

Paul the Apostle

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What can we know about Paul's birth and family?

Paul was born in Tarsus, the capital city of Cilicia, a province in what is now Turkey, probably somewhere around 0-5 A.D.¹

Even in the flourishing period of Greek history [Tarsus] was a city of some considerable consequence. In the civil wars of Rome it took Caesar's side, and on the occasion of a visit from him had its name changed to Juliopolis. Augustus made it a "free city."²

We learn from Acts 22:28 that, although Paul was a Jew, he was "born" a Roman citizen.

Though a Jew, his father was a Roman citizen. How he obtained this privilege we are not informed. "It might be bought, or won by distinguished service to the state, or acquired in several other ways; at all events, his son was freeborn. It was a valuable privilege, and one that was to prove of great use to Paul, although not in the way in which his father might have been expected to desire him to make use of it."³

Paul would think of this valuable privilege later when he was explaining the rights and privileges Christians enjoy as citizens of Heaven (cf. Phil. 3:20; Eph. 2:19; Col. 2:19).

Paul (also called Saul) was a tentmaker by trade. Cilicia was known for a black goat's haircloth called *cilicium*, which was made into tents and "used by caravans, nomads, and armies all over Asia Minor and Syria."⁴

Little is known of his family, but there are a few things we can deduce:

Of Paul's mother nothing is known; he never mentions her, either because she died in his infancy or because of some alienation or because he simply had no particular occasion to do so. He had at least one sister. His father was a citizen or burgess of Tarsus and obviously wealthy, for in a reform fifteen years earlier, the rank of citizen had been removed from all householders without considerable fortune or property....He almost certainly had been married. Jews rarely remained celibate, and parenthood was a qualification required of candidates for the Sanhedrin.[*] Yet his wife never is mentioned in Paul's writings.⁵ [*Although some scholars suggest that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, this is not known for certain.]

As a young boy, Paul would have been sent to school at the synagogue. There he:

...learned to write the Hebrew characters accurately on papyrus, thus gradually forming his own rolls of the Scriptures. His father would have presented him with another set of rolls, on vellum: the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint, from which the set readings were taken in synagogue each Sabbath day.⁶

It is likely that his family moved to Jerusalem when he was still quite young, although the exact timing is uncertain. We do know that in Jerusalem the young Saul sat under Gamaliel, "one of the most eminent of all the doctors of the law."⁷

Paul was also, proudly, a Jew.

He describes himself to the Christians at Philippi as "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee" (Phil. 3:5). On another occasion, he called himself "an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Rom. 11:1).

Thus Saul stood in a proud lineage reaching back to the father of his people, Abraham. From the tribe of Benjamin had come Israel's first king, Saul, after whom the boy of Tarsus was named.⁸

We are not told whether Paul had any actual contact with Jesus during His ministry. It is unlikely, however, that Paul was unaware of the claims Jesus made or of the miracles He performed, particularly if he was in Jerusalem at this time. It's not impossible to think that he may even have witnessed Jesus' trial or even His crucifixion.

What did Paul look like?

The *New Bible Dictionary* (p. 890) states:

Of Paul's personal appearance the canonical account suggests only that it was not impressive (1 Cor. 2:3f.; 2 Cor. 10:10). A more vivid picture, ... occurs in the apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Theclas*, 'And he saw Paul coming, a man little of stature, thin-haired upon the head, crooked in the leg, of good state of body, with eyebrows joining, and nose somewhat hooked, full of grace: for sometimes he appeared like a man, and sometime he had the face of an angel.'

What is the first mention of Paul in the Bible?

The first mention of Paul in the Bible is when he stands by observing the death of Stephen. Acts 8:1 reports that "Saul was there, giving approval to his death."

Acts 8:3 goes on to say, "Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison." We pick him up again in Acts 9, where he is still "breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples." He obtains permission to go to Damascus to continue his pogrom. But along the way Paul has a life-changing encounter with the risen Jesus.

What happened to Paul on the Road to Damascus?

Hearing that fugitives had taken refuge in Damascus, he obtained from the chief priest letters authorizing him to proceed thither on his persecuting career. This was a long journey of about 130 miles, which would occupy perhaps six days, during which, with his few attendants, he steadily went onward, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter." But the crisis of his life was at hand.⁹

What was in his mind as he tramped on, day after day, in the dust of the road and the burning heat of the sun? The intensely personal self-revelation of Romans 7:7–13 may give us a clue. Here we see a conscientious man's struggle to find peace through observing all the minute ramifications of the Law.

Did it free him? Paul's answer from experience was no. Instead it became an intolerable burden and strain. The influence of Saul's Hellenistic environment in Tarsus must not be overlooked as we try to find the reason for his inner frustration. After his return to Jerusalem, he must have found rigid Pharisaism galling, even though he professed to accept it wholeheartedly. He had breathed freer air most of his life, and he could not renounce the freedom to which he had become accustomed.

However, the deeper reason for his distress was spiritual. He had tried to keep the Law, but learned that he could not do so, by reason of his sinful fallen nature. How then could he ever be right with God?

With Damascus in sight, a momentous thing happened. In one blinding flash, Saul

saw himself stripped of all pride and pretension, as the persecutor of God's Messiah and His people. Stephen had been right, and he was wrong. In the face of the living Christ, Saul capitulated. He heard a voice that said, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. ... Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9:5–6). And Saul obeyed.

During his stay in the city, "He was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink" (Acts 9:9). A disciple at Damascus by the name of Ananias became a friend and counselor, a man not afraid to believe that Paul's conversion had been genuine. Through his prayers, God restored Paul's sight.¹⁰

Why did Paul go into Arabia for several years after his conversion?

Before Paul could become the great missionary and defender of the Christian faith, he needed to spend some time in "seminary." It's also likely that he needed to distance himself from his former activities. After all, how could he expect the very people he had been persecuting to be willing to listen to him now?

Paul began witnessing to his newfound faith in the synagogue at Damascus. The burden of his message concerning Jesus was, "He is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). But Paul had bitter lessons to learn before he could emerge as a trusted and effective Christian leader. He discovered that people do not forget easily; a man's mistakes can haunt him for a long time, even after he has forsaken them. Paul was suspected by many of the disciples and hated by his former companions in persecution. He preached briefly in Damascus, went away to Arabia, and then returned to Damascus.

