

## **New Morning Magical – for 7-23-20**

### **The glory drops you to your knees**

Well, it's time to witness Saul's conversion and his radical transformation from a persecutor to an evangelist; so let's pick up the story in Acts 9:

1 Now Saul, still breathing out threatening and murder against the disciples of the Lord, approaching the chief priest,

2 requests from him letters for Damascus to the synagogues, so that, if he should be finding any who are of the way, both men and women, he may be leading them bound to Jerusalem.

3 Now in his going he came to be nearing Damascus. Suddenly a light out of heaven flashes about him.

4 And falling on the earth, he hears a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

5 Yet he said, "Who art Thou, Lord?" Yet He said, "I am Jesus Whom you are persecuting.

6 Nevertheless, rise and enter the city, and it will be spoken to you what you must be doing."

7 Now the men who are journeying with him stood dumbfounded, hearing, indeed, the sound, yet beholding no one.

8 Now Saul was raised from the earth, yet, his eyes being open, he observed nothing. Now, leading him by the hand, they led him into Damascus,

9 and he was three days not observing aught, and he neither ate nor drank.

10 Now there was a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias!" Now he said, "Lo! it is I, Lord!"

11 Now the Lord to him, "Rise! Go to the street called 'Straight,' and seek in the house of Judas for a Tarsian named Saul, for lo! he is praying.

12 And he perceived in a vision a man named Ananias entering and placing his hands on him so that he should be receiving sight."

13 Yet Ananias answered, "Lord, I hear from many about this man, how much evil he does to Thy saints in Jerusalem.

14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who are invoking Thy name."

15 Yet the Lord said to him "Go, for he is a choice instrument of Mine, to bear My name before both the nations and kings, besides the sons of Israel,

16 for I shall be intimating to him how much he must be suffering for My name's sake."

17 Now Ananias came away and entered the house, and placing his hands on him, he said, "Saul! Brother! The Lord has commissioned me (Jesus, Who was seen by you on the

road by which you came), so that you should be receiving sight and be filled with holy spirit."

18 And immediately fall from his eyes as if scales, and he receives sight. Besides, rising, also, he is baptized,

19 and obtaining nourishment, is strengthened. Now he came to be with the disciples in Damascus some days.

20 And immediately, in the synagogues, he heralded Jesus, that He is the Son of God.

21 Now amazed are all who are hearing, and they said, "Is not this the one who, in Jerusalem, ravages those who are invoking this Name? And for this had he come here, that he may be leading them bound to the chief priests."

22 Yet Saul was the more invigorated, and threw the Jews dwelling in Damascus into confusion, deducing that this One is the Christ.

23 Now as a considerable number of days were fulfilled, the Jews consult to assassinate him.

24 Yet known to Saul is their plot. Now they scrutinized the gates also, both by day and by night, so that they may be assassinating him.

25 Yet the disciples, getting him at night, let him down through the wall, lowering him in a hamper.

The period between verse 25 and 26 seems to correspond with the 3-year period when Saul went into Arabia before going to Jerusalem to meet up with Peter for the first time. Here's a quick reminder of that from Galatians 1 that we looked at in an earlier MM:

15 Now, when it delights God, Who severs me from my mother's womb and calls me through His grace,

16 to unveil His Son in me that I may be evangelizing Him among the nations, I did not immediately submit it to flesh and blood,

17 neither came I up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I came away into Arabia, and I return again to Damascus.

18 Thereupon, after three years, I came up to Jerusalem to relate my story to Cephas, and I stay with him fifteen days.

Now let's pick up the account in Acts 9:

26 Now, on coming along to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; and all feared him, not believing that he is a disciple.

27 Yet Barnabas, getting hold of him, led him to the apostles and relates to them how he became acquainted with the Lord on the road, and that He speaks to him, and how, in

Damascus, he speaks boldly in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them, going in and out, in Jerusalem.

29 Speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, he both spoke and discussed with the Hellenists. Yet they took in hand to assassinate him.

Who were the Hellenists? They were a group of Jews who read the scriptures in the LXX translation, which was in Greek, rather than in Hebrew and who spoke Greek rather than Aramaic. For nearly two centuries there had been an uneasy relationship between Jews who welcomed Hellenistic culture and those who defended conservative Hebrew customs and distinctions. In New Testament times, Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem may have had their own synagogue (Acts 6: 9) and possibly Stephen was a member who succeeded in converting some of them to Christianity. In any case, the Hellenists didn't like Saul any more than the Hebrews.

30 Now realizing this, the brethren led him down into Caesarea, and they send him away to Tarsus.

31 Indeed, then, the ecclesia down the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified, and, going on in the fear of the Lord and the consolation of the holy spirit, multiplied.

