

An Easter Message
THE RESURRECTION AND MISSIONS

Luke 24:46-47 NIV Acts 1:3-8 NASB

Introduction: Members of the church in the first century were “witnesses”¹ of the resurrection of Jesus, and spoke passionately of that event in both public and private settings.² Not only was the resurrection a recurring theme of apostolic testimony and preaching;³ but in addition, the resurrection was a controlling factor working in concert with the power of the Holy Spirit to motivate the early church to carry out the Master’s mandate for global evangelism.

1. THE MEANING OF THE RESURRECTION

- a. Prophecy specifically foretold the resurrection of Jesus, meaning God always keeps His word.⁴
- b. Jesus spoke of “the sign of the prophet Jonah” (Matthew 12:39 NIV) regarding His resurrection.⁵
- c. Prophetic utterance of Jesus, Mark 9:31, refers to His betrayal, death, and resurrection.⁶
- d. The resurrection says God is sovereign, has no limits, and is always in control. Romans 4:16-21⁷
- e. The resurrection means we have an advocate, Christ “lives to intercede” for us.” Hebrews 7:25 NIV
- f. Christ died, was raised to life, and is at the “right hand” of God “interceding for us.” Romans 8:34 NIV⁸

2. THE MIRACLE OF THE RESURRECTION

- a. Resurrection of Jesus was a miracle affirmed by the apostles as a fact of history.⁹
- b. They knew Christ would “suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.”¹⁰ Luke 24:46 NIV
- c. Judas replacement had to be a personal “witness” of this miracle.¹¹ Acts 1: 22 NASB
- d. Jesus “presented himself alive, after “suffering”, by many convincing proofs.”¹² Acts 1:3 NASB
- e. Not just a miracle but a miracle proven by evidence, by a “compelling sign.”¹³
- f. Miracle of resurrection, a foretaste of other miracles, lame man healed. Acts 3:16 NIV¹⁴

3. THE MESSAGE OF THE RESURRECTION

- a. The apostolic message, “This Jesus God raised up to which” we are all “witnesses.” Acts 2:32 NASB
- b. Peter’s message of repentance formed an “inclusion” regarding Jesus and the resurrection.¹⁵
- c. Apostles were “witnesses” of the resurrection, and bore witness to this “witness.”¹⁶ Acts 4:33 NIV
- d. This post-resurrection message was one of repentance and “forgiveness of sins.” Acts 2:38 NIV
- e. Personal testimonies/conversations, and public ministry included this resurrection message.¹⁷
- f. An illustration, sinners resurrected from spiritual death to life in Christ. Romans 6:4 NIV¹⁸

4. THE MANDATE OF THE RESURRECTION

- a. In His valedictory address the resurrected Christ gives the disciples “a commission.”¹⁹ Acts 1:3-8 NIV
- b. A global mandate that extended “to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Luke 24:47 NIV
- c. This mandate meant “all people everywhere” should hear the message and “repent.” Acts 17:30 NIV
- d. The “proof” of the mandate and the command to repent was the resurrection of Jesus. Acts 17: 31 NIV
- e. The resurrection of Jesus, a dominant apostolic theme, was crucial to Gentile inclusion.²⁰ Acts 15:1-29
- f. The mandate: “To call people from among all the Gentiles” to “obedience and faith.”²¹ Romans 1:5 NIV

Conclusion: Celebrating the resurrection should not be limited to just Easter Sunday. The early church lived in the constant glow of the resurrected Savior’s presence, a practice believers today would do well to remember. In addition, the contemporary church should heed the example of the apostolic community in the first century, and view the resurrection of Jesus in light of the Great Commission, God’s call for a global missionary outreach “to all nations.” Luke 24:47 NIV

Notes

¹ Acts 1:22 NIV. See footnotes 4, 5, 6.

² George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1974), 317.

³ See Acts 3:15, 26; 4:2,10,33; 5:30; 10:40,41; 13:28,30,33,34,37; 17:18,32; 23:6; 24:21

⁴ Jesus referenced his death and resurrection with “temple” language in John 2:19 NIV, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” See Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 239, 462. Peter made clear that the “Messianic texts” of Psalms 16:8-11; 110:1; 132:11 applied to Jesus and not David. Johnson identifies Psalm 110 as “the classic resurrection Psalm of the early Christian movement.”

⁵ “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days, and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Matthew 12:40 NIV

⁶ “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” Mark 9:31 NIV

⁷ Paul mentions Abraham and how God miraculously made him “the father of many nations,” and then describes this God of promise as “the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.” Romans 4:17 NIV

⁸ See Acts 7:55; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; I Peter 3:21-22

⁹ J. Bradley Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple, and the New Age in Luke-Acts* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988), 65. The disciples had observed the “flesh and bones” resurrected Jesus and His elevation “into the heavens” at the ascension leaving no doubt about the reality of the resurrection.

¹⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 213. They certainly knew the resurrection was an actual event when Jesus appeared after his crucifixion and his departure from the tomb and took “a piece of broiled fish” and “ate it in their presence.” Luke 24:42-43 NIV

¹¹ Mark Allen Powell, *The New Testament Today* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 61. Leaving no doubt about the miraculous nature of the resurrection, this personal witness dimension was crucial because this resurrected and ascended Christ would continue to be a commanding presence in their personal lives and ministry.

¹² Bruce, 31. Between the resurrection and the ascension, Jesus appeared to his followers for forty days, and the disciples knew absolutely he died on the cross and was now alive. I Corinthians 15:5-7 provides a list of those appearances although that list is probably not exhaustive.

¹³ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1998), 202. Fitzmyer notes the dramatic supernatural impact of the resurrection and calls it a “compelling sign.”

¹⁴ Peter ties the miracle of the resurrection to the miracle of the lame man healed; “You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.” Acts 3:15 NIV Peter then states, “By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.” Acts 3:16 NIV

¹⁵ Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts, A Literary Interpretation, Volume Two-The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 35. Like bookends, inclusionary statements (Acts 2:14, 36) presented a “carefully constructed argument” regarding the crucified, risen, and ascended Christ.

¹⁶ See footnotes 3, 9, 10, and 11.

¹⁷ See footnote 3.

¹⁸ Peter spoke of personal cleansing and water baptism to illustrate salvation and then says, we are saved “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” I Peter 3:21 NIV

¹⁹ Fitzmyer, 199. The narrative presents the Savior in a setting that is “a combination of an epiphany and a commission.” This commission/mandate was premised on His death and resurrection.

²⁰ Dennis Johnson, *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 1997), 123. Peter challenged the apostles at the Jerusalem Council to look at salvation for Gentiles through the Christological lens of grace without the added requirement of circumcision. While Peter did not expound specifically on the resurrection it was clear his Christological emphasis included the complete Messianic package; that is, Christ crucified, resurrected, and ascended. His appeal for the Gentile mission would not have been legitimate without it.

²¹ The call to “apostleship” (missions) in v. 5 was preceded by a resurrection affirmation. Romans 1:4 NIV