



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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## Acts 9:10-20 New International Version August 20, 2017

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, August 20, 2017**, is from **Acts 9:10-20**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

**(Acts 9:10) In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered.**

After approving the murder of Stephen in Jerusalem, Saul was so enraged he "breathed out murderous threats" against Christians (Acts 9:1). Saul so hated Christianity and Christians that he sought permission from the Sanhedrin to persecute and imprison any Christians he might find in the synagogues in Damascus. On the way to Damascus, the Lord Jesus appeared and spoke to him in a bright light that blinded him. Saul was led blind to Damascus where he prayed and fasted for three days. Toward the end of these three days, the Lord Jesus appeared to and spoke to Ananias in a vision. Later in the Book of Acts, Saul/Paul described Ananias: "A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there" (Acts 22:12). In the Bible, God sometimes spoke to prophets and others using visions or dreams that would enable them to see the future. In a similar way, Peter would have a vision on a rooftop before he went to share the good news of Jesus with a Gentile.

**(Acts 9:11) The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.**

Judas was probably a respectable Jew in Damascus that Paul might have known. Straight Street is said to have run East and West through Damascus. Tarsus was an important city in Cilicia known for its higher learning in Greek philosophy and

literature. The Lord Jesus told Ananias that Saul was praying, but the Lord Jesus did not say that he was sending him to Saul because he was praying; rather, that was how Ananias would find Saul and be convinced that his vision was truly from the Lord.

**(Acts 9:12) In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”**

The Lord Jesus also gave Saul a vision while he was praying that enabled him to learn how his sight would be restored. During his three days of fasting and prayer, Saul probably spent much time rethinking the teachings and ministry of the Lord Jesus and the type of people believers became as Christians. He probably also spent much time confessing his sins, repenting for his murderous thoughts and deeds, and committing himself to doing God’s will instead of his own selfish, unloving will. God probably helped him use his reason and knowledge of the Old Testament to come to believe in Jesus as his Lord and Savior. At the appropriate time, Saul would meet Ananias and be healed. In this way, he would also be reassured of the Lord’s acceptance and forgiveness. Later, he would learn of Jesus’ plans for him and change his name to Paul.

**(Acts 9:13) “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem.**

Ananias appropriately told the Lord what he thought about Saul based upon the reports he had heard about him. He did not know why the Lord Jesus would want to restore Saul’s sight, because Saul was doing so much evil to His people. Notice: Ananias called Christians “your holy people.” Christians are holy; consecrated to God. Saul’s unholy reputation had preceded him; so, he was a person to be avoided by all Christians. Later in Jerusalem, Saul/Paul was avoided by Christians until Barnabas endorsed Paul’s conversion and preaching in Damascus,

**(Acts 9:14) And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”**

Perhaps immediately after Saul had received the commission he requested, Christian messengers or letters had been sent to the Christians in Damascus warning them of his coming. Notice: every murderous and hateful act that Saul perpetrated on Christians was approved and endorsed by the chief priests in Jerusalem, who had crucified Jesus Christ and approved the stoning of Stephen. Saul was acting under their authority and in their name.

**(Acts 9:15) But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.**

Rather than the Lord Jesus sending Ananias to Saul without giving him a reason, the Lord Jesus explained that He had chosen Saul to be an instrument or vessel of His. As an instrument, Saul would be as a bell of freedom in the hand of Jesus, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to kings, Gentiles, and Jews (to all people). Saul's relationship with Jesus would be as close as the handle of a bell in the palm of Christ's hand. Indeed, Saul would also be filled with the Holy Spirit and Christ would indwell him. Throughout the rest of the Book of Acts, we see Saul/Paul fulfilling Jesus' words to Ananias.

**(Acts 9:16) I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”**

Paul's suffering was not Jesus' further punishment on earth for Paul's previous sins. As Saul, Paul had promoted the persecution of Christians among the Jewish leadership and the Jews in Jerusalem that spread to other parts of Judea and Samaria, even to the city of Rome itself. Paul could not turn back the clock and erase the historical and future consequences of his previous sins. He had so enraged and inflamed so many important Jews against Christians that he had no power as a Christian to change their thinking: a change in their thinking would require a miracle of Jesus. He would suffer for the name of Jesus Christ for the rest of his life, but Paul always courageously preached the good news of forgiveness for and freedom from sin through faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

**(Acts 9:17) Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”**

Ananias immediately obeyed the Lord and went to the house he saw in his vision. When he placed his hands on Saul, he called Saul his brother, “Brother Saul.” Ananias fully accepted him as a fellow Christian, because he knew Saul had seen the Lord, because he knew Saul had been praying, and because Jesus had told him that Saul would be His chosen instrument. Ananias also gave Saul assurance by gently placing his hands upon him and telling him that Jesus had sent him. Placing his hands on Saul was a sign of commissioning directly from Jesus, similar to the time the apostles laid their hands on new deacons in the church. Ananias also encouraged Saul by telling him that he had indeed met the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, though those traveling with Saul

had not seen Jesus. Through Ananias, the Lord gave Saul two gifts at that time: the gift of sight and the gift of the Holy Spirit that filled him.

**(Acts 9:18) Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized,**

After regaining his sight, Saul immediately and publicly joined the Christian Church and was baptized. Saul had come to believe after meeting Jesus and during his three days of praying: he was assured of God's forgiveness and Jesus' acceptance when Jesus sent Ananias to him. His baptism was the beginning of Paul's lifetime of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Earlier, the Ethiopian eunuch wanted to be baptized immediately after he believed and he and Philip saw enough water on a desert road.

**(Acts 9:19) and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.**

Since Paul had not eaten for three days, after his baptism, he began to eat and his strength was restored. Paul then spent several days with the disciples in Damascus that probably included a great deal of prayer, study of the Old Testament and fulfilled prophecies about the Messiah, and much discussion about the true words of Jesus Christ and His ministry. Paul had to completely change his thinking and way of life in order to teach others effectively about Jesus and lead them to faith in the Messiah.

**(Acts 9:20) At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.**

Immediately after coming to faith in Jesus Christ and talking with the disciples in Damascus, which would give them the assurance that Paul was actually a born-again disciple of Jesus Christ, Paul began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. Paul turned from persecuting Christians for blasphemy (for believing that Jesus is the Son of God) to accepting the truth about Jesus and convincing others to accept the truth of Jesus too.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. Why do you think Saul and other religious leaders hated Jesus Christ and the Christians who followed Him?

2. What is one good effect that God worked out when the Christians in Jerusalem came under persecution?
3. When Jesus spoke to Ananias, what did Ananias say to Jesus? What did Ananias do?
4. Why do you think Saul/Paul would suffer much after he became a Christian? Do you think that was Jesus' punishment for his previous sins? Why or why not?
5. What did Saul do after he believed in Jesus?

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Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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