

The Jesus Story (5): A Story that Changed the World—a Story that Changes Everything (UPDATED)

Bob Young

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 reality, resurrection power, resurrection living—living because of the reality of the resurrection. Today I do not desire to advance our study of Acts. I will refer to Acts, but 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?

The message on my blog and on my website is a message that I have shared repeatedly throughout my ministry. But in this video, you get more, new, fresh.

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. Acts 29!

The Jesus story is a story of resurrection. The early church preached the resurrection. The early Christians were convinced, convicted, and changed by the 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.

But in the book of Acts, the message has been certified. It is beyond doubt. Resurrection, witnesses. At least 10 times in the book of Acts.

- 1:22, we must find one to become a witness with us to his resurrection.
- 2:31, Peter's sermon, David foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of Christ.
- 4:2, what got the apostles in trouble with the Jewish authorities is that they were teaching and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. Note the subtlety of text: in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.
- 4:33, giving powerful testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.
- 17:18, 32. In Athens, Paul was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. Some mocked, others were curious and wanted to hear Paul again
- 23:6, 8. Paul before the Sadducees and Pharisees rested his case on the hope and resurrection of the dead.
- 24:15, 21. Paul, in his legal defenses, constantly returned to the truth of the resurrection.

After last week's sermon, in the Bible class afterward, one person remarked, I did not realize that Acts said so much about forgiveness.

I want you to realize today how much the book of Acts says about resurrection.

The most common word is not resurrection (10 times), but raised (18 times).

- 2:24, God **raised** him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.
- 2:32, This Jesus God **raised** up, and of that we all are witnesses.
- 3:15, and you killed the Author of life, whom God **raised** from the dead. To this we are witnesses.
- 3:22, Moses said, 'The Lord God will **raise** up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.
- 3:26, God, having **raised** up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."
- 4:10, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God **raised** from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well.
- 5:30, The God of our fathers **raised** Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.
- 10:40, but God **raised** him on the third day and made him to appear,
- 13:30, But God **raised** him from the dead,
- 13:34, 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.'
- 13:37, but he whom God **raised** up did not see corruption.
- 26:8, Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God **raises** the dead?

Jesus is our leader in resurrection. 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."

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.

This is the message that changed the first-century world, and has continued to change people across the centuries. This the life-changing message of Jesus today—resurrection!

Will you this Easter follow 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.