

EASTER 2023: Resurrection Claimsⁱ

Acts 13:16-39

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! Happy Easter! My name is Chris Wigley, I'm one of the pastors here at Trinity. If you are a first-time guest, I am so very grateful you are here. We'd love to connect with you and to get to know you more. You can help us do that by texting the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mount Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you send that keyword, a link will be sent back to you and that will take you to a short form. When you submit that form, it notifies me, and I look forward to following up with you.

If text messaging isn't your thing, feel free to swing by our information center located in the fellowship area, right out these doors in the lobby. We have a gift there for you just as a way of saying thank you for being our guest today. Again, we are thrilled you have chosen to worship with us today.

This weekend we are talking about what's most important to us as Christians; the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now, next Sunday, I want to invite everyone back as we kick off a new teaching series, "I AM: the 7 I am statements of Jesus."

You know, the resurrection of Jesus Christ displays the very divine nature of Jesus. In other words, Jesus is no ordinary man. His resurrection proves that. And as we are going to see in a moment, the resurrection claims prove the power and authority Jesus has over sin, death, and the grave. And because of who Jesus is, the statements he makes in the Gospel of John, beginning with the phrase, I AM, gives us tremendous insight. So, I am looking forward to beginning that study next Sunday. I hope you'll make it back.

But today, we are going to look at a powerful section of Scripture. If you have your bibles, turn with me to the book of Acts. We are going to be in chapter 13 this morning. If you don't have a bible, there is a bible located on the seat rack on the seat in front of you. And if you need a bible, please feel free to take that as your bible today.

If you have been with us at all in our study through 1 Samuel, leading up to Easter, you are going to find this passage a perfect tie between what we've been studying to our new teaching series on the I Am statements of Jesus.

MESSAGE:

The power in Acts 13 lies in three main things... 1) The Character in the story of Acts 13, 2) The Claim that is made, and 3) The Conclusion. Character, Claim and Conclusion. These are the words that I want you to consider this Easter.

So, let's jump in by looking at...

1) **The Character.**

Read with me verse 16 of Acts 13. *¹⁶So **Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said...*** Let's stop right there. When I say the character, I'm talking about the character in this story. In this case, it is Paul, the Apostle Paul.

But Paul, before he was Paul, was Saul. And in that former life, he was going around as a part of a group of people that were massacring Christians. This was in the days of the early church. Now, this is incredible. Because the same man involved in the murder of innocent Christians becomes one of the most notable Christians. In fact, most people would say that outside of Jesus the two most notable Christians are the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul.ⁱⁱ

But before Paul is Paul, he is Saul, the great persecutor of the early church. Killing Christians and putting them into prison. In chapters 7 and 8 of Acts we learn that Paul was very excited about doing all that. In chapter 7, beginning in verse 58, *⁵⁸Then they cast him [being a man named Stephen, a Christian. They cast him] out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named **Saul** [same person]. ⁵⁹And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep [that is he died, he succumbed to his injuries]. ¹And **Saul approved of his execution.*** That's chapters 7 and 8.

But then, this same man, Saul, is traveling on a road to Damascus, chapter 9, to do more of the same. Well, on the way to Damascus Jesus meets him, the resurrected Jesus, in a powerful way and his life is radically changed. He becomes a Christian and will become the greatest church planter in the history of the world. This is part of what makes the Acts 13 passage so powerful. How can a man that was once so opposed to Christianity now be one of the greatest Christians the world has ever seen? He would even go on to be martyred for his faith! When you meet the resurrected Jesus Christ, He changes you, I mean

forever changes you. It is impossible to meet Jesus and not be transformed. And for a couple millennia now, Jesus has been doing that and He will continue to change lives.

And here's what's crazy about this story. Paul, after he becomes a Christian, is so concerned about his Jewish brothers and sisters that he so desperately wants them to meet Jesus, too. So, his strategy was to attend the synagogues and tell them about The Lord. Many times, he was run out of town, flogged, beaten, and even stoned. But he would get up, dust himself off, and go right back to sharing the gospel.

I don't know about you, but if I am Paul and there was any uncertainty about this Jesus guy, I would not even think about doing such a thing. But you see, Paul had become so convinced, so transformed, so changed, that he was convicted to the core of who Jesus is that now nothing could deter him from sharing Jesus. And this, to me, is one of the most compelling pieces of evidence for the case of the resurrection.ⁱⁱⁱ

And in Acts 13, we see Paul doing what Paul did. His attending the synagogue, on the Sabbath, and the leaders open the floor. They decide to have open mic day. As a result, Paul jumps at the opportunity to preach.^{iv} He stood up, motioned his hand and begins to preach.

This is the character, Paul. And what he says, then, is...

2) The Claim.

