

## Understanding Jesus' Resurrection through the Lens of the Book of Acts (#5)

By Bob Young

### A Story that Changed the World—a Story that Changes Everything

We are rethinking Acts, the gospel, the good news of Jesus. This series of lessons, shared during the weeks leading up to Easter, reflect what I learned, lessons I heard, applications I saw when I studied Acts. We know these stories—do we really know these stories?

I see in this series a study to encourage all people. Here we can wrestle with the Jesus story as it spread throughout the first-century world. Here we can see what discipleship looked like in the early church, shortly after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Here we can hear first steps toward obedience, responding to and living out the Easter story, the Jesus story.

Lesson #5, the story of Jesus, what does it mean? Resurrection living, living because of the reality of the resurrection. Today I do not advance far in our study of Acts. I want to talk about us. I want to talk about applications. Where is the Jesus story visible in my life? How has it changed me? I share a message that I have shared repeatedly throughout my ministry.

The fifth truth—the story of Jesus changed the world—still has the power today to change everything. Obedience to the Jesus Story is not finalized in baptism and then you get to stop. Discipleship is about changed lives – resurrection living. Easter is about changed lives. Easter once a year doesn't work. Annual celebration is OT—Passover once a year. In the NT, remembering Easter is weekly, remembering resurrection every week.

The book of Acts is filled with stories of changed lives—the apostles, 3000, 5000, the Seven, Simon the sorcerer—don't you want to think he eventually got it right? Paul, Cornelius, the list continues. Today we live in Acts 29, post-Acts, and the list continues. This lesson is about us.

The Jesus story is a story of resurrection. The topic that got the early preachers in trouble was resurrection. Death and Life. Nothing is quite so exciting as resurrection—the dead living again, *anastasis*, literally “to stand up.” Spring is aptly named. This is a time of bounce back capacity, resiliency, renewal, rejuvenation, restoration.

Christ's resurrection story is told by all four gospels. There are a few, not many, other resurrection accounts in the gospels. The son of the widow of Nain, Jairus's daughter. A well-known resurrection story, unique to John's gospel, is the resurrection of Lazarus. These are stories of physical resurrection. This is almost always the meaning of the word in the NT.

Today as we think of resurrection, I want to affirm that Jesus is our leader in resurrection, and in resurrection living. He went first, he succeeded, he shows the way. His resurrection is promise, first fruits. His resurrection is guarantee, resurrection is possible, our resurrection is secured. In the Supper we celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection every Sunday, “until he comes.”

There is something comforting about having a leader. Even more meaningful, it is special when the leader chooses us. Leaders are for leading. How can we know if someone is a leader? Is anyone following?

Jesus is our spiritual leader. Jesus leads us in a specific path—resurrection living. What does this phrase mean? How do we understand this? Today we focus not on resurrection after our death, but on resurrection living in the world today, newness of life that follows our baptism. This resurrection living is true life, authentic, genuine. It is not characterized by failure. It is not futile, it is not fatal, it is not final. It is life that is full, free, forgiven, and oriented toward the future.

I share one of my favorite outlines.

When Jesus leads us in resurrection living...

#### 1. Our lives are not futile. Our PROVISION comes from Jesus.

Futile. Literally, pouring out easily, empty, vain, useless. We would be empty shells were it not for the larger, eternal perspective. Jesus gives purpose. Life is difficult, not easy. Burdensome. But as the poem, “Footprints,” suggests, Jesus helps carry that burden.

## **2. Our failures are not fatal. Our POWER comes from Jesus.**

Literally, resulting in death, mortal, lethal. The word is related to fate. Destiny, inevitable, predetermined, controlled, decided in advance, decreed. The results of our failures are not fatal.

We all make mistakes, but mistakes are not permanent, not eternal when Jesus is leading us. Through Jesus we find power to overcome.

## **3. Our death will not be final. Our PROMISE is secured by Jesus.**

Promises of Jesus cannot be broken, undone, forgotten. In 1 Cor. 15, he is described as the firstfruits, the promise of what is to come.

Today, we celebrate, but tomorrow life's rocky road may return. The roses may show their thorns. Go away today knowing one thing, not just that it is so nice that Jesus was raised from the dead, but that because he was raised, "Burdens are lifted at Calvary." Sins are covered, futility, fatality, and finality are erased. As we become like him, we are "Christians."

Will you on this Easter Sunday mirror Jesus—experience the death of the old person, bury that old self in baptism, experience the beginning of resurrection living? It is the beginning of life with him, for him, following him.