

Apostolic Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Apostle Peter

The Messiahship of Jesus the Nazarene – Acts 2:22-32

2:22-24 Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a Man from God having been attested to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know – Him, being delivered by the delineated counsel and foreknowledge of God, you having taken by lawless hands, having crucified, killed; Whom God raised, having destroyed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

In vs. 22, Peter seems to be entering a different phase in his presentation. This is a second salutation, and is appealing to the relationship of these Jews to the nation Israel. Several comments seem in order:

1. The phrase “men of Israel” may have included those who were pilgrims to Jerusalem from all over the Roman Empire, as well as to those who were familiar with the events leading up to the death of Christ, that is, those living permanently in Jerusalem.
2. However, it was those permanently living in Jerusalem Jews that Peter appears to single out here, not the pilgrim Jews, though they, of course, also heard Peter’s statements.
3. No argument, then, can be made that Peter is somehow holding every Jew throughout time responsible for the death of Christ, an abhorrent view which has led to the persecution of God’s chosen people for centuries. Jews are no more responsible for the death of Christ collectively than non-Jews. It was, soteriologically speaking, the sinful state of all mankind that made the death of Christ necessary. If any first cause for the death of Christ can be singled out, it must be that the Trinity Itself made this decision in the decree, and therefore the Godhead Itself is responsible for the death of Christ. This is, indeed, Peter’s argument.

“Jesus the Nazarene, a Man from God” emphasizes our Lord’s humanity. It was necessary to do so because His messianic ministry is what’s being presented, and that messianic ministry began at Nazareth, not at His birth in Bethlehem. Yes, that ministry was done as a result of His incarnation, and emphasizes His physical, genetic relationship to the nation Israel. But the specific identity of the Messiah as God’s servant is at issue. This Jesus, the one from Nazareth, the One from God, and none other, is the Messiah whom God sent.

Again we see Peter addressing specifically those who had seen the Lord’s miracles. Specifically, this statement seems to be directed to those Jews who were actually in attendance during some of the Lord’s miracles in and around Jerusalem. It would be a stretch to apply it to all the Israelites at the feast, as many were “sojourners” from distant parts of the Roman Empire.

The word “attested” means to show forth so as to ratify. This is exactly what God the Father did by performing supernatural acts through Jesus.

The word *miracles* is literally “powers.” *δυναμις* indicates the power that God expresses from His very nature. God always expresses this power in exactly the right way to produce the intended results. So even though God is “all powerful,” the power that He shows to man is moderated, limited, so as to bring about human understanding.

The basic idea of *wonders* is something so strange that it draws one’s attention, and causes itself to be watched. The implication is that it produces amazement in its watchers. The supernatural acts that Christ performed would certainly qualify as wonders.

Apostolic Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

A *sign* is that which points to something else. Here the word refers to the supernatural acts that Christ performed that pointed to Who He was.

“In your midst” cannot refer to the pilgrims to the feast, but to those Jews living in Jerusalem during the time that Jesus was ministering.

God the Father is the direct agent of the performing of these supernatural acts of the Lord. The Father performed them, though the humanity of the Son, who was the conduit through which they were performed.

Peter shows their culpability here. He emphasizes their knowledge of the events, and if they did not participate in them directly, they were complicit in the act.

“Him, being delivered by the delineated counsel and foreknowledge of God” is a grammatically difficult statement. The act of delivering Christ to death was, of course, done by the Jews. Specifically it was orchestrated by the Jewish leadership, primarily the Temple leadership. But the act was done by the agency of “the delineated counsel and foreknowledge of God.” Ultimately, God alone is responsible for the death of Jesus.

The word translated *delineated* is the perfect passive participle of ὀρίζω. It refers to current limits or boundaries having been placed by the counsel of God at the time that the determined plan was set forth. The reason that such a limitation was necessary is because of the nature of that counsel. It came out of God’s desirous will (Ephesians 1:11), and limited the actual realities that would take place to part of which God desired. In other words, God desired more than He determined in His plan.

The word *counsel* refers to the plan itself. It was necessary because of the nature of the Trinity. Each person has the ability to make independent decisions, though all desire the same things. Which desired things, then, would be determined, *and* by which Person of the trinity would they be accomplished? Thus the counsel was necessary, so that a single act of determination would provide a single plan. This delineated counsel, then, is the perfect plan of the Trinity for the present creation.