Paul's second attempt to preach in Damascus did not work out well, either. A year or two had elapsed since his conversion, but the Jews remembered how he had deserted his original mission to Damascus. Hatred against him flamed anew, and "the Jews took counsel to kill him" (Acts 9:23). The story of Paul's dramatic escape over the wall in a basket has captured the imagination of many readers.

Paul's days of preparation were not over. The Galatian account continues by saying, "After three years I went up to Jerusalem..." (Gal. 1:18). There he met the same hostile reception as at Damascus. Once more he had to flee.

Paul dropped from view for several years. These hidden years brought the ripened convictions and spiritual stature he would need for his ministry.¹¹

Immediately after his conversion he retired into the solitudes of Arabia (Gal. 1:17), perhaps of "Sinai in Arabia," for the purpose, probably, of devout study and meditation on the marvellous revelation that had been made to him. "A veil of thick darkness hangs over this visit to Arabia. Of the scenes among which he moved, of the thoughts and occupations which engaged him while there, of all the circumstances of a crisis which must have shaped the whole tenor of his after-life, absolutely nothing is known.

'Immediately,' says St. Paul, 'I went away into Arabia.' The historian passes over the incident [Compare Acts 9:23 and 1 Ki. 11:38, 39]. It is a mysterious pause, a moment of suspense, in the apostle's history, a breathless calm, which ushers in the tumultuous storm of his active missionary life."¹²

How did Paul die?

M. G. Easton gives this poignant account of the death of Paul:

"There can be little doubt that he appeared again at Nero's bar, and this time the

charge did not break down. In all history there is not a more startling illustration of the irony of human life than this scene of Paul at the bar of Nero. On the judgment-seat, clad in the imperial purple, sat a man who, in a bad world, had attained the eminence of being the very worst and meanest being in it, a man stained with every crime, a man whose whole being was so steeped in every nameable and unnamable vice, that body and soul of him were, as some one said at the time, nothing but a compound of mud and blood; and in the prisoner's dock stood the best man the world possessed, his hair whitened with labors for the good of men and the glory of God. The trial ended: Paul was condemned, and delivered over to the executioner. He was led out of the city, with a crowd of the lowest rabble at his heels. The fatal spot was reached; he knelt beside the block; the headsman's axe gleamed in the sun and fell; and the head of the apostle of the world rolled down in the dust" (probably A.D. 66), four years before the fall of Jerusalem.¹³

Paul the Apostle

What happened after Paul was converted on the Damascus road? How did this man come to be known as the Apostle Paul? Where did he get the message that he preached? Did he "invent" Christianity? We asked several scholars to comment on these and other questions.

Dr. Ben Witherington

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What happened to Paul on the Damascus road?

Dr. John Ankerberg: You're a scholar in terms of doing a lot of study on Paul. And Paul is a real mystery to a lot of scholars, because the psychological profile of Paul, there's no reason why he would have become a Christian, there had to be that X again. Describe for the folks that are listening what we're talking about.

Dr. Ben Witherington: Well, remember Saul's background. He's a Hebrew among Hebrews, that means he spoke that traditional language of Hebrew or Aramaic; he's a Pharisee among Pharisees, that means he belonged to one of the strictest sects of early Judaism, very punctiliar about obedience to the Mosaic law, down to the last jot and tittle, and even more traditions than that. We're talking about a person who according to his own testimony in Galatians 1, was a persecutor of early Christianity, persecuted it violently he says in Galatians chapter 1, and of course Acts confirms this as well as a secondary piece of evidence. What kind of thing could have happened to him to change him from all out zealot against the early Messianic movement that we call Christianity to a strong zealous advocate of the same? Some dramatic about face, u-turn had to have happened to Paul on Damascus road. And I know of no better term to describe this than conversion. It's not true, of course, that he was going from no beliefs to Chris-

tian beliefs. It's not true that he was going from a false religion to a true religion. What he believed was that he was becoming a completed Messianic Jewish person, and that the belief that Jesus was that Messiah figure was the missing piece of the puzzle that completed the picture, and rearranged the whole way that he would look at life. Previously he had looked at life through the lens of the law, now he was going to see life through the eyes of Christ.

Now I know of no better way to explain that kind of dramatic shift in a person's life than to say he had a close encounter of the first kind with the risen Jesus, and that's what changed his life. What's interesting to me is that even some of the recent Jewish scholars who have dealt with Saul of Tarsus have been willing to say something dramatic had to happen to him to cause this change.

Ankerberg: Where is modern scholarship in terms of evaluating what happened to Paul? Where are the majority of scholars, in other words, what do they attribute to the conversion of Paul?

Witherington: Well, you know, there used to be this old psychological profile. Saul was an angst ridden person, guilt ridden because he had persecuted some of his fellow Jews, who had become Christian, and agonizing over all of that, he converted to Christianity through wrestling through his own guilt. Now the thing that's interesting to me about that is that Paul himself says nothing to suggest this, and the book of Acts says nothing like that. He was going to Damascus to persecute some more Christians. He was not going to Damascus to join them. And so, you know, the evidence as we have it suggests that something other than a sort of psychological process along the way is what changed his life.

Was Paul psychologically primed to have a vision of Jesus?

Witherington: Well, now here is the sort of ultimate case, really. I mean, it would be possible to argue, yeah, yeah, the followers of Jesus, it's wish fulfillment. They believed they saw him after he died, bless their hearts, you know, they wanted to believe so badly, and there's no stories about Jesus appearing to Pontius Pilate or this or that or the other disbeliever. Give me a piece of evidence that says Jesus appeared to a disbeliever. Well, Saul of Tarsus is that piece of evidence. "Last of all" says Saul of Tarsus, "he appeared to me as one untimely born." And it's not just that he is a disbeliever, or a nonbeliever, he is an ardent anti-believer in this Messianic Jewish movement of followers of Jesus. This is the problem. What kind of psychology did he have to get through, psychological change did he have to go through, to get from point A to point B, you know, from being the ardent persecutor of early Christians to being the ardent advocate of Jesus as the son of God.

Something dramatic had to happen to him in his life. And there's nothing, from reading Paul's letters, there's nothing that suggests that he was a tremendously unstable person before his conversion, or a wishy washy person. On the contrary, he was a great intellectual mind, I mean most scholars would say that he was the greatest amongst the minds of the early Christian writers. After Jesus the greatest figure in early Christendom. Someone who had a very stable set of core beliefs as a Pharisee, was adamant about those beliefs, and yet he totally changed his perspective on Jesus. What did that do to him? Some kind of dramatic experience.

