

## **There is Another King: Jesus**

*Luke – Acts*

### **A Resurrected Jesus in the Midst of Dead Heroes**

*Acts 3:11 – 4:12*

#### **Introduction: A Bunch of Flawed Heroes**

I have always had heroes. One of my first heroes was Fonzie on the TV show *Happy Days*. I totally loved how he got so much respect from the people around him. I liked his cool leather jacket and motorcycle and his ability to punch something and make it work again. That was amazing! The even more amazing thing was that I kind of pretended to be like Fonzie. When I was in fifth and sixth grade, I was the tallest boy in school, and there was a space on the lunch tables that I liked – the end seat. Even though I was never the first boy to sit down, all the other boys knew that when I came, they would scoot over, and give me my seat. That was respect! But over time, I came to accept the fact that I just wasn't like my hero. I realized that I'm not Italian! I don't know why that didn't occur to me before! I also didn't have a leather jacket, or a motorcycle, or the ability to punch things and make them work. I also went into middle school, 7<sup>th</sup> grade in California, and got no respect. I couldn't call out to my hero because he wasn't even real.

My next major hero was real. He was my swim coach. He was awesome. So many people respected and loved him. He taught me how to work hard in swimming, how to play water polo, how to lift weights, how to eat healthy for power, how to bodysurf a wave with an eight foot face, how to drive his stick shift car, and how to swing a golf club. In some ways, this man was the father I wish I had. I found myself wanting to be like him in a lot of ways. Until the time where I realized that he was encouraging some of the boys to become sexually active with some of the girls. I wasn't a Christian then, but something about that struck me as not right. So my first hero wasn't real. My second hero wasn't perfect. He was flawed.

My third hero was my grandfather. I admire him because he immigrated to a very racist United States. He lived through the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. He struggled hard to rebuild his family's hotel business in Skid Row in Los Angeles. He endured my grandmother's affair. With her, he raised four children, including my dad. But he died at the age of 58, before I was born, so I never knew him. His fatal heart attack was probably stress-related. All I have of him is a few stories and his old coat, which I value more than any other piece of clothing I own. I know things about my third hero, but I never actually knew him. He was dead. So I could never ask him any of my questions.

Relevance to us: We go through life like this. Our heroes are either fake, flawed, dead, or some combination of those three things. For example, I know my grandfather had a hot temper, didn't express a lot of love, and didn't step in at key times. So not only was my third hero dead, he had been flawed, too. Fake, flawed, or dead. What good are heroes if they are fake, flawed, or dead? There are still lots of things we can learn from other people as we know them or hear their stories, but there is a part of us, I think, that dies every time we are disappointed by a hero, especially when our hero is our mother or father or an older brother or sister. We stop being inspired to become more than we are, and then we live life at a low level. I think we are made to have heroes. In fact, I think we are also made for a Savior, who is also a hero but more than that. But what happens if our Savior is fake, flawed, or dead? What then?

I think this is one way to approach the question of, 'Is Jesus unique?' Among all the other leaders of the world, all the teachers of great wisdom, all the models that we could follow, is Jesus unique? Just say this, because I think it sums it up: Jesus is not fake. Jesus is not flawed. And most importantly, Jesus is not dead. You want to know or be reminded what makes Jesus unique? Just repeat this: Jesus is not fake. Jesus is not flawed. And most importantly, *Jesus is not dead*. If we compare Jesus to Moses, Mohammed, and Buddha, obviously these people were real people, interesting in their own right, but were they who they said they were? Not in every case. Furthermore, they were flawed and they certainly are dead. But Jesus rose from the dead.

**Context: The Temple in Jerusalem**

That is the message of the book of Acts, which we are studying for the next couple months or so. We started in Acts 1 with the enthronement of Jesus in heaven and the mission he gave his people to spread out over the world and bring people under his reign. We hit Acts 2 and saw that Jesus gave his Spirit so that his people would be able to speak all the languages of the world, to bring all the people of the world under his reign. Now, we're in Acts 3. Our story takes place in Jerusalem in about 33 AD, where some followers of Jesus are stepping right into a conflict.

The conflict revolves around the question, 'who is our hero?' or 'who is our savior?' By the first century, the Jewish people could count quite a few heroes who were fake, flawed, or dead. King David and King Solomon, who built the great Temple, the place where God chose to dwell, but they were flawed, not to mention dead. Then there was the present king, Herod. Not only was he not a son of David, he wasn't even Jewish. He was a fake. He had bought his way in with the Romans, who said, 'Sure, go ahead and rule over those people.' Then he tried to impress the Jews by refurbishing the Temple. And then the dozens of failed revolutionaries, the people who said they were Messiah's but weren't. They said they would cleanse the Temple. They were fake, flawed, and now they were dead. The fact that they stayed dead was confirmation that they were fake and flawed. So now the followers of Jesus step up and say that Jesus is our Messiah, our Savior, our hero.