The word “foreknowledge” has caused many problems because it is confused with knowing things before hand. In fact, the word doesn’t mean that at all. It refers to the fixity in the program of the decree. God foreknows because He has determined. Foreknowledge is acquaintanceship with something because of having interacted with the thing. This is not omniscience. Before He decreed, there was *no foreknowledge* with God, but *there was omniscience*. Foreknowledge is the result of an act, while omniscience is the unlimited body of God’s knowledge out of which His acts occur.

A simple illustration might help here. God knows all, about all. He knows all there is to know about sin and unrighteousness, for instance. But He has no foreknowledge of such things. Foreknowledge is based on experience, and God has no experience with sin and unrighteousness.

“Lawless hands” is interesting figure of speech indicating the culpability of the Jews who were consenting to the crucifixion of Christ. Their actual hands were never used of course, so Peter refers to the “lawless hands” of the Roman soldiers who actually did the work of crucifixion. The Jews killed Christ using someone else’s hands. It’s a way of saying that the Jews who consented to Christ’s death were responsible for that death, and not the Romans alone.

Toussaint in his commentary on Acts states, “Many times the apostles accused the Jews of crucifying Jesus (2:23, 36; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39; 13:28), though the apostles also held the Gentiles culpable

Apostolic Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

(2:23; 4:27).”

The word crucified (προσπήγνυμι) is unusual. It only occurs once in Scripture. It's really the verb *to fasten*, which seems appropriate as that is exactly what the hands of the Roman soldiers did. The normal verb for crucify is σταυρόω (37 times in the NT).

The centrality of the resurrection is seen throughout Acts. The message of the death of Christ, as important as it is, is meaningless without the resurrection. Undoubtedly the disciples did not understand the full import of the death and resurrection of Christ at this point in their history. The full exposition of the soteriological benefits of the cross of Christ are left for Paul. But they recognized the supreme importance of what had happened in Jerusalem at the end of Christ's earthly messianic ministry. It was in that messianic context that they placed the death and resurrection of the Lord, even more than in its soteriological context.

The phrase “the pains of death” have caused much comment. The word “pains” is an old Greek word referring to birth pains. Some have thought that it refers to Christ's special suffering on the cross. Others, that it refers to Christ's “birth from death.” But perhaps the best view is that it simply means the process of death and the resultant disembodiment.

The Lord could not be held down by death because of several factors. First, it was God's predicted plan that He rise. Second, the divine person Jesus had the power to raise His body independently, if need be. Finally, the resurrection is central to the redemptive provision of Christ as planned in the decree.

2:25 For David says in reference to Him: I saw the Lord before me always in my presence, because He is at my right side, in order that I may not be shaken.

Vss. 25-28 are taken from Psalm 16:8-11, a Psalm of David.

There is only a single speaker in the quote by David and both Peter here and Paul in Acts 13:36 make it the Messiah. David is speaking in the guise of the Messiah. But is Messiah speaking as a human being rather than a partaker of the divine essence? As a human, Christ always had the Lord (God) in His presence, at His right side. As a human Christ required that presence in order that He might not be shaken (probably a reference to temptation of the human nature of Christ to remove Himself from the correct messianic program).

2:26-27 Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue exulted; and still my flesh also will dwell in hope because You will not abandon my soul in Hades, nor will You give over Your Holy One to see corruption.

In His humanity, Christ's heart was glad. This attitude of gladness extended even through His suffering. His tongue exulted as He verbally gloried in what God was doing.

David is clearly speaking of the Messiah here, as Peter will shortly point out. That Psalm 16 is Messianic has been held from antiquity. The reference is to the post-death experience that the Messiah encountered.

It is correctly held by many that Christ's person, His soul, if you will, entered Hades, the place of the dead, while His body was in the grave. However, unlike mankind in general, the Father did not abandon His soul there, a clear reference to the resurrection of the Messiah.

Likewise, the body of the Lord did not remain in the grave. The concept of corruption is best applied to

Apostolic Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

the physical remains of Christ after His crucifixion. The reference means that the physical body did not decay into dust.

2:28 You caused me to know the paths of life; You will fill me with gladness with Your presence.

This is Messiah speaking to God. “You” refers to the Father; “me” refers to the Messiah. The phrase “the paths of life” is a figurative way of saying “the way to life,” that is, the way to physical life through the resurrection.

“You will fill me with gladness” again refers to the Father acting with reference to the Messiah. The cause of the gladness is expressed in the prepositional phrase, “with Your presence.” The physical presence of the Father with the human Messiah produces gladness. This physical presence is after the resurrection.