Did Paul see an actual physical body or a spiritual body?

Ankerberg: In Paul's own writings, was he talking about a real body appearing to him when he saw Jesus, or a spiritual body?

Witherington: Well, he uses the phrase *pneumatikon soma*. Now in some translations this is

rendered “a spiritual body.” What he means by that is a body animated by the Holy Spirit. He doesn’t mean a body not made of any substance. The Greek word *pneumatikon* means having been effected by this thing called Spirit. Having been animated, vivified, kept alive, eternalized by the Spirit. So what he’s not talking about is a body made out of spiritual substance or non-material substance. He’s talking about a body fully animated by the Spirit. That’s what he’s talking about there.

What did Pharisees believe about the resurrection?

Ankerberg: Was Paul a Pharisee?

Witherington: Paul was a Pharisee. I mean, he claims to be, and evidence from Acts suggests that he was a Pharisee, and indeed, his parents, his father was a Pharisee.

Ankerberg: And what did they believe?

Witherington: They believed in bodily resurrection. I mean there’s all this wonderful speculation from early Judaism you know, in the resurrection will you have all the hair follicles you had before you died? And there was speculation: Will I be raised at my peak powers, you know, at 27 year of age, looking good, or will I be raised at the same age at which I died? And there’s all this speculation about the physicality of the resurrection. When a Jewish person talked about somebody died, being buried, and coming back from the dead, it was a bodily resurrection.

Did Paul invent Christianity?

Ankerberg: You are an expert on the Apostle Paul. A lot of people have said that Paul was the one that really created Christ, the Messiah, the God-man, if you want. What would you say to those folks?

Witherington: Well, if Paul was a person operating 50, 60, 70 years after the time of Jesus, that could be a reasonable historical argument. We could actually debate that. But the truth of the matter is that Paul was converted within three or four years of the death of Jesus. And Paul himself tells us that among the other things that he did, he went up to Jerusalem and he consulted with the pillar apostles. Galatians is very clear about this. He talked with Peter, James and John. And you may be sure that they didn’t talk about the weather. They talked about matters of theological and ethical importance. Missionary strategies: who was going to go to the Gentiles, who was going to go to the Jews. I mean it’s the height of naiveté to suggest that Paul could have invented a Gospel about Jesus as the Christ, or as the son of God, not run it by the pillar apostles in Jerusalem, and gotten away with it. I mean, the truth of the matter is that there weren’t millions of followers of Jesus in first century A.D. Rather there was a rather tightly interwoven group of Christians in various parts of the empire and all of them had as their touchstone the original Christians in Jerusalem: Peter, James and John and the original followers of Jesus.

And so, if Paul affirmed these things, you may be sure that he affirmed them in agreement with the earliest apostles.

Ankerberg: Yes, in 1 Corinthians 15 he says “whether it was we or they, this is what we all preached.”

Witherington: And this is what we all believed. And he says that this was handed down a sacred tradition.

What did “tradition” mean to people in the first century?

Ankerberg: Let’s pick that word up, because a lot of people, they do not understand the

importance of the word “tradition.” There may even be some Christians who think that is a bad word. Okay? That’s not how we’re talking about it. Define it for us.

Witherington: Well, tradition, when we are talking about religious tradition, we’re talking about the oral and written sources of the materials that are now part of our holy Scriptures. That’s what we’re talking about. The truth of the matter is that what Scripture contains is those sacred traditions. So there’s not a fundamental contradiction between tradition and Scripture.

Ankerberg: The authoritative message that needed to be passed on, right?

Witherington: Exactly.

What sacred tradition was Paul passing along in 1 Corinthians 15?

Ankerberg. Alright, now. Fit that into the context of 1 Corinthians 15. Take the folks through what Paul is saying in terms of transmitting this oratative message that was held by the Christians. Now we’re talking about the early apostles, going right back to Jesus. Weave that all together.

Witherington: Let’s set the setting just for a second. Paul’s writing to a largely Gentile group of Christians, in a bustling metropolis called Corinth.

Ankerberg: About what time?

Witherington: Somewhere in the mid-50’s A.D. Within 20 or 25 years of Jesus’ death. Now he’s writing to an audience of people, a congregation, that was highly pneumatic. They had what we would call charismatic gifts. They spoke in tongues, they prophesied. The spiritual gifts were really high on their wish list of things they wanted to have and do in their worship service. And traditionally speaking, whenever you’ve got a sort of charismatic approach to Christianity, traditions play less importance. There’s not a lot of focus on being well-grounded in the past. You’re looking forward to the experience of the moment or the future things that God’s going to prophesy and that sort of thing.

Now what Paul tries to do in 1 Corinthians is ground those pneumatic Corinthians Christians in the sacred traditions that Christians elsewhere believed. And he wanted them to be a form of Christianity that comported with the other forms that were out there. So, among other things that he does, is he deliberately cites some of the specific sayings of Jesus, for example Jesus’ teaching about no divorce (1 Cor. 7). In 1 Corinthians 11 he says “I’m passing on to you what I have received that on the night that Jesus was betrayed He took bread, broke it, and said, take, eat, this is my body¼.” And in 1 Corinthians 15 of course he says the same thing, “I have passed on to you already that which I myself received.” Now this is technical early Jewish language for the receiving of the Sacred Tradition that needs to be preserved and passed on intact. It’s so important it needs to be memorized, and memorable.

From whom did Paul learn the sacred tradition?

Ankerberg. Not only that, but Paul said he got it from somebody else.

Witherington: Exactly. It comes from the earliest Christians.

Ankerberg: How do we know that he got it from somebody else, or who is it that he got it from?

Witherington: Well, the best perspective on that I would say is that probably his earliest Christian teaching that Paul himself received was in Damascus. We will remember that after his conversion on Damascus Road, or his dramatic close encounter of the first kind, he was taken

to Damascus and was with Christians in Damascus, and it surely must have been there that he received his first Christian instruction. Later, of course, he went up to Jerusalem and talked with the pillar apostles as well, but his basic, nodal Christian instruction must have come in Damascus from some of the early Christians there, such as Ananias, who laid hands on him.

What was Paul's message?

Ankerberg: Alright. Take us back to 1 Corinthians 15 and what Paul was saying.

