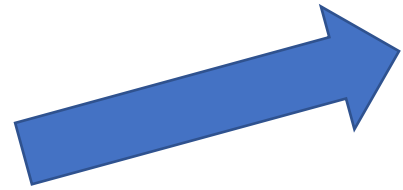


# Arrested on the road to Damascus

Acts 9:1-31



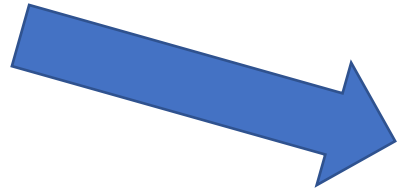
# In Acts there are 3 occasions we have Saul's testimony



1<sup>st</sup> Here, told by Luke mostly for believers reading the account.



2<sup>nd</sup> Acts 22 to a hostile crowd of Jews in Jerusalem



3<sup>rd</sup> Acts 26 before King Agrippa and the Roman governor, Festus

Extra details are included that are suited to each audience.

# Back in Jerusalem

**Meanwhile,** Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord`s disciples. v1



Following on from Stephen's death where Saul was there giving his approval.

He grows to become a great persecutor of believers.

## Saul's zeal to wipe out the 'heresy'

He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. v2



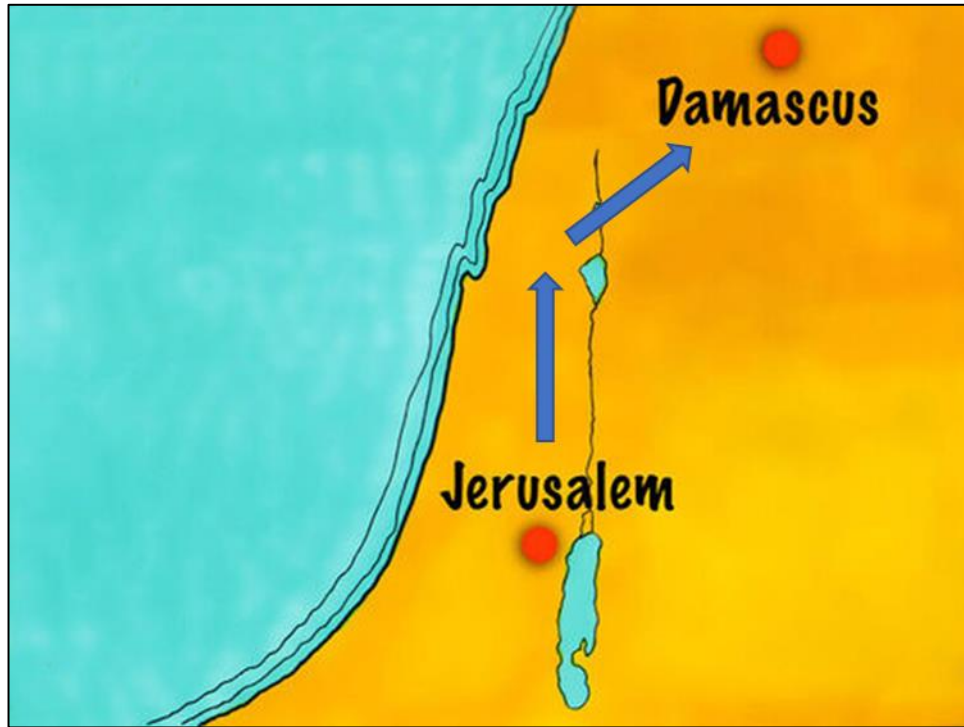
Religious authorisation

Cruel pursuit of followers of  
“the Way”

A Lifestyle term derived from Jesus’  
words in John 14

# Heaven Opens

As he neared Damascus on his journey,  
suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. v3



Just outside the city, the  
Supernatural glory appears.



## The risen, glorified Lord speaks ...

He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him,  
"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" v3



Jesus speaks Saul's name with its Hebrew pronunciation.

Saying it twice – a way of showing concern and affection

### Why?

It is futile!

Notice that Jesus had taken Saul's attacks on believers personally.

## The risen, glorified Lord speaks ...

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.  
"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. v5



This was totally unexpected and a shocking revelation. How could he have been so completely blind and wrong about Jesus?

At this point the risen Jesus actually appeared to him- this was to be part of his qualification to be an apostle.

# Under a New Authority with New Instructions

"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." v6



Something given  
and something withheld



## Secondary witnesses

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless;  
they heard the sound but did not see anyone. v7



This was a personal  
revelation of the risen Lord  
to Saul.

The men heard the voice,  
but perhaps they didn't  
understand the Hebrew  
that Jesus was speaking.

## A physical reflection of his inner state.

Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. v8



A very humbling start!

They were near the city,  
so it wasn't too far to go.

