

The Christ Had to Suffer and Rise Again (Acts 17:1-4)^a

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Context

1. Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke on the 2nd Missionary Journey
2. Evangelizing in Philippi, thrown into jail
3. Miraculously freed by an earthquake
4. “Unnatural” testimony of their actions caught attention of Jailer
5. Preached the gospel to the jailer, he and his family saved
6. Eventually released, now traveling southwestward on their way to the seaport of Thessalonica
 - A. Today is the second largest city in Greece (Thessaloniki) with population exceeding 1 million
 - B. (We think we have history around here? Thessalonica was founded in 315 BC — and is now over 2,300 years old!)

Passage (Acts 17:1-5a)

[1] Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. [2] Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, [3] explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and [saying], “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.” [4] And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. [5] But the Jews who were not persuaded . . .¹

Paul’s *Modus Operandi* - MO

1. In Philippi there was apparently no synagogue so Paul found people praying down by the river.
2. Here in Thessalonica, there was a synagogue so Paul, as *his custom was* (Acts 17:1), immediately goes there to reason from the Jewish scriptures.
3. The pattern:

- A. After recovering from his dramatic conversion, in Damascus Paul *immediately . . . preached Christ in the synagogues* (Acts 9:20).
 - B. In Salamis, on Cypress, the first stop on the first missionary journey, *they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews* (Acts 13:5).
 - C. When they arrived in Antioch in Pisidia, they *went into the synagogue* and reasoned with the Jews in that city (Acts 13:14-15).
 - D. Same story when they came to Iconium (Acts 14:1).
4. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17; Rom. 11:13; 2Ti. 1:11), never tired of trying to reach his fellow Jews (Rom. 9:2-3).

Paul's evangelistic approach:

- 1. Since the Jews accepted the Old Testament, “all one needed to do” was to show how Jesus fulfils Old Testament predictions . . . or was it?!
- 2. *For three Sabbaths [Paul] reasoned with them from the Scriptures* (Acts 17:2).

A. “Reasoned” is from **διαλέγομαι** [*dialegomai*], from which we get our English word *dialogue*.

I. The Greek term means to “discuss with reasonable discourse”.²

3. *explaining and demonstrating*

A. “Explaining” is from **διανοίγω** [*dianoigō*], which includes the idea of “to make open” as in opening one’s mind to the truth.³

B. “Demonstrating” is from **παρατίθεμαι** [*paratithemai*], “to show something to be true”.⁴

4. This is the essence of apologetics

A. As Paul would later write to Timothy

I. *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always [be] ready to [give] a defense (ἀπολογία [apologian]) to everyone who asks you a reason (λόγον [logon]) for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; (1Pe. 3:15)*

II. When they ask us the *reason* (λόγον [logon]) for our hope, then we *reason* (διαλέγομαι [dialegomai]) with them—just like Paul does here.

III. We have a “reasoned dialogue” using *words* → **λογος** [*logos*]

5. Now some of you may be thinking — I don't know how to do that . . . I'm not skilled enough for this apologetics stuff!

A. Not so: and here's why

I. The Holy Spirit will use whatever you've got — witness how God used Balaam's donkey (Num. [22:28-20](#)).

II. The most advanced, detailed, formidable presentation of *the reason* for your hope isn't enough to convince those whose hearts are hardened.

III. A simplistic, but genuine presentation of *the reason* for your hope will be sufficient in the hands of the Holy Spirit for those who are truly seeking.

IV. It's not so much about *your skill*, but more about *the preparation of the heart* of the one listening.

B. As we've seen before and we'll see in the passage before us, no less an apologist than the Apostle Paul—full of the Holy Spirit and an absolute expert on the Old Testament—is only able to persuade some.

C. The rest of the Jews were not persuaded (Acts [17:5a](#)).

D. God could not possibly have blessed them with a more persuasive presentation by a more capable presenter — yet they failed to believe.

E. The problem wasn't the need for better evidence or facts. The problem was the dark and hardened condition of the human heart.

According to the Scriptures

1. Paul reasoned . . . from the Scriptures . . . that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead (Acts [17:3](#)).

A. "The Christ" - the Messiah, the predicted Jewish individual found throughout the Old Testament.

B. *This Jesus whom I preached to you is the Christ* (Acts [17:3](#)).

I. Paul's logic:

a. Exhibit A - The Jewish Scriptures predict the Messiah would die and rise again.

b. Exhibit B - The life of Jesus of Nazareth matches those predictions.

c. THEREFORE: Jesus is "the Christ," the predicted Jewish Messiah.

