

Life and Teachings of Paul

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Why is it important or beneficial to do a personality profile of Paul the Apostle of Christ? Even though his message is inspired of God, it is still Paul who is the messenger and the message is an expression of his understanding of what has been revealed to him. How he understood what he calls "the gospel" is what we will be considering in this study.

To Paul, the gospel (a story revealed by God) was the power of God with reference to the salvation of the human race. What does he understand by the world salvation (*soteri'a*)? The answer is found in the whole of his writings, but in 1 Cor 15:1-8, we see the most explicit expression of what he means by this term. What role did the cross (Paul's figure for the ignominious and brutal death of Jesus) in the scheme of his thinking on this subject? How was the resurrection of Christ a saving event for the race of Adam?

Paul draws from his own scholastic background in biblical studies and his cultural background; especially, his educational and religious training in Tarsus and Jerusalem. But to this must be added his experience of the risen Christ, his exposure to the early Christian community (i.e., the church in Damascus, Antioch, and Jerusalem - Acts 9:19-30; 11:19-30; 13:1-3), as well as Peter and James, not to mention the "missing years" in Arabia and Tarsus (Gal 1:13-2:13).

The Sources for the Study of Paul the Apostle of Christ

How do we know what we know about the Apostle Paul? The first source, of course, is the letters of Paul to the churches he had

established, churches he visited or planned to visit, and to individuals with whom he was associated. The letters are the earliest writings of the NT canon. The second source would be Luke's second volume of his two-volume collection on the life of Jesus of Nazareth (the Gospel of Luke), and the beginnings of the early church (Acts of Apostles), where Paul first appears in Acts 7:58, as the Pharisaic scribe or scholar called Saul of Tarsus. The third source is the first century Jewish world of Palestine and the Greco-Roman world of the Jewish Diaspora. The fourth source is the Hellenistic culture of the Mediterranean world, which was such an influence on both Jews and gentiles of the first century period.

From Acts of the Apostles and the letters of Paul we see anything but an ordinary historical figure. Rather, we see a man who was an extraordinary historical figure, whose life was characterized by the presence of supernatural gift or abilities. He was the last person to whom Jesus of Nazareth appeared after he had been crucified and resurrected from death. He had received special revelation from God, had been given the gift of inspiration to aid him in his understanding of the story of the Messiah and in his letters. He possessed the gift of prophecy as the prophets of Israel in ancient times. He had been given, by divine empowerment, the unique ability to speak multipliable languages, as well as the ability to perform works of wonder, known as miracles or manifestations of power.

He was a man of scholastic accomplishment in knowledge of the Hebrew (and Greek) Scriptures of Judaism, and was a man of extraordinary moral character, spiritual depth and theological insight.

The first six lessons address the life of Paul, with the last six lessons developing the theology of Paul.

How To Study This Material

0. Introduction to the Study

1. Saul: the Jewish Rabbi

2. Saul Sees the Risen Jesus

3. Paul: a Man Recreated

4. Jesus Is “the Son of God”

5. The Lost Years

6. Paul: an Apostle of Christ

7. Paul on New Creation

8. The Mystery of the Gospel

9. Paul on Divine Reversal

10. Paul’s on Redemption

11. The Conquest of Satan

12. Paul’s on Justification

13. Jesus’ Death as Sacrifice

