

Acts 9.19-31

Advent of an Apostle

ADVENT – Latin word ‘COME’ > ref. Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ
Christmas > CAME: MIGHTY God veiled as HELPLESS Babe

Acts > COMING to His Church – by PERSON and POWER of Holy Spirit
Also comes by APOSTLES – Dozen or So CHRIST-Appointed Men

CAME to Last Apostle > DAMASCUS Rd: Saul His Enemy > Paul His Apostle
By the WORDS & WITNESS of this AMBASSADOR > Jesus COMES Today

Paul the Apostle > FAST STARTER > Jumps from the PRAM to the PULPIT
TEXT > his Ministry in 2 Different Churches DAMASCUS and JERUSALEM

Luke’s Purpose > DESCRIBE Ministry – Characteristics and Challenges
NOT EXACT Chronological Sequence / Although LUKE Accurate Historian
CHRONOLOGY > Galatians 1 > 3 YEARS between Damascus & Jerusalem

1. Humble

TODAY’S Church > Leaders on ELEVATED Platforms, Titles, Robes, Honor
APOSTLES > Despised, Attacked, Refugees, and Martyrs
IF Paul IS GREAT > NOBODY seems to NOTICE....Yet

a. Travels > Fallen FROM his HIGH HORSE > No ROYAL SEDAN CHAIR

ENTERED Damascus: v. 8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened
his eyes he could see nothing. So they *led him by the hand into Damascus*.

UNCEREMONIOUS DEPARTURE from Damascus: v. 25 his followers took
him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.

9.1 Saul LEAVES Jerusalem to ARREST FUGITIVE Christians

9.30 Paul LEAVES Jerusalem as a FUGITIVE Christian

APOSTLE of JESUS > Like Him who made HUMBLE ADVENT JOURNEY

Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself...
Philippians 2.5-8

b. Testimony

vs. 20,21 At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?"

PREACHING > Right OUT of the STARTING BLOCKS > Paul Instructs

Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands
UNUSUAL CALLING & COMMISSION > Jesus Himself LAID HANDS On
1 Timothy 5.22

TEACHERS and STUDENTS > KEEP Going with HARD WORK of STUDY
Man God used MOST to Give Us OT? Moses – HIGHLY Educated in Egypt

Man God used MOST to Give Us NT? Paul – GREAT SCHOLAR of ISRAEL

Perhaps NEW BELIEVER Not Ready – Exposition, Interpretation, Preaching
SHOULD HEAR > Praise and Testimony of GOD'S SAVING GRACE
POWER of Testimony > Fresh, Unpolished, Unprofessional > No 3 P's!

SONG NOT 'I did it MY WAY' but 'AMAZING GRACE' Saved EVEN ME!

Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because *I acted in ignorance* and unbelief. 1 Timothy 1.13

We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.
2 Corinthians 4.5

NOT Easy to ADMIT Wrong: Terribly Wrong >> KILLING followers of Jesus
HUMBLE PREACHING = CHRIST-EXALTING PREACHING!

For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it...But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem...I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." And they praised God because of me. Galatians 1.13-24

THREE Year INTERVAL Between – Damascus and visit to JERUSALEM
Paul's 'SEMINARY TRAINING' – See JESUS as KEY to OPEN Scriptures

c. Troubles > Saul knew ALL ABOUT Trouble – MADE Lots of IT!

Apostolic CALLING > WARNING that TROUBLE is AHEAD

v. 16 Jesus: "I will show him how much *he must suffer for my name.*"

MET with SUSPICION in JERUSALEM

v. 26 When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.

Great PLOY?? > WOLF dressed like SHEEP, or Perhaps SHEPHERD
People in Jerusalem > MORE Cautious > TASTED his FURY and PAIN

SABOTAGE in DAMASCUS

v. 23,24 After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him, but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him.

SENT AWAY to SAVE HIS LIFE

vs. 28-30 in Jerusalem... they tried to kill him. When the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

Paul tells story to KING AGRIPPA

I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me.

Acts 26.19-21

PAUL told New Believers on First Mission Journey

...strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" Acts 14.22

NO PAINLESS, PROBLEM FREE Salvation > KINGDOM forged in BLOOD
Perfect Health – Limitless Prosperity – Deliverance from Pain? Yes! HEAVEN

Most HUMBLE of ALL > Great Lord Jesus Christ

Jesus: Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Matthew 20.26-28

PARADOX of KINGDOM of God: HUMILITY is Pathway to GREATNESS

2. Bold

a. Message > Words of SHOCK and SCANDAL

v. 20 At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

FEW Places in World phrase "Jesus is the SON of GOD" Commonly HEARD
MOST Places Sounds SHOCKING and SCANDALOUS > Jewish Synagogue!

Some Christians Today AFRAID to Make this CLAIM > Jesus is SON of GOD

SON of GOD > Occurs ONCE in Acts > Paul uses 15 times in his LETTERS

ISLAMIC Context > KORAN says NOT!!! Crass Idea – God has Sex w/ Mary
Part of TEACHING TRUTH means to CLARIFY what we DO NOT Mean

JEWISH Context > National CREED for over 1000 years – SHEMA

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Deuteronomy 6.4

Then JESUS of NAZARETH dared to INCLUDE self in the HOLY ONENESS

"I and the Father are one." Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him...

