

Acts 22:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

Analysis

And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. This verse recounts Paul's dramatic conversion experience, the third detailed account in Acts (also chapters 9 and 26). The specific mention of "about noon" emphasizes the supernatural brilliance of the heavenly light—it outshone the midday sun, indicating divine glory and power beyond natural explanation.

The Greek word for "suddenly" (exaiphnēs, ἐξαίφνης) stresses the unexpected, sovereign nature of Christ's intervention in Paul's life. The "great light" (phos hikanos, φῶς ἵκανόν) recalls theophanies throughout Scripture—God's self-revelation through brilliant light (Exodus 3:2; Ezekiel 1:27-28; Revelation 1:14-16). Luke's emphasis on this detail authenticates Paul's apostolic authority as one who encountered the risen Christ directly.

Theologically, this conversion narrative demonstrates several crucial truths:

1. salvation is entirely God's sovereign initiative, not human seeking
2. Christ actively reveals Himself to those He calls
3. religious zeal apart from true knowledge can oppose God's purposes;
4. the risen, glorified Christ possesses divine authority and power.

Paul's transformation from persecutor to apostle became the paradigmatic example of God's transforming grace, illustrating that no one is beyond the reach of Christ's saving power.

Historical Context

Paul's conversion occurred approximately 33-35 CE, shortly after Stephen's martyrdom. Damascus, located about 135 miles northeast of Jerusalem, was a major city in the Decapolis region with a significant Jewish population and numerous synagogues. Paul was traveling there with letters from the high priest authorizing him to arrest Jewish believers in Jesus and bring them bound to Jerusalem (Acts 9:2).

This event marks the pivotal turning point in early Christianity's expansion. Paul, formerly Saul of Tarsus, was a Pharisee trained under Gamaliel, zealous for Jewish tradition and convinced that the Jesus movement threatened Israel's covenant identity. His encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus road transformed him from Christianity's chief persecutor into its greatest missionary.

Paul recounts this experience here in his defense speech to the Jerusalem crowd after his arrest (circa 57 CE). By emphasizing the supernatural nature of his calling, Paul establishes his apostolic credentials and explains his mission to the Gentiles. The Damascus road experience became foundational to Paul's theology of grace, election, and the gospel's universal scope, shaping Christian doctrine for all subsequent generations.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's conversion demonstrate that salvation is entirely God's work rather than human achievement or merit?
2. What does this passage teach about the reality and authority of the risen Christ who actively calls people to Himself?
3. How should Paul's transformation from persecutor to apostle shape our understanding of who is "too far gone" for God's grace?
4. In what ways might religious zeal and conviction operate against God's purposes, as it did in Paul's pre-conversion life?
5. How does the supernatural nature of Paul's calling encourage believers facing opposition or questioning their own conversion experience?

Interlinear Text

Ἐγένετο δέ μοι πορευομένω καὶ ἐγγίζοντι τῇ
it came to pass And my journey and was come nigh G3588
G1096 G1161 G3427 G4198 G2532 G1448

Δαμασκῷ περὶ μεσημβρίαν ἐξαίφνης ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ
unto Damascus about noon suddenly from G3588 heaven
G1154 G4012 G3314 G1810 G1537 G3772

περιαστράψαι φῶς ἵκανὸν περὶ ἐμέ
round light a great about me
G4015 G5457 G2425 G4012 G1691

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 1:16 (Parallel theme): And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.