



feeding...gathering...carrying...leading. (Isiah 40:11)

Dearest family,

It was so good to celebrate Easter with you on Sunday and wonderful to have a full house. The flying eggs and kazoos, apart from their immediate purpose, were prefiguring the ascension with its key phrase “in the air”! On your behalf, I want to give a huge ‘thank you’ to Irena and her team for the brilliant set up of the ‘Stations of the Cross’ that provided such a spiritual and meaningful preparation for us during Holy week. The art work, the creative interactive exercises, and the meditations and questions were challenging and inspiring. Celia and I had the privilege of going into the church early on Good Friday morning and going from station to station in the meditative silence. Please express your personal appreciation to Irena. Next year, I would love us to let all the local churches know about this. As many people as possible should experience it. Thank you too, to all the faithful who attended one of the watches of the night of prayer, and another ‘thank you’ to Monique for organizing it so well. Also, appreciation goes to Alysha and the worship team for all their hard work and effective ministry over Easter at both the Good Friday and Sunday services. Thank you one and all.

As we begin the Acts series, we must note how it opens: “*After his suffering He showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.*” This is how the story of the early church began. This is what sets the scene, the tone, the message, the meaning, and determines the narrative of Acts. Without this premise, none of the story makes any sense. He showed himself alive! On Sunday I promised to put the quick summary of texts that I gave in the letter so here it is:

- 1:22 - “*One of these must become a witness with us of the resurrection.*” (Qualification for apostleship.)
- 2:24 - “*But God raised Him from the dead*”
- 2:31 - “*He (David) spoke of the resurrection of Christ*” (Peter expounding Psalm 16:8-11 which he could only have got from Jesus, as Luke had previously recorded in his gospel in 24:45 “*Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures.*”
- 2:32 - Peter: preaching: “*God has raised this Jesus to life*”
- 3:15 - Peter to the “*men of Israel*” on the Temple grounds: “*You killed the author of life but God raised him from the dead*”
- 4:2 - “*They (Sadducees who did not believe in resurrection) were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.*”
- 4:10 - Peter to the “*rulers and the elders of the people*” who had seized him and John: “*You crucified but whom God raised from the dead*”
- 5:30 - Peter to the Sanhedrin: “*The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead*”
- 9:17 - Ananias to the newly converted Paul: “*The Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road*”
- 10:40 - Peter to those at Cornelius’ house: “*They killed him...but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen...seen by witnesses whom God had already chosen – by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.*”
- 13:30 - Paul in Pisidian Antioch to “*children of Abraham and God-fearing Gentiles*”: “*they laid him in a tomb but God raised him from the dead*”

- 13:34 - Paul quotes Isaiah 55:3 as proving *“the fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay.”*
- 13:37 Paul continues: *“But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.”*
- 17:3 - *“He reasoned with them (Jews in Thessalonica synagogue) from the scriptures, explain and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead.”*
- 17:18 - Paul in Athens: *“A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, ‘What is this babbler trying to say?’ Others remarked, ‘He seems to be advocating foreign gods.’ They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.”* (They thought *Anastasis*, the word for ‘resurrection’, was another god, so much did he talk about it.)
- 17:32 - *“When they heard about the resurrection of the dead some of them sneered”*
- 17:38 - *“He has given proof of this (coming judgment) to all men by raising him from the dead.”*
- 24:15 - Paul before Felix *“I have the same hope in God as these men (the Prophets) that there will be a resurrection of the righteous and the dead.”*
- 24:21 - *“It is concerning the resurrection that I am on trial before you today.”*
- 25:19 - Festus to Agrippa, briefing him about Paul’s accusers and case before Agrippa heard him: *“They had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive.”*
- 26:8 - Paul to Agrippa: *“Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?”*
- 26:16 - *“I have appeared to you to appoint you as a witness of what you have seen of me and I will show you.”*
- 26:23 - Paul telling Agrippa his message is *“nothing beyond what Moses and the Prophets said...that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”*

The preaching and teaching of the apostles, the narrative of Acts, just continue to speak and live out what Peter preached in that first sermon. It’s the prototype if you will. Believe it or not, when you listen to what he says, you will find he has three simple main points which address three basic questions: What actually happened? What does it mean? How does it relate to me? Listen to Peter and see if you can pick up on each of these:

- *“Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you (v22) ... God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of the fact (v32)... David said about him (v25, 34)...” (HISTORICAL EVIDENCE)*
- *“This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose (v23) ... God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ (v36) (THEOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL MEANING)*
- *“When the people heard this they were cut to the heart ... and said ... What shall we do? (v37) ... Repent and be baptized ... The promise is for you and your children ... save yourselves from this corrupt generation (vs38-40) ...” (PERSONAL APPLICATION)*

So as we begin our study of Acts of the Apostles, we assert that Jesus *“showed himself alive”* and will show himself to be so, to us as well as He did to them. I am so grateful for those three points of Peter’s first sermon, offering all of us historical evidence, biblical explanation and personal experience. Please download and re-listen to review the teaching, and please take time this week to read Romans 6: we died with him, we were buried with him, we were raised with him. So church, *“in the same way”*, as Paul says, that Christ *“lives to God”*, let us all post-resurrection, *“count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 6:10-11)

Pastorally yours,
Stuart