



UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE LESSON 7

DISPENSATIONAL CHANGE GOD PREPARES A NEW MESSENGER

Memory Verse: 1 TIMOTHY 1:15

Please memorize the above verse and be prepared to write it out at the end of this lesson.

In the last lesson we read about the stoning of Stephen. This incident was symbolic of Israel's rejection of the risen Messiah and demonstrated the need for a new dispensation. So long as the Kingdom was being offered to Israel the nation had the opportunity to respond, repent and receive. When it became clear that Israel had rejected Christ a second time, a transitional period began as God made preparation for a new dispensation, the "Dispensation of the Grace of God" (Ephesians 3:2).

Salvation was still offered to individual Israelites, but the Messianic Kingdom in which Christ will rule Israel, and through Israel the world, was temporarily set aside.

Just as He once raised up Moses and gave him special revelation concerning Israel under the Law, God now brought a new messenger into view. Saul of Tarsus, later called Paul, is the one through whom God established the Church, the Body of Christ. He is the revealer of truth for the age of grace.

In this lesson we begin to trace the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul.

SAUL'S BACKGROUND

In the following questions we will look at some of the scriptures which give background information on Saul of Tarsus who became the Apostle Paul.

1. (Philippians 3:4-6) Here Paul is describing his life before he received Christ in order to show that, even though a man or woman is successful by human standards that success does not make him right with God. In these verses Paul lists at least seven facts about his early life. Give any four of them.

1. _____ 2. _____
3. _____ 4. _____

2. (Galatians 1:13,14) What did Paul do before he was converted to Christ? _____

How does he describe his former life? _____

3. (Acts 22:3) List any two of the facts about Paul which are given here. _____

Saul of Tarsus was a young man on the way up! He was a Jew born in Tarsus (Acts 22:3). He was also a Roman citizen with all the rights and privileges of the empire.

Saul had the best education available to a Jew of that day. He was brought up in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3), possibly living with his sister (Acts 23:16). He was educated under Gamaliel, one of the most prominent Jewish teachers of the day. He was also a devout man, a member of the Pharisees, and was respected as a religious leader.

Due to his zeal for the Jewish religion, Saul was a hearty persecutor of those who believed in Christ (Acts 22:4).

4. Please read Acts 7. _____ (Check) Here we find Saul during the time of his life when he is still an unbeliever.

(Acts 7:58) What did Saul do when Stephen was stoned to death? _____

5. Please carefully read Acts 8:1-3. _____ (Check)

(vs. 1) What was Saul's attitude towards Stephen? _____

(vs. 1b) What happened at this time? _____

(vs. 3) Describe Saul's activities at this time. _____

6. (Acts 22:4) Here Paul is giving his testimony to a crowd of Jews and refers back to his early life. How does he describe his early actions? _____

7. Please carefully read 1 Timothy 1:12-17. _____ (Check)

(vs. 13) How does Paul describe himself? _____

8. (vs. 15) What had the Lord done for Paul? _____

(vs. 16) What does this verse teach? What lesson do you take from it? (Use your own words.) _____

9. (Eph. 1:7) What has God given to us through the blood of Christ? _____

Saul was a criminal, a murderer in God's eyes. Yet he was completely forgiven through Christ's blood. His life was turned around and God used him for great things.

Part of God's purpose in saving Saul was to show that God will accept anyone who comes to him through the blood of Christ. He will forgive, He will save and He will set them on a good path and use them for great things!

10. Have you been saved by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ? _____ (Yes) _____ (No)

SAUL IS CONVERTED

11. Please carefully read Acts 9 _____ (Check) for the story of Saul's conversion to Christ.
(Acts 9:1,2) What special project was Saul engaged in? _____

12. (Acts 9:3-9) Describe the events which took place as Saul was converted. (Use your own words.) _____

13. Please read Acts 26:15-18. _____ (Check) Here Paul is retelling the story of his conversion before King Agrippa.
He adds some detail which was not included in Acts 9.
(Acts 26:16b) What would Paul be a witness to? _____

14. Please carefully read Acts 26:17,18. _____ (Check)

To whom would Paul be sent? _____

For what purpose was Paul to be sent? _____

15. Now return to the original story in Acts 9. According to Acts 9:7-9, where was Saul taken after his experience on the Damascus Road? _____

16. Read Acts 9:10-19 for the following questions. _____ (Check)

Name the man whom God instructed to go to Saul. _____

Why was this man reluctant to go? _____

17. (Acts 9:15) How does God describe Saul? _____

18. (Acts 9:18,19) What happened to Saul after Ananias had spoken to him? _____

PAUL'S THREE-YEAR MINISTRY IN DAMASCUS

After his conversion Paul spent three years in the city of Damascus preaching to the Jews there. He declared that Christ was the Son of God and their Messiah. Paul also spent much time in the Arabian desert, which lay to the east of Damascus, in meditation and contemplation as he was being taught by God.

