

Message Five

**The Heavenly Vision
and Vanquishing Conversion
of the Apostle Paul**

Scripture Reading: Acts 9:1-19; 22:6-16; 26:13-19

I. The heavenly vision of Paul's completing ministry must be seen by us, and this vision must be renewed in us day by day—Acts 26:19; Eph. 1:17; Prov. 29:18a:

- A. This vision of the age will keep us living in God's presence; this vision will uphold us, control us, and become our divine commission to meet the need of this age—Jer. 1:7-10, 18-19; Isa. 6:1-8; Acts 26:16-19.
- B. When we see a vision of God's plan and have been converted from everything to Christ Himself, He will be the inner operating God to us, energizing us to carry out His plan—Gal. 1:15-16; Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 15:10; Phil. 2:13; cf. Jer. 1:1, 4-10, 18-19.
- C. Eventually, the opposing Saul became, in his victorious ministry of the gospel, Christ's vanquished captive in the triumphal procession celebrating Christ's victory over all His enemies; the Lord's perfecting of His chosen vessels in such a way is excellent and marvelous—Acts 26:14; 2 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:7-12.

II. While Saul of Tarsus was on the way to Damascus, a heavenly vision came to him, and this vision revolutionized him—Acts 9:1-19; 22:6-16; 26:13-19:

- A. After he saw the vision, he became blind, unable to see anything, and impotent, unable to do anything; a blessed blindness comes upon those who are met by the heavenly vision:
 - 1. After this blindness comes upon us, there will be the inner anointing and the inner shining, the inner enlightening; we, who were once God's enemies, will be brought into the feast of the New Testament ministry to be saved in Christ's life—v. 14; Rom. 5:10; 1 Cor. 5:8; cf. 2 Kings 6:18-23.
 - 2. The inner vision will increase more and more and will revolutionize the way that we serve the Lord; this vision will control us to do everything by the Spirit, in our spirit, and in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body—Gal. 5:25; Phil. 3:3; Rom. 1:9; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27.
- B. For three days Saul did not see anything, and he did not eat or drink anything; all he could do was pray—Acts 9:9, 11:

Message Five (continuation)

1. Under the inspiration of the essential Spirit, his only interest was to pray in order to know the significance of what he had seen and heard—22:14-15.
 2. It is likely that as Saul was praying, vision after vision and revelation after revelation came to him concerning Christ as the embodiment of God, the mystery of God, and the church as the Body of Christ, the mystery of Christ—Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4; 5:32.
 3. Each crucial point of Paul's vision recorded in Acts 9 should not merely be a teaching to us but a vision that we see on the heavenly "television."
- C. In our reading of Acts 9 we need to see the heavenly vision concerning three items—"Me" (v. 4), "Jesus" (v. 5), and the "chosen vessel" (v. 15).

III. "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"—v. 4:

- A. This is a corporate "Me," comprising Jesus the Lord and all His believers; He is the Head, and we are His Body as one person, one new man—Eph. 2:15; Col. 3:10-11.
- B. Saul (who is also Paul) began to see that the Lord Jesus and His believers are one great person—the wonderful "Me"; to him this was a unique revelation in the entire universe—Acts 13:9a; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 3:3-4; 5:32.
- C. Paul is the only writer of the New Testament to use the term *the Body of Christ*; he placed great emphasis on the Body because at the time of his conversion he heard a message concerning the corporate "Me," a message concerning the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:22-23; 2:16; 4:4, 16.
- D. Immediately after Saul was saved, the Lord began to educate him concerning the Body of Christ; those who see that they are members of the Body treasure the Body and honor the other members—Acts 9:6, 17-18, 24-25; 1 Cor. 12:23-24; 16:18.

IV. "Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute"—Acts 9:5:

- A. *Lord* here equals the word *Jehovah* in Hebrew—Exo. 3:14-15; John 8:58.
- B. The name *Jesus* embodies the full message of the gospel; Paul saw that Jesus is Jehovah the Savior and that as the One who is now in the heavens, He has passed through the process of incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, and ascension

Message Five (continuation)

for the producing and building up of the Body of Christ—Rom. 9:5; Eph. 1:19-23.

- C. Paul saw that Jesus is the very God, Jehovah, who has been processed and consummated with the divine and human elements to be the ascended Lord, the Head of the Body, and the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, to be dispensed into all His members—Rom. 10:12-13; Col. 1:18a; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Acts 16:7; Phil. 1:19.
- D. Paul saw that the center of the universe is that Christ is in us and we are in Christ; he saw that God’s plan is both to reveal Christ in us as life so that we may live Christ and to put us into Christ so that we may be conformed to His image and built up with others to be His living Body for His corporate expression—Gal. 1:15-16; 2:20; 4:19; Rom. 8:28-29; 12:1-5; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:16-19.

V. “This man is a chosen vessel to Me”—Acts 9:15:

- A. God’s intention in saving Saul of Tarsus was to fill him with Himself and thereby make him an outstanding vessel—Col. 1:25; Eph. 3:8-9.
- B. Paul’s writings develop the spiritual significance of the word *vessel*:
 - 1. Paul saw that man is a tripartite vessel to contain and be filled with Christ as life for the building up of the Body of Christ—Gen. 2:7; 1 Thes. 5:23-24; Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:20-21; cf. 2 Kings 4:1-6; Jer. 48:11.
 - 2. The Body of Christ is God’s great corporate vessel to contain Him and be filled with Him for His expression—Eph. 3:16-19.
- C. As God’s chosen vessel, Paul was converted from everything to Christ Himself—converted to call on His name, to suffer on behalf of His name, and to bear His name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel—Acts 9:14-16; 22:16.

VI. The central vision of the apostle Paul’s completing ministry is God in us as our contents (“vessel”), Christ as the mystery of God (“Jesus”), and the church as the mystery of Christ (“Me”)—9:4-5, 15:

- A. Paul’s preaching in Acts and his writing in his Epistles are a detailed description of the heavenly vision seen by him—26:16; 22:15; Eph. 3:3-6.

- B. The Lord appeared to Paul to appoint him as a minister and a witness both of the things in which Paul had seen Him and of the things in which He would appear to Paul—Acts 26:16; cf. 1:8; 23:11; 20:20, 31.
- C. In all the visions that Paul saw, he saw Christ; the things in which we have seen Christ and the things in which He will appear to us are the things that we must minister to others—Gal. 1:15-16; Acts 22:14-15.

VII. The Lord's recovery today is the recovery of the central vision of Paul's completing ministry—26:13-19; Col. 1:25; Eph. 5:32.