2:29 Men, bothers, it is allowable that I speak boldly to you of the patriarch David, both that he died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

As one studies Acts it becomes evident that the Apostle Peter was not only well-versed in the Old Testament Scriptures, but that he understood and was able to use the information to prove his spiritual points. The apostles may have been “ignorant and unlearned men” in the formal sense, but they were not stupid or foolish, and several events in Acts proves that point. This is one of those events.

In Acts 2:29-36 Peter presents two broad truths. *First*, Jesus the Nazarene is the One who sent the Holy Spirit. *Second*, Jesus did this sending because of His authority as the predicted and resurrected Messiah. Based on the previous quote, Peter argues that Jesus the Nazarene was the Messiah about whom David wrote. His argument has six elements:

1. David could not be referring to himself since he was dead and buried and his tomb was known at the time of Peter’s speech (vs. 29);
2. Since David was a prophet, he knew that according to Psalm 132:11, God had sworn that “fruit of his loins,” that is, David’s offspring, “the Christ,” would be the one resurrected to sit on David’s throne (vs. 30-31);
3. Jesus had indeed risen (vs. 32);
4. Having risen and seated at the Father’s right hand, Jesus had sent the Spirit, the evidence of which they were seeing and hearing (vs. 33);
5. David did not ascend to the right hand of God, but according to Psalm 110:1 the Lord Messiah would so (vss. 34, 35);
6. Therefore, Israel needs to know that the crucified Jesus is both Lord and Christ (vs. 36).

We will comment on each of these points as we travel through the next set of verses.

Peter sets up his argument by pointing out that the question in the context has to do with David, Psalm 16’s human author. The word “boldly” refers to the outspoken nature of Peter’s statement, and is probably expressed by him to assert his authority in the matter. There is no hesitation here with Peter. Like all Jews of his day, Peter was conversant with the Old Testament Scriptures, as well as the various interpretations which were held.

Peter expresses the three-fold truth in logically proving that Psalm 16 could not refer to David.

Apostolic Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

1. David died.
2. David was buried.
3. David had not risen from the dead. This truth is proven by the fact that at the time Peter spoke those living in Judea knew where David's tomb was. The kings of Israel were buried on Mt. Zion. The tomb was said to have fallen into ruins in the time of the Emperor Hadrian. Josephus (*Antiquities*. XVI. 7, 1) attributes most of the misfortunes of Herod's family to the fact that he tried to rifle the tomb of David.

The conclusion to which this logically draws the listener is that David could not have been speaking about himself in Psalm 16. David's soul was still in Hades. David's body did see corruption. So only the Messiah can fulfill the truth of Psalm 16.

2:30-31 Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not abandoned in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption

David was a prophet, and therefore received revelation from God which he presented to Israel. This revelation is found in Psalm 132:11, which states "The LORD has sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it: I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body." See 2 Samuel 7:11-16 for the covenant with David that God had established.

The Greek words "the Christ" here refer to the anointed one of Israel, the Messiah. Both words come from roots in their respective languages that mean "anointed." Peter has not yet applied this truth to Jesus of Nazareth. He is still formulating his argument that the Messiah had to die and rise from the dead.

Psalm 16:10 reads, "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." Both the words Hades and Sheol can refer either to the grave itself, or to the place where the disembodied dead go to await the resurrection. If the words "His soul" are to be retained, as does the Majority Text, then the reference is not to the grave, but to the place of the dead.

2:32 God raised this Jesus, of which we are all witnesses.

Here we come to Peter's application of the various statements from the Psalms, which application continues through verse 36. The first point is that God the Father raised Jesus. This central doctrine of the resurrection of the Jesus the Messiah is presented as a simple fact. It is not elaborated on here.

Note that the gospel for salvation as Paul presents it in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 is not yet being preached. The importance of the resurrection in this passage is not the redemptive provision of the Lord Jesus, but of His messianic ministry to Israel. The death and resurrection of Christ has a three-fold application in Scripture:

1. It can refer to the Lord's redemptive provision for mankind, and does so especially in the epistles;
2. It can refer to Jesus ministry as Messiah of Israel, to which it is central. The two comings of Christ are dependent on Jesus' rejection by Israel, His crucifixion, and His resurrection and ascension. This passage speaks of Jesus' work in this capacity as Messiah.
3. It can refer to the application of Jesus' activity in sanctification to the believer today, as in Romans 6 and elsewhere. In this regard, the facts of the death, resurrection, and ascension are applied to

Apostolic Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

the individual Christian (not Old Testament believers) as the basis for grace provision daily living apart from law.

On five occasions in Acts some of the apostles said they were witnesses of the resurrection (v.32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39-41; 13:30-31). They knew whereof they spoke! It is in this sense that the word “witness” is used in the book of Acts. It refers to those who can testify because they had been first-hand eye witnesses of the events of Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension.