19. Read Acts 9:20-22 for the "Reader's Digest" version of Paul's time in Damascus.

(vs. 20) Where did Paul start to preach? _____

What did Paul preach? _____

(vs. 22) Describe in your own words how Paul's preaching affected the Jews in Damascus? _____

20. Please read Galatians 1:11-18. _____ (Check) Paul reflects back on the time he spent in Damascus.

(vs. 11,12) How did Paul receive his message? _____

(vs. 13,14) Describe Saul before his conversion. _____

(vs. 15) How long had God marked him out for service? _____
(For other examples of God's knowledge of us before birth, see Jeremiah 1:5 and Psalm 139:13-16.)

(Gal. 1:17) Instead of consulting with others or seeking out Peter and the Jerusalem Apostles, what did Saul do after his conversion? _____

(vs. 18) How long was it after his conversion before he went to Jerusalem and met with any of the other Apostles? _____

21. (Acts 9:23-25) Describe the events which ended Paul's ministry in Damascus. _____

PAUL VISITS JERUSALEM

22. (Acts 9:26) Describe what happened when Paul came to Jerusalem. _____

In your opinion, how do you think Paul felt at this time? _____

23. (vs. 27) How was Paul's problem finally resolved? _____

24. (Acts 9:28,29) Describe Paul's activities in Jerusalem. _____

25. (Galatians 1:18,19). Name the two Jewish leaders whom Paul met at this time. _____

26. (Galatians 1:21) Where did Paul go after this visit to Jerusalem? _____

27. (Acts 9:29) Here we see why Paul left Jerusalem. Who was attempting to put Paul to death? _____

Note: It was the Greek speaking Jews who had earlier argued with Stephen and falsely accused him (Acts 6:9-15). Back in Acts 6 and 7, Paul was one of them. It is quite possible that back then he had held the robes of some of the very people who now sought his death.

This is an ironic turn of events and it offers a spiritual lesson. Very often when we come to Christ and our lives are changed, our old friends and associates no longer accept us because our values have changed. In some cases they will try to harm us and, at times, we may find it necessary to separate from them.

28. (Acts 9:30) Where was Paul now sent? _____

Tarsus, which was the city of Paul's birth, was also an important city in the Roman province of Cilicia. Syria was the province directly to the east. At that time both provinces were administered together. The combined "regions of Syria and Cilicia" (Gal. 1:21), formed the district of which Tarsus was a major city.

PAUL'S MINISTRY IN TARSUS

29. (Gal. 1:23) Very little is recorded of Paul's ministry in Tarsus and the regions of Syria and Cilicia. How is his activity described? _____

The exact length of Paul's time in Tarsus is not known, although it is a fairly extended period. A number of writers feel that a time of 9 or 10 years is accurate, from approx. 35 AD to 44 AD.

We know from the Galatians reference above that Paul was preaching Christ. It is probable that some of his sufferings, recorded in passages like 2 Cor. 11:23-28, took place during this time. God was also teaching Paul and preparing him for further ministries.

30. The book of 2 Corinthians was written in approx. 56 or 57 AD. The events of 2 Cor. 12 took place 14 years before the writing (2 Cor. 12:2) in about the middle of the Tarsus period. Read 2 Corinthians 12:2-4.

Describe what had happened to Paul? _____

31. Review question: In Acts 26:16b, Christ said that Paul would be a witness to the things which he had seen and

32. Review question: According to Galatians 1:11,12, from where and how did Paul receive the gospel which he preached? _____

33. Please read carefully Ephesians 3:1-3. _____ (Check)

(vs. 2) What was given to Paul. _____

(vs. 3) What was made known to Paul? _____

(vs. 3) And how? _____

34. (Ephesians 3:6) What was this mystery? _____

35. (Ephesians 3:8,9) What special purpose had God prepared Paul for? _____

All the Bible is for our learning and understanding. The Apostle Paul is of special concern for us because he is the man whom God raised up and prepared to preach and reveal the truth for the Body of Christ of which we are a part.

The next lesson is the last in this series. In it we will consider further passages regarding Paul and some of the most important teachings from his epistles.

36. Memory verse. (1 Timothy 1:15) Please write out the memory verse from this lesson in the space below.

Use the space below for any questions or comments:

I would like to be contacted by a minister in my area that can help me better understand God's Word. If checked please include a telephone number _____

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