

## The Significance of Saul's Conversion.

Acts 9:1-22.

Sunday morning, April 11, 2010.

### I. Its significance to the history of redemption.

- A. Saul's conversion comes sort of like a revolution. It is a sudden drastic change; one that came unexpectedly and to an unlikely candidate.
- B. Why did it come at this time in the history recorded in the book of Acts, and, more broadly considered, in the unfolding of the history of redemption?
  1. The Lord Jesus Christ came to the nation of Israel and proved Himself to be the eternal Son of God by word and by deed and by many convincing signs. Nevertheless, the nation, by way of its representative leaders, rejected Him and killed Him.
  2. God the Father overruled the injustice perpetrated against his Son, and He raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him at His own right hand as a Prince and a Savior. This is the story recorded in the four gospels.
  3. In the book of Acts the Lord Jesus Christ comes to Israel a second time.
    - This time not only to Israel, but also to Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth.
    - This time it would begin with Israel again as though the Lord were saying, "Let's try this again seeing you really messed up the last time."
    - This time the Lord Jesus came to Israel in the Person of the Holy Spirit who took up residence in the followers of Jesus, and He came in the preaching of the gospel as repentance and the forgiveness of sins were preached in Jesus' name.
    - The same signs would accompany this coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to the nation of Israel. This is the story of the book of Acts thus far.
  4. The reaction to the second coming of the Son of God on the part of Israel's leaders is much the same as that recorded in the gospels regarding His first coming.
    - The resentment and oppositions grows; the tensions build.
    - We see the apostles threatened; we see attempts to silence them; next come imprisonment and beatings; finally it all comes to a head with the stoning of Stephen and the following all out persecution of the church, in which many would lose not only their freedom, but also their very lives. Acts 22:4 and 26:10.
  5. With that rejection two things happen:
    - Israel as a nation is delivered over to the judgment that was carried out by the Romans in AD 68-70.
    - The gospel is sent far away to the gentiles.
  6. Saul was God's chosen instrument to facilitate the gospel's going forth to the gentiles. Acts 9:15,16. His life and ministry as recorded in the book of Acts take place between the bookends of the rejection of the gospel by the Jewish nation in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 22:17-21 and the Jews in Rome as recorded in Acts 28:25-28. In both passages the gospel is sent to the gentiles.

Applications:

1. You can not sin with impunity. You can not ignore and reject the Lord Jesus Christ indefinitely. "He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Proverbs 29:1. This truth is illustrated by the history of the double rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ on the part of Israel as a nation.
2. The Lord Himself is in charge of the unfolding of the history of salvation. He who has begun the work will also finish it. He is not short on recourses, and things are not out of control. The church, and you and me, may find ourselves in stormy waters, but things will be all right as long as we have Jesus with us in our boat.

## II. Its significance to the church in Jerusalem.

- A. Saul had been the driving force of the persecution of Christians in and around Jerusalem. This had resulted in the scattering and propagation of the Christian Church throughout the region, even as far as Damascus. Acts 8:1,3 and 9:1,2.
- B. Meanwhile the sufferings of the Church in and around Jerusalem multiplied with imprisonments, beatings and executions. How long would this be allowed to go on? Had the Lord forgotten them?
- C. With the conversion of Saul the wind is taken out of the sails of the persecution. A period of peace and tranquility seems to have followed for we read in Acts 9:31 that the churches throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace and were edified... and multiplied.  
Perhaps the Sanhedrin changed their approach to dealing with the Christians. Seeing that the persecution scattered and multiplied them, they now seem to ignore them.

Application:

The Lord is a good and wise Shepherd. He has purpose and design in all things. He had a good and holy purpose for the persecution that scattered and multiplied the church, and drove it far beyond the boundaries of Jerusalem and its surroundings. But the Lord also knows how and when to stop persecutions; He takes no pleasure in the sufferings of His children. Lamentations 3:33.  
Allow the sufferings and hardships of this life to set you apart to God's purposes; allow them to sanctify you, and then "leave to your God to order and provide" as the hymn writer counsels us in "Be still my soul."

## III. Its significance to you and me.

Saul, now the apostle Paul, touches on this significance in 1 Timothy 1:15,16, where he tells us that his conversion serves as a pattern, or a prototype as the Greek has it, for all those who are going to believe on Jesus for everlasting life.

- A. There are no people too sinful for Jesus to save and reconcile them to God.
- B. There is no heart so hard that Jesus can not break it.  
There is no will so wild that Jesus can not tame it.

Application:

So what is keeping you from taking your heart and your will to Jesus, and what is keeping you from asking Him to make them His own? Only in that place do you have peace, rest, provision, and a future.