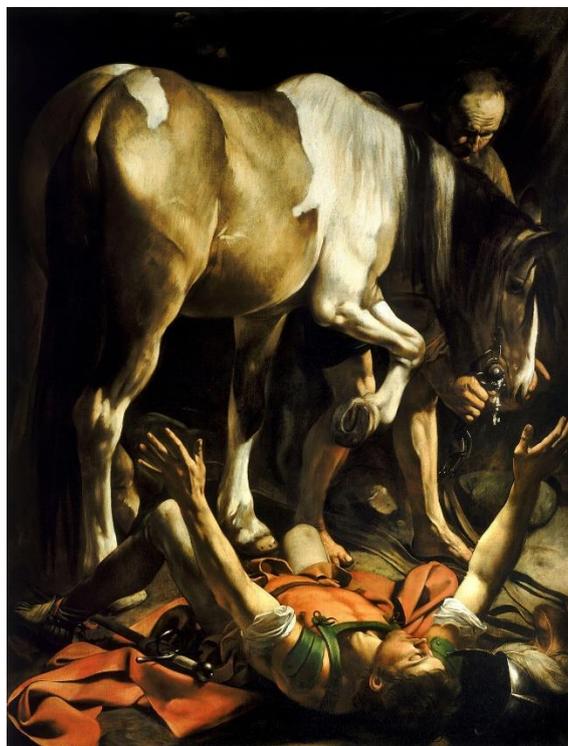


Presentation 5—Acts 9.1-11.18

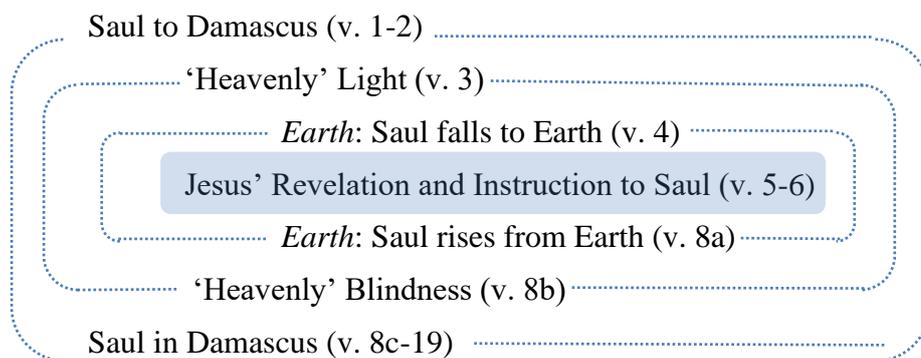
Saul and Peter



Paul's Conversion on the Way to Damascus, Caravaggio (1601)
St Maria del Popolo (Public Domain)

- Acts 9.1-19—Luke returns to the story of Saul, *en route* to Damascus to capture people of “The Way”. Saul’s encounter with God, who surrounds Saul with astral light, recognises the heavenly voice of the Ascended Jesus. Is led to Damascus to Ananias who brings Saul to enlightenment. This brings Saul to Baptism and “food”.

Luke’s literary pattern of Acts 9.1-19



- Acts 9.20-30—Saul preaches and meets opposition.

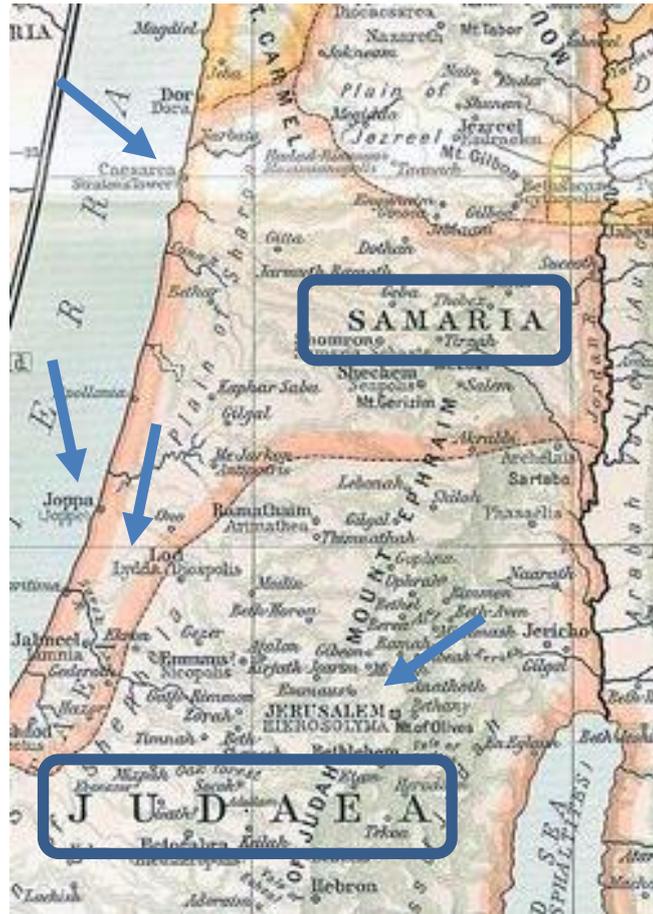


Roman Processional Arch in “Straight Street”, Damascus, Syria
© Michael Trainor

- Acts 9.31—*Summary*: Growth of the Jesus movement in Judea, Galilee and Samaria: “Meanwhile the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers” (NRSV).
- Acts 9.32-43—*Peter’s ministry of Healing*: Peter heals in Lydda and Joppa, echoing the ministry of Jesus in the Gospel, and resides with Simon a tanner. Peter is in a situation of contamination and impurity. John Pilch comments:

Peter apparently saw no contradiction between associating with this unclean fellow-member of the house of Israel, yet refusing to eat unclean food. Worse, Peter was about to discover that while he associated with an unclean fellow-member of the house of Israel, he was still unwilling to associate with non-Israelites who believed in Jesus because non-Israelites were unclean people (see Gal 2:11-14). Only a trance experience of divine provenance could bring such a ‘believer’ as Peter to his senses.¹

¹ John Pilch, *Visions and Healing in the Acts of the Apostles: How the Early Believers Experienced God* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), p. p. 89.



First Century Israel, showing Judaea, Samaria and Jerusalem, Lydda, Joppa and Caesarea (Public Domain)

- Acts 10.1-48—*Peter’s ministry of Confirmation*. Peter’s perplexing vision over what he regards as impure and unclean. Peter goes to Caesarea, enters into a Centurion’s house and affirms the faith of Cornelius’ household, baptises them, after being affirmed by the Holy Spirit. This becomes a definitive moment of openness and incorporation into the Jesus movement.
- Acts 11.1-18—*Peter meets the Jerusalem leadership*. Peter explains the reason for his action with the Gentile Roman household in Caesarea. Peter acknowledges that the initiative is from God. “Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life” (11.18 NRSV)

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION & CONVERSATION

- In Luke's story in Acts here, Saul takes a 180-degree change in his life. Has this ever happened to you? What were the circumstances?
- Peter, too, also has a "conversion". Those whom he judged as impure, unclean and unworthy of God he discovers are already open with God and God is with them. Have you ever had the experience of pre-judging a situation or another person to discover later that there was "more to the story" and you came to a different position?
- What are the implications for a Church or parish that emerge from this section of Acts that suggests an openness to change, hospitality and inclusivity?

IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT PRESENTATION

- The next session will focus on Acts 11.19-14.28. In preparation for this session, spend time with this section of the *Acts of the Apostles*.

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