

Date: 10th February 2008
Speaker: Bill Gardner
Reading: Acts 7:51-8:1
Subject: Saul of Tarsus

The nation of Israel had refused the Word of God as preached by the Lord Jesus and then by Stephen. They vented their hatred of God on Stephen while Saul stood by as they stoned him, consenting to what they did.

Saul was stirred up to persecute the Christians and he set out to Damascus with the intention of arresting them and suppressing their teaching. This was the character that he described in Romans 1:18 "holding down the truth in unrighteousness".

On the road to Damascus, he saw the Lord, Who asked, "Why persecutest thou Me?" (Acts 9:4). He asked, "Who are Thou?" and was told, "I am Jesus". Saul had been fighting with his conscience as a result of what he saw with Stephen and now the Lord intervenes directly.

Ananias was sent to explain to Saul what had happened and why (Acts 9: 10-17), as a result Saul was baptised and he preached in the synagogue (v.18-20). The man who had persecuted the Christians became one of the foremost preachers, suffering in the way that he had made others to suffer (2 Cor 11).

In Acts 17, Saul (now called Paul) was waiting in Athens for Silas and Timothy, and he saw the idolatry of the city. It was wholly given to idolatry (v.17) to such an extent that when Paul preached of "Jesus and the resurrection", they thought that this was a god of which they had not heard.

Paul pointed out how God had spoken in creation and now he had spoken in His Son (Heb 1:1,2). As a result, he was brought to the Areopagus where the people questioned him. He exposed their idolatry and pointed out that "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" because of a judgment that is coming (vv. 30,31).

What is repentance: contrition for sin and a change of heart in view of the death and resurrection of Christ. We all need to acknowledge that we are sinners in the sight of God and that only One can save us from our sins,. He is waiting and willing, will you repent?