So, Paul stands in the synagogue and preaches an awesome sermon. Acts 13 records it for us. Follow along in your copy of God's Word as we look at the claims Paul makes in his sermon. Verse 16.

¹⁶So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: "Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. [In other words, let me explain what was just read. And Paul goes all the way back to the book of Genesis and gives a quick synopsis of the Old Testament. He then wraps up with Jesus being in the tomb. Here's what he says.]^v

¹⁷The God of this people Israel chose our fathers [Genesis and Abraham] and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it [Reference to the Book of Exodus and crossing the

Red Sea]. *¹⁸And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness.* [As the Israelites whined and griped and complained. But God provided for them and eventually brought them into the Promised land. But before that happened, Moses hands the baton to Joshua. Verse 19] *¹⁹And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan* [The Promised Land], *he gave them their land as an inheritance.* [In three verses Paul covers the first 5 books of the Old Testament, known as the Pentateuch. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.] *²⁰All this took about 450 years.*

And after that he gave them judges [following Joshua judges ruled the nation of Israel] *until Samuel the prophet* [Samuel being the last judge of Israel. Why? Verse 21]. *²¹Then they asked for a king* [the people were no longer satisfied with a theocracy so they demanded a monarchy], *and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.* *²²And when he [being God] had removed him* [being Saul. God removed him because of his horrible character], *he raised up David* [as in David and Goliath] *to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'* [In other words, even though David is a sinful man, he will bow the knee to God and seek to serve The Lord with all his heart.]

²³Of this man's offspring [King David's offspring] *God has brought to Israel a Savior* [that being], *Jesus, as he promised.* [You can feel the tension rising in the synagogue.] *²⁴Before his coming, John* [John the Baptizer] *had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.* *²⁵And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he.* [In other words, I'm not the Messiah.] *No, but behold, after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'* [Reference to Jesus].

²⁶Brothers, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. [Christmas reference. Incarnation. Jesus taking on flesh being born in Bethlehem]. *²⁷For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him* [Jesus] *nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him.*

²⁸And though they found in him no guilt worthy of death [no evidence], *they asked Pilate to have him executed.* *²⁹And when they had carried out all that*

was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. Sermon over? Oh no! Verse 30.

³⁰**But God raised him from the dead**, ³¹and for many days **he appeared to those** who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, **who are now his witnesses** to the people. ³²And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, “‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’” ³⁴And 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.’” ³⁵Therefore he says also in another psalm, “‘**You will not let your Holy One see corruption**.’” ³⁶For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, ³⁷but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. Such an awesome sermon.

But in this sermon, there are 4 claims Paul makes. 4 major claims.

A) Fulfillment of Prophecy

Paul says in verse 27. ²⁷For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him [Jesus] nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, **fulfilled them by condemning him**.

What Paul is saying is that everything the Rabbi just read about, in the Old Testament, testifying of a Savior to come, even the prized book of Isaiah, read every Sabbath, written 700 years prior, points to Jesus Christ. And not only do prophecies point to Jesus' coming, but it also foretells of his crucifixion. Isaiah 53:5 says, 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.*” The crucifixion of Jesus is actually the fulfillment of what God promised long before.

That's claim number 1. Claim number 2...

B) Resurrection, not Resuscitation

Verse 30. ³⁰**But God raised him from the dead**. This is not that Jesus passed out. Not that Jesus swooned. Not that Jesus was comatose. He was dead. But God raised Him from the dead.

Think about the number of trained people who essentially signed the death certificate of Jesus. The Roman soldiers who had verified countless deaths on the cross. Joseph of Arimathea who prepared his body for burial. The Roman guards that placed his body in the tomb. There is no doubt that this was indeed a resurrection.^{vi}

Claim 1 is the fulfillment of prophecy. Claim 2 is the resurrection, not resuscitation. Claim number 3...

C) Confirmed Resurrection

Paul points out that not only did Jesus raise from the dead, there were witnesses, currently alive at the time of his sermon that could confirm the resurrection account. Verse 31. ³¹and for many days **he** [being Jesus] **appeared to those** who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem [after His resurrection], **who are now his witnesses to the people**. In other words, don't take my word for it, ask those that have witnessed it first-hand.

Paul also wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:4-7. ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas [That's Peter's Aramaic name], then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Claim 1, the fulfillment of prophecy. Claim 2, resurrection not resuscitation. Claim 3, resurrection confirmation in other witnesses. The 4th claim...

D) Jesus is still Alive

Not only did Jesus raise from the dead, but he is currently alive and seated at the right hand of the Father. Verses 34 and 35 of Acts 13. ³⁴And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, **no more to return to corruption** [In other words, to never die again], he has spoken in this way, “‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’” ³⁵Therefore he says also in another psalm, “‘**You will not let your Holy One see corruption**.’” Verse 36. ³⁶For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep [that is he died] and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption [his body decayed. But not so with Christ. Verse 37], ³⁷but he whom God raised up did not see corruption.

