

## Sharing the “Light” of Christ’s Resurrection

### Acts 26:1-23

**Main Idea:** *Like Paul, the church is commissioned to proclaim the “light” of Christ’s resurrection to both Jews and Gentiles, opening their spiritually blind eyes and turning them from darkness to light, that they too may receive the gift of forgiveness and the promised inheritance of fellowship with God.*

**Introduction:** Please open your bibles and turn to Acts 25...

#### **Orienting the Text: Where we are in the story**

I want to spend a few minutes catching us up in the narrative and where we currently are. Keep in mind that what Luke is doing is showing us how the political world of the first century intersects with Paul’s ministry and mission. While most of these figures probably don’t mean much to most of you (unless you happen to geek out on ancient history!), but if you were a first century resident, then this would be like Paul meeting with the US Senate, the supreme court and making a bid to stand in front of the president himself!

- A) Paul returns to Jerusalem to bring an aid package to suffering Christians and is arrested on trumped up charges of starting a disturbance in the temple courts and bringing Gentiles into forbidden spaces.
- B) Next Paul goes before the Sanhedrin where he is put on trial. Here Paul divides the assembly against itself by focusing on the resurrection (dividing Jews and Sadducees).
- C) Next Paul is moved to Cesarea and faces the governor of Judea, Felix and his (illegitimate) wife Drusilla, whom he witnesses to about faith in Christ. Felix hopes that Paul will make him a bribe, and when he doesn’t he is left in prison for another 2 years.
- D) However, Paul’s enemies still have not forgotten about him! They return and plead with the new governor, Festus, to move Paul back to Jerusalem, where they hope to put him to death. In seeking to do them a favor, Festus brings Paul out to give his own defense (which he is due, according to Roman law). As usual, Paul directs the attention from himself and comes back to Jesus. He has broken no laws, been faithful Israelite his whole life – the only difference being that he has found in Jesus the one true Messiah, and the promised resurrection/restoration of the nation of Israel, which begins with Jesus and will conclude with the literal resurrection of all of His followers at the end of history when he returns again to consummate His coming kingdom.
- E) However, Paul turns the tables and, in accordance with the legal privileges afforded him by his Roman citizenship, Paul appeals to the highest court and governance of the land, by demanding an audience with Caesar himself. Shocked and unsure what to do, Festus grants this request (thus favoring Paul over the Jews).
- F) Last week, we saw how King Agrippa the 2<sup>nd</sup> and his sister, Bernice, visit Festus, who shares this dilemma he has and what to do with this odd, little Jew named Paul (who also happens to be a Roman citizen!).

Today, we get to hear from Paul. And as you might expect, he takes the opportunity of explaining himself as an opportunity to proclaim Jesus, the true Light and the true Inheritance of Israel, for the world. Let’s begin...

#### **Exposition of Acts 26:1-18 - Paul defends the resurrection - Acts 26:1-8**

Paul explains that he is on trial for the sake of the promises of God to his forebearers, centering on the resurrection. As a reminder, the Jewish view of resurrection was not just for the righteous individuals at the end of the age who would inherit eternal life (like in Daniel 12:1-3), but of a national restoration of the nation under a Davidic king, who would restore the temple and secure the land as the place where Yahweh dwells, thus ending Israel’s spiritual exile.

05-19-24

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### **The “Light of Resurrection” in the Old Testament**

Restored Israel (Isa. 25:6-8; Hos. 6:1-3; Ezek. 37:) including...

- a. Davidic Messiah (Isa. 11; Ezek. 34:25-31)
- b. Outpouring of the Spirit (Isaiah 59; Ezek. 36:22-32; Joel 2)
- c. Restored Temple where Yahweh dwells (Eze. 37; Joel 3; Mal. 3; Isa. 66)
- d. The Gentile nations worshipping God (Isa. 2; 19; 66).

Summary text: Isaiah 60:1-3

### **The Theme of “Light” in Luke’s Prophecies about Jesus**

Simeon’s prophecy: Luke 2:29-32

*Paul explains how he met Jesus - Acts 26:9-15*

Now, we are going to see how Paul uses this theme of “light” in this passage to describe the presence of Jesus.