Witherington: Well, the key phrase here is "I passed on to you that which I received." Notice this is technical early Jewish language used by Pharisees, non-Christian Jews as well as Christian Jews. And the language here is the language of the careful transmission of sacred beliefs, sacred traditions. And what he is passing on, he says he himself received. Now what did he himself receive? It was the tradition about the death, the burial, the resurrection and the appearances of the risen Lord. He gives us this long grocery list of appearances, with himself being the last of all. And so you may be sure he's added something to the list, namely the appearance to him, but otherwise, this was received tradition that was believed, not just by him, but believed by the other early church Christians, and it was transmitted in various congregations. And he's trying to get that Corinthian congregation to conform to the form of early Christian belief that's found elsewhere in early Christendom.

Ankerberg: Yes, this is a flag that's planted in the ground around 55-57 A.D. in essence, which is 25 years after the time Jesus passed off the scene.

Witherington: Right.

Ankerberg: And Paul is saying he got that information, which the community of Christians already holds, and is teaching other places, and the fact is, he got it from someplace else. How early did he get it?

When did Paul learn this sacred tradition?

Witherington: Well, again, it seems to me that since everywhere in Paul's letters the essence of the matter is "Christ, and him crucified, and the risen Lord," it seems to me only logical to conclude that this was some of the very first teaching he received.

What most scholars would say is that the earliest tradition that probably received a written form, the earliest continuous narrative, was the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus. This was probably the earliest part of the Gospel that was put into written form as a continuous narrative. It's very possible that at some point Paul had read such a narrative. What we know, though, that he had contact with some of the eyewitnesses that actually experienced these things, and he could consult with them.

What were some of the earliest "creeds" or "confessions" of the church?

Ankerberg: Take me back to some of the creedal statements that precede the writing of the New Testament. That which was being preached that will show up in the book of Acts, and why are some of those important?

Witherington: Well, let's take probably the earliest confession that Christians' made: Jesus is the risen Lord. We find this in various places in Paul's letters. He says, this is what you've got to confess with your lips and believe in your heart that Jesus is the risen Lord. Well, that seems to have been the very earliest distinctive Christian confession.

Ankerberg: Why do scholars hold that? I mean, how do you guys figure that out?

Witherington: Well, if you go back to the actual stories of the visit to the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus, what is it that the women go and tell the male disciples? “He is risen! He is risen indeed.” I mean, this is actually going back to Easter morning itself. This is the original proclamation. This is the proclamation that Mary Magdalene made to the male disciples, even though, initially, they scoffed at it. And so, we’re talking bedrock here. This was the most primitive confession. It distinguished Jewish Christians from non-Christian Jews.

What does Philippians 2 tell us about how the early church thought of Jesus Christ?

Ankerberg: What about Philippians 2? The critical scholars accept Philippians as a Pauline epistle. What do they do with Philippians 2?

Witherington: Well, now that’s a really interesting one. Because what we’ve got in Philippians 2 is what I would call a “Christ hymn.” If you are a student of Greek you will know that this is in a sort of rhythmic cadence. It’s a sort of poetic form, it has a V pattern. There’s a three point sermon here about his pre-existence, his earthly existence, and his existence in heaven beyond his time of his earthly career. So it’s a kind of V pattern, he came down, humbled himself to the form of a servant, even to the point of death on the cross. Because of this God has highly exalted him. Now what we know is that when we compare Philippians 2 to John chapter 1, when we compare Philippians 2 to Colossians chapter 1 we’ve got these V pattern hymns about Christ in various different document of the New Testament which suggests to most scholars that this is an early Christological hymn. Predating Paul in terms of his own performance of this particular hymn in Philippians 2, predating the writing of the Gospels. So what we know is, and what scholars have stressed is that these Christological hymns show that a high Christology was a very early Christology.

Ankerberg: What does a “high Christology” mean?

Witherington: Well, it means that it’s a Christology that affirms not only the true humanity of Jesus, but also his divinity.

Ankerberg: Where did that come from, then?

Witherington: Well, it came from the assessment of the impact of the Christ event. You see, what a person is, what a person claims to be, and what others claim about him can all be different things. No Christian scholar that I know of is denying that the early Christians ascribed to Jesus, or said about Jesus, more than Jesus said about himself. The question is, is that “more” grounded in who he actually was, or not? It’s not so crucial whether Jesus actually claimed this or not. The question, was he, indeed, the son of God? Was the one that God sent from heaven to redeem the world or not? The earliest Christians all believed that was certainly the case. And they believed that was grounded in who he actually was. So this confession, this Christ hymn goes back to the earliest Christians and what they believed about Jesus.

Why is the cross so prominent in Paul’s teaching?

Ankerberg: In the theology of Paul, the cross is prominent. Is this something that goes back to Jesus as well?

Witherington: Certainly I think it does. Jesus, it’s not, I’ve said before, and I’ll say again, it’s not amazing to me that Jesus got himself crucified. What’s amazing to me is that he lasted as long as he did, considering what he was doing and what he was teaching. The truth of the matter is that Jesus would not have had to be a particularly prophetic figure to foresee that he was going to come to a violent end. What’s interesting to me about that is that it’s not clear to

me when exactly he realized that that end would take the form, not of stoning, which he might have expected, like Stephen got, but of crucifixion. In those great passion predictions of Mark 8, 9, and 10, what Jesus says is that the son of man must suffer many things, and be killed, and on the third day rise. He doesn't use the verb crucified. He simply says be killed. I think that it's probably as we get down towards the last week of his life that it begins to become clear that the particular form in which he was going to die was the most shameful way to die. And this is why there is this wrestling in the Garden of Gethsemane. He does not want to drink the cup of God's wrath in front of the whole world, and be shamed in front of the whole world by being crucified. But if that's what God wills, then Thy will be done, says Jesus. I think it is true that it may well be that Jesus used the term take up your cross and follow me metaphorically. Maybe he had an inkling that this was where this was going anyway. But in any case, I think it is certainly the case that Jesus understood that he was the man born to die, and that he believed that God would be in that death.

Ankerberg: That shaming part must have really gotten to the apostle Paul.

Witherington: Well, I think it did. You know, the impression you get of somebody like Saul of Tarsus is that he was tremendously proud of his Jewish heritage. He lived in an honor and shame culture, and he believed that he had lived an honorable Jewish life. When he reflects in Philippians 3 about his Jewish pedigree, he says in regard to legalistic righteousness that comes from the law, I was faultless, kept it, every last jot and tittle. Here's a tremendously proud man. Someone who believes in his Jewish heritage, has a good clean conscience, believes he's live a good Jewish life, and then what happens? God asks of him what seems to be the impossible: by the way, I want you to believe in a crucified manual worker named Jesus as your Messiah, as the savior of the world. Now, it takes a major intellectual battle to get from Saul the Pharisee to Paul the convinced preacher of Jesus.