Does Peter here mean the twelve, or the 120? Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:6 that over 500 believers saw the resurrected Lord, all at one time. Certainly the 12 saw the resurrected Lord, but if Peter means the 120 here, it is probably as part of the 500 that Paul mentions.

Alfred Barnes presents the following arguments in favor of the literal resurrection of Christ’s body:

1. They had seen him themselves. They did not conjecture it or reason about it; but they had the evidence on which people act every day, and which must be regarded as satisfactory, the evidence of their own senses.
2. The number was such they could not be imposed on. If 120 persons could not prove a plain matter of fact, nothing could be established by testimony; there could be no way of arriving at any facts.
3. The thing to be established was a plain matter. It was not that they “saw him rise.” That they never pretended: Impostors would have done this. But it was that they saw him, talked, walked, ate, drank with him, being alive, after, he had been crucified. The fact of his death was matter of Jewish record, and no one called it in question. The only fact for Christianity to make out was that he was seen alive afterward, and this was attested by many witnesses.
4. They had no interest in deceiving the world in this thing. There was no prospect of pleasure, wealth, or honor in doing it.
5. They offered themselves now as ready to endure any sufferings, or to die, in attestation of the truth of this event.

The Apostle Paul

The Promised Resurrection of the Messiah – Acts 13:32-37

In this section Paul proves that the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is in accordance with Old Testament doctrine.

13:32-33 And we evangelize you the promise which was made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise for us their children, by raising up Jesus, as also in the second Psalm it is written, ‘You Yourself are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’

Verses 32-37 identify the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel. Paul’s argument, like Peter’s in Acts 2:26-32, uses David’s Psalms, specifically the second and the sixteenth, to show that the one risen from the dead must be the Messiah. Paul’s argument goes like this:

1. The basis for the kingship of Jesus is the fact that He is the specific Son of God (vs. 33 refers to Psalm 2:7). The “raising up” of verse 33 does not refer to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, but to His exaltation to kingship, which is the subject of Psalm 2. In other words, Paul is claiming that

Apostolic Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Jesus of Nazareth is the specific “Son” of this Psalm. This is a statement of deity, and it includes the idea that the true Messianic king of Israel must be God incarnate, otherwise He is a faker.

2. Paul quotes Isaiah 55:3 (though not from the Septuagint, as is often stated) to show that Messiah fulfills David’s program. Isaiah 55 refers to the “everlasting covenant,” a reference to God’s covenant with David. The “mercies” are the promises made to David of his perpetual kingdom. But David was dead already by the time of Isaiah, so the question arises, and had arisen in the Jewish mind, how were these mercies of David to be fulfilled? To the dispersion Jews such as Paul addresses here, this was a vital issue. When will Israel return to the land *en masse*? How will God bring about the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant?
3. By referring to Psalm 16 Paul answers the question uppermost in the mind of the Jews of his day. The Holy One who will not see corruption (verse 35, a quote from Psalm 16:10) cannot refer to David. David died (fell asleep) and was buried (vs. 36). Therefore, *his body* did see corruption. David was not resurrected. But the one who was raised, Jesus, saw no corruption.

The conclusion is obvious: Jesus, attested as having been raised from the dead by twelve adult Jewish males must be the Messiah. This is the only possible interpretation of the preceding passages of Scripture.

13:34 And because He raised Him from the dead, no longer about to return to corruption, He has spoken thus, ‘I will give you the reliable sacred promises of David.’

This is from Isaiah 55:3, a messianic prediction passage. Since the physical body of the Messiah will not remain in the grave to corrupt, He will receive the “reliable sacred promises of (to) David.”

13:35 Therefore also in another place He says, ‘You will not give Your Righteous One to see corruption.’

A quote from Psalm 16:10. This is further confirmation that Messiah’s body could not remain in the grave long enough for corruption to set in. Beginning here, Paul uses essentially the same argument from the same passage that Peter did in Acts 2:22-32. For a detailed discussion of the logic of this approach, see that acts two discussion.

13:36-37 For David, having ministered by the will God in his own generation, fell asleep, was added to his fathers, and indeed did see corruption; but the One Whom God raised up did not see corruption.

See note on verse 32-33 above. As stated there, the Holy One who will not see cannot refer to David. David’s body did see corruption. But the One who was raised, Jesus, saw no corruption. In Acts 2 Peter points out that the grave of David was still with them. The kings of Israel were buried on Mt. Zion. Since David’s body was still in that grave, Psalm 16 must be referring to the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.