

Lesson 7 Handout: The Conversion of Saul

Acts 9:1-31

Lesson 7 Answers:

1. How do you rationalize the desire of Saul to murder believers in verse 1 and his living in good conscience up until that day as stated in Acts 23:1? What conclusion can you draw about your conscience?

Saul did live in good conscience because his actions agreed with his thinking. Each of us must be careful to tune our conscience to match what God desires.

2. Why did Jesus appear to Saul after His ascension? Why was this necessary?

For Saul to be an apostle requires direct contact with Jesus. This was necessary because Jesus needed Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles.

3. Why was Saul blinded and why did he have to wait three days and nights before receiving further instructions?

Many people have to be forced to look at their lives by extenuating circumstances; Saul needed this and was blinded and left waiting for three days; he had much to think about.

4. Was Ananias fear justified?

Yes, Saul was a known believer persecutor. I would have requested assurance from God also. See Gideon for another example.

5. What elements of conversion are detailed in this passage?

Saul now believes in Jesus after their face-to-face encounter. He has taken three days in prayer and fasting to repent. Saul is baptized for the remission of his many sins.

6. What proof shows Saul did receive the gift of the Holy Spirit when a non-apostle, Ananias, laid hands on him?

Ananias told him that he was sent from God to restore his sight and for Saul to receive the Holy Spirit. And we see in verse 22 that Saul confounded and refuted the Jews.

7. Why were the Jews in the Damascus synagogue confused with the teaching and behavior of Saul?

Saul was able to use the Scriptures to prove that Jesus was the Christ; in contrast, a few days before Saul was sent by the Jerusalem Jewish leaders to arrest believers.

8. How did Saul escape the Jewish conspiracy to murder him?

The Acts of the Apostles

Verse 25 indicates that *his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.*

9. Use Galatians 1:11-24 to detail the life of Saul (Paul) between verses 25-26 of Acts 9.
Why does Luke leave out this information?

We see that Saul ... went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas... Then I went to Syria and Cilicia.

10. Who became the mentor of Saul when he arrived in Jerusalem?

Barnabas

11. Who were the Hellenist Jews? Why did they try to kill Saul?

The Hellenist Jews were those Jews who had adopted the Greek language and culture.

12. Why did the churches in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria continue to grow?

They enjoyed a time of peace and were strengthened, living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit.

13. To where did Saul escape?

Verse 30 indicates that they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Cameo 7 – Damascus, Syria

The Damascus Gate is the main entrance to the Old City of Jerusalem. It is located in the wall on the city's northwest side where the highway leads out to Nablus, and from there, in times past, to the capital of Syria, Damascus.



One of the oldest cities in the world, Damascus was, and still is, the capital of Syria. The oasis city sits on the edge of the Syrian-Arab desert about 130 miles northeast of Jerusalem and is said to be one of the most beautiful cities in all of western Asia. Damascus plays a significant role in both the Old and New Testaments and is perhaps best remembered as the scene of Paul's dramatic encounter with the risen Christ and the place where he converted to Christianity.

Damascus lays at least a six-day journey on foot from Jerusalem. Northeast of Mount Hermon and about 50 miles from the Mediterranean coast, Damascus was a leading commercial and transportation center. The city's location along a river at the crossroads of two major international highways (the Via Maris and the King's Highway) guaranteed its prosperity and importance.

The Acts of the Apostles

The Abana River (known today as the Barada) is the primary water source for Damascus. The Pharpar River (now el-A waj) runs on the outskirts of Damascus, supplying the gardens and orchards. 2 Kings 5:12- Naaman, the Syrian commander, references these two rivers as being “better than” the waters of Israel.

The Roman temple of Jupiter was built somewhere between the 1st century BCE and 4th century CE.