"...for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." John 10.30,33

Jesus: "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but *he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.* John 5.17-18

Paul 1st Sermon in Synagogue in Damascus > PEACEFUL, CONCILIATORY IMMEDIATELY PROVES > 'I am NOT ASHAMED of the Gospel'

Gospel of Mark > Sent into ROMAN WORLD of Many gods and Religions
The beginning of the gospel about *Jesus Christ, the Son of God.* Mark 1.1

UGANDA – Clerical Collar, Church Vehicle > MUSLIM Soldier, BIG GUN
 $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ --- Showed ANOTHER Math Equation – $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$

Ask Muslims: Do YOU Believe 'God is GREAT'? >>> Allah AKHBAHR!!
GREATER than Your UNDERSTANDING?! Me TOO! > Father, Son, Spirit!

b. Manner

vs. 27,28 ...in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.

FACE Red – FINGER Pointing – NOSTRILS Flaring – VOICE Shouting??
Maybe SOMETIMES > NOT Paul's Goal > Argued NOT Argumentative

Some CULTURES > Soon as RAISE your VOICE you LOST ARGUMENT

...speaking the truth in love...

Ephesians 4.15

SHORT Phrase of Paul's Letter > EASY to PREACH > HARD to PRACTICE

Remember when you TELL NEIGHBORS 'Jesus is God' this Christmas >

The Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth
2 Timothy 2.24-25

Some men...were teaching..."Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them.
Acts 15.1-2

Paul in Corinth: Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.
Acts 18.4

BOLD Personality?? Probably NOT > Describes PREACHING in CORINTH

I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God...I came to you in *weakness and fear, and with much trembling*.
1 Corinthians 2.1,3

If Paul was BOLD was because GOD MADE HIM BOLD
Not a SELF-MADE Man but a GOD-MADE Man

I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified...My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power
1 Corinthians 2.2,4

When was the last time you begged for the grace to declare Christ's Name more boldly?
Dennis Johnson

MAY God make YOU a Christmas PRESENT > MESSENGER of Life in Jesus

3. Persuasive

a. Christ Crucified > NEW Understanding of SUFFERING MESSIAH

v. 22 Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

SAUL of Tarsus – Christ Crucified STUMBLING BLOCK > OXYMORON
Jesus: FALSE Messiah CURSED by God > Messiah: CROWN NOT CROSS

If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree...*anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse.* Deuteronomy 21.22-23

CROSS Proves Jesus of Nazareth NOT CHRIST > CRIMINAL Not KING!

Risen LORD Showed Paul > MEANING of Cross > Jesus DIED FOR US

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5.21

Messiah WAS CURSED > Because He Carried our SINS > SUBSTITUTE

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. Galatians 3.13-14

b. Church Community > Saul saved PERSONALLY, Not PRIVATELY

PERSUASIVE Force of TRUTH > TRUTH Made FLESH in CHURCH

MESSAGE of Christmas: WORD of God in Mortal HUMAN FLESH
The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1.14

This JESUS CanNOT be SEEN Today > REIGNS in HEAVEN

Seen in FOLLOWERS: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13.34-35

GLORY, GRACE, TRUTH of Jesus clearly seen in LOVING COMMUNITY

Two Men in STORY > Demonstrated that LOVE to NEWBIE Named Saul Scary, Fire-Breathing, Wild Man – Came to KILL Them – NOW BROTHER

UNDERSTANDABLE Question of Believers in DAMASCUS

v. 21 All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?"

RESPECTED LEADER – Ananias: 'HE'S WITH ME!' You can TRUST Me

SAME Concern > GREATER REASON in Jerusalem: FELT Paul's FURY

vs. 26-28 When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord...

Luke Shifts Narrative Off Paul: 10 yrs later Barnabas brings him to Antioch

If was NO RESPONSIBLE Ananias > Then NO UNFORGETTABLE Paul
NO Encourager named Barnabas > NO Evangelist Named Paul

True conversion always issues in church membership. It is not only that converts must join the Christian community, but that the Christian community must welcome converts, especially those from different religious, ethnic, or social background. There is an urgent need for modern Ananiases and Barnabases who overcome their scruples and hesitations, and take the initiative to befriend newcomers. John Stott

ACTS > Church in Community > Ministry in Teams

NONE of the EARLY CHURCHES were led by ONE MAN

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church Acts 14.23

RECENT Days > Church News in USA Grim > Big Churches, Big Pastors
Reminder > Weakness of Men, SINNERS, Need Accountability, TEAM

I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost sinner, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. 1 Timothy 1.16

v. 31 Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

ONE Church > Gathered in DIFFERENT Regions // FIVE Characteristics

PEACE – STRENGTH – ENCOURAGEMENT – GROWTH – GODLINESS

SOME Say you NEED Persecution to GROW > NEED Jesus to GROW!

Christmas > Bring Blessing of Jesus > Humble, Bold, Persuasive in His Name

Acts 9:19-31

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. 20 At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. 21 All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" 22 Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

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