



Acts 2:22-32

Most believers know that there dozens of prophecies in the Old Testament that have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Many of these are very specific to his crucifixion, such as these two from the Psalms.

Psalm 22:18 *They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.*

Psalm 34:20 *He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.*

The gospel writers took these psalms and applied them to Jesus Christ.

And of course Isaiah 53 not only clearly predicts his suffering before and on the cross, but it also gives precise theological details concerning his atoning sacrifice which covered out sins.

Isaiah 53:5

*But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.*

And later in the same chapter we see the perfect description of Jesus' burial.

And they made his grave with the wicked

*and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.*

Passages such as these are comforting and encouraging because they give even more credence and proof to the reality and historicity of our faith in Christ as Savior. We have all of these Old Testament predictions of his suffering, atonement, death and burial but admittedly, there is very little in the Old Testament about his resurrection. But that does not mean that there isn't solid evidence for the linch pin of our faith—the resurrection of Christ. I think the most clear passage is Psalm 16. However, if you read Psalm 16 by itself, you would almost certainly not conclude that it was referring to the resurrection of the future Messiah. This is why we need someone to explain it to us and that someone is none other than the apostle Peter during his first sermon in the book of Acts.

*“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—
23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. 24 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. 25 For David says concerning him,
'I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
26 therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
my flesh also will dwell in hope.
27 For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One see corruption.
28 You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'*

“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, 31 he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

If the resurrection of Christ did not happen, as Paul said, our faith is futile and we are still in our sins (1 Co. 15:17). Paul also rightly said that if Christ was not raised, then we are to be pitied. And why are we to be pitied? Because that would mean that we have a false hope, that we were staking our entire lives on a lie. Not only would we not spend eternity in heaven, but we would also be wasting our time in this life. We would be giving up pleasures, ideas and experiences in this life. We would be living in unnecessary self-denial.

If Christ is not raised, then we might as well put all of our hope in the color blue. Is blue anyone's favorite color? It's a nice color. It is the color of the sky, the oceans, blueberries and smurfs. There is a wide spectrum of the color blue and paint companies and marketers are continually creating new shades and new names for the color blue so that they can sell you another two gallons of paint. The color blue is a wonderful color but it is as powerless to save

you as Christ who is still in the grave. And that is how foolish some people think that we are. They view our faith and hope in Christ with as much value as the color blue.

But if Christ is raised, then everything that Jesus said—even this whole book—is absolutely true. We are accountable to him. Our eternal existence is dependent upon him. We are most blessed if we know him and most cursed if we do not.

Peter knew this, so the very first sermon that was ever preached was a sermon about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this first sermon he laid out five undeniable facts which support this truth and they are as relevant today as when Peter first spoke the words.

Fact #1—Mighty works were done through Jesus.

²² *Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know*

Remember that when Peter gave this sermon, it had only been ten days since Jesus ascended to heaven and only fifty days after his crucifixion. The day Peter spoke was the day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day after the start of Passover.

My point is that all of these events would have been fresh in the minds of everyone who heard Peter, which is why he added the phrase, *as you yourselves know*. Everyone in the crowd knew of Jesus' reputation. The crowds may have called for his execution that fateful day, but it wasn't because they believed he was a fraud or an evil person. They knew that Jesus was attested and verified by God through his mighty works and signs. *Many* of them would have been eyewitnesses of these mighty works and signs and *all* of them would have heard the stories. The written accounts of the gospels would not be recorded for many more years but in mere days following the events, all knew that they were true.

Fact #2—Jesus was killed by Romans. (23)

this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

No one listening to Peter would have doubted that Jesus had been killed. Today, skeptics hold to the so-called swoon theory which states that Jesus did not actually die. He was merely in a state of shock or near death and to the untrained eye, he would have appeared dead. Three days later he revived and walked out of the tomb. But had you floated this idea in the crowd that day, they would have laughed you out of the city. Better yet, perhaps they would have devised an experiment. "OK, if you think Jesus didn't actually die, why don't we hand you over to the Roman guard and let them put you through the same process. I am sure the exact same soldiers who flogged Jesus would be available to help you out. There's probably still much of Jesus' dried blood on the whips and cords, so that will make it extra special for you. It would be a simple task to find the soldiers who pierce the hands and feet of Jesus and as a final experiment, they'll drive a spear into your side. What do you think—do you wanna test it out?"

Jesus died and was buried. This is foundational to the gospel message, as Paul stated in his first letter to the church in Corinth.

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you...For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Co. 15:1, 3-4).

The resurrection is the linch pin of our faith and it sounds redundant and silly, but if Jesus did not die, then he did not rise from the dead. Again, none of the thousands of people listening to Peter that day would have had any doubt about this. It was an established fact.

Fact #3—David spoke of a resurrection in Psalm 16

But why did Peter bring this psalm into his sermon. He had the facts of Christ's death and resurrection before him, so why go back one thousand years to Psalm 16? Peter quoted from this psalm because He wanted to anchor the resurrection in Jewish history and prophecy. He wanted his listeners to know that Jesus was THE Messiah. This was not a new religion they were starting. As we have already detailed the death of the Messiah appeared many places in the Old Testament, but Psalm 16 was the premier OT passage describing the resurrection.

When you read Psalm 16, it is clear that David is speaking about himself. It begins like this.

*Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
2 I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you.*

In eleven short verses of the Psalm, David used the personal pronouns, "I," "me" and "my" twenty three times. Like the other 72 psalms that David wrote, it was a very personal record—a song—of his relationship with the Lord. This psalm was all about him. Until you get to the key verse. *For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption (Psalm 16:10)*

In what sense would King David not experience decay or corruption? For one thousand years, readers of this Psalm did not have an answer to that question? I suppose you could read a resurrection into this story, but no one ever did. Perhaps it was meant to be figurative? No one ever had a good answer to this question, until Peter explained it on the day of Pentecost, which leads us to the fourth fact.

Fact #4—David's body is still in the tomb, therefore David was not resurrected.

Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

David wrote about someone not seeing corruption and decay. Peter told the crowd that the person about whom David spoke could not have been David because he died and the proof of his death was the presence of his tomb. At that time, David's tomb was still in Jerusalem. 1 Kings 2:10 records that he was buried "in the city" of David," which was Jerusalem.

Each of these four points that I am calling "facts" are not just facts to you and me. The important point I am trying to drive home is that they were established facts for Peter's listeners. They all knew that Jesus did mighty works and signs—they had seen them. No one could have possibly

doubted that the Romans crucified Jesus for it had just been a few weeks prior. Jews were very familiar with Psalm 16 so they knew what David wrote there. And finally, they obviously knew that King David's tomb was in Jerusalem. Most of them had probably been there multiple times. For us, reading this account 2000 years later, these may or may not be the most familiar facts to us but for Peter's audience, everything he said was indisputable. They were cold, hard facts, which leads to the most important and final fact.

Fact #5—*This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.*

Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, 31 he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.¹

Here Peter refers to David as a "prophet." King David was the greatest of all Jewish kings so the thought of him being a prophet does not usually even occur to us. But through many of his psalms, he took on what we might call an 'unintended prophetic role'. In other words, he wrote things about which he did not have full knowledge.

This is just like what the writer of Hebrews said. *These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth* (Hebrews 11:13). David wrote this Psalm about the resurrection of Christ without really understanding what he had written.

But through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter finally understood what this odd-sounding psalm was all about. It was about Jesus being raised from the dead. So convincing was this psalm, that the apostle Paul used the exact same Psalm for the exact same reason about fifteen years later. This was Paul's first missionary journey and took place in the second city that he visited on this first journey. This is also Paul's first recorded sermon ever. Therefore, both Peter and Paul preached about the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the very first sermon they ever preached.

And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,

" 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'

35 Therefore he says also in another psalm,

" 'You will not let your Holy One see corruption.'

36 For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, 37 but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. (Acts 13:34-37).

Peter and Paul both followed the same pattern in sharing about the truth of the resurrection. Incidentally, this is the same pattern that you and I should follow as well.

1. Scripture—they expounded the Scriptures, the double-edged sword of the Word of God.
2. Sound logic—They didn't only quote Scripture to them but also explained it clearly and with convincing logic, hence the five facts we have looked at this morning.

3. The Holy Spirit—After doing their part—Scripture and sound logic—they got out of the way and let the Holy Spirit do what only the Spirit can do—convict of sin and shed light on the truth.

We fail in our witness for Christ when we do not give sufficient emphasis to all three of these factors. I have even found that many people who are engaged in apologetics rely too much on logic and reason. We do not trust the Lord to work his power through his own word instead, try to talk people into the kingdom of God. It doesn't mean that we can be lazy about our logic. Peter and Paul were master logicians. Their arguments were airtight but they were founded upon the word of God.

Karen and I experienced this process this past week. With all of the news about the Supreme Court's ruling on gay marriage, many of you know that facebook was lighting up on the subject. Our nephew posted a comment stating that the New Testament does not call homosexuality a sin. Oftentimes the battle on this subject is not worth it and you will just inflame the other person but in the case of our nephew, not only did he unequivocally state what he thought the NT said, but he also invited anyone to debate it with him. So we did what we could do. We gave him lots of Scripture with sound logic and stood back and let the Holy Spirit do the rest.

Interestingly, both Peter and Paul used the same Psalm to speak to the same people—Jews—to prove the resurrection of Christ from the Old Testament, but they had radically different results. I think most of us are familiar with what happened after Peter's sermon.

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

But Paul had the opposite reaction from his listeners.

As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. 43 And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.

44 The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. 46 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles (Acts 13:42-46).

Peter's sermon resulted in 3000 Jewish converts and Paul's brought rejection from the Jews. But in God's providence, this was the turning point in Paul's ministry when he turned his proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles, with wonderful results.

*47 For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,
“ I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth. ’ ”*

*48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord,
and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.*

If Christ has not been raised, our faith is futile and we are still our sins. However, *God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.* One commentator said this about Jesus' resurrection. "But the grave could no more hold the redeemer than a pregnant woman can hold the child in her body."² The death and resurrection of Christ had been planned since before the creation of the world. There never was a time in the mind of God that our redemption was not his sovereign plan. This is not just blind faith but a fact of history.

This marvelous fact should cause us to respond in an even greater way than King David.

*You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.*

Rich Maurer
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¹ "If his suffering and death were ordained by the determinate counsel of God, so were his resurrection and glory." F.F. Bruce, p. 64

² G. Bertram, TDNT 9, p. 673.