

=THE CONVERSION=

Lesson 7
Saul of Tarsus

Objects to have:

Objects from telling stories in this series: The square of fabric, pitcher, the black and white heart, the HIDE-AND-SEEK sign, a hammer, complete jigsaw puzzle picture from last week's lesson.

The letters that are written out in the story; envelopes for the letters

Objects representing the temple and some synagogues (You could use little covered boxes or "hotels" and "houses" from a children's game, if using the table while teaching. If using the bulletin board while teaching, tack some rectangles to represent synagogues. Think of the location of Jerusalem when placing the temple either on your table or on the bulletin board. Picture among other locations for synagogues the city of Damascus which is northeast of the Sea of Galilee in Syria.)

Your Bible.

Introducing the lesson:

(Using the objects, quickly review the lessons of this series. After putting down the last object, simply turn and face the children and begin.)

Saul would go to church. He would go to the big main temple in the city of Jerusalem. (Place your object representing the temple on the table or on the bulletin board.) The temple was here in Jerusalem. What if a person lived here? (Indicate a distance away from Jerusalem, where you would imagine Damascus to be.) They could not travel to the temple every time they wanted to hear the Bible read and taught because it was too far to go to Jerusalem. The people in this city built a little temple; they called it a synagogue. They built this synagogue so that it would face in the direction of Jerusalem where the temple was located. What if you lived in this city? (Indicate another location.) You, too, would want to go and listen to the Bible read and taught. In this city, another synagogue was built. (For as many synagogues as you would like to place in your plan, continue the foregoing conversation.) In each synagogue building there was a big box at the front. In this big box was the Bible. In the days when Saul lived on earth the Bible was much too expensive for people to have in their homes. The only way they could hear it read was to go either to the temple or to the synagogue.

In the center part of the synagogue was a stage or a platform. There was a stand on this platform. The teacher in the synagogue would stand behind this pulpit and teach the people about the Bible. Brother Schaap, our pastor, does that for us. Saul often went either to the temple or to the synagogue, depending on where he was. If Saul was in Jerusalem, he went to the temple. If Saul was in another city too far away from Jerusalem, he went to a synagogue. Where did Saul go to hear the Bible read and taught? Yes, either to the temple or to a synagogue.

Telling the story:

(Suggestion to the teachers: "Act" this story as you tell it.) "I'm going to see to it that they are punished! There are some people who have disobeyed God! They should be brought back to Jerusalem to stand trial before the High Priest in the temple! I am angry enough with them to see them suffer death!"

Saul was shouting those words. Saul had seen many people ask Jesus to be their Saviour. Saul saw many people whom he knew become Christians. Saul sincerely thought they were wrong to do this.

Saul was so angry with Christians that he wanted to see them put in jail; he wanted to see them die. Saul decided that he would help to bring Christians to Jerusalem where they could be punished for becoming Christians.

Of course, Saul could not make people leave their homes and cities where they lived, and drag them off to Jerusalem without permission from the people in authority. Saul would have to go get permission to take people prisoner and to take them to Jerusalem to be punished. Saul went to the High Priest in the temple. Saul said, "High Priest, I have come to you today to ask permission to go to the city of Damascus. I know there are many people there who are called Christians. These people have done wrong by asking Jesus to be their Saviour. Give me permission to go capture these people and to bring them back as prisoners to stand trial here in Jerusalem"

The High Priest replied to Saul, "Saul you have my permission. I will write that permission in letters. As you go to the city of Damascus, you may show these letters to the rulers of the synagogues there. If you need to show any letter to the town mayor or the chief of police, there will be a letter to them, also." The secretary of the temple sat down and wrote down the letters. (Pretend to be that secretary while saying the following:) The first letter that the secretary wrote was to the ruler of the synagogue in Damascus:

Dear Ruler,

The man who gave you this letter is named Saul. He has my permission to bring Christians back to Jerusalem. Do not stop him from bringing people from your synagogue if they say they are Christians.

Yours truly,
The High Priest

The secretary wrote another letter:

Dear Chief of Police:

The man who has handed you this letter is named Saul. He has my permission to take as prisoner anybody in Damascus who is called a Christian.

Yours truly,
The High Priest

Perhaps there was another letter, to the mayor of the city:

Dear Mayor:

The man who has handed you this letter is named Saul. He has my permission to capture any Christians in Damascus and to bring them back to Jerusalem. They must stand trial in Jerusalem and be punished because they should not have become Christians.

Your truly,
The High Priest

(Put the letters into envelopes after "writing" them, and pass them from one of your hands to the other, pretending that you are Saul, receiving them from the hand of the secretary.) Saul eagerly took these letters.

Then Saul went to some of his friends. He said, "Friends, will you go with me? I'm going to get some of these Christians." The friends eagerly agreed to go with Saul. They did not like it that people were asking Jesus to be their Saviour.

Saul and his friends started on their long journey to the city of Damascus. They walked through a gate that was in the wall that was around the city of Jerusalem; they walked through the Gate of Damascus, and so were on the road that led to Damascus. The city of Damascus was many miles away from Jerusalem. They were on a secret mission to get those Christians!

Saul and his friends were getting closer and closer to the city of Damascus. They talked as they walked. They talked about what they were going to do when they got inside Damascus. They had the letters to the ruler of the synagogue and to the chief of police and to the mayor of the city. As soon as they got into the city, they would show their letters to these people. Then they would start spying and finding the Christians. Their plans were laid. They were very close now to the city of Damascus.

Suddenly, a bright light shined down around Saul. The bright light came from Heaven. Saul fell down. He fell all the way to the ground. Then he heard a Voice. The Voice said, "Saul, Saul, why are you trying to hurt Me? Why persecutest thou Me?"

Saul said, "Who are You? Who art Thou, Lord?"

The Voice said, "I am Jesus. You are hurting Me."

Saul was shaking all over. He said, "Lord, what do You want me to do? What wilt Thou have me to do?"

Jesus said to Saul, "Get up. Go into Damascus. After you get to a certain house, you will be told what you should do then."

All the time that this was happening, the men who were with Saul wondered about what was going on! They heard a voice, but they did not see anyone. Then, Saul tried to get up. As he got up, he discovered that he could not see. Saul was blind. The men led Saul into the city of Damascus. He got to the house where Jesus told him to go. He stayed in the house there, where for three whole days Saul was blind. For these three days Saul would not eat or drink. He spent these three days praying. Saul had to decide that he had been wrong. He had to decide that the Christians were right. Saul trusted Jesus as his Saviour!

After three days a man came to visit Saul; Jesus told that man to go visit Saul. This man named Ananias went to the house where Saul was. Following God's direction, Ananias placed his hands on Saul's head. He said, "Brother Saul, Jesus sent me to see you. The same Jesus Who talked to you while you were on the road told me to come and see you. He told me to place my hands upon you so that you can see again. I have also come to help you understand what has happened to you." Saul immediately saw again! Something scaly immediately came off Saul's eyes. Saul could see again! Saul and Ananias talked for a while. Then Saul decided that he needed to be baptized; he had trusted Jesus as his Saviour, and then he needed to be baptized. Saul was baptized. Then he decided that he was hungry and that he should eat.

Saul stayed in Damascus for many days. While he was there, he decided that he could throw away his letters. (Tear up yours.) Saul was completely changed. Saul began to preach that people needed to ask Jesus to be their Saviour! Later his name was changed to Paul. (Teach Acts 9:20 to the children, telling them that that is what happened to Saul.)