

Saul and the Resurrection of Christ - Acts 9:3-7 GRBC 2012-07-22

How did Saul of Tarsus, better known as Paul, come to be so closely tied to the message of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead?

The Lord Jesus had said this of Himself:

Luke 9:22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."

At the time the Lord Jesus spoke this about His resurrection, Saul had no connection with it. He didn't hear this say, and didn't know anything about it. Really the twelve apostles had little connection with it either. They didn't understand it, and Peter even argued against the whole thing.

When He had indeed been killed and raised the third day, He had said this to His apostles:

Luke 24:45-48 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. (46) Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, (47) and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (48) And you are witnesses of these things.

When the Lord said this to His eleven apostles, He established in them a firm connection with His resurrection. What was the connection? They had seen Him risen from the dead, and they were to go bearing witness of that fact, that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. But Saul still had no connection with the Lord's resurrection. I suppose he heard about everything that happened, and had some part in the events. But the Lord's resurrection was nothing to him. If he even heard about it, he certainly did not believe it. Eventually, he did hear about it, and became a harsh persecutor of everyone who believed it.

Now let us read again what we read last time of how the Lord Jesus, risen from the dead, made Saul have a connection with His resurrection.

Acts 9:3-7 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. (4) Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (5) And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." (6) So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." (7) And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.

So, on that day, the Lord Jesus proved to Saul that He is indeed alive, resurrected, risen from the dead.

If we turn ahead to nearer the end of this book of Acts, we will hear Paul tell more details of what he saw that day, and of what the Lord Jesus said to him:

Acts 26:15-16 So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. (16) But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.

So we see that Saul was given the same connection to the resurrection of Jesus Christ that Peter, John, and the other apostles had---he was made to see Jesus Christ resurrected, and given the charge to be an apostle, bearing witness to that resurrection.

Now, with that as introduction, let us see what great importance Saul, later called Paul, lays on the resurrection:

If we read one more passage on this subject, we will see Paul connect all of this for us:

1 Corinthians 15:1-22

The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is the good news, the gospel, by which you are saved (1-4)

The resurrection of Christ is witnessed by more than five hundred witnesses, including Paul himself (5-8)

It doesn't matter who the preacher is, just as long as you believe in Jesus Christ resurrected (9-11)

Since Jesus Christ is resurrected, all who believe in Him also will be resurrected (12-20)

Temptation comes to believe that after death there is no resurrection

This untruth is proved false by the truth that Jesus Christ is resurrected from death

All of Christianity would be false and worthless if Jesus Christ were not resurrected

Since Jesus Christ is resurrected, all who are in Him will be made alive (21-22)

CONCLUSION

So, as we continue to study Acts, and the story comes to center on Paul, understand that in this experience on the Damascus road, the risen Lord Jesus Christ gave Saul the firmest connection with His resurrection, and sent him to preach the good news of that resurrection, which good news we now have received, and in which we are saved to eternal life if we hold fast to it.