

RESURRECTION ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS? EXPLORING PAUL'S PURVIEW ON HIS DAMASCUS EXPERIENCE

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Abstract. Scholars agree that Paul's Damascus experience was life-changing, but they disagree when it comes to how that is to be defined. This article delves into the resurrection-aspects present in how Paul describes this event. Romans 4,17 about God "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" is given a bearing on Paul's experience. The grace he found in this event is resurrection at work.

Keywords: Grace, transformation, resurrection, God, Abraham, paradigmatic.

Karl Wilhelm Niebuhr has contributed significantly to Pauline scholarship, not least through his *Heidenapostel aus Israel: Die Jüdische Identität des Paulus nach ihrer Darstellung in seinen Briefen* (WUNT 62; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992). In this study, he emphasizes also how Paul's biography impacted on his theology. It is, therefore, a pleasure to pay homage to him with a Pauline paper. Paul's Damascus-event was "life-changing,"¹ albeit what that entails, is indeed negotiable. This incident in Paul's life often works as a pointer to how his theology is viewed more generally in Pauline scholarship. The Damascus event is often presented primarily as a commission or mandate given in a call,² or that Paul came to realize that the "time" for the eschatological ingathering of Gentiles had arrived, like the prophets of old spoke about the pilgrimage of the nations to Jerusalem.³ No doubt, this may account for the life-changing effect of this event. Nevertheless, the way Paul himself and his way of thinking were altered and transformed, is, I think, not sufficiently accounted for.⁴ The most obvious change is put in the mouths of the "Judean churches." They noticed a change from previous

¹ Pamela EISENBAUM, *Paul was not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle*. New York: HarperCollins, 2009, 142.

² See the influential contributions of Krister STENDAHL, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976.

³ Paula FREDRIKSEN, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle*. New Haven. Yale University Press 2017, 73–77 and EISENBAUM, 132–49.

⁴ See Karl Olav SANDNES, "Prophet-Like Apostle: A Note on the 'Radical New Perspective' in Pauline Studies," *Bib* 96 (2015): 550–64 and Karl Olav SANDNES, *Paul Perceived: An Interactionist Perspective on Paul and the Law*. WUNT 412. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018, 37–47.