

Handout: Acts Lesson 5

In last week's lesson the Church carried the Gospel into Judea and Samaria (8:4-40). This week's lesson begins with the conversion of St. Paul (Saul), introduces the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles, and ends with the persecution of the Church and the death of Herod Agrippa I.

- A. The conversion of Saul (9:1-30)
- B. Peter's Miracles (9:31-43)
- C. Cornelius' Vision (10:1-8)
- D. Peter's Vision (10:9-23)
- E. Peter's Mission to the Gentiles in Caesarea (10:24-43)
- F. The Baptism of the First Gentiles (10:44-49)
- G. Peter's Defense of the Baptism of Gentiles (11:1-18)
- H. The Spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria (11:19-30)
- I. The Persecution of the Church and Death of the Persecutor (12:1-24)

Saul's personal history (Acts 21:39; 22:3-5, 25-29; 23:6, 16, 27; 26:9-11; Phil 3:5):

- Saul was born in Tarsus in the Roman province of Cilicia on the southeastern coast of Asia Minor.
- He was a Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin.
- He was raised in Jerusalem and studied the Law with the great rabbi Gamaliel.
- He had family living in Jerusalem.
- As an agent of the Sanhedrin and the chief priests, he arrested men and women followers of Jesus in their synagogues, in their homes in Jerusalem, and imprisoned them.
- He punished Christians in an attempt to force them to blaspheme.
- He cast votes against Christians he arrested in the Sanhedrin to be put to death.
- He had authority to pursue Christians who had escaped to foreign cities like Damascus.
- He was a Roman citizen.

Acts 9:3-4 On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

The appearance of light is often associated with the presence of God (see Ps 36:9; 56:14; 78:14; 89:16; 97:11; 104:2; Wis 7:26; Is 2:5; 60:19-20; 1 Jn 1:5-7; 1 Pt 2:9; Jam 1:17). The flash of lightning is also a reoccurring feature of theophanies in Scripture (see Ex 19:16; 2 Sam 22:15; Ps 17:14; 76:18; 96:4; 143:6; Ez 1:4, 7, 13; Dan 10:6; Lk 9:29; 10:18; 17:24; 24:4). The repetition of a name in a theophany is not only found in Moses' and Saul's experiences but also in the call of Jacob (Gen 46:2) and Samuel (1 Sam 3:4, 10).

Act 10:34-43 is Peter's fifth kerygmatic address; this speech has the same basic outline as his other proclamations of Jesus as Lord and Savior:

1. Jesus was sent by God and anointed by the Holy Spirit to be Lord and Messiah.
2. He did what was good and healed those in need of physical and spiritual healing.
3. He was put to death by men but arose from the dead on the third day.
4. He appeared to His disciples and commissioned them to preach in His name.
5. Whoever believes in Him and is baptized in His name will receive forgiveness of sins.