How did the resurrection of Jesus differ from what Paul the Pharisee expected?

Ankerberg: It takes an appearance of Jesus to him as well, and putting two and two together. What did the resurrection mean to Paul?

Witherington: Well, as a Pharisee, he believed that in the future, when Messiah came, there would be the resurrection of the saints in general. Most Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the just or the righteous. Not the resurrection of everybody. But he believed in the resurrection. Now what's odd about the Jesus tradition is that out of the blue we have this isolated individual resurrected in the midst of history. Now, for the Pharisee that meant an adjustment in what you believed about resurrection. And so Paul uses this terminology: Jesus being the first fruits, and those who are in Christ being the latter fruits of the resurrection. So he's had to rethink this whole belief in the resurrection. He doesn't abandon the belief, but in light of his own encounter with the risen Lord, he has to now believe differently. There was a resurrection back here, there is going to be more in the future.

Did Jesus really say "this is my body" at the Last Supper?

Ankerberg: Did Jesus really say at the Passover ceremony, where he had communion "This is my body"? That seems to be in contention. Is there any reason for that contention?

Witherington: Well, of course, the reason is that, if he said something like that he must have had some kind of atonement theology that referred to the salvific significance of his own death, and you know, there are various scholars who want to avoid that conclusion. But the truth of the matter is that even if you left all the Gospels out of the account, we still have Paul, a witness

from 20 some years after Jesus died saying well, this is what was said. And not only does he say this in 1 Corinthians 11, he says “this is the tradition I received from the earliest Christians.” Now it seems to me straining credulity to the breaking point to say, “Okay, we know that Paul affirms that ‘this is my body, this is my blood’ stuff. We know that Paul says that he received it from earlier Christians, but he couldn’t have received it from the eyewitnesses who were there with Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed. He must have received it from Christians who kind of ‘theologized’ about Jesus somewhere along the line, but they weren’t really in touch with Peter, James and John and those sort of folks. Now that argument is just straining credulity to the breaking point. The truth of the matter is that Jesus is the one that said this. The earliest disciples picked it up and remembered it as a sacred tradition because he was changing the Passover ritual. The thing that they had memorized since they were children suddenly had a new and different significance, because he’s now talking about himself, his body and his blood being the symbolic things that bring about the exodus, the redemption, the Passover of all human kind. For sure they were going to remember how he changed that ritual. And the earliest Christians transmitted this as a sacred tradition that we now call the Lord’s Supper.

Dr. N. T. (Tom) Wright

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What authority does Paul give for his message?

Dr. N. T. Wright: Right at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 15, which, by the way, is really where he’s summing up a lot of the stuff that he wants to say in the whole letter, so this isn’t just a bit tacked on at the end, he says, “Now, look, I’m going to remind you of the stuff I preached to you right at the beginning and here’s how it went.” And then it’s this formula: “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and was seen by” these various witnesses.”

Now, Paul is quoting there something which he has told them right at the beginning. In other words, back in maybe the late 40s when he first arrived in Corinth. So we’re talking 20 years after Jesus’ crucifixion and Resurrection. But he’s also saying that this wasn’t just what he used to teach, it was what Peter and Apollos and everybody else used to teach. And it’s clear that the Corinthians knew those other teachers and if they could have called up, or however, got in touch with one of the other teachers and said, “Hey, just check it out. Is this the real thing?,” Paul knows that they would have got the answer, “Yes. It is.” So with that little nugget there at the beginning of 1 Corinthians 15 we are in touch with material which takes us right back to the very early days of Christianity.

Did Paul invent Christianity?

Wright: Paul does talk of himself as building on the foundation and he says in a sense, “I am the one whose done this stuff” but it’s clear that it’s Jesus who is the foundation and Paul is

constantly looking back and saying that what he is doing is building on that Messiah foundation which is the very beginning of it all because if you take away the death and resurrection of Jesus, for Paul, there's nothing left. Paul is not offering people a new way of being religious. Paul is telling people that something has happened through which the world is now a different place.

What changed Paul over to believing in Jesus?

Ankerberg: People have to go back and say, "What persuaded this fellow to change from his views over to believing in Jesus?"

Wright: For Paul it's clear that he had and hadn't abandoned his previous views. I mean, for Paul, he was and remained a Jew loyal to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and that was absolutely fundamental. But he believed that this God, and not some other God, had acted in Jesus in the decisive events of the crucifixion and Resurrection. As I say, through which the world had been changed and a door had been opened into God's future.

Was Paul predisposed to believe in Jesus?

Ankerberg: He was not predisposed to believe in Jesus. Right?

Wright: No. No. No. No, that's right. And it would have taken something pretty dramatic. I mean, we've seen in our own day how people can get very fixed and set in believing that God is on the side of their particular movement, whichever it may be. And Paul was exactly in that kind of mind-set. So for him it took this blinding flash of light on the road to Damascus which wasn't just a religious experience, it was God revealing to him that Jesus of Nazareth really had been raised from the dead. Take that away and you can't explain why Paul did and said what he did and said.

Define "tradition" as Paul used it.

Ankerberg: Some people look at that and they say that he's talking about giving traditional material, and that word "tradition," especially in America, has a bad connotation. Tell us why that's valuable stuff.

Wright: Oh, it's valuable because in the early Church they lived in what we would call an "oral culture," by and large. We live in a print-based or an electronic-based culture. They didn't have any of that and for them, having something that was passed down by word of mouth and you could check where it had come from was **the** best way of making sure you were on safe ground. Now, of course, over the subsequent centuries, the Church has developed a thing called "Tradition" which often then becomes an excuse for, "We like doing it this way so let's call it Tradition and that makes it okay." And since the Reformation we've learned that there's a lot of danger in that. But for Paul and the early Church this was the way of saying, "We are in touch here with the authentic, early, original events." And so Paul uses the Jewish language called "handing on Tradition" because that meant we were on secure, solid rock. You could base your life on it.

What does Paul tell us about the burial of Jesus?

Ankerberg: Now, in 1 Corinthians 15 he says, "Jesus died according to the Scriptures, and then He was buried." It doesn't say that He was buried in a tomb. But you say that that is implied. Tell me why.