Following His resurrection, Jesus appeared to many, spent 40 days with the disciples, and then ascended into Heaven where the book of Hebrews tells us that He is now seated at the right hand of the Father. Jesus is alive and He is forever alive, never to see decay. Amen.

Listen, Jesus defeated death. No question. Death is not still in the grave. As we have sung, "Where, oh death is your victory? Where is your sting?" It has been conquered by Jesus. And we, that are in Him, have life and life eternal. That even the grave, for those in Christ, simply gives way to our victory. Victory in Jesus, the one that overcame the grave.

So, we've looked at the character in Acts 13, Paul. We have also considered the claims Paul made in his sermon. Now, let's look at...

3) The Conclusion.

You know, every good sermon has a strong conclusion. Paul has given information, but one question remains. What does Jesus' resurrection mean for me? What does this have to do with us today? Every good sermon answers that question. And Paul does that in his conclusion.

Let's look at it. Verse 38 of Acts 13. ***38**Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.* My friend, because Jesus has raised from the dead, you can be forgiven of your sin! That is good news!

You might say, well how can I have the forgiveness of my sin, my wrongdoings? Again, verse 38 says, "***that through this man.***" Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father except by me." Through faith in this man, faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, there is forgiveness of sin.

And notice this. "***forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.***" Proclaimed, spoken, declared to you. Well, who declares it to us? God. God says to you, by way of His grace, through faith in Jesus, "I forgive you."

Think about that for a moment. In our sin we have offended the Creator of the Cosmos. In our rebellious heart, we have turned away from Almighty God. By ignoring God's commands for our life, we have disrespected Him. Yet that God

stands ready to say to you, "I forgive you." And that is only made possible through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:7 says it this way, *"**7**In him [in Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses [sins], according to the riches of his grace."* You know, I'm confident that the one thing that we would all love to hear are the words, "I forgive you." To know that The God of the Universe has, through His Son, purchased unlimited forgiveness for you and me. Isn't that good?

But it gets even better. Verse 39. ***39**and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.* EVERYONE freed from EVERYTHING by way of faith in Jesus.

You might be here today and think, Pastor, there's no way God would ever forgive me. You don't know what I've done. Oh, but there is an empty grave that says otherwise. By Christ, **everyone** who believes is freed. Freed from the penalty of sin, eternal separation from God in a real place called hell. This forgiveness is available to **everyone** who believes.

The thief on the cross next to Jesus, forgiven. The murderous journeys of Paul, forgiven. The most vile criminal, forgiven. And yes, even you. For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that WHOEVER believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Today could be your day.

You know, there's only one sin that Jesus didn't die for. That's the sin of unbelief. That makes sense. Because if forgiveness is available to everyone who believes then if you don't believe then you have not been forgiven. Listen, Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection results in everyone being forgiven of everything.

CONCLUSION:

We've looked today at the character, the Apostle Paul. We've looked at the resurrection claims he made in his sermon. And we talked through the awesome conclusion of the sermon.

There's another "C" word I want to make mention of. Consideration. After Paul lands the plane of his sermon he asks them to please consider these resurrection claims. That they may respond by faith in Jesus as Lord.

What about you? I'll make the same statement to you today. Please consider what Jesus has done on your behalf. How He not only died for your sins, but resurrected demonstrating power over your sin. Have you trusted Jesus as Lord of your life. Take deep consideration, and trust Him today.

I'm going to pray and our worship team will lead us in a time of response. Will you respond to Jesus today? Our elders will be here at the front ready to receive you. Simply come, take us by the hand, and say, "I need Jesus." That's it. And make today the day of salvation.

[PRAY]

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation for this message: John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Acts 13-28*, Moody Press: Chicago, 1996; Ajith Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary: Acts*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1998; Tommy Politz, "Resurrection Claims," sermon preached at Hillside Christian Church, Amarillo, Texas, accessed online: <https://hillsideonline.com/message-detail?Item=1643&Message=1644>; Robert Jeffress, "16 APR Evidence #1 For Resurrection: Transformation of the Disciples," article published by Pathway to Victory, accessed online: <https://ptv.org/devotional/evidence-1-transformation-of-the-disciples/>; G3, "Biblical Apologetics Lesson 5: The Resurrection of Christ," article published by G3 Ministries, accessed online:

ⁱⁱ Tommy Politz.

ⁱⁱⁱ G3 Ministries.

^{iv} Discussion on the commonality of Rabbi's giving other credible teachers the floor is discussed in John MacArthur's commentary, page 17.

^v Synopsis borrowed from Tommy Politz.

^{vi} For more information on the evidence of the resurrection, see the G3 article.