

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Apostolic Witness of The Resurrection **Acts 1:2-3**

Keywords: resurrection, New Covenant, Holy Spirit, Acts, Apostles

PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: As we enter into this important book Luke reminds us that there are some huge theological realities that ought to govern our thinking and interpretation of life as it unfolds. In these first several verses we are introduced to the authority and mission of the Apostles, the reality and centrality of the resurrection and the necessity of the Kingdom of God. In this message we will see how the resurrection and the testimony of the Apostles was key to preparing the Church to go forth with the gospel.

I. Introduction.

- A. We are going to ease our way into Acts.
 - 1. Initial verses are full of pregnant statements that are easily passed over but which are foundational for each of us.
 - 2. In vs 1 he makes reference to his gospel.
 - 3. In vs 2:
 - a. Luke then casually speaks of Jesus being taken up into heaven.
 - b. Jesus first gives orders, but not on his own but by the Holy Spirit.
 - c. And finally Luke references the Apostles whom Jesus Himself had chosen.
 - d. Summary: Ascension of Christ, orders given by Jesus through the Spirit and apostolic leadership. This is the setting for the rest of the book.
 - 4. In vs 3:
 - a. Luke mentions in passing the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead. The reason for this is simple. It was a settled fact that had been fully researched.
 - b. Then that Jesus spent a significant amount of time convincing these Apostles that He had actually risen.
 - c. And finally He spent much time focusing on what Luke calls the Kingdom of God.

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5. The subject of the resurrection and the Kingdom of God could take many weeks of teaching to develop properly all by themselves.
- B. Today, we will focus on one key aspect, the apostolic witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
1. We speak of the resurrection in one way or another every Sunday.
 2. 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 (give basic explanation as I read).
- C. Without the resurrection there is nothing that can rightly be called the “Christian Faith.”
1. It is what is known as a “cardinal” doctrine. Many other doctrines are debatable within the Christian faith but not this one.
 2. The lack of the resurrection means that there is no hope.
 - a. And so the Bible says that there is no reason for us to live in any special way if there is no resurrection.
 - (1) Why deny yourself?
 - (2) Why not gather close to you all the goods and comforts and pleasures of this life?
 - (3) Why not do whatever you desire? Meaning there is nothing more after this life.
 - (4) For if Christ did not rise again and if there is no resurrection then do whatever you wish because tomorrow you die and then there is nothing.
 - (5) The resurrection changes everything.
 - b. As much as the miracles of Jesus were wonderful to see and experience, they are NOT the hope for anyone.
 - (1) Death is our great enemy and its power comes from sin. As Paul says it, “Therefore, . . . through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned-- (Romans 5:12)
 - (2) Though Lazarus was raised from the dead, death still pursued him. And he died a second time—how fun.... All

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because he still belonged to this age that is under the power of sin and death.

c. And a major consequence is that Jesus was a liar and a fool if He did not rise from the dead.

(1) Matthew 16:21.

(2) Matthew 17:22-23.

(3) Matthew 20:18-19.

(4) He made explicit statements that cannot be misunderstood or made to mean something else.

3. But if He did rise from the dead then it changes everything.

a. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the gospel/good news.

(1) Anyone can suffer. Anyone can and will die. People can even predict that they will be raised. Talk is very cheap.

(2) But to be raised from the dead, that is a whole different matter.

(3) In fact, when talking to someone else about what it means to be saved, how much of your time focused on the resurrection? How often do you think about the resurrection and how it applies to your current situation?

b. The resurrection gives us the basis to tell others about Jesus Christ.

(1) It gives us the purpose of evangelization—we are not introducing just another man-made religion built upon the useless framework of human effort.

(2) It gives us the power of evangelization—the gospel tells us that those who hope in Christ alone shall also be raised. Why would we withhold that?

(3) It gives the explanation of evangelization. We are calling people to come, see, believe and follow the resurrected Jesus who by virtue of His resurrection can be trusted.

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- c. The resurrection tells us that we must understand about what salvation is and does.
 - (1) It gives explanation on how we might escape what seems to be the inescapable reality of our existence.
 - (2) We cannot defeat our enemies of sin, Satan and death. Even if you reject the reality of Satan it changes nothing. There is evil in this life and we all face death.
 - (3) But the bible tells us that because of the resurrection that because of Jesus' resurrection we can be in a right relationship with our Creator and God.
 - (a) The bible tells us that through the resurrection we can now be declared righteous before God. Though we are more sinful than we can even imagine, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we find righteousness.
 - (b) The bible tells us that through the resurrection that God approved and accepted Jesus Christ's death as the proper and only acceptable sacrifice for sin.
 - (4) The bible tells us that through the resurrection that all who trust in Jesus Christ for salvation shall be raised from the dead and live forevermore with Him in the New Creation.
 - (a) There is hope.
 - (b) There is something more to this existence.
 - (c) We are not merely cogs in an unthinking, unfeeling machine that inexorably grinds forward, crushing each of us under its weight as it moves along.
 - (d) Do not these words of John in the final book of the Bible give you hope? "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or

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crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.’
And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am
making all things new.’ And He said, ‘Write, for
these words are faithful and true.’ And He said to
me, ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the
beginning and the end. I will give to the one who
thirsts from the spring of the water of life without
cost.’” (Revelation 21:3-6)

- D. Here in Acts 1 we see the resurrection stated yet again at the beginning of something entirely new—the preparation of the birth of the Church in the program of God.