## Time to think things over.

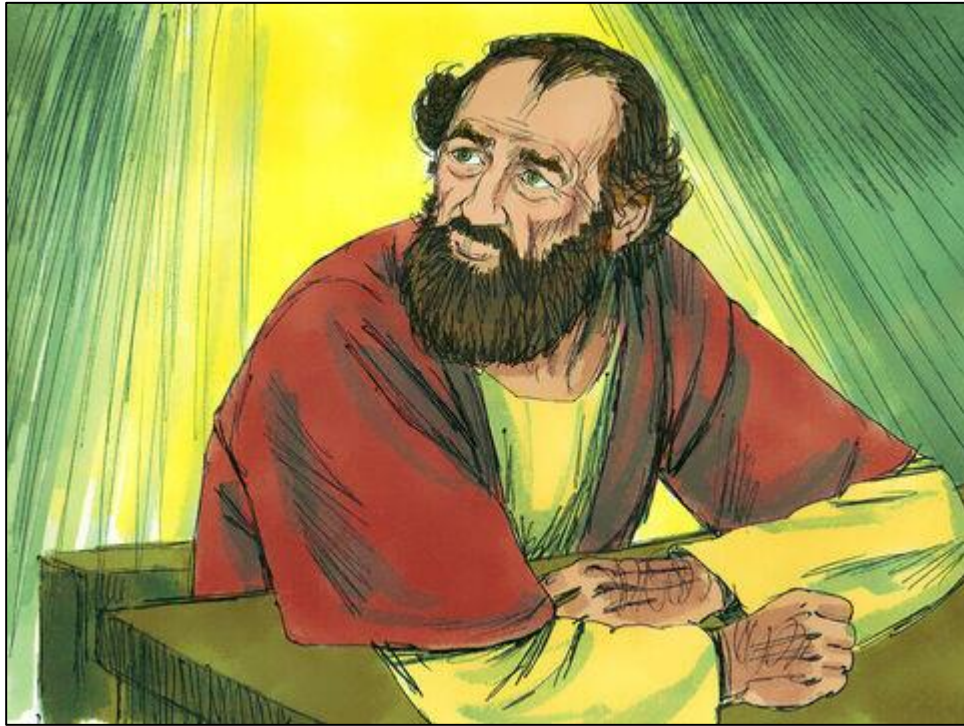
For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. v9



It was a kind of fast, but perhaps as a result of what had happened, Saul didn't have much of an appetite.

# The Chosen Messenger - Ananias

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. v10



He is an ordinary Messianic Jewish man, living in Damascus.

He is known by name!

His response is positive.

# The Chosen Place - Straight Street

The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.

**In a vision he has seen** a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." v11-12

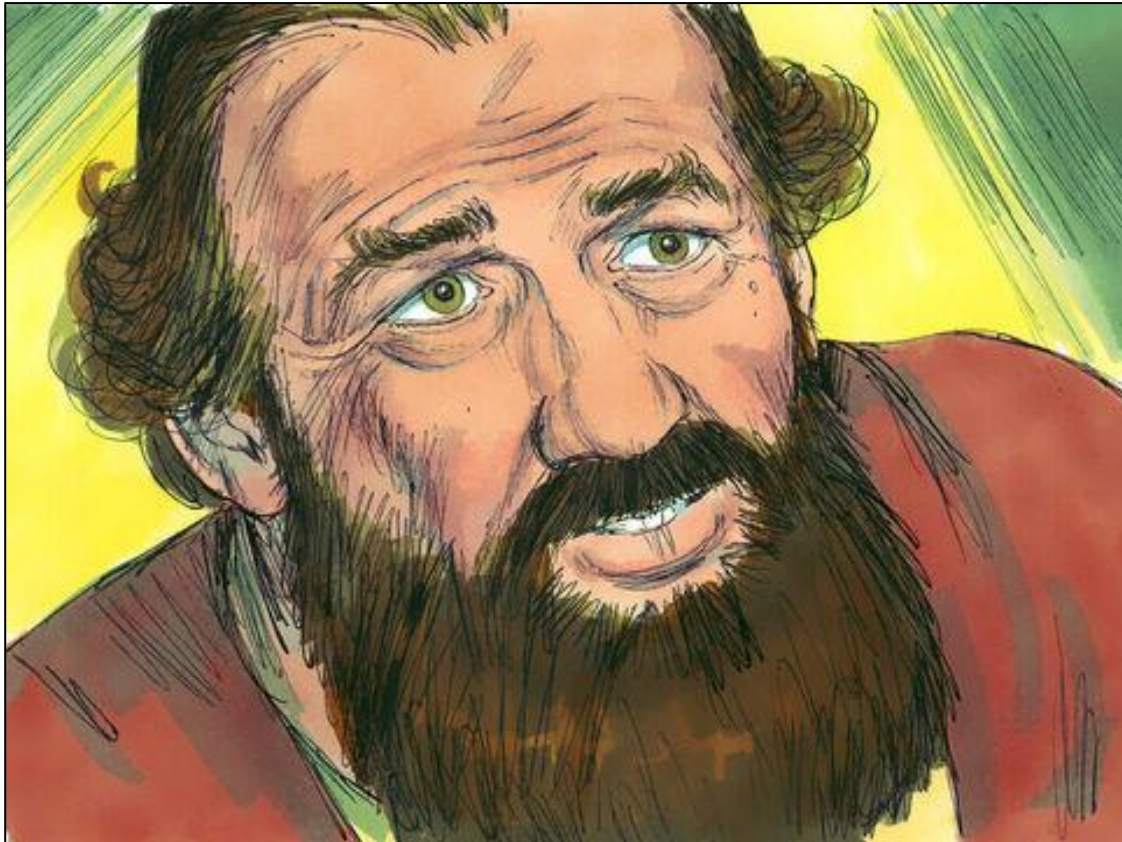


Ananias is given:-  
the address,  
a name (he is praying!!)  
a vision of the task he is to do.

