

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Minot, ND
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The Acts of the Apostles

The Ministry of the Gospel in a Messy Church & Conflicting World

Acts 1:1-5

It has been said before the basis of Christianity is not grounded in philosophical theories or theological theses. But instead, it is grounded in bedrock hard facts – many proofs – that Christ lived, died, and rose again. This is the main presupposition that frames the Book of Acts – that Christ rose again. Without the fact of the resurrection, none of Christianity amounts to anything, and certainly, the Book of Acts will not make sense.

Consider what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:17, *“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins.”* That is to say; the good news of the gospel is either true, or it is not. It is true not based upon a well-argued theory or a fanciful myth, but it is true because all of Christianity ties itself to a single, real-world event, the death and resurrection of Jesus. And so Christians do not live with a blind faith. We don't live in the land of theories and myths. We don't ve in operate within the realm of things that are not connected to reality.

Luke states that there are many convincing proofs that establish the resurrection. In other words, the

resurrection of Jesus from the dead serves as not only a cherry on the top of the cake but a validation of all that Jesus did, taught, and accomplished.

But before we talk about the implications of this resurrection, let us make several observations regarding the many proofs of the resurrection:

- 1) We must keep in mind that there is a plethora of evidence outside the Bible that establishes the fact that Jesus really existed in the first century. Josephus, Cornelius Tacitus, Gaius Suetonius Tranquillas, Julius Africanus, The Talmud, Lucian, the Mara Bar-Serapion, and so forth establish the validity that Jesus existed in time and space.
- 2) The Apostle Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 that more than 500 people witnessed the risen Christ.
- 3) The actions of the Apostles give proof of the resurrection. Keep in mind that all the

Apostles abandoned Jesus in his last hours (with the exception of John). However, consider the rest of the story. In the garden and before servant girls, the Apostles were full of fear, even denying Jesus. However, at the end of their life, we see a complete change. According to church history, Matthew ministered in Parthia and Ethiopia in which he was slain with a halberd in the city of Nadabah (60 AD). Mark was dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria. Luke traveled with Paul through various countries and is supposedly hanged by idolatrous priests of Greece. Paul gave his neck to the sword under Nero in 67 AD. Peter was crucified upside-down under Nero. So, what happened in these men's lives to create such a radical change from fear to confidence amid death? It was the resurrection of Jesus.

4) Finally, if Christ had not risen from the grave, surely the Pharisees and Sadducees would've produced a body as evidence to silence and stomp out the news of the resurrection. Oh, but some scholars say that the Apostles stole the body of Jesus? Let us consider that a moment! A bunch of fearful Apostles (who ran in the garden) overpowered Roman Soldiers, stole a body, and then died Martyrs' deaths that were founded on a lie? Hardly!

Now, very briefly, let us consider the power and implications of the resurrection:

- 1) The resurrection shows Christ's divinity.
- 2) The resurrection validates all of Scripture as true.
- 3) The resurrection gives authority to what Christ accomplished on the cross.
- 4) The resurrection confirms to us that our sins have been truly paid for.
- 5) Affirms Jesus' other miracles – power over the physical realm.
- 6) The resurrection protects the church from drifting into the heresy of Gnosticism.
- 7) The resurrection is a foreshadow of what is to come for those baptized into Christ – that we will rise again too.
- 8) The resurrection establishes that there is a God; it is one of the main indications that we live in a Theo-centric world. It gives us a Creature-created worldview.
- 9) It is the backdrop to the rest of the Book of Acts.

Christ is risen; He is risen indeed! Alleluia.



