

When was Saul Converted ? On the Road to Damascus or When He Received His Sight?

When was Saul of Tarsus converted? Was it on the Road to Damascus or was it when he received his sight after his three days of blindness? There are several clues in the three accounts of his conversion in Acts 9:3-18; 22:6-16; and 26:12-18. Evidence can be found for both positions.

Acts 9	Acts 22	Acts 26
<p>v 3 As he [Paul] was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;</p> <p>v 4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"</p> <p>v 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,</p> <p>v 6 but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."</p> <p>v 8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.</p> <p>v 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.</p> <p>v 10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias....</p> <p>v 11 And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go... and inquire at the house of Judas for a man ...named Saul, for he is praying,</p> <p>v 15 ...the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name....</p> <p>v 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road... has sent me so that you may regain your sight</p> <p style="margin-top: 20px;">and be filled with the Holy Spirit."</p>	<p>v 6 "But it happened that as I was... approaching Damascus ...a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me,</p> <p>v 7 and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'</p> <p>v 8 And I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, ' whom you are persecuting</p> <p>v 10 And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.'</p> <p>v 11 But since I could not see... I was led by the hand... and came into Damascus.</p> <p>v 12 A certain Ananias...</p> <p>v 13 came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul,</p> <p style="margin-top: 20px;">receive your sight!</p>	<p>v 12 ...I was journeying to Damascus</p> <p>v 13 ...I saw on the way a light from heaven... shining all around me....</p> <p>v 14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me..., 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.</p> <p>v 16 But get up...</p> <p>v 18a to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God,</p>

v 18 And immediately there fell
from his eyes
something like scales,
and he regained his sight,

And at that very time

I looked up at him.
v 14 And he said, 'The God
of our fathers **has appointed you**
to know His will
and to see the Righteous One
and to hear an utterance
from His mouth.

for this purpose I have appeared
to you, **to appoint you**

v 15 For you will be **a witness** for Him
to all men of what **you have seen**
and heard.

a minister and
a witness not only to the things
which **you have seen**,
but also to the things
in which I will appear to you;

v 17 rescuing you
from the Jewish people
and from the Gentiles,
to whom I am sending you,

and **he got up**
and **was baptized**;

v 16 Now why do you delay?
Get up
and be baptized,
and wash away
your sins.

v 18b that they may receive forgiveness
of sins and an inheritance
among those
who have been sanctified
by faith in Me.'

calling on His name.'

An Argument for Saul's Conversion on the Road to Damascus

Ananias immediately addressed him as "Brother Saul" (Acts 9:17 and 22:13)

Arguments for Saul's Conversion After His Three Days of Blindness¹

Conversion is defined as the opening of eyes and turning from darkness to light by Paul in Acts 26:18 in the context of his description of his own blindness and then receiving sight in his own conversion (Acts 9:9-17). His being filled with the Spirit is specially linked to his receiving his sight in Acts 9:18.

Ananias links his baptism to the washing away of his sins, as if they were not washed away until his public oath ritual of baptism (Acts 22:16). Paul apparently links the forgiveness of sins that he preached in the context of his own conversion and the washing away of his sins

It was at Saul's baptism that he called on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16), the initial act of faith by which he received forgiveness (Acts 26:18).

¹ This possibility was initially suggested to me by Justin Woyak.