

2017 Research Week Proposal

Title – The Role of the Resurrection in Acts

Program of Study – Pastoral Leadership

Presentation Type – PowerPoint

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Category – Textual or Investigative

Abstract:

This paper examines the role of the resurrection in the book of Acts, and consequently, its influence on the early church. The early church has fascinated pastors, scholars, and skeptics alike with its ability to multiply and thrive amidst heavy opposition. Indeed, the power of God was with the early church, and church leaders today would be wise to follow their example. As one studies the preaching that took place in the early church, an interesting theme arises. In Peter and Paul's sermons throughout the book of Acts, there is a consistent use of the Greek terms for resurrection (*anastasis* and *egeiro*) in reference to Christ's physical resurrection from the dead. The significance of this is threefold.

First, when building an evidential case for the resurrection, one would typically refer to the gospels (Matthew-John) or 1 Corinthians 15. But if the resurrection is truly the central message of the preaching in Acts, then the birth of the early church becomes yet another piece of evidence to support the resurrection's historical validity. If the early church was founded on the premise that Jesus is alive, then the life of the church becomes a witness to that reality.

Second, since Peter was an apostle primarily to the Jews, and Paul was known as an apostle to the Gentiles, the consistency of their message demonstrates that the resurrection is good news for all people. This observation not only supports the theology of the resurrection, but it helps explain the structure of Luke's narrative as he traces the gospel movement from Jerusalem (the heart of Judaism) to Rome (the center of the Gentile world). Although Peter and Paul had different teaching styles depending on their audiences, Luke demonstrated that they were preaching the same resurrection story. This certifies that neither one of them were preaching their own gospel, but simply Christ and Him crucified.

Finally, Peter and Paul's frequent preaching of the resurrection provides an excellent Christocentric philosophy of ministry for church leaders today. In 1 Corinthians 2:2, Paul claimed, "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." The book of Acts demonstrates that very point. Pastors and church planters today should observe the centrality of Jesus (especially His death, burial, and resurrection) in the preaching of the early church and desire to continue that model in their preaching and teaching.

Christian worldview integration:

I tried to write my paper in such a way that a non-Christian could pick it up and follow the logical arguments without the use of faith. While faith certainly plays a significant role in salvation, there are many parts of Christianity that can be argued through reason and evidence. I believe the majority of my research for this paper falls into the latter of those categories. As a Christian, it is a joy and an affirmation to see the literary and historical evidence for the resurrection lead to the same conclusion as what I first accepted by faith. As a child, I believed in my heart that Jesus rose from the dead. As an adult, it is my desire to validate those early beliefs, and to persuade others towards the goodness and the grace of Jesus.

Many times during the course of my research, I would remember that topic of my study was not merely academic, but the centerpiece of everything I believe about life and eternity. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul claimed that if Christ was not raised from the dead, the apostles preaching was in vain, faith is in vain, and Christians are still in their sins. Indeed, Christianity hinges on the reality that Jesus died and was raised—never to experience death again. With this in mind, it is appropriate to approach any discussion of the resurrection with a sober mind. My prayer for this paper is that it would provoke repentance in the skeptic (a change of mind/thinking towards Jesus) and a strengthened faith for the believer. The gospel has the power to do just that.