

A Tale Of Two Towns.  
Damascus and Jerusalem  
Acts 9:20-31.  
Sunday morning, March 28, 2010.

I. Preaching.

A. In Damascus.

1. Luke records that Saul, after his encounter with Ananias and the restoration of his sight, spent some days with the disciples, and that he received food and was strengthened.
2. It appears from a comparative reading of Paul's own account of these events in Galatians 1, that Luke at this time jumps ahead about three years when Saul returned once more to Damascus acc. to Gal 1:17.  
Those three years could be reckoned according to the Hebrew manner of counting time. That is that the first and the last year could have been only partial years; the middle year would have been a full year. A similar reckoning of time occurs with the three days the Lord Jesus spent in the grave. Two partial days with a whole day in the middle.
3. This avoids a number of difficulties:
  - The fact that Saul would take on himself so quickly the office of a preacher. He himself writes to Timothy that new converts ought not to be elevated to office too quickly, but that they ought to prove themselves first. 1 Timothy 3:6,10 and 5:22.
  - You would think that Saul himself, having gone so horribly astray in his religious zeal, would have had some reservations about jumping right in again as a teacher, and that he would have wanted to sit back and learn and get his bearings as a new convert.
  - You would think that Saul would have wanted some time alone with the Lord and the Scriptures to read the Scriptures in light of their fulfillment in Christ, and to do so prayerfully. Indeed to be taught by the Lord.
4. It appears from the reading in Galatians 1 that Saul did just that. He spent three years in the Arabian desert; then he returned to Damascus.
  - At this time he says to us in Galatians 1:12, he preached a gospel that he did not receive from man, nor was he taught it by man.
  - Again he says that it came by the revelation of Jesus Christ; presumably in the Arabian dessert by God's word and Spirit.
  - In Vss. 15 and 16 he says that following his encounter with the Lord on the Damascus road he did not confer with flesh and blood; he did not even go to the apostles in Jerusalem; he went into Arabia. Then returned to Damascus.
5. This accounts for the manner in which he ministered in Damascus; with power and with conviction and proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

B. In Jerusalem

Following Damascus Saul would preach in the same Spirit in Jerusalem.

Application:

It is essential that conviction and conversion be worked in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Salvation is a super-natural work. You must be born again. Regeneration is a work of the Spirit, and the truth of the Scriptures must be written on your heart by the Holy Spirit. The conviction that any man can bring to bear on your heart can be undone by another man. The changes that any man can effect in your heart can be undone by another man. Only the work of God will stand forever.

This is the reason that we need to have personal dealings with the Lord, and in these personal dealings we must seek and ask for the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts; and we must read God's word in the presence of God, asking Him to teach and to guide us by His Spirit. Do you know such dealing with the Lord, and such a work of the Lord?

## II. Plotting

### A. In Damascus.

1. Saul's preaching was powerful; he had been taught by the Lord. He confounded the Jews at Damascus proving to them from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.
2. The Jews did not want to be confounded, and as such they plot to kill Saul.
3. In 2 Corinthians 11:32 Saul himself sheds some further light on this. It seems the Jews must have accused Saul of creating civil unrest (something they always accused him of, and something the Roman authorities did not allow.) They enlisted the help of the governor of Damascus and had a garrison of Roman soldiers at their disposal to arrest Saul.

### B. In Jerusalem.

1. First the church believes there to be a good possibility that Saul is still plotting against them and they want nothing to do with him.
2. Finally Barnabas takes him under his wing and introduces him to Peter and James, Gal.1:18,19. The other apostles seem to have moved out from Jerusalem by this time.
3. Saul's stay with Peter is brief; 15 days, but his preaching is powerful, and again a plot to kill Saul is uncovered.

#### Application:

The persecutor is persecuted. Often the Lord's future dealings with his children follows a pattern consistent with their previous sins. Jacob, the deceiver was deceived by his own sons regarding Joseph. Willful Peter, who always did and said whatever he wanted to do and say, is brought to the place where he does not want to go, and others take him and impose their will on him. John 21:18. And Saul, who imposed so much suffering on others, will be shown how many things he must suffer for Christ's sake. Acts 9:16. This is to cultivate humility in us, and longsuffering, but also because a converted persecutor can best relate to, and reach, other persecutors.

## III. Provision.

Notwithstanding the plotting of the Jews, the Lord provides a way of escape for Saul. In Damascus he is let down the wall in a basket. In Jerusalem he is escorted out to Caesarea to board a ship to his native Tarsus

#### Application:

Here we learn that with the normal use of means, the Lord will protect and guide His servants, so that they may finish the course of their lives with joy.