2 - visions confirmation.

## Lord, are you sure you've got the right man?

"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." v13-14



Word has got around about Saul's coming.

(How did they find out since Saul would have wanted it to be kept secret at first?)

Why does Ananias tell the Lord what he already knows?

# Just Go!

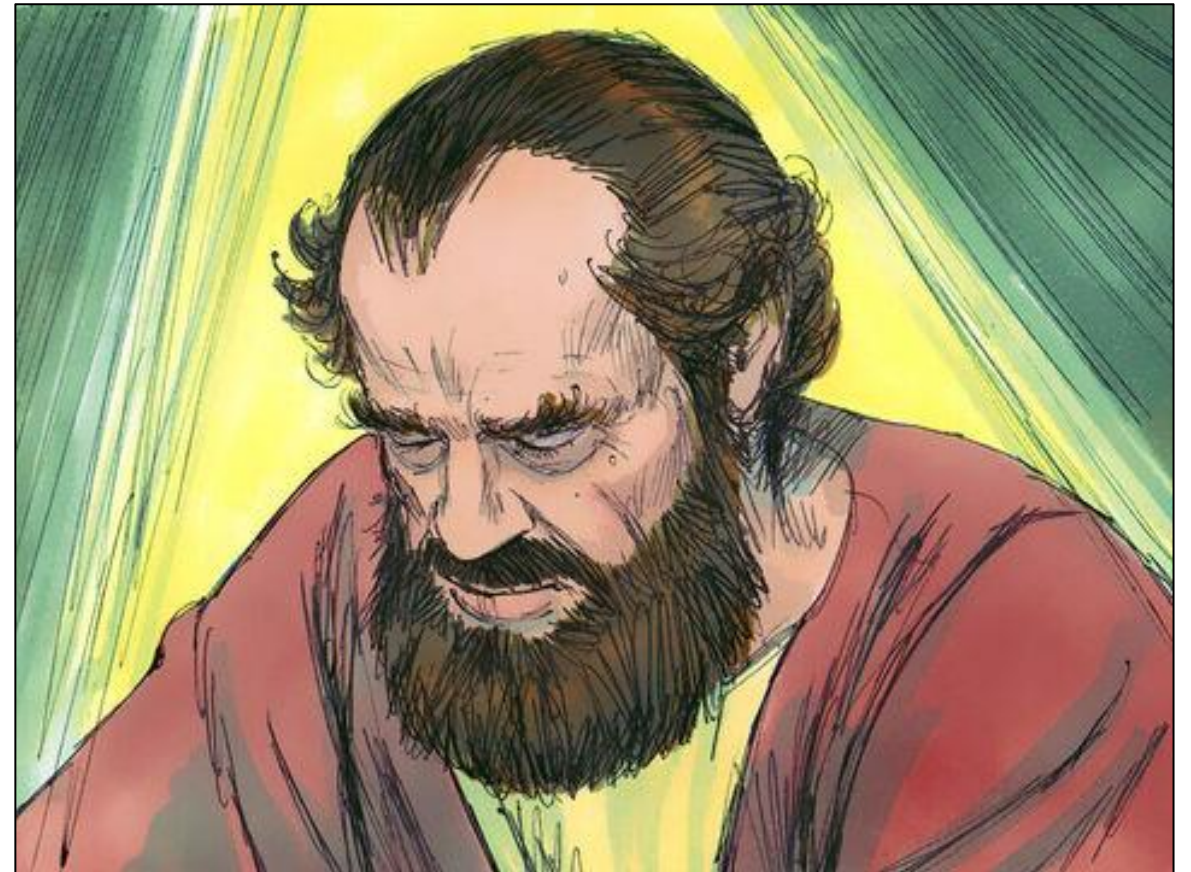
But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." v15-16

“my chosen instrument”

A great calling and a great challenge

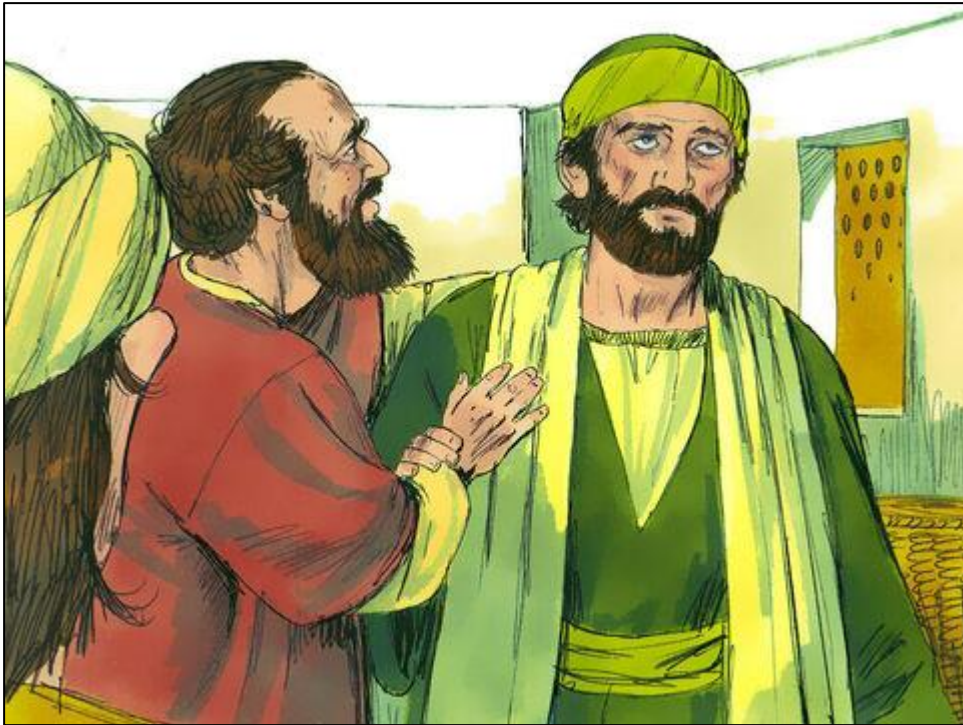
How did the Lord reveal this to Saul?

