

- To date we have been focused solely on Israel.
  - Continuing the Kingdom theme from the Gospels, we see an escalation of Kingdom-related events.
  - Miracles, signs and wonders increase, the number of believers increase, no one in Jerusalem could be ignorant of the message of the good news of the Kingdom.
  - The first recorded bona fide offer was recorded in Peter's second sermon. **Acts 3:19—20**
  - We also see three recorded times when the Gospel of the Kingdom was presented personally to the leadership of Israel. (Peter and John—Acts 4; the Apostles—Acts 5; Stephen—Acts 7)
  - In each instance, they become more adamant in their rejection of Jesus Christ.
- We see Israel stumble at the stoning of Stephen and through Israel's fall comes the rising up of the Gentiles.
 

**Romans 11:11—12** <sup>11</sup>I say then, they did not stumble so as to (fatally) fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. <sup>12</sup>Now if their transgression (stumbling) is riches for the world and their failure (diminishing) is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!
- The rest of Acts is primarily focused on the casting away (diminishing) of Israel.
  - The rising of the Church, the Body of Christ is a sub theme keeping a low profile to Israel's fall.
  - The rise of the Body of Christ is the theme of Paul's later writings.
- We see a definite change with the salvation of Paul (Saul).

### Acts 9:1—2

- Paul was on his mission to stamp out anything having to do with Jesus. The word “still” in Acts 9:1 indicates that all through chapter eight Saul was playing havoc with believers.
- “The Way” definitely referred to believing Israel (the remnant) who existed before the dispensation of Grace because we see Paul stamping out those of “the Way” before he was saved. (9:2)
- Apollos was a Kingdom believer who is said to be instructed in the way of the Lord. This could be a general reference that may not refer specifically to “the Way”. **Acts 18:24—26**
- When Paul was in Ephesus he ministered to Jews belonging to “the Way”. These were all Israelite believers. Paul approached them as such. **Acts 19:4—6**
- According to how the NIV reads, Paul was a follower of “the Way” **Acts 24:14**
  - This verse could be read: *In accordance with the beliefs of the Way, which some call a cult, this is how I serve the God of Abraham, without violating anything written in the Scriptures.*
  - By doing this, Paul defends those of “the Way” by saying they have done nothing that goes against anything written in the Old Testament. The accusations are groundless.
- Interestingly, “the Way” does not seem to refer to those belonging to the Church, the Body of Christ. Paul, in defending the Way, never says he is a part of the Way. He also never references the Way in his Epistles nor states that we are a part of the Way.

### Saul's Conversion

- When God says something twice in Scripture, you know it's important. Saul's conversion is brought up in three chapters in the book of Acts. It must be an important and significant event.
- Many point to his conversion as the turning point in their own lives seeing his change as absolute proof that Christianity is valid and true. Paul's conversion is proof of God's love and mercy and his radical change is proof of the power of God.
- Paul's conversion may even be seen as a hope for Israel. Just as God took Paul and made him a believer, God will, at the end of the Tribulation, cause all of Israel to turn to Him.

- Paul's hatred of those who followed Jesus as Messiah was misdirected. His goal was to stamp out those who would make a mockery of the Law and seemingly turn their backs on Judaism by following a false religion.
  - Paul was sincere in all that he did to defend Judaism but he was completely wrong.
  - Contrary to popular belief, sincerity will not sway God in the least.
- People misinterpret Paul as getting a pass from God because he did what he did in ignorance not realizing the emphasis is on God's grace, not Paul's ignorance. If Paul continued doing what he was doing, even in ignorance, the final resurrection would bring eternal condemnation.
  - 1 Timothy 1:13—14** <sup>13</sup>even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; <sup>14</sup>and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.
- We now see in Paul the immensity of God's grace to all.

### Acts 9:3—7

- Imagine how Paul felt, not only to have this intense sensory experience of the light and voice coming out of heaven, but also found out everything you've been doing is wrong.
- Notice that mistreating believers is the same as mistreating the Lord.
  - We see this principle in the judgment of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31—46. How you treat Israel is directly applied to how you treat Jesus.
- We in the Church, the Body of Christ also need to treat each other in love because we are all one.
- It's interesting to note that God left Saul alone while he persecuted Israel but when he started to step outside of the borders of Israel, going into Gentile territory, He put a stop to him.
  - Israel had already rejected Christ, but the Gentiles haven't had a chance to do so yet.
- Is Saul's conversion any less dramatic than our own conversion?
  - Inwardly we were the same type of person as Saul. There was nothing good in us.
  - It required the same process to convert Saul as it did us. God needed to get our attention and drag us to where we are today. We would not have done it on our own.
  - Both Saul and we were depraved—we were as bad off as we could possibly be. We could not have become any worse.
  - Both Saul and we went through the same spiritual events at the point of our believing.
- Of course, Christ had a very special and unique ministry for Paul to fulfill and He gave him everything he needed to do so.
- In Paul we find our pattern of salvation. **1 Timothy 1:16**

### Acts 9:8—16

- Ananias was told to go to Saul. This would be like a Jew being told to go speak to Hitler.
- Paul's commission is given in verse 15. As a chosen vessel, Paul was to bear the name of Jesus to:
  1. Gentiles;
  2. Kings;
  3. Sons of Israel
- Contrast this with the Gospel of the Kingdom which was to go to Israel. Paul is commissioned to go to the sons of Israel (individuals) instead of to the nation of Israel.
- As Saul caused much suffering on the part of the believers, he will be called to suffer greatly for the sake of Jesus Christ.
- It was at the time Jesus Christ appeared to Saul that he was given his commission. **Acts 26:16—18**
  - Here Jesus Christ tells him that He will be appearing to him in the future.
- It's obvious that God has raised up Paul to be a separate Apostle distinct from the 12. Many say Paul should have been the 12<sup>th</sup> Apostle but we know he was not qualified because he was not with Jesus during His whole ministry. (See Acts 1:22)
  - As we see in Galatians 1:1 Paul was appointed directly by Jesus Christ to be an Apostle without the intervention of man.

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