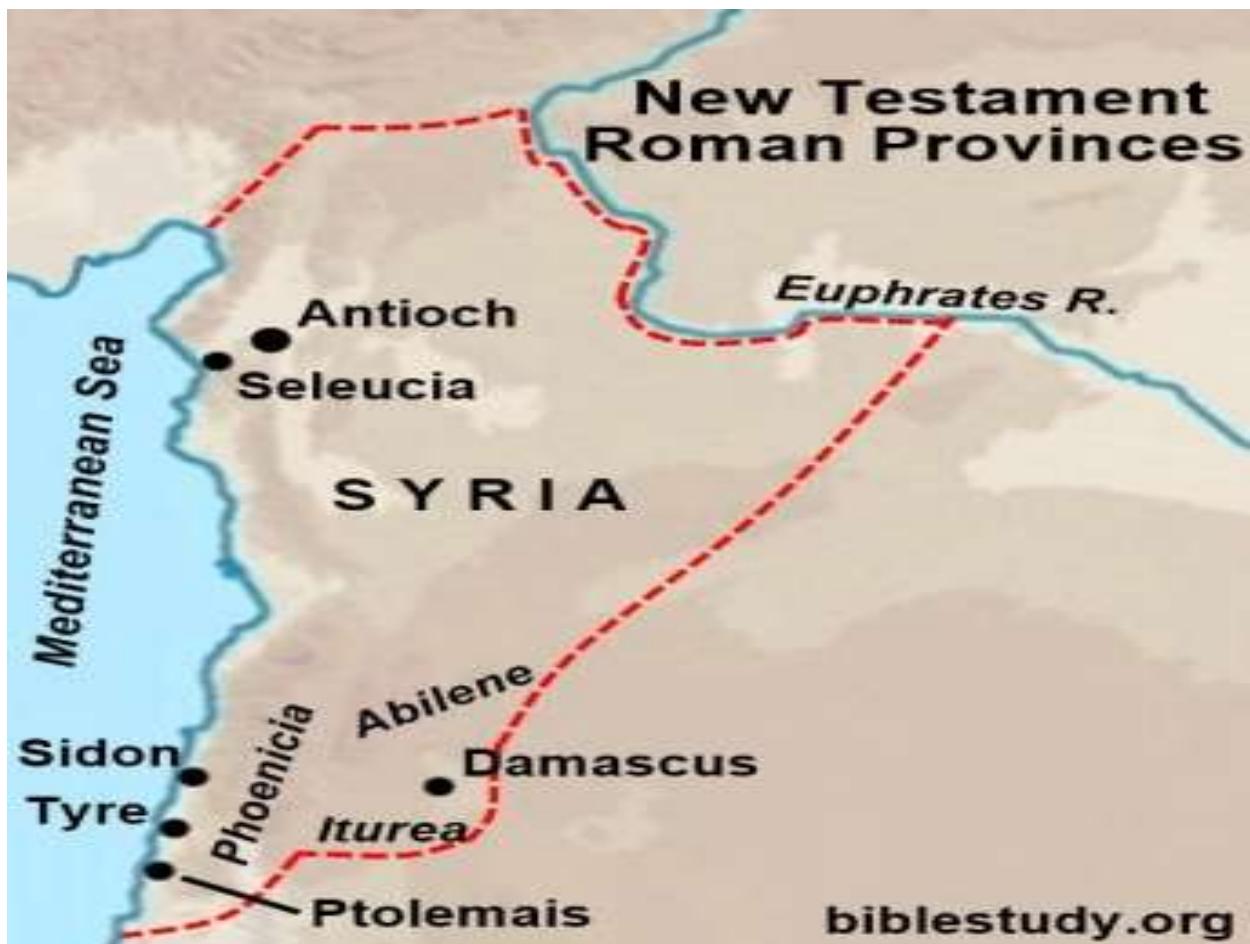
The Temple of Jupiter

Syria, which became a province of Rome in 64 B.C., is referenced at least several times in the Bible (Matthew 4:24, Luke 2:2, Acts 15:23, 41, 18:18, 20:3, 21:3 and Galatians 1:21). Within its boundaries is the region known as Phoenicia (called Phenice or Phenicia in the KJV) which is mentioned three times in the New Testament.

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that arose concerning Stephen went through Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch (in Syria), speaking the word to no one except Jews only (Acts 11:19, see also 15:3 and 21:2).