The true gospel challenge



## Brother Saul

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here--has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." v17



Ananias gives him :-

a warm welcome to the  
'family of believers'

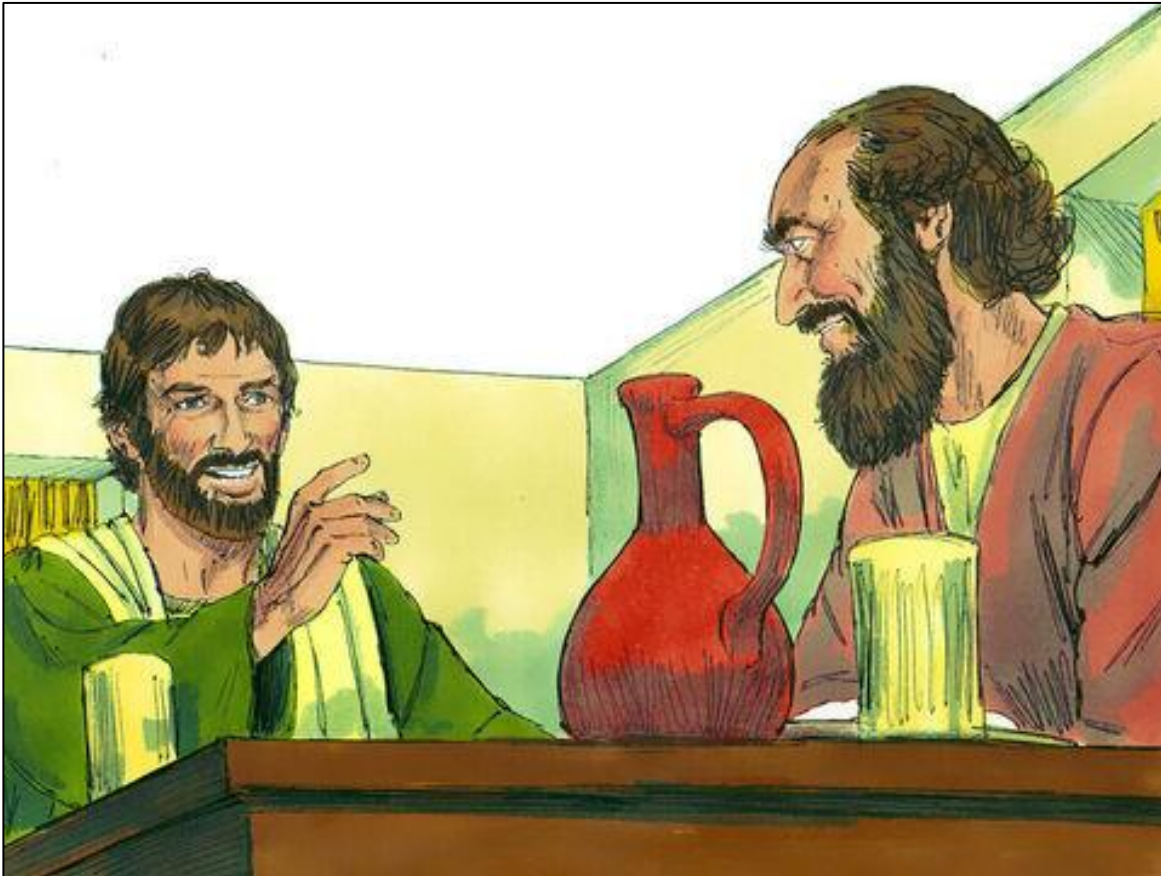
a confirmation that the Lord has  
directed him to come

a promise of what God is going to do.



