

## Deconstructing Doubt: 3 Days

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Stay with me today

I'm going to circle the airport a time or two

But I will land the plane

So, don't let me lose you, ok?

**In 1978**

American astrophysicist, author, and researcher Michael Hart

Published his landmark book called

The 100

Where he ranks the top 100

Most influential people in history

Hart didn't characterize the 100

Based on if they were good or bad

Just influential

For instance

**Adolf Hitler is ranked number 39**

Because he impacted history

**Ginghis Khan is 29**

Even though he was a really bad dude

So, his list is based on impact

Societal impact

Who changed the course

Of human history

The most

NOTE – this was not a Christian book

**Jesus was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Behind Muhammed and Isaac Newton**

Which seems a little sketch to me

I would have put Jesus higher

So, in this secular study

Of who changed the course of world history the most

**The Apostle Paul was #6**

**Ahead of every American president – Washington (26), Jefferson (64),  
Kennedy (81)**

Abe Lincoln, by the way, made honorable mention

Not sure how Kennedy came ahead of Lincoln

But that's a discussion for another day

The Apostle Paul came Ahead of every inventor

Except for Newton

**Ahead of every Roman Emperor – Augustus (18), Julius (67)**

Which is ironic

Since Nero had him beheaded

But Nero didn't even make the cut

The apostle Paul

Had great impact

**We know that Paul of Tarsus** {Show Acts 22:3 - "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today."}

Grew up in Jerusalem

He was about the same age as Jesus

Maybe a touch younger

But he had a very different upbringing

He studied under the famous Rabbi Gamaliel

So, he essentially got an Ivy League education

For his day

We don't read about him in the Bible

Till the book of Acts

But living in Jerusalem

Training under Gamaliel

He would have been step for step

Right in the middle of all the Jesus conflicts

Right?

We certainly don't know for sure

But He probably would have been there

The day that Gamaliel spoke to the Sanhedrin

About the apostles

Peter had just declared that

God raised Jesus from the dead

**Acts 5:33-40a (NIV) - When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while.**

The Sanhedrin was a group of religious scholars

71 men

Who served as a judicial court of sorts

And they held great political authority

**Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his**

**followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt.**

**He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.” His speech persuaded them.**

Paul wasn't a member of the Sanhedrin

But he probably would have been there

And even though Gamaliel's speech persuaded them

But it must not have persuaded Paul

Because he...

**Acts 8:3, 9:1b (NIV) – Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison (and) breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples.**

Saul was his Hebrew name

Probably named after Saul

The first Jewish King

But he also went by his Greek & Latin name

Paul

And often he's referred that way in Scripture

Because he was ministering

In Gentile areas

A short while later

**Acts 9:1b-6 (NIV) - 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."**

He met Jesus there

On the road to Damascus

Not a dream

Not a vision

A person

Alive – whom he had probably seen die

It says:

**Acts 9:8-9 (NIV) 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.**

For three days

He was blind

Didn't eat or drink

Probably didn't sleep much if at all

For three days

He thought about what had happened

He prayed

He probably thought about

All the times he had seen Jesus

And as an understudy of Gamaliel

We don't know

But there were probably quite a few times

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Let me show you

Just a few of those

Grab a Bible and turn to

**Matthew 26**

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*Read Matthew 26:57*

Gamaliel certainly would have been there

And Paul – as an understudy of Gamaliel

Probably would have been too

*Read Matthew 26:59-60a*

Can you picture Paul

Working the crowd?

Trying to get people to come forward

Trying to catch Jesus say something condemning?

*Read Matthew 26:63b-68*

Coming on the clouds

That was a clear reference to Daniel 7

Of the Messiah

So, when Jesus said that

About Himself

The religious leaders went crazy

He was saying

He was God

Now we don't know

But Paul was so passionate about the purity of his Jewish faith

I imagine him going crazy too

And I don't think it's a stretch

To picture Paul spitting in Jesus' face

Or punching and slapping Him

*Read Matthew 27:1-2*

Was Paul a witness to those conversations?

*Matthew 27:11-23*

I think Paul would have certainly been there

Yelling in the crowd, “Crucify! Crucify!!”

*Look at verse 25-26*

“All the people answered, ‘His blood is on us and our children’”

“All the people”

Very likely included Paul

Luke records a little detail

That Matthew and the others don’t mention

I think this is worth looking at:

**Luke 23:33-35 (NIV) – When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified Him there, along with the criminals—one on His right, the other on His left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up His clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at Him. They said, “He saved others; let Him save Himself *if* He is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.”**

“The rulers sneered at Him”

Was Paul among the sneerers?

Was Jesus possibly even looking at Paul

When He asked God to forgive them?

*Read Matthew 27:62-66*

He was likely there for it all

He probably wasn't old enough

To be a voting member

But he probably had Jesus' blood on his hands

Figuratively

If not literally

But now

A few months

Maybe a year or two

Later

Paul meets a risen Jesus

On the road to Damascus

And for three days

He thought about what had happened

He prayed

He probably thought about

Each of those times that he had seen Jesus

**Acts 9:17-18 (NIV) - Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized**

“Something like scales fell from (his) eyes”

I prayed this week

That something like scales would fall from eyes today

That you & I could see

Really see

The Lord

**I titled this message 3 days**

Because a lot can happen in 3 days

In 3 days

Jonah went from a rebellious prophet

To a faithful preacher

In 3 days

In 3 days

Saul went from “breathing out murderous threats”

To declaring that Jesus is alive & King

In 3 days

And of course

On this day

We celebrate that Jesus went from

Defeated *by* death

To defeater *of* death

In just 3 days

Paul was almost certainly considering the fact, that

**Jesus' death showed that He was human**

**But Jesus' resurrection showed that He was Divine**

And Paul

As far from Jesus as He was

Took 3 days to really weigh all that out

What would happen if you

Weighed all that out

Over the next 3 days?