The Acts of the Apostles

The Phoenicians, living on the coast of ancient Syria, were known for their fabrics of wool, silk, cotton and linen. They were also considered the most skilled seamen of the ancient world. It was the Phoenicians of Syria who produced a script that became the forerunner of the Greek, Latin, Arabic, Hebrew and other alphabets.



It is important to determine what is meant by the term Arabia. In modern English, Arabia would refer to the Arabian Peninsula where Saudi Arabia is located. However, in the first century the designation could also refer to the Syro-Arabian desert, farther north, which includes portions of modern-day Syria and Jordan.

Paul was in Arabia (including Damascus and the surrounding desert) for at least three years immediately after his conversion. Some speculate that Paul spent this time in relative seclusion, perhaps living as a desert hermit and sorting out the implications of his new faith. However, the biblical record emphasizes that he immediately began preaching in the synagogues.

Acts 9:22 does not present the picture of a man who is just "figuring it out": "*Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.*" When he left Damascus, with its significant Jewish population, it is reasonable to

The Acts of the Apostles

assume that he did the very thing that Jesus had called him to do—preach the gospel to the Gentiles. For three years he spread the gospel in Damascus and in the surrounding countryside.



The Arabian Desert

The area of Cilicia was conquered by Roman general Pompey in 64 B.C. That same year it became a Roman province with its capital located in Tarsus. In 58 B.C., it had the island of Cyprus added to its provincial territory.

Cilicia is referenced eight times in the Bible (Acts 6:9, 15:23, 41, 21:39, 22:3, 23:34, 27:5, Galatians 1:21). New Testament cities within this province include Tarsus (hometown of Apostle Paul, Acts 21:39) and the Cyprus cities of Salamis (Acts 13:5) and Paphos (verse 6).

Not only was the area rich in agriculture, it was also strategically important to the Roman Empire.

Cilicia was a dangerous place to live. Due to its mountainous region, it was the home of many robbers. Paul almost certainly had his home province in mind when he wrote of the dangers he encountered spreading the gospel which included "perils of robbers" (2Corinthians 11:26).

The Acts of the Apostles

Pirates were also a huge problem in Cilicia's early history.



The Acts of the Apostles

Roman Law

Collaborative Research Group
2016

What is Roman law?

Roman law is the set of rules and laws that existed in the different periods of ancient Roman society, from the 5th century B.C. until the death of Emperor Justinian I in AD 565. C. The oldest evidence of the Roman legal system is the text "The law of the XII Tables" from the middle of the 5th century B.C. that details rules of coexistence for the people of Rome. At the beginning of the 6th century, Emperor Justinian I compiled the legal texts of the time into a single legal text called *Corpus iuris civilis*, which means "Body of civil law". It consisted of the most influential legal document in history that established a parameter of what was allowed and what was prohibited.

Furthermore, the emperor convened a committee to select the Roman lawyers. From then until today, the legal order is maintained and updated as societies evolve. Roman law was the basis of the modern legal order worldwide, with the exception of the nations in which Muslim, Hindu and Chinese law are applied, in addition to customs that are not written but are followed by tradition or social ethics and differ from one culture to another.

Starting in the 18th and 19th centuries, several European countries began to replicate the foundations of Roman law for the legal system of their nations. For example: Spain promulgated the Commercial Code in 1885 and the Civil Code in 1889, laws that remain in force although they have undergone several modifications over the years.

Characteristics of Roman law

Roman law was characterized by:

- Establish norms that impose social duties and establish the bases for the coexistence of the population.
- Reflect important changes in the legal order of Ancient Rome.
- Being the antecedent of the division of powers and Civil Law today.
- Being bilateral, that is, it requires the interactivity of two or more parties, such as the State and the people, who must fulfill obligations reciprocally.
- Not recognizing the right of equality for the entire population, since it continued to consider slaves as property of the nobility.