# The Miracle of the New Birth

Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. v18-19

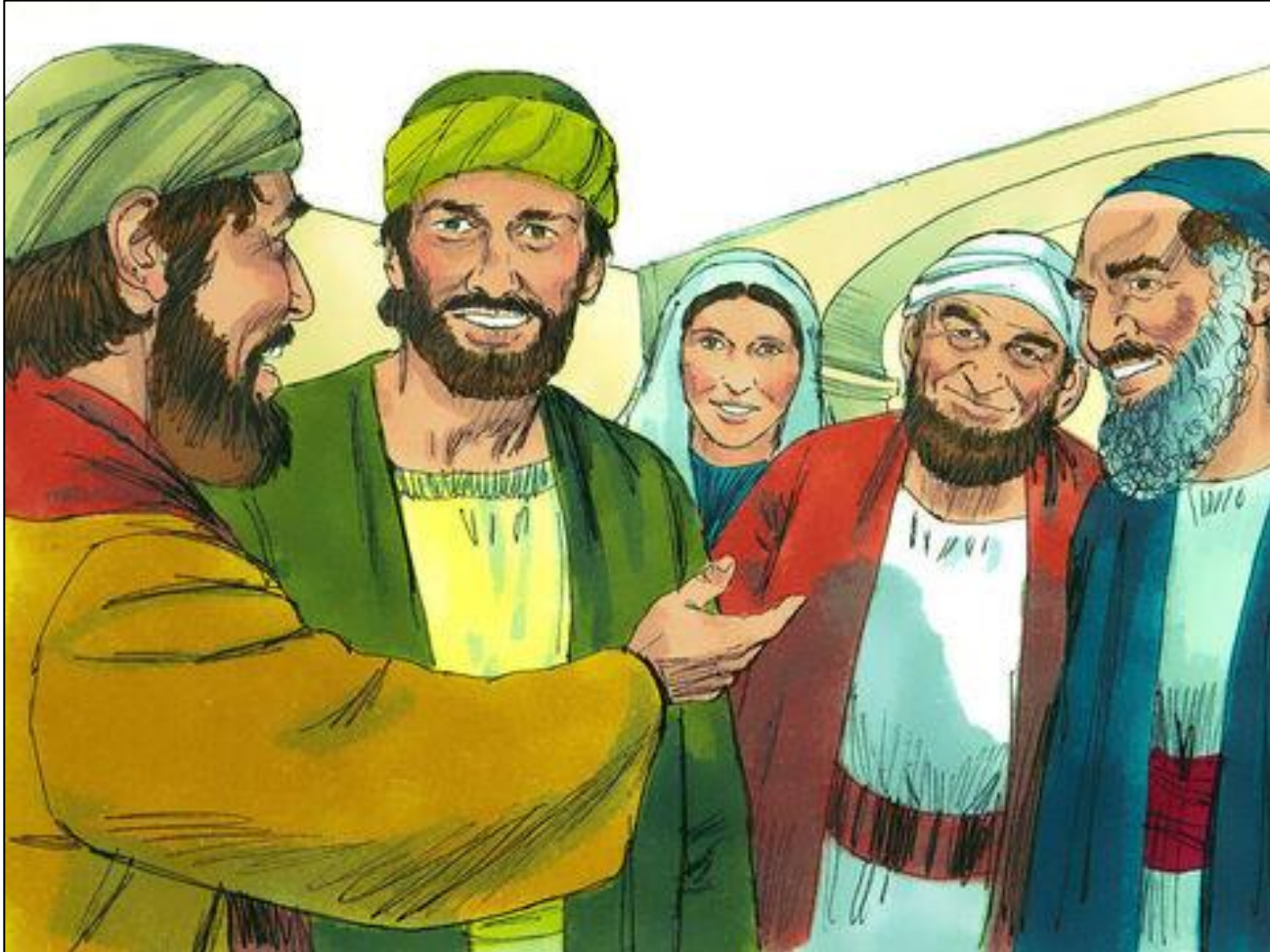


Believed – baptized – filled  
(with the Spirit)  
and fed.

They must have had plenty to  
talk about.

# Meet the family

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. v19



Fellowship is important.

## Beginning his life's work.

At once he began to preach in the synagogues  
that Jesus is the Son of God. v20



He now sees what he has  
never seen before both by  
personal experience and  
from the Scriptures,

And he wants to tell others ...