II. The Apostolic Witness of The Resurrection (1:3).

- A. The importance of the Apostolic work.
1. It is significant for you to notice in both vs 2 and vs 3 how central the Apostles are to this point.
 2. In vs 2 Jesus is giving specific orders, or charges/commands, to the Apostles. Not to others, but to them. They were going to be going forward with the message and teaching of Christ and so they were His focus.
 3. In vs 3 it is explicitly emphasizing that it was to **them** that He presented Himself alive. This is not by mistake—Luke is emphasizing that apostolic witness of the resurrection.
 4. Who are they and how did they become Apostles?
 - a. Luke 6:13.
 - b. The word itself simply means to be sent as a messenger. At times it simply means to be sent in a general sense.
 - c. It even refers to Jesus Himself in Hebrews 3:1 where He is called both our Apostle and High Priest. Why? Because the Father sent Him into the world with a message and a task—to suffer and to die and to rise again.
 - d. And early on in His ministry Jesus selected a specific group of men who would be first His disciples/followers and also His Apostles.

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- e. So they are not Apostles because they decided to be that. This is something appointed them by Christ alone.
 - (1) This gets into the whole mess today of what is called the NAR movement, with which you should have nothing to do.
 - (2) But it also deals with the selection of a new Apostle later on in Acts 1 known as Matthias. And then with another man you all know as Paul.
- 5. Their function were to be witnesses of Jesus Christ.
 - a. Their primary job after Christ ascended into heaven was declare what they heard and saw regarding Jesus Christ to the world. And that is what Acts is all about.
 - b. Jesus speaks of this in Matthew 24:14 that the good news of the kingdom is to be preached to the whole world. How? Through these men who would function, He said, as a witness of its truthfulness.
 - c. Notice Luke 24:45-48.
 - d. Then notice that right on the heels of that is the promise of Holy Spirit through Whom they shall be empowered to proclaim that message (49).
 - e. So we see two key thing there: First the message they were to give. And second, the promise of power via the Spirit of God to accomplish this.
 - f. Notice also:
 - (1) Acts 1:22.
 - (2) 2:32.
 - (3) 3:15.
 - (4) 4:33.
 - (5) 5:32.
 - (6) 10:39-41.
 - (7) 13:30-32.

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- (8) 22:15 (Paul explaining his conversion to Jesus Christ).
 - (9) 23:11
 - (10) And finally 26:16 (again Paul explaining his conversion to Jesus Christ).
6. They were not the only ones who saw Christ after He rose but they were the ones most important and central to His task.
- B. The fact of the resurrection.
- 1. Notice Acts 1:3 for it speaks of “many convincing proofs.”
 - a. This is a very specific term that was used in various history works and likely used on purpose.
 - b. It means what it says. It speak of proofs that were irrefutable.
 - 2. The centrality of the resurrection was so important that it was not some strange event that has vague attestation attached to it.
 - 3. The first thing Jesus does is spend a significant time with the Apostles showing proof of His resurrection.
 - 4. We see some of it in the final chapter of Luke (24:39-43).
 - 5. But apparently there was more that was taught by Jesus.
 - a. They spent a significant amount of time with Him, meaning they listened and looked and touched Him many times.
 - b. He was not far away or merely there for a moment.
 - c. He was with them as a group, not only a private moment with one or two of them.
 - d. He would have eaten with them many times. He would have slept while they slept. They walked with Him.
 - e. What a wonderful time it must have been.
 - 6. Realize that they did not know what had happened at first.
 - a. In Matthew 28 (turn) there was already a campaign to suppress this information (11-15).

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- b. And in vs 17 we see that it was affecting even these men themselves.
 - c. Paul speaks of how the resurrection was attested by even more people (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).
- C. Why is this important?
- 1. Because, again, if there is no resurrection then nothing about the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ matters.
 - 2. And these men were going to put their lives on the line proclaiming to a largely hostile audience the fact of that resurrection. It was the cornerstone of all that they said and did.
 - 3. We know that Peter was to be killed because of his message of Jesus Christ.
 - 4. And history and tradition says the same for the vast majority of the other Apostles.
 - 5. Consider the reaction of the crowd in Acts 2:22-37.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Before anything else happens in the history of God's working within this world, the fact of the resurrection had to be established.
- B. And that fact of Christ's resurrection continues to this day.
 - 1. Do you believe this?
 - 2. Is this your only hope?
 - 3. Do you testify to those who are not following Jesus Christ of this fact?
- C. May our Lord embolden each of us to not shirk this duty for it is truly our delight and our hope.

Small Group Questions

- Think about various ways the reality of the bodily resurrection should help us think through life and the challenges that come to us on any given day, whether large or small.

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- What are possible applications you might see as you think about the massive amount of time Jesus spent instructing about and proving His resurrection?
- How can the fact of the resurrection give you opportunities to transition into the gospel when talking to others?
- How does the resurrection serve to help you give counsel to believers?