

"On the Way" 365 Bible Reading Plan**ACTS 9****Acts 9**

The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized at the close of Acts 8, and the Spirit of the Lord took Philip to his next assignment, and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing. The mood shifts in Acts 9:1 from a scene of rejoicing to one of rage as Saul of Tarsus is threatening the church of Jesus, which was still all Jewish at this point. He had imprisoned many and oversaw their death sentence, and now he would export his campaign of terror to the north. He went to the high priest and secured letters to take to the rulers of the synagogues in Syria. He would take those prisoners who were practicing **the Way** and bring them back to Jerusalem to stand trial before the Sanhedrin.

As he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." (Acts 9:3-5)

As Saul made his way to Damascus, Syria, the Lord Jesus appeared to him and blinded him with the glory of God Himself and spoke to Paul and told him He was ***"Jesus, the one from Nazareth (see Acts 22:8) whom you are persecuting."*** The word for **persecute** is the word for

pursue, hunt down, like a hunter looking for prey diligently to kill it. The word is also in the *present tense*, which means it was on ongoing operation and, by the words used, relentless pursuit. Notice the Lord Jesus said, you are **persecuting me**. As far as we know, Saul of Tarsus never laid a hand on Jesus, yet Jesus said, You are persecuting me. In effect, when Saul or anyone persecutes the bride of Christ, the church, they are laying hands on Jesus. This is said of the Jewish people during the days of the great tribulation and here about the church or Jesus, made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Saul repented then and there and became a follower of Jesus of Nazareth. He was so blinded by the light that he had to be led to his destination in Damascus, where God sent a man named Ananias to pray for him, lay hands on him for healing, and for his sight to be restored. When Ananias prayed for him, Saul received his sight, and the scriptures say, "that something like scales fell from his eyes and he received his sight and was filled with the Holy Spirit and was immediately baptized." Like the Ethiopian, Saul already knew the meaning of baptism and wanted to quickly show his identification with a new message and a new master. After a short preaching and testimony sharing with those there and in Jerusalem, Saul was sent away to his home and then, more than likely spent the next three years in Arabia being schooled by the Lord.

Prayer and Action Steps

Father, thank You for saving Saul of Tarsus. Thank You that no one is out of Your reach. Thank You for saving and setting apart for service even the most wicked among us and use us for Your purposes and for Your glory. Amen