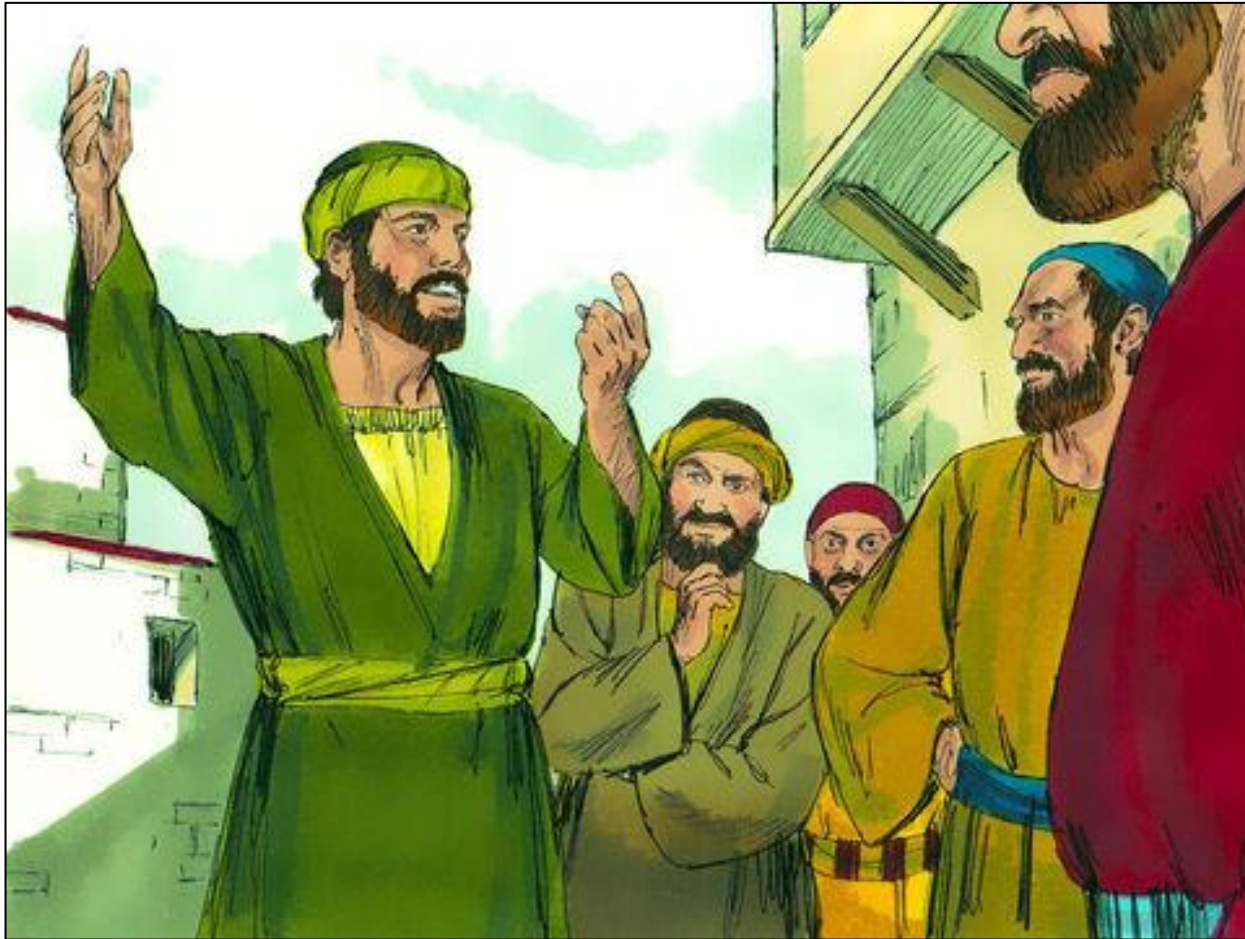
## What has happened? – It can't be the same man!