Hang on to that a second

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Let me show you something

In 1 Corinthians 15

And then we'll come back to that

Paul cites a first century creed

In 1 Corinthians 15

That would have been recited by the church

Possibly sung by the church – as a hymn

Within weeks or months of Jesus' resurrection

We know this timing

I don't have time to show you today

You'll have to come to the seminar

Later this month

To see how we know that timing

*That was a teaser... realin' you in...*

OK – so let me show you the creed:

**1 Corinthians 15:3b-7 (NIV) - Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles.**

I'm going to

Leave that up here a minute

If that was a creed

That they recited regularly

A motto – possibly a hymn

A rallying cry for the early church

And if Saul was “destroy(ing) the church. Going from house to house, dragg(ing) off both men and women and put them in prison

(and) breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples.

Don’t you imagine

Those two pieces intersected?

Paul was going house to house

Dragging off men & women for their faith

Their kids screaming in the background

As their mom and their dad

Were being taken away

Begging Paul and the others to stop

And the mom & dad

Clinging to their faith

Were muttering these words to each other:

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

Clinging to their life

Clinging to their faith

The Bible says Paul was going to town to town – synagogue to synagogue

Bursting into the room with armed guards behind him  
Breathing out murderous threats  
Against any of Jesus' followers

And these faithful folks  
Huddled together in fear  
Were reciting or singing  
To encourage each

*Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*

*He appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve... than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time... then to James, then to all the apostles.*

And those words  
Filled with fear  
But filled with faith  
Must've been in Paul's ear  
In Paul's mind  
Seeping into Paul's broken heart  
For three long days

A lot can happen in 3 days

But now

This time

This time Paul adds to the Creed

He added what we call verse 8 today

**and last of all (Jesus) appeared to me also**

Paul was now part of the story

Paul was now part of the creed

A lot can happen in 3 days

A whole lot can happen in 3 days... if it's true

That's the thing

Isn't it?!?

Is it true?

If it's true

There's nothing in our lives more important

*Then this*

Now, if it's not true

*You're all wasting your time today*

*And I'm literally wasting every bit of my life*

But if it's true

*That changes everything*

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Every year

The stat has remained unchanged for decades

Every year

They ask American's

Around Easter time

If they believe that Jesus

Literally rose from the dead

The numbers change slightly

But it's always around 75%

3 out of 4 Americans

Believe that Jesus literally rose from the dead

I would guess a bigger majority of us

Believe that Jesus literally rose from the dead

What would change in our world

What would change in Spring Hill

If 3 out of 4 people

*Lived*

Like they believed Jesus literally rose from the dead?

Because Jesus dying showed that He was human

And His resurrection showed that He was Divine

What would change

If 3 out of 4 of us

Really lived like that was true?

...

I think its time to find out

Paul devoted 3 days to this

He didn't eat

He didn't drink

I bet he didn't sleep much

If at all

Because he understood

That *this* question

Was the center of it all

Is it true?

Is it real?

And that hasn't changed

This question is still the center of it all

If you could give the next 3 days

To devote to that question

That would be fantastic

But most of us

Can't

Give the next 3 days

So, I'm challenging us

To give 72 hours

3 days

Over 3 weeks

To settling this question

Once and for all

And we're going to help

This series is a 3-week series

Next week – to help

We're going to talk about the cross

What really happened

And what it means for us today

The week after

We're going to talk about the empty tomb

What really happened

What it means for us today

**This next week also, we're giving you a chance**

To get to know us

We're calling it first date

For you to see if we could be your community

Your family

To explore these spiritual issues

**Then the following week**

We're going to take a deep dive

Into all things faith & doubt

I'm going to be teaching

On Friday night

And Saturday morning

And if you'll devote yourself

For these three weeks  
I really believe  
You'll come to the same conclusion I have  
And I really believe  
It will change everything... for you

On April 23<sup>rd</sup>

**We're going to have a baptism Sunday**

We have baptisms all the time  
But on occasion  
We pick out a day  
And celebrate a bunch of them all at once  
I wouldn't be surprised if we have  
10 or more that day  
It's going to be a great day

So, if you've been needing to do that

*And you know who you are*

Or if you've been thinking about it

And putting it off

*And you know who you are*

Or if *in* your 72 hours

You decide it's true

## **We're offering a class**

We're giving you two options

To make it convenient

To answer any questions

You might have

About baptism

Because you

Like Paul

May come to the same conclusion

Paul

At the end of 3 days

Paul heard Ananias say

**Acts 22:16 (NIV) - And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His Name.**

I'm praying for you

If that's you

That April 23<sup>rd</sup> will be your day as well

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I don't know what Heaven is like

But the Bible seems to show that

People there

Are aware of things happening here...