Stages in the development of Roman law

Roman law throughout the history of Rome was divided into the following stages:

The Acts of the Apostles

- Ancient law (753 - 130 BC). It was the stage that was characterized by the norms based on customs and that were embodied in the *Law of the XII Tables* that was directed to the population and resulted in a rigid and severe legal order.
- Classical law (130 BC - 230 AD). It was the stage that was characterized by the organization of jurisprudence of the legal order, such as the Senate and by formalizing the law as a science.
- Post classic law (230 - 527 AD). It was the stage that was characterized by the absolute power exercised by the emperor to regulate the areas of public and private life of citizens.
- Justinian Law (527 - 565 AD). It was the stage that was characterized by a legislative reform that made it possible to compile the norms and laws in force, in a formal and codified way, in a single text.

Bases of Roman law

The main bases that gave rise to the Roman law of Ancient Rome were:

- Customs. They were the first social norms adopted.
- The law. They were rules established by the authorities, such as the collection of taxes or the deprivation of rights for those considered slaves.
- The plebiscites. They were the legal procedures in which a popular vote was called.
- The jurisprudence. It was the adoption of law as a science, made up of sentences and decisions by a court of justice.
- The Senate consults. They were the representatives of the ruling class who took deliberations of the Senate with the value of law.
- The imperial constitutions. They were the regulations established by the emperors.

Principles of Roman law

Roman law promulgated three general principles formulated by the Roman jurist Domicio Ulpiano, advisor to the Emperor Alexander Severus.

The three general principles were:

- *Honeste vivere* (live honestly). It consists of a moral and legal precept.
- *Alterum non laedere* (do not harm the other). He who harms others violates their rights and is exposed to sanction.

The Acts of the Apostles

- *Suum cuique tribuere* (give each his own). It consists of complying with the law, contracts, agreements and recognizing the rights of others.

Greek and Roman Meteorology

By Liba Taub

August 8, 2017

I've lived in England for about 20 years and ever since I moved here English people have been telling me that weather is one of their very favorite topics of discussion. It turns out that in Ancient Greece and Rome people were interested in weather as well. In fact, the people who were probably the earliest scientists in Greece, the ancient Pre-Socratic natural philosophers, apparently also had quite a bit to say about weather too. They were interested in understanding what causes weather phenomena. The Greek word "meteora" refers to lofty things, to things that are high up. It's that word from which our modern word "meteorology" derives. It turns out though for the Ancient Greeks that the study of meteorology didn't only include what we would call weather phenomena (things like snow, rain, hail, wind), but also included some things that we would regard as astronomical phenomena. For example, comets, but also geological or seismological phenomena; this includes earthquakes. The main way that we know that such an extensive list of natural phenomena were included in the study of meteorology is that when we go to Aristotle's work called "The Meteorology", he tells us at the very beginning exactly what the work studies, and he gives us a very long list of the things I just mentioned and more.

Now, Aristotle's work on meteorology is the earliest full text that survived on the topic from Antiquity. But we know from reading his work that many of his predecessors were interested in meteorological phenomena as well. It's one of the interesting things about reading Aristotle: he gives us a little bit of a history of meteorology, as well as giving his own ideas about meteorological phenomena as well. It turns out when we turn to the very earliest Greek texts, the Homeric and the Hesiodic poems, there are quite a bit of weather in those poems as well. When we read the Homeric and the Hesiodic poems, the Iliad, the Odyssey, the Theogony, it looks as if weather is in the control of gods. We see this not only in written texts (these poems), we also see it on vase paintings, Greek vases, we also see it sometimes in statues as well. So, for instance, the Statue of Zeus throwing a thunderbolt. We also find in an early work, one by Hesiod ("Works and Days"), something that looks like a very brief form of weather calendar or farmer's almanac. It turns out that it is probably the prototype, the earliest example of just that – a farmer's almanac, giving us an indication of what we should be doing and when. I would argue that even the depiction of weather phenomena as being under the control of Gods is offering a type of explanation of how weather happens. It doesn't just happen – the Gods are in control of it.