Wright: Oh, yes. When Paul talks about Jesus dying, being buried and being raised, Paul is familiar, of course, with the burial practices of first century Jews. He was a first century Jew

himself. And so to be buried implies that He was in whatever sort of a tomb it was. Now, they had different types of tombs, but many of them—and we can see these in and around Jerusalem today—were tombs cut in a rock, in a cave, into which you would go and roll a stone outside the door and so on. So it seems to me quite clear that Paul is aware of that as the sort of burial it was.

What is the “spiritual body”?

Ankerberg: What did Paul mean in 1 Corinthians 15 when he talked about “spiritual body”?

Wright: That’s one of those phrases which have caused endless problems because the word “spiritual” in our culture doesn’t mean at all what Paul meant by it. In the Revised Standard Version and the New Revised Standard Version which many Christians use and which are very good versions in many ways, they oppose the physical body to the spiritual body and in our culture that means physical—this “stuff,” and spiritual is kind of nebulous like a ghost or a vision or whatever. But the actual words in the Greek don’t mean that. In the Greek what we have is *soma pseuchekon*, which is from the same word that we get psyche or psychedelic or psychiatrist, and that is what is translated “physical.” And it seems to mean the embodiment for the soul. And then the *soma pneumatikon*, which is the appropriate embodiment for the spirit. And what we have then is not a contrast between what we would call physical and spiritual but a contrast between this present body—which is corruptible and which is heading for death—and a body which, because it’s finally animated by God’s Holy Spirit, the Resurrection body, is not corruptible. When Paul is talking about this in 1 Corinthians 15, that is the main contrast that he is making between a body that is corruptible—going to die and going to corrupt in the grave; and a new body which will be incorruptible and has come through death and come out the other side and will never be touched by death again.

What was the understanding of “resurrection” among the Jews, particularly the Pharisees?

Ankerberg: In the context of Judaism, in all that they were thinking about in terms of when people died what happened to them, and the expectations of the Resurrection that the Pharisees held, okay? There also is a little turn in the road when Jesus comes forth from the dead and appears to the disciples, and that is, that there is only one Resurrection; where the Pharisees you talk about held to everybody was going to be raised. Now, talk about why that is important.

Wright: Yes. I think, for Paul, again, because he is our earliest witness, you can see it very clearly, you could summarize it like this: What Paul expected God to do for **all** the righteous at the **end** of time, he discovered that God had done for Jesus in the middle of time. And so you have this sense of not just, “This is a very odd thing that’s happened,” but this was what was supposed to happen to everybody and it happened to Jesus. And that is, of course, one of the reasons why for Paul Jesus is the Messiah who represents the whole people of God. It’s as though in him all of this has actually happened, has actually come to pass, so that you then get not just a sharpening up of the idea of Resurrection, that it isn’t just resuscitation, it means going through death and out into this new sort of body, you also get a revising of the time table of history. Instead of history going along and at the end God’s going to do it all, God has done an advanced version in the middle of the present sequence of what He’s going to do at the end.

It’s very interesting that in the Greek Orthodox tradition of iconography—I’ve got on the mantelpiece an icon of the Resurrection. And what we have there is not simply Jesus as the Risen

One, but Jesus helping up Adam and Eve out of the tomb. And when I bought a different icon just recently in a Greek Orthodox shop, I said, "I want an icon of the Resurrection of Jesus" and they pointed me to one like this which is actually of the Resurrection of all people. And they said, "Yes. This is Easter. This is what it's all about." And whereas for us in the West we have really separated that out: "There's Easter over there" and "There's all of us being raised there," in the Eastern Church these things belong together and they've never really separated them out. And that's a very biblical, a very Pauline insight.

What was it about the resurrection of Jesus that got Paul's attention?

Wright: Paul was what we would call a right-wing Pharisee. We know a little bit about some right-wing Jewish agendas of our own day. This is a very politicized agenda. It's about getting rid of pagans; getting rid of enemies; about God acting through the devotion to Torah of particular Jews and God thus revealing what we call God's righteousness, God's faithfulness, to the covenant.

And this is Paul's question: How is God going to be faithful to the covenant? And Paul's answer as a Jew—Saul of Tarsus' answer—is that God is going to do this through the Torah, through the obedience of His people through which He will act splendidly to bring about justice and peace for Israel and the judgment of the world.

Take this man, Saul of Tarsus, having gone off zealously to persecute the followers of Jesus because they are out of line; they are being disloyal to Torah; they're being disloyal to Temple and the land and all these other things; have him confronted by the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus and suddenly, Paul's world turns inside out because he realizes that Jesus has been raised from the dead; that Jesus, who was executed as a blaspheming, would-be Messiah, and this means that God has vindicated this Jesus as Messiah, which means that in fact that whole plan of God has in fact been fulfilled in the messianic events of Jesus' life and death and Resurrection. And from there it's actually only a short step to saying this good news, this Gospel message of Jesus, God has now unveiled what His covenant plan was all along. And in the letter to the Romans Paul says, "The gospel is revealed, the righteousness of God, the covenant faithfulness of God." On that basis Paul then looks at Jesus himself and sees that God has done in Jesus what in the Old Testament God said He would do Himself. In the Old Testament God says, "I love my people so much, I will come and deliver them." Paul sees that God Himself was present. He says, "God was in Christ redeeming the world to Himself." And so he writes that extraordinary poem in Philippians 2 in which he talks about Jesus being in the form of God but not regarding His equality with God as something to exploit—which is a way of saying being equal with God didn't mean giving Himself as putting on grandeur like a Roman emperor would. It meant being committed to the path of self-sacrificial humble service, going being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. That is why Paul says, "God has now raised Him from the dead, exalted Him, given Him the name Lord, the name above all names, that at the name of Jesus we should bow..." and we shouldn't mistake what's happening there. This is both the theological statement again—a way of saying "in Christ God has redeemed the world" and it's also a political statement because if Jesus is Lord, Caesar isn't. And all of that is there in a nutshell in Philippians 2:6-11 and in Romans 1:1-17.

Dr. Craig Evans

[Dr. Craig Evans: Ph.D. in New Testament from Claremont Graduate School and is the Director of the Graduate Program in Biblical Studies at Trinity Western University, where he has taught since 1981. He has lectured at Cambridge, Durham, and Oxford. Co-editor of *Dictionary of New Testament Backgrounds*, *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* and *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Author of *Jesus and His Contemporaries*.]

Did Paul invent Christianity?

Ankerberg: The information in 1 Corinthians 15 tells us something about how to answer the question, “Did Paul invent Christianity?”

