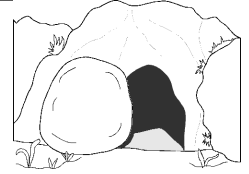


The Resurrection of Jesus

The Conversion of Saul (7 of 12)



The apostle Paul lists the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in 1 Corinthians 15. Verses 8 and 9 indicate he was the last witness. “Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Corinthians 15:8-9).

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is the most well-documented fact in the book of Acts. It is recorded three times (Acts 9, 22, 26). The apostleship of Paul—one qualification being an eyewitness of the resurrection—is confirmed by Peter (2 Peter 1:16; 3:15). It is cited by Ananias and Barnabas too in Luke’s book of Acts (Acts 9:7, 17, 27; 22:9,14; 26:14).

Not only is Paul a witness of Jesus Christ his change is an astonishing historic phenomenon. In Josh McDowell’s *More Than a Carpenter* he notes four major changes in the life of Paul. He writes,

“First, Paul’s character was drastically transformed...Second, Paul’s relationship with the followers of Jesus was transformed (Acts 9:19)...Third, Paul’s message was transformed. Though he still loved his Jewish heritage, he had changed from a bitter antagonist to a determined protagonist of the Christian faith...Fourth, Paul’s mission was transformed. He was changed from a Gentile-hater to a missionary to Gentiles” (pp. 83-85).

Clearly, Paul was truly converted. But, why? Of course,

the skeptics must make up their reasons to try and deflect the fact a rabid, foaming at the mouth, persecuting Jew turned into a loving, persecuted Christian. Three common “scholarly” theories include...

The Psychological Meltdown Theory. Some skeptics argue Saul’s conversion was the result of a psychological meltdown. They believe the phrase “kick against the goads” in Acts 9:5 indicates Saul was conflicted and double-minded in his religious beliefs. Some even suggest his psychological instability led to a hallucination experience.

There are a few problems with this theory. First, what about all of the others who were witnesses to the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5-8)? Did they all have a group hallucination? Second, Paul denies ever being psychologically conflicted (Acts 23:1; 26:9; 1 Timothy 1:12-13). Third, would someone who was unsure of his faith in Judaism go around asking for letters from the high priest so he could imprison Christians? This sounds like a man who was quite sure of himself (Acts 7:58-8:3; 9:1-2). Fourth, the reaction of the Jews to the conversion of Saul indicates they never viewed him as wishy-washy prior to his conversion (Acts 9:19-22). This theory fails as we really study the Scriptures.

The Selfish Motives Theory. Some ignorant Bible scholars may claim Saul converted out of selfish motives. After all, some may convert today for those very reasons—to better a family relationship, make friends, hope for money or fame. Yet, every selfish motive man could possibly have is denied Paul after conversion.

The following checklist

will force us to realize Paul was much better off pre-conversion than post-conversion with regard to...

- Personal safety (Acts 9:23-25)
- Wealth (Philippians 3:8; 4:12)
- Education (Acts 22:3)
- Family tradition (Phil 3:3-6)
- Reputation (2 Cor 11:23-28)

The “Resurrection of Love” Theory. Some modernists actually claim Jesus was “resurrected in the hearts” of men, but not literally and bodily. Saul of Tarsus throws a kink into any such theory. After all, Saul did not love Jesus he absolutely hated Him! How could his experience with the Lord been borne out of love when he was fully opposed?

Frank Morison writes in *Who Moved the Stone?*

“How can we account for this incident...why should a man of this tough breed and of this admittedly sane and virile mental caliber be uprooted in an instant from his cherished beliefs and swept like chaff before the wind into the dogmatic camp of his most hated enemies?...The facts that led to Saul’s conversion were the same facts that so profoundly modified the behavior of Peter and Matthias and James...when Saul was really convinced that he had seen the risen Jesus the immense and overpowering significance of the empty tomb swept for the first time into his mind” (pp. 142-145).

Will you honestly weigh the evidence of the risen Lord?

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