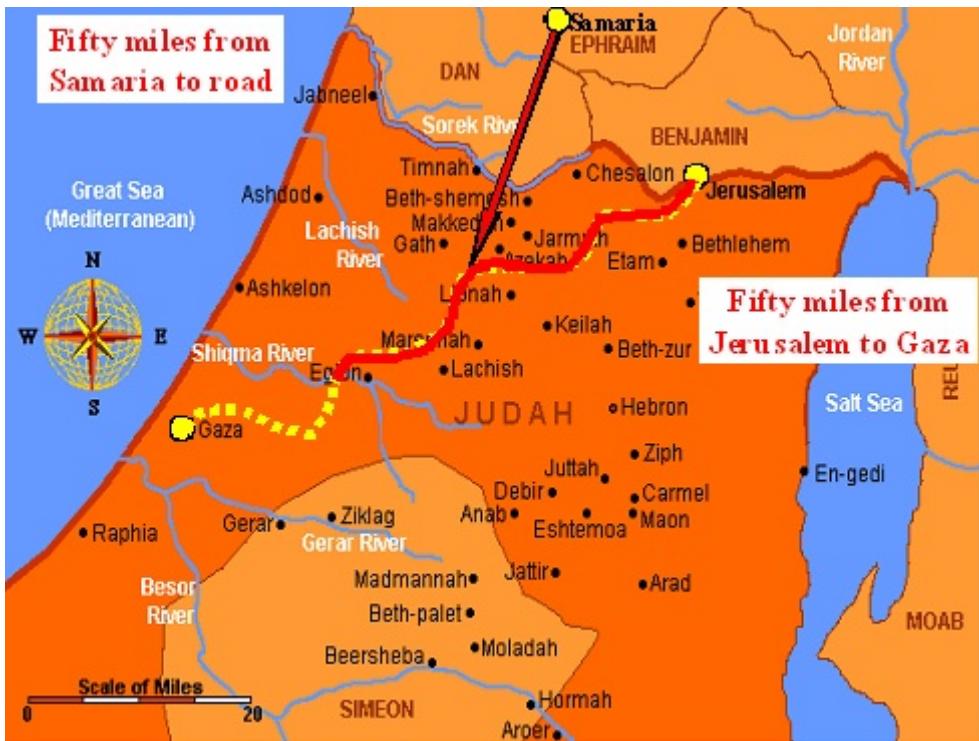


The Ethiopian Eunuch; Saul of Tarsus; Peter at Lydda & Joppa

The events that led to the conversion of the Eunuch reveals how angels, the Holy Spirit and man work together to bring about salvation. The Eunuch was in Jerusalem but did not receive the opportunity to hear the gospel there. He was returning home with no further chance to hear and no ability at that moment to understand.

An angel was sent to Philip to get him moving toward the 50 mile Road that connects Jerusalem to Gaza. It had been so perfectly calculated that at the very moment Philip reached the road, the chariot was passing by. It had also been calculated the exact spot in the Scripture where the Eunuch would be reading. The Holy Spirit told Philip to join that chariot. We see the providence of God at work and now have a concrete example of how God knows the hearts of all men, wants all men to be saved and when he saw into the heart of the Eunuch he saw what was necessary to bring salvation.

But that is where God allowed the power of the Word to finish salvation. Once Philip reached the chariot, Philip taught him the same way everyone is taught. We will see this same thing with Saul of Tarsus when he wanted to know what to do. He was told to go into the city where Ananias was waiting. The gospel alone saves.



He couldn't have been reading a better passage for Philip to begin preaching. Isaiah 53 was a Messianic prophecy that spoke directly about Jesus' work of atonement!

We see a powerful necessary inference with his question about baptism. While riding in the chariot, Philip preached Jesus and the Eunuch heard baptism. If he misunderstood, he would have been corrected. Not only was he correct, as soon as he was baptized the Spirit saw the need fulfilled and took Philip away.

We hear about Philip again many years later.

On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. Acts 21:8-9

The Conversion of Saul

If ever there was an unlikely candidate for the preaching of the gospel, it was Saul.

As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Acts 8:3

The extent of his persecution was revealed in how many were left in Jerusalem after it was complete:

Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Acts 8:1

Although it can't be proven conclusively Saul did all of the above, after his conversion it all ceased:

Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied. Acts 9:31

Once the church in Jerusalem was purged, Saul decided to begin purging it from other areas. It is interesting that the authority of the chief priests extended as far as Damascus.

Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Acts 9:1-2

"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.
4 "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,
5 "as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished. Acts 22:3-5

Breathing threats and murder - an idiom - that described his passion and intensity. Paul himself described it:

I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them. 11 And punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities. Acts 26:9-11

It seems Damascus was not the first city he had gone to with this purpose. He spoke of his inner attitude and emotion. He was a blasphemer, persecution and insolent(hubris).

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, 13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. 1 Tim 1:12-16

Paul's own inspired assessment is that this made him the chief of sinners. But the reason Jesus appeared to him are that it was done "ignorantly in unbelief." He "persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it"

For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. 14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, Gal 1:13-16

Paul also described part of his motivation.

For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ Phil 3:3-8

For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 1 Cor 15:9-10

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, Eph 3:8

Why did Jesus appear to Paul?

Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. 15 'For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. Acts 22:14-15

For it is written in the book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it'; and, 'Let another take his office.' 21 "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 "beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection." Acts 1:20-22

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16 "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake. Acts 9:15-16

And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew

language, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads. 15 So I said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 16 But rise and stand on your feet; **for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.** Acts 26:14-18

God did not immediately remove blindness from Saul even after his repentance.

*Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And **he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.** Acts 9:8-9*

Ananias had doubts and even voiced them.

*Then Ananias answered, **Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.** 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name. Acts 9:13-14*

After Saul's conversion, he immediately changed. He began preaching boldly

***Immediately he preached the Christ** in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. 21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" 22 **But Saul increased all the more in strength,** and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. Acts 9:20-22*



The Jews did not respond well to Saul's preaching.

*Now after many days were past, **the Jews plotted to kill him.** 24 But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. 25 Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket. Acts 9:23-25*

Although Luke did not record it, after he left Damascus Saul did not immediately go to Jerusalem, but instead went into Arabia for three years. The inference is that while there he was taught the gospel.

But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12

*For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but **it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.** 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; **but I went to Arabia,** and returned again to Damaskus. 18 Then **after three years** I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days Gal 1:11-12;17-18*

During that time some disciples returned to Jerusalem and the church began working again.

*And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, **he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.** 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damaskus in the name of Jesus. 28 So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. Acts 9:26-28*

But this was only for fifteen days and then Jesus appeared to him and told him to leave.

"Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance 18 and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your

testimony concerning Me.' Acts 22:17-21

After those fifteen days, an attempt was made to kill Saul and the brethren sent him to Tarsus.

And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. 30 When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus. Acts 9:29-30

Peter at Lydda & Joppa

When we last saw Peter, he was with John. They had come to Samaria to help Philip then went back to Jerusalem.

So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. Acts 8:25

After mentioning Judea, Samaria and Galilee Luke also spoke of Peter's work among them.

Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. Acts 9:32

Luke gave a description of the type of work Peter and the rest of the apostles were doing after the church was scattered. They had been chosen to witness of Jesus resurrection and this is one of the ways they did it. Peter healed another lame man and converted many in Lydda and Sharon.

There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. 34 And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. 35 So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. Acts 9:33-35

Dorcas

Since Joppa is not far from Lydda(10-12 miles) and the brethren in Joppa heard that Peter is nearby they ask him to come. One of their godly saints has died. Dorcas(a doe) or Tabitha(Syriac a gazelle or antelope) is portrayed as a women who has done multitudes of good works and charitable deeds. Note "which she did" many talk about and plan to do but she did. Dorcas had recognized the needs of the widows and had busily fulfilled it with a skill she possessed and wanted to share in the church. Being full of good works and charitable deeds translated into the widows having coats and garments. She was sorely missed by that church.

At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. ... And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. Acts 9:36-37, 39

As Luke made clear in the sixth chapter, benevolence was a vital part of the work of the church and Dorcas was so involved in that work that "all the widows" were able to show Peter examples of her work. Nothing is said about anyone asking Peter to heal this women. We see very few examples of the apostles using miracles for the benefit of other saints. "*Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick.*" 2 Tim 4:20

Remember, miracles were primarily to confirm the word. But though this was a miracle performed upon a saint, it still had the same result.

And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. Acts 9:42

But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. 41 Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. 42 And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. 43 So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner. Acts 9:40-43