2. The Jewish Old Testament makes *predictions*

- A. Since we are all trapped *within* time, none of us can accurately see what is coming next: we can't accurately predict the future.
- B. For a message to accurately describe the future, not just vaguely, but precisely—it would have to originate outside of time.
- C. It would form *objective evidence*, in written form, of the existence of God.
- D. Such is the nature of the Bible which contains detailed, accurate predictions, made hundreds of years in advance.
- E. We Christians know this as “biblical prophecy” — the only true prophecy in existence.
- F. One such passage which matches Paul's description is found in the 53rd chapter of the prophet Isaiah, written at least 680 years before Christ.

3. According to the Dead Sea Scrolls

- A. Why the Dead Sea Scrolls
 - I. Discovered in 1947, containing numerous Biblical texts from the OT
 - II. Pushed back the date of our earliest OT manuscripts by an additional 1100 years
 - III. Contains the oldest complete copy of Isaiah in existence - the “Great Isaiah Scroll”
 - IV. Date using both radiocarbon analysis and style of writing
 - a. Carbon-14 dated at least four times: 335-324 BC and 202-107 BC
 - b. Paleographic analysis: 150-100 BC
 - V. I'm telling you nothing you can't read from *Wikipedia*.⁵
 - VI. Notice the dates: B. C. = BEFORE CHRIST — by at least 100 years *according to secular science*.
 - VII. Whatever we might find about the Messiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls must have been written no later than one century before the birth of Jesus — in reality, it was written far earlier than this particular copy.
 - VIII. IF the scroll predicts details concerning the life of Jesus, THEN where did the message come from? Who knew and how?

B. Isaiah 53 from the Dead Sea Scrolls⁸

See, my servant will prosper and he will be exalted and lifted up, and will be very high. Just as many were astonished at you—so was he marred in his appearance, more than any human, and his form beyond that of the sons of humans—so will he startle many nations. Kings will shut their mouths at him; for what had not been told them they will see; and what they had not heard they will understand. Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a tender plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form and he had no majesty that we should look at him, and had no attractiveness that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others, and a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering; and like one from whom people hide their faces and we despised him, and we did not value him. Surely he has born our sufferings, and carried our sorrows; yet we considered him stricken and struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, and he was crushed for our iniquities, and the punishment that made us whole was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, each of us, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, as a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. From detention and judgment he was taken away—and who can even think about his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living, he was stricken for the transgression of my people. Then they made his grave with the wicked, and with rich people his tomb—although he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet the Lord was willing to crush him, and he made him suffer. Although you make his soul an offering for sin, and he will see his offspring, and he will prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will triumph in his hand. Out of the suffering of his soul he will see light, and find satisfaction. And through his knowledge his servant, the righteous one, will make many righteous, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong; because he poured out his life to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sins of many, and made intercession for their transgressions.⁹

I. The passage concerns the Jewish Messiah — early Jewish rabbis agree:

- a. “All the ancient Jewish writings — the Mishnah, the Gemara, (the Talmud), the Midrashim and many others — all regard this portion of Scripture as relating to the Messianic Person. The first rabbi to suggest otherwise was Rashi, around 1050 A.D. Every rabbi prior to Rashi, without exception, viewed this passage as describing Messiah.”¹⁰
- b. Rabbi Moshe Le Sheich, in the late 1500’s: “. . . our Rabbis with one voice accept and affirm the opinion that the prophet is speaking of King Messiah, and we shall ourselves also adhere to the same view.”¹¹
- c. Rabbi Naphtali Ben Altschuler, 17th century: “I will now proceed to explain these verses of our own Messiah, who, God willing, will come speedily in our days!”¹²

II. What does the passage reveal?

- a. An individual who would be despised and rejected.
- b. An individual who would be punished and die for the transgressions of others.
- c. By the death of this individual, the transgressors are healed.
- d. The iniquity (sinful errors) of all men were to be laid upon this individual.
- e. The individual did not attempt to defend himself from the accusations brought against him.
- f. The individual was put to death. His death was associated with the sins of the people.
- g. The death of the individual was associated with both the wicked and the rich.
- h. The soul (life) of this individual was made an offering for sin. His death was required in order to atone for the sins of others.
- i. By his death, the individual will make many righteous.
- j. Even though the individual dies, “he will see his offspring and prolong his days” — somehow he lives again after his death.
- k. A Jewish individual.

C. Who could this be?!!!

- I. Was there ever an individual who was truly righteous (without sin)? Was he rejected? Did he undergo seeming defeat and die a cruel death? Was his death purposeful in that he bore the sins of others thereby reconciling them to God?
- II. If we carefully study history, can we find any record of such a Jewish individual?
- III. If one tried to summarize or restate the essence of this passage — how might it be written?

