

TEXT:

¹ But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. ⁴ And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” ⁵ And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” ⁷ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸ Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So, they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

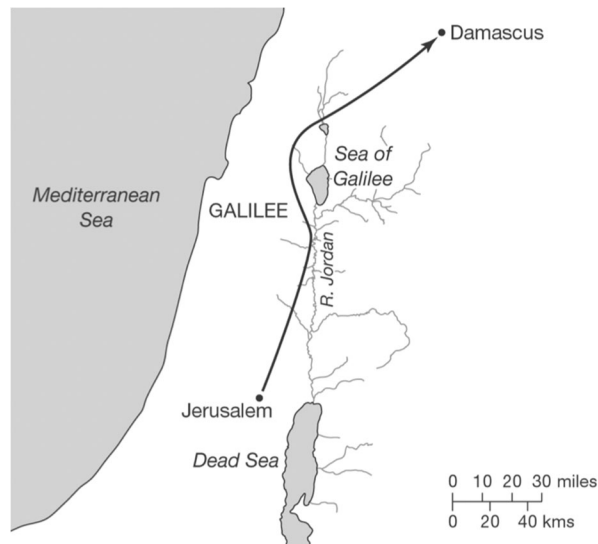
~Acts 9:1–9 (ESV)

LESSON: The Road from the Cross: The Road to Damascus (Part 1): Paul with No Vision

1. We know from Paul’s writings that he was, from his earliest days, a _____ Jew, for whom prayer and meditation would have been a daily reality, and the study of the Scriptures a lifelong _____.
2. Saul came from that part of Judaism—the deep, out-and-out devotion to God and his _____ that characterized the strictest of the _____—where meditation of the kind I have been describing was taught, at least in some circles.
3. _____, which is about 135 miles (217 km.) from Jerusalem, was one of ten self-governing cities in the Decapolis League.
4. He was on his way to act for the glory of God, the glory which he believed was being _____ by these crazy followers of Jesus.
5. The descent from Mt. Hermon to Damascus in the plain goes through a region known for violent _____ storms.
6. Though this flashing light may have had the effects of lightning, however, Paul’s encounter with Jesus was a _____ midday phenomenon.
7. Suddenly Saul’s world turned upside down and inside out. Terror, ruin, shame, awe, horror, glory and terror again swept over him. Years later he would write of seeing ‘the glory of God in the face of Jesus the _____.
8. Saul experiences a _____ (an appearance of Christ) in broad daylight, in which ‘a light from heaven’ surrounds him and he is addressed by the voice of Jesus.

9. Even in this brief passage, the change in Saul—from the opening description (vv. 1–2) to the concluding one (vv. 8–9)—is _____.
10. Saul is described in language that recalls 7:51–52, proposing that he was now ‘the major representative of the attitude condemned by _____.
11. Saul grapples with his dawning realization that his life, though lived in zeal for the one true God even to the point of persecuting the church, has in reality been one of “_____” (1 Tim 1:13).
12. As Saul deeply considers that “why?” and accepts the divine perspective on his actions, his whole spiritual world will be turned _____.
13. In reality, Saul was not _____ God, he was _____ him.
14. When Saul heard the voice, he immediately _____ to the ground.
15. The divine voice addressed him _____, using his Hebrew name twice (‘Saul, Saul’), and asking a revealing question (‘why are you persecuting me?’).
16. The double utterance of Saul’s name suggests _____ on the part of Jesus.
17. The ascended Christ identifies himself and repeats the charge of _____ with the clear declaration, ‘*I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting*’.
18. Saul had been persecuting the Lord’s disciples (9:1), with the understanding that Jesus was a treacherous _____ and a _____.
19. Saul’s blindness is not a _____ nor an indication of divine _____.
20. The blindness represents an acted _____ showing Saul the spiritual _____ and _____ of his pre-Christian condition.
21. Serving God cannot be simply a matter of _____, it must be a matter of _____, and the truth was Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah of Israel, but radically _____ than expected.
22. The spiritual significance of a Jewish rabbi being physically blinded by the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ leads to light shining in Saul’s _____ heart.
23. The Scriptures that Saul has studied all of his young life, the Law of Moses and the Prophets had come true, _____ through the words and actions of Jesus of Nazareth.
24. In one sense, the Law and the Prophets had been _____ and put back together in a totally _____ way.

25. Immediately Jesus issues a divine demand that requires Saul's _____ and _____.
26. In the city he will learn what he *must do* to fulfill God's _____.
27. We call this event a ' _____', but it was more like a Hurricane Harvey, a volcanic eruption, a thunderstorm, and a tsunami all coming together.
28. If the death and _____ of Jesus is the hinge on which the great door of history swung open at last, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus was the moment when all the ancient _____ of God gathered themselves up, rolled themselves into a ball, and came crashing through the now open door of Saul's _____ and then out into the _____ beyond.



For Our Reflection:

1. Most of us, if not all, grew up in a Christian culture, where even if the gospel was not believed, it was respected, how do you think it was for Saul for whom Jesus was contrary to everything he had been taught as a Jew and especially as a Pharisee?
2. What do you imagine was Saul's emotional state when he discovered that he was actually fighting God in persecuting the Church.
3. How would you describe the moment when you discovered who Jesus Christ really is?