



Of all the claims in the Bible and of all the claims about Jesus, THIS ONE is the most foundational - the Cornerstone of Christianity is the resurrection of Jesus. Without the resurrection, Christianity crumbles. But...if He really is ALIVE, then the Resurrection changes everything!

☀ **Philosopher Douglas Groothuis:** *"Of all the world's religions Christianity alone purports to be based on the resurrection of its divine founder. No other religion or worldview makes such an audacious and consequential claim. . . . The resurrection of Jesus is at the center of the Christian worldview and Christian devotion."*¹

☀ **William Lane Craig:** *"It is quite clear that without the belief in the resurrection the Christian faith could not have come into being. The disciples would have remained crushed and defeated men. Even had they continued to remember Jesus as their believed teacher, His crucifixion would have forever silenced any hopes of His being the Messiah. The cross could have remained the sad and shameful end to His career."*²

Throughout our study in Acts, **the resurrection of Jesus is the focus of the Gospel message.**

The Cornerstone of Christianity is the resurrection of Jesus.

Without the resurrection, Christianity crumbles. BUT...if He really is ALIVE, then...

The Resurrection Changes Everything

It changed how the early Christians viewed DEATH.

They stopped hiding, became bold, and eventually gave their very lives rather than deny their risen Lord because ***The Resurrection changes EVERYTHING!***

It changed how the early Christians viewed LIFE.

Because Jesus was alive, obeying Him became their top priority.

- Because Jesus was alive, they **prayed**. They prayed believing that God heard them.
- Because Jesus was alive, they **gave**. They gave to people in need.
- Because Jesus was alive, they **loved**. They loved each other and they EVEN loved their enemies.
- Because Jesus was alive, they **went**. They went around the world to share His message with others...because ***The Resurrection changes EVERYTHING!***

¹ Ibid.

² Josh McDowell & Sean McDowell, PhD. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict; Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World*, p. 237

Acts 21:20-24 (NET) Then they said to him, "You see, brother, how **many thousands of Jews there are who have believed**, and they are all ardent observers of the law. ²¹ They have been informed about you—that you teach all the Jews now living among the Gentiles to **abandon Moses**, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. ²² What then should we do? They will no doubt hear that you have come. ²³ So do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow; ²⁴ take them and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself live in conformity with the law.

Many thousands of Jews have **believed** - that is - they have believed on Jesus of the Jewish Messiah. That's GREAT NEWS!!! And they care about obeying the Jewish Scriptures.

But there's more news, that's not so good. Many of them have heard through the grape vine that Paul wants Jews to **abandon Moses** - that is - what Moses had written in the Scriptures. Of course, this was NOT true. Paul appreciated and taught the Scriptures, but he also pointed out how Jesus FULFILLED the Scriptures (e.g. no more animal sacrifices were needed as Jesus was the ULTIMATE SACRIFICE).

Acts 21:27-33 (NET) ²⁷ When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from the province of Asia who had seen him in the temple area stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, ²⁸ shouting, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this sanctuary! Furthermore he has brought Greeks into the inner courts of the temple and made this holy place ritually unclean!" ²⁹ (For they had seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him previously, and they assumed Paul had brought him into the inner temple courts.) ³⁰ The whole city was stirred up, and the people rushed together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple courts, and immediately the doors were shut. ³¹ While **they were trying to kill him**, a report was sent up to the commanding officer of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.³² He immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down to the crowd. When they saw the commanding officer and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³ Then the commanding officer came up and arrested him and ordered him to be tied up with two chains [see Acts 21:11]; he then asked who he was and what he had done.

The Romans who arrested Paul ordered him **to be tied up with two chains** - the fulfillment of the prophecy of Agabus (Acts 21:11). From here on, Paul would no longer be free to carry the Gospel whoever he wanted. Paul might be bound but the Gospel message would never be bound (2 Tim. 2:9).

Paul's Speech

Acts 21:40-22:3 (NET) ⁴⁰ When the commanding officer had given him permission, Paul stood on the steps and gestured to the people with his hand. When they had become silent, he addressed them in Aramaic, ¹ "Brothers and fathers, listen to my defense that I now make to you." ² (When they heard that he was addressing them in Aramaic, they became even quieter.) Then Paul said, ³ "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated with strictness under Gamaliel according to the law of our ancestors, and was zealous for God just as all of you are today.

