

### 5.30.21 ~ **Jesus Appears to Saul**

Before Nancy and I went on vacation I taught for 4 weeks on the resurrection appearances of Christ. There is still one post resurrection appearance that we have not studied together; it took place after Christ's ascension back into heaven, and it was to the Apostle Paul.

Paul's inspired writings form the basis for most of the New Testament instruction to the Church. Paul's birth name was Saul [Hebrew], but we know him better by the name Paul [Roman], for he was to be Christ's witness to the Gentiles.

Paul was a Jew (**Philippians 3:5-11**), "circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless," (**Acts 22:3**), "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city [Jerusalem], educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today."

Paul was also a Roman citizen. Once when Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and about to be flogged, he said to the centurion (**Acts 22:25-29**), "'Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman [and has not been lawfully condemned]?' When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and told him, saying, 'What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman.' The commander came and said to him, 'Tell me, are you a Roman?' And [Paul] said, 'Yes.' The commander answered, 'I acquired my citizenship with a large sum of money.' And Paul said, 'But I was actually born a citizen.'

"Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains."

See **1Corinthians 15:8-9...** Paul says, "and last of all He (Jesus) appeared to me also, as to one untimely [abnormally] born."

All the others to whom the Lord had appeared, had seen Him while he was alive and after He had died and risen from the grave. But Paul had not seen Jesus during the 40 days between Christ's resurrection and ascension, instead, the Lord appeared to Paul long after the Lord had ascended back into heaven.

No wonder Paul felt like one abnormally born, the other apostles had lived and walked with Jesus for three years, being taught by Him; whereas Paul had not only rejected Him as the Messiah, he had persecuted His followers, "For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

After his conversion, Paul was taught by the Lord (**Galatians 1:11-12**), "I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by

revelation from Jesus Christ," (**vv. 16-18**), "I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then **three years** later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days."

Paul was fully convinced of his apostleship and also of the grace and forgiveness given him by God. All twelve apostles (the original eleven + Matthias, who took Judas' place) were commissioned within the territory of Israel, to minister to the Jews; but Paul was commissioned outside of Israel and ministered mostly to Gentiles [non-Jews].

Paul labored more than any of the apostles and yet, he only boasts about God's marvelous gift of grace (**See 2Corinthians 11:12-12:12**).

Paul could do nothing apart from Christ working in and through him to accomplish the works of God (**See Ephesians 2:8-10; 3:8-21**).

It was the resurrected Christ who changed Paul by saving him, personally instructing him, and empowering him to serve on God's behalf. Prior to that time Paul had been an enemy of God and God's people; he was now a bond slave of God and a servant to God's people.

Paul had persecuted the Followers of Christ before his conversion on the road to Damascus; after he confessed Jesus as Lord, he became the most outspoken witness for the Christian faith apart from Jesus Christ. The same people he was previously hunting down and putting in jail, he is now calling his brothers and sisters in Christ.

No wonder Paul felt like one abnormally born, the other apostles had lived with Jesus for three years, being taught by Him; whereas Paul had rejected Him as the Messiah, and had even persecuted His followers.

And yet Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus, several years after He had ascended back into heaven, (See **Acts 9:1-9; 22:6-11; 26:1-18**).

Did Saul actually see the Lord that day?

**1Corinthians 9:1**, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?"

Did Saul actually hear the Lord?

**Acts 22:14-15**, "And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'"

Note: The Greek word translated *voice is phone [fo nay]*, it means sound or speech. Its most common use in the Bible is for the voice of God, humans, and angels, but it is also used for sounds in general (**John 3:8**), "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is

going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit," (**Revelation 1:10**), "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet."

On another note, probably some of you are wondering what it means (**Acts 26:14**), "to kick against the goads." A *goad* [noun] is a *spiked stick used for driving cattle*; the verb form use of this word, to *goad* someone, means to provoke or to stimulate someone to action or to get a reaction. Jesus is telling Saul he has been going against God Himself by going after these followers of the Way, the believers of Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Messiah, the Christ, the Lord, the Savior, God the Son.

Paul went from being the most aggressive persecutor of the Church of God to becoming the most aggressive proponent and proclaimer of God's Message: Jesus Christ, God's Son, Lord and Savior.

Jesus provided many demonstrable proofs and convincing evidence of His resurrection: He appeared to a great number of people, as recorded in the Scriptures. Luke writes, (**Acts 1:3**), "After His suffering [Christ's death by crucifixion], He showed Himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God," John writes (**John 20:31**), "these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."

There are many examples of infallible evidence:

Almost 2,000 years of testimony in and through the Church of God....

The evidence of billions of individual changed lives since Pentecost...

But the real proof of the power of Christ's death and resurrection is in your life, God's Spirit confirming your birth into the family of God and your transformation as you are conformed to the character and nature of Christ, in obedience to the God's Word, to the glory of the Father.

**Philippians 4:12-13**, "I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

**Philippians 4:19-20**, "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen."

**2Peter 1:2-4**, "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious

and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”

We often talk about what the death and resurrection of Christ means for eternity to those who believe in Him; but what difference does it make to you right now?

Here are some Scriptures that answer that question:

**Ephesians 1:13-14**, “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.”

**1Corinthians 6:19-20**, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”

**1Corinthians 12:13**, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

**2Corinthians 13:5**, “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?”

**2Corinthians 4:4**, “The god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

**2Corinthians 4:6**, “For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

**Hebrews 10:23-25**, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day (of His Return) drawing near.”

The Apostle Paul, like all true believers and followers of Jesus Christ, was spiritually dead in his sins and trespasses before confessing Christ as Lord and trusting Him as Savior. Having been born-again by the Spirit of God, made effectual through the death and resurrection of God’s Son, we have the propensity to live in a manner that exemplifies the character and nature of God, so that unbelievers might see Christ in us and respond to Him, as we proclaim what the Scriptures teach about Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Lord and Savior: crucified, resurrected, and coming again.

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