I think it's funny that Saul was such a problem and had caused such a stir that "the brethren" escorted him into Caesarea, which was way north and west of Jerusalem on the Mediterranean coast. This would have been quite a walk of around 65 miles. Tarsus was a much further journey to the southern coast of modern day Turkey, but in Paul's time it was in the Roman province of Galatia.

Essentially, the Boys in Jerusalem told Saul to go home and cool his jets, and they made sure to get him part way to the port city of Caesarea, where he may have caught a ship sailing north to Tarsus. I don't know that, but it seems likely, given the distance to Tarsus, and the coastal location of both cities here.

Now, I don't want to turn Morning Magical into a history lesson, but I found a map that I've included in the notes showing all the cities that Paul visited, so you can get a rough idea of the area he covered. I'll also recommend to you again the Daily Bible, which includes Paul's epistles in chronological order within the book of Acts; so you gain a completely different perspective as you watch the progression of Paul's revelation.



Let's begin to look into Paul's writings beginning with his letter to the Galatians. I'm going to read the intro from the Daily Bible, because it sets the stage for what we'll be examining together and, I don't know about you, but I find it helpful to get a sense of time and place when I'm studying anything.

I couldn't copy and paste anything to my notes from the Kindle version of the Daily Bible, so just close your eyes and let F. Lagard Smith's introduction to Paul's letter to the Galatians bring you into that time and place.

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So, here's how an older and wiser Paul begins his first epistle:

Galatians 1:

1 Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through a man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, Who rouses Him from among the dead),

Paul is careful to let everyone know that His apostleship came through no man's authority, and through no group of men deciding anything. His office had nothing to do with himself. *"If you have any concern over my office as an apostle, take it up with Yeshua or the Father, because I had nothing to do with it!"*

In verse 2, Paul addresses the “ecclesias” of Galatia. Galatia was a big province in what was then known as Asia, and included the cities he and Barnabas visited, such as Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

Let’s pick it up in verse 3

3 Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ,  
4 Who gives Himself for our sins, so that He might extricate us out of the present wicked eon, according to the will of our God and Father,  
5 to Whom be glory for the eons of the eons. Amen!

You may have heard me speak many times before about “this present wicked eon,” and now you see in verse 4, where I got that term. I know of no other apostolic writing in which you find this designation for the eon in which we live, and I can’t tell you how important it is to remember it. Keeping in mind that this eon is wicked will help you understand why the world around you looks out of control with hatred and violence that might otherwise not even be contemplated by reasonable people. The Father not only knows that the eon is wicked; He designed it that way. Why would He do that? The answer is in Ephesians 1:

11 in Him in Whom our lot was cast also, being designated beforehand **according to the purpose of the One Who is operating THE all in accord with the counsel of His will.**

The Father is not missing anything, no matter what the world looks like; quite the opposite. Time is marching along and events are unfolding exactly as He has purposed, because He is operating according to His own counsel. He’s not asking for anyone’s opinion or suggestion. The Father is operating everything, and He’s accomplishing what Paul calls, “*the purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord*” in Ephesians 3:11.

Now, let me clarify, lest you misunderstand: The Father is not creating the disasters that occur in the world – flood, famine, plague, earthquake, volcanic eruptions – nor is He orchestrating the violence that we can see around us. He doesn’t need to! The eon is *designed* to play out this way until the Lord Himself returns to set things right.

The question that most people ask is, “*Why would a loving God design a ‘wicked eon’ in the first place?*” Two reasons that I can see, and once again, this is my take only; do with it what you will:

ONE – The bestowing of the Father’s grace occurs only now, in this wicked eon; no other time. This is the one time in all of history in which you get to decide to believe and be saved or not. Other eons will follow, as we’ll discover in Paul’s writing, followed by what he calls, “*the consummation*” in 1 Corinthians 15:24. By then, choices are over and only one path is left to take.

Two: The Father is bringing us to Himself, through grace, through the Christ, “*making known to us the secret of His will (in accord with His delight, which He purposed in Him [Christ])*,” Paul says in Ephesians 1:9, and he continues in verse 10:

to have an administration of the complement of the eras, **to head up all in the Christ -- both that in the heavens and that on the earth.**

The Father wants to raise up mature sons and daughters because it is, as we will read in Ephesians, “The delight of His will.” If you are believing in Yeshua today, it is because the Father chose you – designated you – before anything was made, to be His son or daughter. That’s how much He loves you, so when things don’t work like you want them to, it’s because He’s after you and if you get everything you **think** you want, you’ll miss everything He wants **FOR** you.

We’ll stop here for today and see where the Spirit leads us tomorrow.

Until then:

May Yahweh bless you and keep you;  
May Yahweh light up His face toward you  
and be gracious to you;  
May Yahweh lift His face to you  
and appoint peace for you.

Amen