Paul's Story

Acts 22:4-8 (NET) ⁴ I persecuted this Way even to the point of death, tying up both men and women and putting them in prison, ⁵ as both the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. From them I also received letters to the brothers in Damascus, and I was on my way to make arrests there and bring the prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished. ⁶ As I was en route and near Damascus, about noon a very bright light from heaven suddenly flashed around me. ⁷ Then I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' ⁸ I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' He said to me, '**I am Jesus** the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.'

This is quite a problem. If Jesus has been killed, that was the end of him. Yet, Paul (aka Saul) claims he SAW the resurrected Jesus - the same one he used to blaspheme.

Paul's Detour

Acts 22:12-16 (NET) ¹² A man named Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who live there, ¹³ came to me and stood beside me and said to me, 'Brother Saul, regain your sight!' And at that very moment I looked up and saw him. ¹⁴ Then he said, 'The God of our ancestors has already chosen you to know his will, **to see the Righteous One**, and to hear a command from his mouth, ¹⁵ because you will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, **calling on his name.**'

The arch-enemy of Christianity would become the most ardent defender of Jesus Christ, bowing his head in the water before the Lord Jesus, **calling on his name!**

Paul's Persecution

Acts 22:17-20 (NET) ¹⁷ When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸ and saw the Lord saying to me, 'Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because **they will not accept your testimony about me.**' ¹⁹ I replied, 'Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat those in the various synagogues who believed in you. ²⁰ And when the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I myself was standing nearby, approving, and guarding the cloaks of those who were killing him.' ²¹ Then he said to me, 'Go, because I will send you far away to the Gentiles.' " ²² The crowd was listening to him until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Away with this man from the earth! For **he should not be allowed to live!**" ²³ While they were screaming and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust in the air, ²⁴ the commanding officer ordered Paul to be brought back into the barracks. He told them to interrogate Paul by beating him with a lash so that he could find out the reason the crowd was shouting at Paul in this way.

Paul's Defense

Acts 23:1-5 (NET) ¹ Paul looked directly at the council and said, "Brothers, I have lived my life with a clear conscience before God to this day." ² At that the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit there judging me according to the law, and in violation of the law you order me to be struck?" ⁴ Those standing near him said, "Do you dare insult God's high priest?" ⁵ Paul replied, "I did not realize, brothers, that he was the high priest, for it is written, '**You must not speak evil about a ruler of your people.**'" [Ex. 22:28]

Here is proof that Paul not only KNOWS the Scripture, but desires to DO what it says.

Tactical & Powerful Focus

Acts 23:6-11 (NET) ⁶ Then when Paul noticed that part of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, he shouted out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the **resurrection of the dead!**" ⁷ When he said this, an argument began between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸ (For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.) ⁹ There was a great commotion, and some experts in the law from the party of the Pharisees stood up and protested strongly, "We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" ¹⁰ When the argument became so great the commanding officer feared that they would tear Paul to pieces, he ordered the detachment to go down, take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks. ¹¹ The following night **the Lord stood near Paul** and said, "Have courage, for just as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome." [see Acts 19:21]

And now Paul begins the long journey that he longed before looked forward to, the journey to **Rome**, to complete his mission **to take the Gospel to the planet in the power fo the Spirit.**

The **persecutor** becomes the **persecuted**. The one who once tried to snuff out the Gospel, became it's greatest missionary. All because... **The Resurrection changes EVERYTHING!**

QUESTION What role does the Resurrection of Jesus play in your daily life?

- Because Jesus was alive, will WE **pray**, believing that God heard us?
- Because Jesus was alive, will WE **give**, believing that our time, talents, & treasure can be used to make an eternal difference?
- Because Jesus was alive, will WE **love**, showing the world who we are by loving each other deeply and EVEN by loving our enemies?
- Because Jesus was alive, will WE **GO**, across the street and around the world to share His message with others?

The Resurrection Changes Everything