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# BIBLE TALK

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This week the question is: **Does Acts 9:7 contradict Acts 22:9?**

Acts 9:7 concerns the conversion of a man named "Saul." Saul was a bitter enemy of the church in those days. He hated Christ and Christians. In his rage, he obtained permission from the high priest in Jerusalem to travel to Damascus and arrest all the Christians there and bring them back to Jerusalem for trial. Several men traveled with Saul. As he was nearing the city of Damascus, a bright light from heaven suddenly shined upon him and it blinded him. A voice from heaven spoke out and said, "*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*" This was the voice of Jesus Himself. Saul realized that Jesus was indeed real and was indeed the Lord of heaven and earth. Saul was ashamed of himself for having persecuted the Lord's people and he immediately asked what the Lord wanted him to do. The Lord told him to go into the city and it would be told to him there what he must do.

Notice carefully:

## **Acts 9:7**

7 And the men who journeyed with [Saul] stood speechless, **hearing a voice** but seeing no one.

Notice carefully that the men traveling with Saul heard a voice.

In Acts 22 Saul, who was now known by his Roman name, Paul, retold the story of his conversion. Listen carefully:

## **Acts 22:9**

9 "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but **they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke** to me.

Notice this verse says the companions of Paul "*did not hear the voice of Him who spoke.*" It appears this verse contradicts what we read in Acts 9:7.

As a matter of fact, those who are enemies of the Bible (Mormons, Moslems, and others) use this passage in an effort to show that the Bible is unreliable. They offer these two verses as an illustration to say the Bible contradicts itself and is therefore unreliable and unworthy of trust.

Are these verses contradicting each other? The answer is "no" – these verses are not contradicting each other.

Ray Summers, in his book, Essentials of NT Greek, writes this on p. 51:

Some verbs take their object in a case other than the accusative. There is a variety of usage at this point. ἀκούω (the Greek verb for "hear") may take its object in the genitive or the accusative. Usually ἀκούω with the genitive means "to hear without understanding," while with the accusative it means "to hear with understanding." This probably explains the difficulty involved in Acts 9:7 and 22:9. The incident is the experience of Paul in seeing the light and hearing the voice on the road to Damascus. Acts 9:7 states that Paul's companions heard the voice (ἀκούω with the genitive); Acts 22:9 says they did not hear the voice (ἀκούω with the accusative). Thus both constructions say the same thing: the companions of Paul did not understand what the voice said to Paul; to them it was unintelligible sound.

To illustrate what is being said, think about an old man who is hard of hearing. He says to his grandchild, "*What did you say, I didn't hear you.*" What the grandfather means is that he didn't understand what was said. He heard a voice. He hears speaking, but he didn't understand what was said.

In the same way, the companions of Paul heard a voice speaking, but they didn't "hear" the voice in the sense of understanding what the voice was saying. There is no contradiction here. As a matter of fact, notice:

### **Acts 26:14**

14 And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and **saying in the Hebrew language**, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

We can understand from this verse why the companions of Paul did not understand – because the voice was speaking in the Hebrew language. Evidently the other men could not understand Hebrew.

Those who use these passages to show a supposed "contradiction" in the scriptures are truly desperate people. They are being unfair and, in fact, dishonest. It is dishonest to ignore plausible explanations and immediately jump to the conclusion that a contradiction has occurred.

Once again, the Bible proves itself to be reliable and trustworthy.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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