I think, one of the things that really distinguishes the Greek natural philosophers' approach to explaining weather and other meteorological phenomena, including earthquakes, is that they in their explanations they wrest control of these phenomena out of the hands of the Gods and instead offer rational, natural explanations. They emphasize that, for instance, thunder and lightning is not due to the Gods. They may believe that Gods exist, but the Gods are not causing

The Acts of the Apostles

the weather. So, for instance, if we look at Epicurus's 'Letter to Pythocles', in which he talks at length about weather phenomena, meteorological phenomena. He makes it very clear that we can have a rational understanding of weather, but it is not due to the Gods. In fact, in Epicurus's worldview the Gods are too busy to be bothered with something as mundane as weather. The Ancient Greeks had explanations that were based on nature for how weather happens. Some of the philosophers, like Epicurus, like Theophrastus, seem to be content with coming up with several alternative possible explanations of different clauses for weather phenomena. They were happy with an idea that, in principle, we can explain these phenomena naturally. It doesn't matter whether or not we have one explanation, or the right explanation. This is an interesting approach, I think, to doing science, to explaining nature.

When we look at some of the Hellenistic philosophers after Aristotle, philosophers like Epicurus and the Stoics, part of their aim in doing natural philosophy, in explaining nature was to provide people with a way of feeling, of a sense of calmness, of being free from worry. And they're very explicit about that. And, of course, if you're worried that you're going to be hit by lightning, or if you find thunder very frightening, or if you're worried about torrential rain and you think it's in the hands of the Gods, you may be very worried and feel uncomfortable. But Epicurus, for example, suggests that we don't need to worry about these things – they just happen naturally. And so we shouldn't worry about the Gods.

Not all of the people who wrote about weather were interested explaining it. Some of the Ancient Greeks and Romans were interested in predicting weather, in being able to know what if there was going to be a lot of rain, if there was going to be a lack of rain, how this, for instance, might affect a harvest, etc. And this harkens back to Hesiod's 'Calendar', 'Almanac' and the "Works and Days". And we actually see a very interesting array of calendars that correlate astronomical phenomena with weather phenomena. And we also see many examples of what we might call a farmer's almanac as well, we see them being collected by Ptolemy, the astronomer, who was very interested in this sort of astrometeorological calendar. We also see them in the writings of the Roman agricultural authors, the agronomers. It shouldn't surprise us that farmers are interested in the weather. And Pliny the Elder, who wrote "The Natural History", recounts a story that some merchants actually used weather predictions to help them set the prices for cloaks that they would be selling. If it was predicted to be a harsh winter then they knew that they could raise the price for their cloaks and gain more money. It's interesting because Aristotle tells us in one of his works that Thales of Miletus was the first person who attempted to explain nature, to understand nature. So, in Aristotle's view by our understanding of the word "scientist" Thales of Miletus would be the first scientist.

Aristotle also tells us a story that Thales used his astronomical knowledge to be able to predict that there was going to be a particularly good grape harvest one year. He thought this was going to happen, and in advance of this grape harvest he bought all of the wine presses to get his hands on. And he made a lot of money renting out these wine presses to other people, who had not predicted such a good harvest. Now, Aristotle is a little bit disparaging of what Thales did, because he said he'd only created a monopoly. But I think that we see here also an early account of someone using weather prediction in a way that's very practical and also economic.

The Acts of the Apostles

For those of us who are interested in understanding how Ancient Greek and Roman people tried to cope with weather of all sorts, there remain a number of texts and also a number of different artifacts, including stone inscriptions that are weather calendars that need to be studied more than they have been. I mentioned Aristotle's meteorology. I don't think that there are many people who study Aristotle's philosophy, who have actually read the work, much less – studied it in detail. There are, of course, exceptions to that, but I would like to encourage and emphasize that there are many works on meteorological phenomena: some of them are prose work, some of them are poetry, and that they're out there and they're waiting for us to study and to learn more about, what the Ancient Greeks and Romans thought about and had to do with trying to understand and control weather.

One of the questions that I'm often asked when people know that I'm interested in Ancient Greek and Roman meteorology, they ask me, whether or not people were able to predict the weather any better than we are today. And I say that we actually have quite a lot of evidence about weather predictions, for instance, being linked to birds, for instance, and different signs of nature, weather signs indicating what weather will be coming, but we don't have any accounts to my knowledge of people saying; "Yep, I got that right".