All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" v21



## More and more powerful

Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. v22

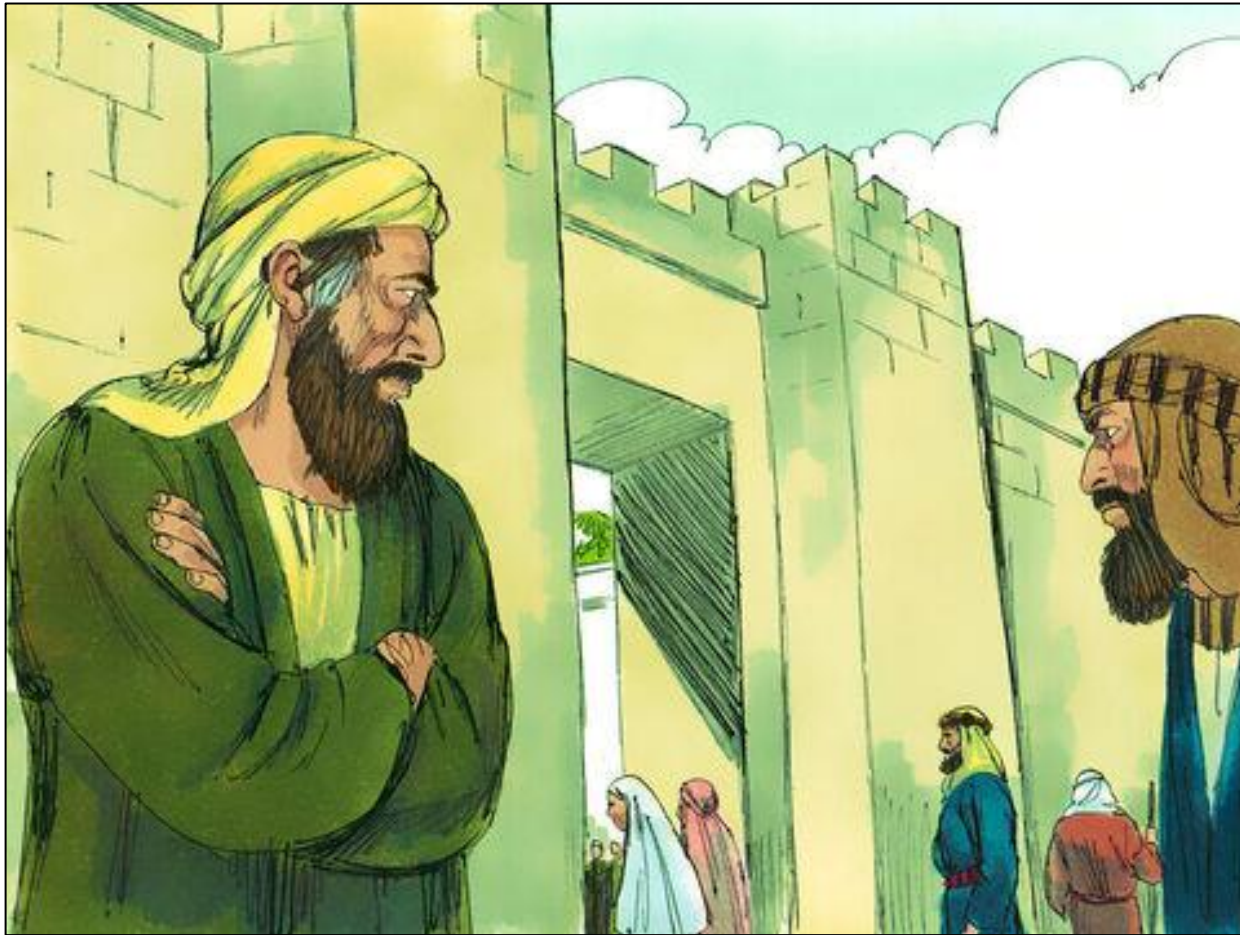


He already knew the OT Bible, but now he understands it, and he can use it to show that Jesus really is the Messiah

# The Jewish authorities show their true colours

After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him v23

Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him.



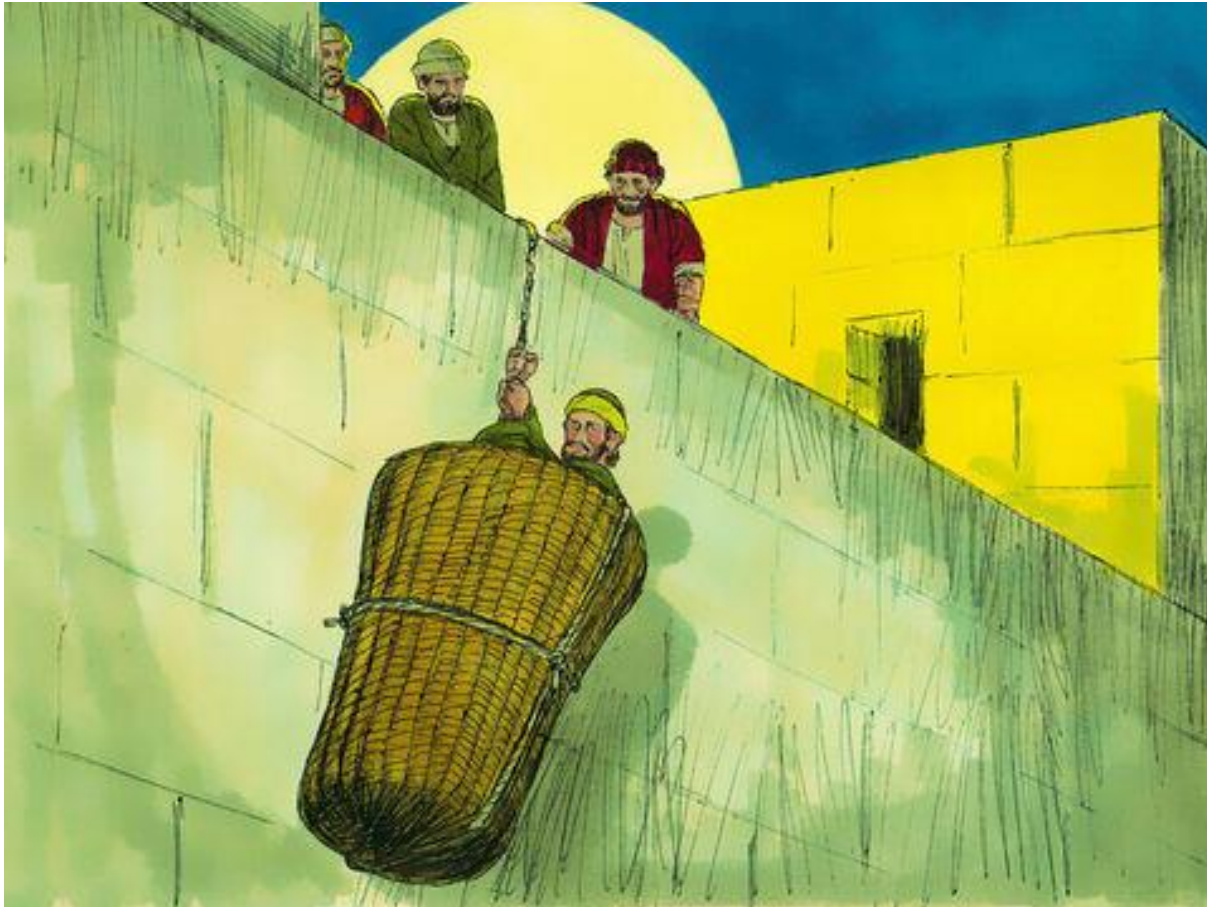
**Many days** probably amounts to about 3 years! Cf. Galatians 1

The term 'Jews' refers the leadership, who as usual feel threatened by Jesus being the Messiah.

Of course, the Messianic believers were Jewish also.