Dr. Craig Evans: Yeah. That has been around for a long time: Who is the Founder of Christianity anyway? Is it Jesus or is it Paul? And the question is actually a good one to ask because it forces us to recognize the contribution that Paul made. It forces us to stop, rethink, “Well, what contribution did Jesus make anyway?” But at the end of the day, if it’s carefully thought through, we still come back to, “No. Jesus is the Founder of Christianity.” What Paul does is, Paul takes it to the next step. It’s implicit in Jesus’ ministry—the Gospel, the Good News, goes first to the Jewish people; and then it goes to the Gentiles. That’s in Jesus’ ministry. It’s hinted at in a few places. It’s significantly hinted at in His temple demonstration when He appeals to Isaiah 56: It’s supposed to be a house of prayer for all the peoples. If He has that whole oracle in mind, and I think He does, then He envisions Israel renewed, restored, which then becomes like a lighthouse for the entire world. Well, that’s what Paul is doing—the light for the world—again, another Isaiah phrase, Isaiah 49:6. That’s what he’s doing. So he’s acting on Jesus’ mission. He’s taking it that next logical step and I don’t think this is an innovation on Paul’s part. He’s done this in cooperation and collaboration with the Jerusalem Church with its blessing. He takes the Gospel in His own special way to the Gentile world. So Paul is not the founder of Christianity but obviously he is a major contributor to what Christianity becomes, the expression it takes, and of course he is the major theologian for Gentile Christianity in that sense.

How is Paul’s message related to the Gospels?

Ankerberg: Pull Paul in here in terms of showing that we have information that we could trust in the Synoptics and John via Paul because the Gospels may be “out” for some of the scholars, but Paul is “in.” Well, if Paul is “in,” what does that tell you about the Synoptics?

Evans: When some of the scholars say that Paul doesn’t really know the Gospel tradition or doesn’t relate to it, they’re wrong because you have the tradition of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in Paul in various places—like the words of institution: the Last Supper in 1 Corinthians 11; or the eyewitnesses of the Resurrection mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15. There is important Matthew, Mark, Luke tradition right there in Paul years before Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written.

How accurate is the New Testament in terms of history?

Ankerberg: Are the words accurate words as far as the scholars are concerned? Did Jesus actually say those statements? And, secondly, if He did say those statements, what’s the meaning of those statements?

Evans: First of all, it’s very probable that He did say those words. You have multiple attestation. You have it in Paul in 1 Corinthians 11, so you have a very early source. When Paul writes

this down, not even twenty years have elapsed. And he cites this as received tradition. People already knew about that. So Paul, even if he's the first to write about it, he's not the first to know about it. It's already an old tradition—the gospels are written later.

Ankerberg: What was the message that was proclaimed after Jesus died but before the Gospels and the New Testament were written. How do you even know anything about what was preached immediately after?

Evans: Well, we assume that the Gospel was proclaimed by word of mouth, and so what we hope is that something is written down before the living eyewitnesses pass away. And that's what happens. Paul is talking about it, and the way Paul talks about it in 1 Corinthians, it's "old hat;" they've known about it for years, what Paul is writing, 20 years, maybe 17, 18 years after the event. And so that, from a historian's point of view, that's pretty good because remember what historians of antiquity have to deal with. Sometimes we have one source written down two or three hundreds years after the event took occurred and the oldest copy of that source we have is five or six hundred years after the original was written. And you say, "Well, that's pretty good. We've got some good solid information here to work with." And so we go to the scene where it all happened and we find a few stones that match the source and we say, "Hey! It's confirmed."

Well, the Gospels give us a ton of stuff in comparison to that. We actually have Paul talking about critical events, like the words of institution, eyewitnesses to the Resurrection, writing that within 20 years, writing within the lifetime of the people who were the witnesses themselves, and then the Gospel is written 10, 20, 30 years after that—and several of them, drawing upon at least two, probably three, maybe four distinct sources. That's pretty good attestation compared to what historians of antiquity normally have to work with. There are lots of historians of antiquity that would rejoice if we had sources that reached back to Paracletus, within 20 years of his life, sources that reach back to living eyewitnesses; and then had hundreds of manuscripts and copies of these sources dating within a century or so. They would be ecstatic! Well, that's what we have in New Testament research and yet some of the scholars are hyper-critical, hyper-skeptical. I just don't understand.

What is "tradition" as used by Paul?

Ankerberg: Talk about 1 Corinthians 15. Get "tradition" on the table for our American people to realize that's important, almost technical data that Paul is giving that the community accepted. In other words, our people don't seem to understand the import of what Paul is doing in 1 Corinthians 15 and why that's so important in verifying that Jesus was a historical person, that the Resurrection took place—you've got the empty tomb; you've got the eyewitnesses all labeled there. But it's packaged in a special way that you scholars sit up and notice. Even the Jewish scholars like Pinchas Lapide and Flusser and so on, all say, "This is authentic stuff." Okay, our guys don't seem to get that. Why is it authentic stuff? Why is that portion important and what's the information that's being given there?

Evans: Well, in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul passes on as tradition what he has received, what they have received, he wants to pass on to them, and underscore it. And he does so for a reason because there are some heretical views regarding Resurrection that are beginning to float around in the Corinthian church and Paul wants to stamp it out. And so he appeals to old tradition. Well, it's funny—"old" tradition? The tradition isn't even 20 years old yet and it's old tradition. And so it's tradition that is circulating with the eyewitnesses still living. And so this is why many scholars, in fact, do take it very seriously. Some may not, but most do. They take it very seri-

ously.

Ankerberg: Define tradition first then.

Evans: Well, Paul defines it and so “Jesus *died*, and He *was buried*, and He *was raised up*.” We get these key verbs that summarize a lot of things. And “was buried,” by the way—that’s something that I think Dom [John Dominic] Crossan has to look at again and take more seriously. It’s not Jesus died and was shamefully left...I mean, why not incorporate that in the Christian story if Jesus wasn’t buried: “Jesus died and was dishonored with no burial and then He was resurrected”? But, no, He died, He was buried, and this summarizes old stuff and it’s stuff that’s so old it has already developed into a shorthand. It has been around. You know the whole story so well, you just need three verbs and you can summarize the whole thing. “Hey, I know what you mean.” And that’s what it has become: a theological and historical shorthand summarizing the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. And it’s considered “tradition”—already “old stuff”—20 years later? That’s amazing! You know, it really is something. It reaches back to the time of Jesus. It reaches right back into the lifetime of eyewitnesses, many of whom were still living; and Paul says so: “He has appeared to over five hundred...” after cataloging everybody, “most of whom are still living.” That’s pretty solid stuff. And if Paul were making it up, I mean, he would have been compromised; he would have been found out so easily and discredited. But he’s not making it up. In fact, that isn’t even the point of the argument. He just reminds them of this and then goes on and makes his argument having to do with the importance of the Resurrection for the believer.