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.¹³

— John [3:16-17](#)

D. What have we seen?

- I. Archaeological evidence, dated by secular science, asserts this passage predates the birth of Jesus Christ.
 - II. (We also have other written records which also prove the predictions were made in advance of his birth [e.g., the Septuagint].)
 - III. There is no one known to history, other than Jesus Christ, who can claim this resumé.
- E. The inconvenient question
- I. If this passage was written nearly 700 years BC, and found in archaeological remains no younger than 100 BC then . . .
 - II. . . . how can it describe the life of the very person who's birth defines the B.C. / A.D. boundary?
 - III. UNLESS - we have here objective evidence of information originating outside of time.
 - IV. (As an aside: this is another reason why I place greater authority in the Bible's account of early history than the postulations of secular cosmology: prophecy trumps science which will never produce the likes of Isaiah 53!)

Objective evidence of the supernatural origin and ministry of Jesus the Christ

1. **The claim of the skeptical: "Just give me some hard evidence that the Bible is what it claims to be and Jesus is Who He claims to be!"**
2. **Hard evidence that the Bible contains accurate predictive prophecy.**
3. **Hard evidence that the Jewish man, Jesus Christ, is the predicted Messiah of the Old Testament.**
4. **What more could a person need to believe?**

It's not [just] about evidence!

1. **Stone edition of the Tanach: "53:10. That is, Israel. God replies to the nations that Israel's suffering was a punishment for its own sins; and when the people realize this and repent, they will be redeemed and rewarded. [emphasis added]"¹⁴**
2. **Jewish Study Bible: "53.1-11a: . . . the servant is probably the nation Israel, and the nations are stunned that such an insignificant and lowly group turns out to have been so important to the divine plan. . . . [the] resurrection is probably a metaphor for the renewal of the nation at the end of the exile."¹⁵**
3. **As in Paul's day, so it remains: *[many of] the Jews were not persuaded (Acts 17:5)***

4. And so it is with several engineering friends of mine with whom I've shared this evidence found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

A. They claim to be “all about facts” and “evidence” and consider themselves as “unbiased and intelligent” — but they've already made the *a priori* decision that prophecy is impossible and God doesn't exist.

B. They won't allow *anything* to overturn their preference to ignore the Bible.

5. The problem is the hardness and darkness of the human heart which would prefer to imagine it is independent from any claim of God

A. As Charles Clough wittily puts it: “Atheists can't find God for the same reason criminals can't find police!”

6. As Jesus observed: *If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead* (Luke **16:31).**

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Endnotes:

1. NKJV, (Acts 17:1-5a)
2. Ref-0617, #1363
3. Ref-0617, #1380
4. Ref-0617, #4192
5. “The Isaiah Scroll, designated 1QIsa and also known as the Great Isaiah Scroll, was found in a cave near the Dead Sea (Qumran Cave 1) with six other scrolls by Bedouin shepherds in 1947, later known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. The scroll is written in Hebrew and contains the entire Book of Isaiah from beginning to end, apart from a few small damaged portions. It is the oldest complete copy of the Book of Isaiah known, being 1100 years older than the Leningrad Codex, and the most complete scroll out of the 220 found at Qumran. Pieces of the Isaiah Scroll have been carbon-14 dated at least four times, giving calibrated date ranges between 335-324 BC and 202-107 BC; there have also been numerous paleographic and scribal dating studies placing the scroll around 150-100 BC.”
[Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls)
6. Ref-0001, p. 29
7. Ref-0236, 136
8. “Even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1. . . were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscript previously known (A.D. 980), they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text, but in 1QIs^b, (ca. 75 B.C.) the preserved text is almost letter for letter identical with the Leningrad Manuscript. The five percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.”⁶ “1QIs^a is the usual designation for the great Isaiah Scroll, one of the manuscripts in the first discovery. Dated about 100 B.C. or earlier, it is a complete copy of the Book of Isaiah, except for a few small breaks in the text. For all practical purposes, the text of this ancient scroll reads the same as the standard Massoretic Text printed in current Hebrew Bibles. There are, to be sure, a number of divergent readings represented in it, some of which are worthwhile; but the majority of readings has to do with such things as spelling, grammar, and modifications of vocabulary. Indeed, 1QIs^a may be described as a kind of updating of the text whose older form is still retained in the Massoretic Text.”⁷

9. [Ref-0790](#), 359-360
 10. [Ref-0011](#), 54
 11. [Ref-0011](#), 127
 12. [Ref-0011](#), 128
 13. [\(John 3:16-17\)](#), NKJV
 14. [Ref196](#), 1048
 15. [Ref-0934](#), 891-892
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Sources:

- NKJV** Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- Ref-0001** Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994).
- Ref-0011** Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1998).
- Ref-0236** Neil R. Lightfoot, *How We Got the Bible*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2003).
- Ref-0617** James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Greek (New Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).
- Ref-0790** Martin Abegg Jr., Peter Flint & Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1999).
- Ref-0934** Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004). ISBN:[0-19-529751-2^d](#).
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Links Mentioned Above

- a - See http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts_by_Tony_Garland/57_Acts_17_1-4/index.htm.
- b - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.
- c - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.
- d - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?0-19-529751-2>.