

# SEEING THE LIGHT

*how to prepare your heart for learning and sharing the gospel*

## LESSON 4 | PAUL SAW THERE IS LIFE AFTER DEATH BY RESURRECTION | 12/27/2020

As a Pharisee, Paul believed in life after death. It was the Sadducees who did not (Matthew 22:23). Some three centuries before Christ, Antigonus Sochaeus taught his disciples, “be not as servants who serve their master for the sake of reward; but be ye as servants that serve their master not for the sake of reward, and let the fear of God be upon you.” One of his disciples, a man named Saduk, interpreted this to mean there is no future state of reward or punishment — and thus, the sect of the Sadducees was born. They denied any resurrection from the dead, and the existence of angels or spirits. When Sadducees challenged Jesus on it (Luke 20:34-40), he used Moses’s words from the Pentateuch, the only part of our present Old Testament that they regarded to be from God Himself. And they said, “Teacher you have answered well.”

This was not new info to Saul of Tarsus on the Sanhedrin. He would have heard the counter arguments in discussions about the after-life. It is unknown whether Saul would have been in any audiences where Jesus preached His messages or engaged in conversations with Sadducees, Pharisees or others.

Before Damascus, Saul would have likely held to the Pharisees’ party line that the disciples had stolen Jesus’ body (Matthew 28:13). After Damascus, he will teach, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” (Acts 26:8). What could have been his process to seeing the light? But the message he would come to proclaim would be based on the truth that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God in power... by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4).

It will be the empty tomb transformed Jesus from a martyr to a Savior. And it would be the resurrected Lord that transformed Saul from persecutor to Paul the proclaimer. In Acts 9, Luke tells us that God told Ananias that “I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name” (9:16). In Paul’s retelling of his conversion experience in Acts 22, Ananias told Paul that God had appointed him to see “the Righteous One” (22:14) and in his recounting to Agrippa, Paul said that Jesus told him, “I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness of the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you” (26:16). So not only would Saul be saved in this experience, Saul would see the risen Lord so that he would be a qualified witness (Acts 1:21-25) and be assured by that same risen Lord that he would see Him again in future appearances (i.e. Arabia, Gal. 1:16-17) and in other visions (2Cor 12:1-10; Acts 23:11).

But the basis for all of this was that Saul of Tarsus saw the resurrected Jesus, the Nazarene. Without it, Christianity, Paul would later say, is a fraud and Christians are, at best, deluded—of all men most miserable (1 Corinthians 15:12–19). With it, Christians are also guaranteed a resurrection (15:22). Paul emphatically stated that “Christ is risen from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:20). He believed the tomb was empty because he knew its former occupant. He saw Him; he heard Him; he conversed with Him. When Paul “saw Him” on the road – He knew He was alive. Saul had no motive whatever to claim to see Jesus alive and every reason to deny the resurrection. Every other religion lacks what Christianity has—a living Savior, an eternal High Priest ministering for His people in heaven. And in his conversion there is plenty of evidence that helped Saul of Tarsus see the light:

- Paul's Accounts of His Conversion
  - At noon (midday) on the road to Damascus a light from heaven shone around him, brighter than the noon sun - 22:6; 26:12,13.

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- He heard a voice asking (in Hebrew) why Saul was persecuting Him - 22:7; 26:14.
- Saul spoke to the speaker and asked Him questions, which the speaker answered - 22:8,10; 26:14,15.
- The speaker specifically identified Himself as Jesus of Nazareth, the One Saul had been persecuting - 22:8; 26:15.
- Those with Saul saw the light, but did not understand the words spoken (NASB) - 22:9.
- Jesus stated that He had appeared to Saul (therefore, Saul did see Him) to make him both a minister and a witness. He was to preach to people how they could receive forgiveness of sins - 26:16-18.
- Saul did preach the gospel, witnessing to all that Christ did suffer and arose from the dead - 26:22,23.

So Paul's own testimony claims specifically that he both saw and heard Jesus, as well as speaking to Him. This occurred to qualify Paul as an eyewitness, which was an essential requirement in order for one to be an apostle (Acts 1:21,22). This means that Saul was a "witness" in the same sense as the other apostles: he was able to tell people that he had personally seen Jesus alive after His death.

Paul Repeated His Claim in Other Passages:

1. 1Cor 9:1: Have I not seen \_\_\_\_\_?
2. 1Cor 15:3-9,14,15: After stating that Jesus had died, been buried, and arose again, Paul lists various people who saw Him after His resurrection. In each case, he says that Jesus was "seen" by these people: Who were they? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ And the Paul says, "Last on all, he \_\_\_\_\_ to me" (15:8).

But there is still the testimony of Paul's changed life. (Phil 3:4-6; Acts 22:3; 26:5; Gal 1:14). In short, Saul had been a zealous and devout Jew. He was well educated, prominent and influential among Jewish leaders. No doubt he had a great future among them. From an earthly view, he had nothing to gain and everything to lose by accepting the gospel. He could have had no possible ulterior motive for claiming to see Jesus. But then consider Paul's life after he saw Jesus. As soon as he learned what to do, he was baptized and began preaching the gospel (9:18,20; 22:16). This indicated repentance and a willingness to change his life to do what Jesus wanted. Further, in Acts 9:16, Jesus warned Saul that he would suffer greatly for the gospel. This was exactly what happened. His life was repeatedly threatened so that he had to flee nearly every city where he taught (2Cor 11:23-28,32,33). Why would anyone suffer all that Saul did unless he was totally convinced that his message was true? All the witnesses that we have cited argue that the reason Saul changed so dramatically was that he had truly seen Jesus. How can anyone explain such a major change in Saul's life in just one day on any basis other than the explanation that he gave? Why suffer so if it was a lie?

What does this mean to you? Specifically, the resurrection proves Jesus is:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Romans 1:4
2. \_\_\_\_\_ John 20:24-31.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Romans 14:9
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Luke 24:46,47