Elsewhere in the Old Testament, this kind of heavenly light was typically associated with angels, but also the presence of God Himself.

*Jesus commissions Paul - Acts 26:15-18*

*Paul is obedient to Jesus’s commands - Acts 26:19-23*

Okay, let’s do some biblical math! Paul’s repeated use of the phrase “light” is drawn from the prophet Isaiah. I want you to see this: This calling is in line with what the prophet Isaiah spoke about Israel (Isaiah 42:6-7), and Israel’s servant (Isa. 49:5-6).

### **Israel as God’s “light” to the world in the Old Testament**

*Israel called to be “light” to the Gentiles (Isa. 42:6-7).* However, Israel herself needs resurrection! How will that happen?

*God’s servant will bring light to both Israel and the Gentiles (Isa. 49:5-6)*

*The servant accomplishes this by his own death/resurrection (Isa. 53:10-11)*

Do the math with me now: **Christ fulfills Israel’s commission by becoming the source of God’s “light” via His own resurrection.**

Through His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ becomes “true Israel” (the king, the land, the temple) and is now the source of God’s “light”.

### **The resurrected Jesus commissions Paul to extend Christ’s “light” and spiritually “resurrect” both Jews and Gentiles**

Let’s take a closer look at what Jesus tells Paul to do in verse 18: By proclaiming God’s “light” in Jesus, Paul is assured that:

- a. Open - Spiritually blind eyes of both Jews/Gentiles would be opened
- b. Turn – Jews/Gentiles would be turned from darkness to light (i.e. Satan to God)
- c. Receive – Both Jews/Gentiles would receive the gift of forgiveness of their sins and the promised inheritance [a place among God’s “holy people”] through faith in Jesus.

**Main Idea:** *Like Paul, the church is commissioned to proclaim the “light” of Christ’s resurrection to both Jews and Gentiles, opening their spiritually blind eyes and turning them from darkness to light, that they too may receive the gift of forgiveness and the promised inheritance of fellowship with God.*

**Application:** Being an “ally of the light” for both Jews and Gentiles

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I'd like to step back a moment and do some theological reflection with you on this text in light of our current cultural moment we are living in right now. Over the last several years, there has been a trend in our culture to move away from judging and/or criticizing other groups or belief-systems, but instead becoming an "ally", and therefore bless, affirm, and support groups that may be disadvantaged or marginalized. According to one report I read, allyship can be defined as: *Allyship is the process of actively supporting and advocating for individuals from marginalized communities. An ally is someone who uses their position of privilege to create opportunities and advocate for people who do not have that same privilege.*

Now in so far as being an ally means that we seek to protect people from bullying, harassment, or violence, then allyship is a good thing – it's a form of a neighbor love, which is exactly what Jesus would have us do. Think of the parable of the Good Samaritan. However, many who advocate for allyship are also vehemently opposed to what is known as proselytizing (seeking their conversions).

So friends, as you hear the cultures call to be an *ally* of underrepresented, or marginalized groups – whether it be Palestinians, Israelis, ethnic groups, or whoever – let us be Paul-type allies, who point people back to the light of God's salvation, so that Christ may be seen by all. This is the great gift we have to offer – don't withhold the gift!

*"This is what Paul lived for: the joy of his people in Christ. His whole ministry is a project of bringing others into the joy he had in knowing Jesus Christ. "Love" means gladly embracing the quest to bring others into your experience of joy in God [in Christ], even if it costs you your life."*

The most loving thing we can do for people today, in our confused and conflicted culture, is continue to point them all back to Jesus, that Christ may be seen by all!

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#### Exposition of Acts 26:1-18

*Paul defends the resurrection*

Acts 26:1-8

*Paul shares how he met Jesus*

Acts 26:9-15

*Jesus commissions Paul*

Acts 26:15-18

*Paul obedient to Jesus's commands*

Acts 26:19-23

**Application:** Being an "ally of the light" for both Jews and Gentiles

**Questions for Reflection:**

- 1) What is purpose of Paul's commission from Jesus?
- 2) What does the theme of "light" signify in Luke? (hint: see Isa. 60:1-3; Luke 2:29-32).
- 3) How can we be an "ally of the light" for the people around us?
- 4) Whom might God be calling you specifically to be "ally of the light" for?