## His followers (disciples)

but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall. v23-25

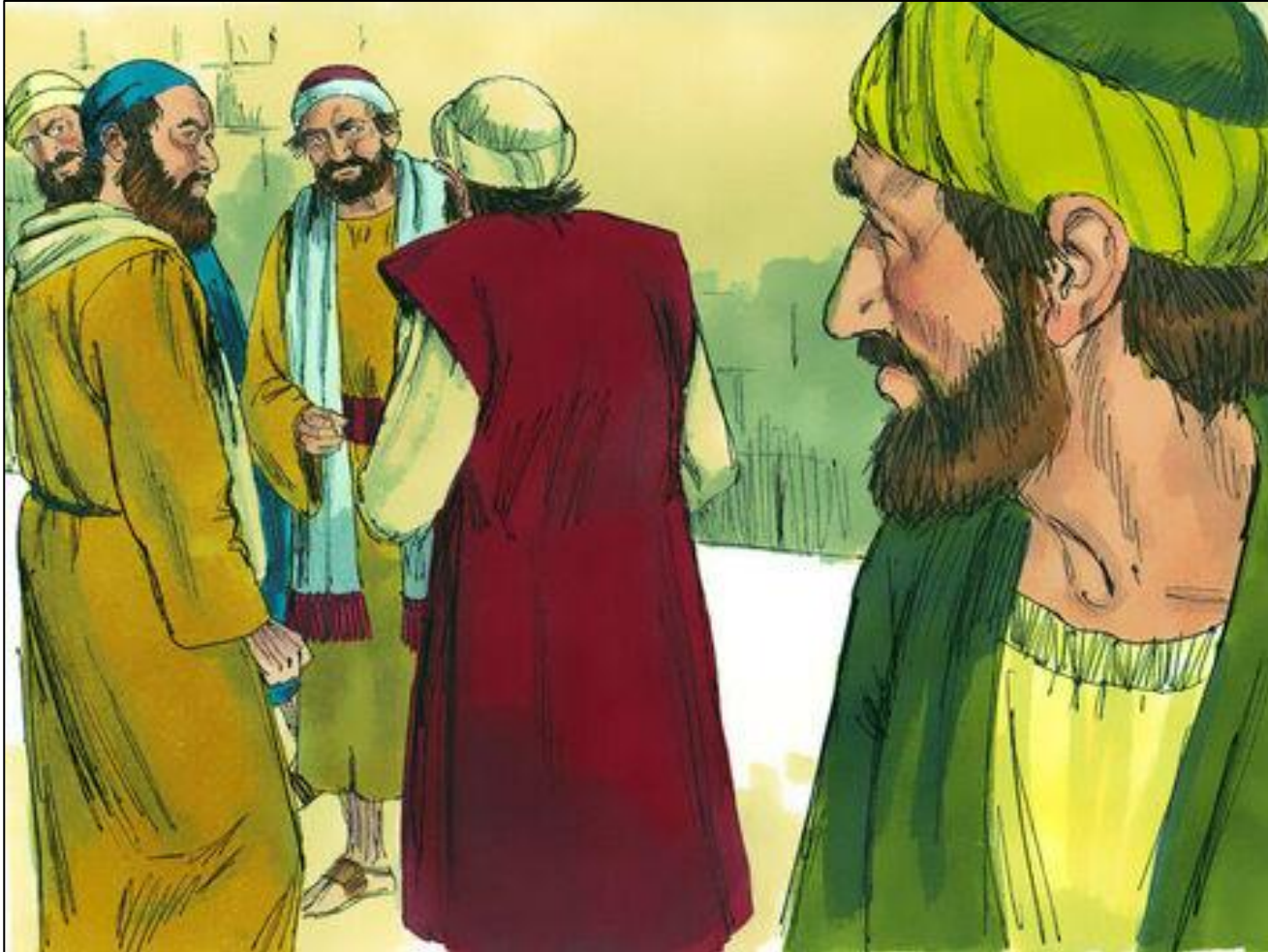


After the period of time, believers who have become Saul's friends recognised Saul's gifts and calling and are called 'his' disciples!

A rather humbling experience.  
*(This kind of thing happened to the spies at Jericho)*

# Sceptical Saints

When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. v26



It could have been a clever trap.

Cf. Jeremiah 13:23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?



## Let us thank God for Barnabas - and those like him!

But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. v27



Barnabas, a well respected leader with a big heart and great vision

His short testimony convinces them.

By their fruit ....

# What an encouragement!

So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. v28



Both for Saul, and the believers.

He was not ashamed to admit he had been wrong, but had now come to know the truth about Jesus.

## More death threats

He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him. v29

This is the same group that had been so hostile to Stephen, only this time Saul is on the other side.

And again, having failed to win their argument, resort to ungodly tactics.



## He'll have to go! – for his own sake

When the brothers learned of this,  
they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. v30



He was sent back home to  
where he came from.



# PEACE

Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord. v31



Saul must have been the cause of a lot of trouble.

But God's plans continue.

# A Damascus Road Experience?



How did you come to believe?

For some, seeing the love and sacrifice of Jesus it seems the most natural thing to give Him your heart and life

For others, it takes a outwardly powerful work of God  
eg. Paul had to arrested (cf. C S Lewis)

For Paul, this experience led to a profound understanding of the theology of salvation:-  
He saw it as a Sovereign work of God by the Spirit revealing Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour



**For by grace you have been  
saved through faith.**

**And this is not your own doing;  
it is the gift of God.**

**Ephesians 2:8**

