



## LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

### “A.D: Undeniable ”

Ps Rice Brooks – May 24, 2015

#### **WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)**

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. *No right or wrong answers.*

- Why do you believe Christianity to be true?
- What do you think is the main reason people doubt the truthfulness of Jesus claims?
- What’s one fact/ principle/ person you can count on to be true everytime?

#### **WORD (10-15 minutes)**

Sermons can be heard online at [bethelbrentwood.org/media](http://bethelbrentwood.org/media).

Meanwhile, Saul was still professing murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!” “Yes, Lord,” he answered. The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.” “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.” But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” Acts 9:1-16

Many have tried to discredit the truthfulness of Jesus resurrection. Christianity is the only religion that bases all its truthfulness on that one event. The enemies of Christ tried to dismiss the belief in the resurrection, and Christians tried to prove its veracity. There are five main historical events to which both, believers and skeptics alike, believe to have happened. The encounter Saul of Tarsus had with the

resurrected Jesus is one of the main historical facts that even skeptical historians accept to be fact. (The other facts accepted by most historians, Christians and skeptics, alike are: 1. Jesus actually lived and was Jewish; 2. Jesus was executed by crucifixion by Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator; 3. Jesus's tomb was found empty by a group of His female followers three days after His crucifixion; 4. His disciples believed Jesus appeared to them after His death; 5. Saul of Tarsus was transformed after claiming to see the risen Jesus.)

There is no other encounter like Saul's recorded in the New Testament. The impact of his preaching and his works sparked the explosive growth of the Christian church. Let us look at the effects of Saul's encounter with Jesus:

**1. Saul's encounter with Christ gave him a new life mission.** This event may be one of the most dramatic encounters with God in all of Scripture. Paul experienced Him as a blinding light. The end result was Paul being commissioned by God to accomplish His purposes. A common theme runs through the stories of those who encounter Christ in any way: They find themselves divinely "redirected." Paul's belief that Christ had been raised from the dead led him to spark a mass movement that caused multitudes to accept the Gospel, putting their trust in Christ.

**2. Saul's encounter with Christ changed his character.** Meeting Christ on the road to Damascus not only changed the course of Saul's life, but it changed his character. Before Damascus, Saul was indeed religiously zealous; yet, his heart was filled with anger, resentment, and even murder. However, after Saul's encounter with Christ, he became the exact opposite. Instead of resorting to torture and persecution to get others to change their beliefs, Paul would instead pray, preach, and persuade them by the force of his arguments—even to the point of being tortured and persecuted himself.

**3. Saul's encounter with Christ made him willing to suffer for the sake of his faith.** From the very start of his new Christian life, Saul was told the price he would have to pay to follow Jesus. This message doesn't sound like much of the popular preaching of our day that promises the blessings of following Jesus without mentioning the cost of being His disciple. Jesus consistently told His disciples that they would have to pick up their own cross and follow Him (Luke 14:27). "Christianity is a cross, not a crutch."

**4. Saul's encounter with Christ caused him to ground his faith in the truth of Scripture, not just personal experience.** Just three years after his encounter, Saul personally visited Peter and James and verified the message of the Gospel (Galatians 1:18-20). Eventually, he would talk to John and other apostles, as well as those who were eyewitnesses (Galatians 2:1-10). He would write to the Corinthians the great Gospel creed, which he received from the eyewitnesses he spoke to (1 Corinthians 15:3-8), and which historians say would have been constructed no more than two to three years after the resurrection. These statements contained in the passage emphasize that Christ died and rose again "*according to the Scriptures.*"

Ultimately, because they witnessed and believed these certain *undeniable events*, the believers were willing to lay down their lives. History tells us that a majority of the original disciples were actually put to death rather than denying Jesus had been raised from the dead. When you have a personal encounter with the resurrected Christ, you can make a dramatic impact for Christ. As you embrace these key truths and allow God to ground your faith as He established Saul's, you put yourself in the place to make a difference with your life.

## **PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)**

**Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.**

- Have you had a personal encounter with the resurrected Christ? What effects has it produced in your life?
- Have you ever doubted your faith? How did you settle the issue?
- Commit to memorize the message of the Gospel to share it to other.

## **PRAYER (10-15 minutes)**

**Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.**

- Pray that the truth of the Gospel will disperse all factual doubts, the love of Christ disperse all emotional doubts and the conviction of the Spirit disperse all volitional doubts in our hearts.
- Pray for some people you know that need to have an encounter with our risen Savior. Pray for God to open their hearts to receive the Gospel.
- Pray for boldness to share, and wisdom to defend, the Gospel to anyone God puts in your path.