What is so important about the creedal statements in Paul’s writings?

Ankerberg: There’s other creedal statements. People don’t understand what the word “creedal” means; they don’t understand what the word “tradition” means in conveying technical information that the community accepts. This is the authoritative scoop, okay? How do you scholars know when you have a creedal statement, i.e., in Acts, and what do those creedal statements signify?

Evans: Well, creedal statements comes from the Latin word *credo* which means, “I believe.” And so these are confessional statements; these are summarizing statements that say this is the important stuff. Other stuff is negotiable. Other stuff is, you know, it’s okay, it’s useful, but you don’t have to have it. But this is the non-negotiable. This is the stuff that we **must** believe. That’s what Creed is. And “Tradition” is that plus other things that’s passed on—it’s handed on from person to person, generation to generation. And I know that for some Protestants the idea of “Tradition” is somehow bad: “We’re not into traditions.” Oh, yes, you are. And the New Testament, of course, is our single-most important piece of Tradition that has been handed on, and written down, and handed on generation by generation.

Ankerberg: When Peter says, “They killed Him” or “You killed Him, God raised Him,” they say that’s a creedal statement. And in just a short, succinct little package there you have a whole lot going on.

Evans: Yeah, just like 1 Corinthians 15. They’ve got those three verbs and that’s a creedal statement and creeds, that’s what they do. They summarize the essence. It’s a shorthand. They summarize a larger paradigm, a larger constellation of ideas. That’s what a creed does.

What effect did the fact of the Crucifixion have on Paul?

Ankerberg: This very fact blew Paul away, too, that Jesus was willing to go to the extent of being a Servant even to the death on the cross, so Philippians 2 comes about. But this had to

blow Paul's mind. Tell why this whole thing that Jesus did impressed His followers later on, people that were Pharisees like Paul.

Evans: If Jesus had not been resurrected, I don't think they'd have been very much impressed. They'd have said, "Well, you've got to give Him high marks for devotion to His vision and willingness to die for it." They might have said that. But when He was resurrected, they realized, "You know, He was right in what He was saying. He really was God's Son. He really was acting according to God's will. God did raise Him up." And for Paul, Paul's testimony would be very similar because Paul would assume that when the Messiah came, the only people that are going to do any suffering are the bad guys. The only people who are going to be doing any suffering are the Romans. That's the way it's supposed to be when the Messiah shows up. "So Jesus obviously can't be the Messiah. He's dead." But now you've got this heresy, and people are running around saying, "Hey, aspects of the law of Moses really don't have to be followed. I mean, in the name of Jesus you don't have to do this and that and the other thing," and he says, "Oh, obviously Jesus is a heretic. Jesus must have left behind a legacy of false teaching." So Paul, the purist and the Pharisee, is going to stamp it out—until he encounters the risen Jesus. And now he has a whole new insight as to what the Messiah means, a whole new personal insight as to what his own righteousness means and what the Law means. And so you have Paul turned inside out because of his encounter with the risen Christ.

What changed Paul from a skeptic to a believer?

Ankerberg: Many scholars want to deny an actual physical resurrection of Jesus. But could anything other than resurrection account for the change in Paul and other skeptics?

Evans: There have been all sorts of alternative theories that have been proposed. The New Testament, without any variation, unanimously affirms that Jesus was raised from the dead. Resurrection we're talking about, not ghost appearances and things like that, or wishful thinking, or memories and dreams, nor anything like that. Jesus was resurrected. And that was contrary to expectation. The disciples had run away. Why in the world would they think Jesus was going to be resurrected. They didn't want to hang around for His execution. They took off. So the disciples were all drawn back. Jesus' own family members were somewhat resistant to His ministry. You see that clearly in Mark 3. And yet His brother James becomes the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. Mary, who, you know, comes on board. So what has changed the minds of these cowardly disciples who had run away? What's changed the minds of some of His own family members? What has changed the minds of some of the Pharisees—two, by the way, who, according to Luke, become converts early on? And it's because of the Resurrection—and that was contrary to expectation. They believed in the Resurrection probably the way a lot of Christians today do. It's kind of pie in the sky eventually, somewhere down the road. I think they would have believed that. But Jesus was talking about being resurrected in three days. And you don't have to press that and say that means literally 72 hours or something like that. It's based again—it's typical of Jesus—it's based on a loose paraphrase, Aramaic in this case, of Hosea 6:2: "On the second day He will revive us; after three days He will raise us up." And in the Aramaic paraphrase, which was developing in the synagogue of Jesus' day and beyond, it's understood to be, "He'll raise us up in the day of resurrection." And that's probably where Jesus' language comes from. So He's trying to assure His disciples, "On the third day I will be raised up." And He's alluding to Hosea 6:2. Well, that sounds nice in theory but, you know, would you like to put it to the test? No. Most people wouldn't. "I'll pass on that." And but Jesus had faith that God would raise Him up and the disciples were, I think, thunderstruck when they realized after three days He **was** raised up. And Jesus' hope and His faith in His Heavenly Father were vindicated

and then He appears to them. And of course, they are just overwhelmed. Here is their Master. He stands before them bearing the marks of crucifixion still within His body. They are astounded by that and utterly transformed. No more cowardice; no more doubting; no more fickleness and fecklessness—the way it had been. No. They become His witnesses throughout their lives right to their own deaths and for most of them, it was martyrdom.

Notes:

¹ *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (www.studylight.org)

² *Smith's Bible Dictionary*

³ *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (www.studylight.org)

⁴ John Pollock, *The Apostle: A Life of Paul* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), p. 15.

⁵ Pollock, pp. 15-16, 19.

⁶ Pollock, p. 17.

⁷ *Smith's Bible Dictionary*

⁸ James I. Packer, Merrill C. Tenney and William White, Jr., editors, *Nelson's Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible [computer file], electronic ed.*, Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1995.

⁹ *Easton Bible Dictionary*

¹⁰ *Nelson's Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible*

¹¹ *Nelson's Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible*

¹² *Easton Bible Dictionary*

¹³ *Easton Bible Dictionary*