So Jerusalem was the place of greatest conflict for Jesus. The rest of the Jewish people thought that Jerusalem was corrupt. Why? The leaders wanted to collaborate with the Romans. They had even changed their beliefs to strike a political compromise. The priests didn't even believe in the resurrection anymore. The priests weren't even fully Levites, so they were disobeying the Law. And so the Essenes who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, just wanted to stay away from Jerusalem. The Pharisees thought that Jerusalem was no longer holy, so developed new codes of holiness to make up for it. If these folks thought Jerusalem was corrupt, how much more so Jesus? In Luke 9 – 19, Jesus had set his face to go to Jerusalem, to confront the leaders of his day. He said that the Temple in Jerusalem was no longer relevant, because God no longer dwelled in buildings; God dwelled in a single person, Jesus the Messiah. But if the Temple in Jerusalem was no longer relevant, then people didn't have to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year. People didn't have to make animal sacrifices for their sin. The priests would be out of a job. Their ability to compromise with the Romans was completely cut out from under them. That is what Jesus came to tell them. No wonder they killed him.

And now, the disciples of Jesus are following in the footsteps of Jesus. They're in Jerusalem. They've just healed a crippled man by the power of Jesus in 3:1 – 10, so they're attracting lots of attention. In 3:11 – 26, they face a large crowd, and in 4:1 – 12, they face the leaders of the Temple. We're going to read their two speeches, one to the people and the other to the leaders.

### **The First Speech, to the People: 3:11 – 26**

<sup>3:11</sup> While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. <sup>12</sup> But when Peter saw this, he replied *to the people*, 'Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? <sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. <sup>14</sup> But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer [a revolutionary named Barabbas] to be granted to you, <sup>15</sup> but put to death the Prince of life, **the one whom God raised from the dead**, a fact to which we are witnesses. <sup>16</sup> And on the basis of faith in his name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.'

Right away I want to point out a contrast. The Muslim story of Mohammed is similar but different. It's similar in the sense that the Koran traces the pattern of God's prophet being rejected first and vindicated second. That much is accurate. Joseph is rejected first, vindicated second. Moses is rejected first, vindicated second. Jesus is certainly rejected first, vindicated second. They 'disowned' and 'put to death the Prince of life.' But the Koran changes Jesus' story so that it's not actually him who dies, but someone else. So in the Koran, Jesus is not resurrected. Then the Koran points to Mohammed. Mohammed is rejected first by being kicked out of Mecca. But he is vindicated second when he returns with military

victory over Mecca. So what resurrection is to Jesus, military victory is to Mohammed. What resurrection is to Christians, military victory is for Muslims. I know there are peace-oriented Muslims, but I think they have to do things to their texts to get there. That is one of the most troubling differences, so much so that I emailed my friend the Muslim chaplain at MIT to meet up and talk about these things in light of world events.

Resurrection is greater than military victory. I want to quote you a few clips from movies. These movies have at least one thing in common. In all these movies, the hero comes back from the dead. 'So you see, you can't be dead' said Trinity to Neo in *The Matrix*. 'Darth, if you strike me down, I will become more powerful than you can ever imagine,' said Obi Won Kenobi in *Star Wars, Episode IV*. 'I have come back to you now, at the turn of the tide,' said Gandalf in *The Two Towers*. 'When a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards,' said Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. In a similar way, Jesus committed no treachery and died in the traitor's stead, and rose again, and now Death is working backwards. His resurrection is the turning of the tide. He is more powerful than we could ever imagine.

That's why Jesus himself still does miracles. Notice what happens here in Acts 3. Jesus has just done a miracle, and some of us have seen people get healed, or protected, or even raised from the dead. Praise God! There are signs that Jesus is still at work in the world. He doesn't do them as we predict all the time, but he does do them in his time and for his purposes. However, often we think that if I just see Jesus do a miracle, I'll believe. Or, Christians think if other people a power encounter with Jesus, they'll become Christians. That wasn't true even when Jesus was physically here. We always need to bring people into a truth encounter, where we use words and arguments and help people understand Scripture. This is what Peter does. He says in v.18 that 'the things God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Messiah would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.' He says in v.21 that 'God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time' about Jesus. He says in v.22 that Moses himself said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren.' And he says in v.24 that 'all the prophets who have spoken...announced these days.' A truth encounter with Jesus is to look at how many prophecies were made about him.

Peter quotes a specific prophecy in v.26, from Isaiah 53. And I'll highlight this one briefly. He says, 'For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.' That title, 'His Servant' is from Isaiah, who originally wrote 700 years before Jesus. We don't have the original copy of that scroll. But the nice thing about turning to Isaiah is that we have the Dead Sea Scrolls, which go back at least 200 years before Jesus, and that copy says, 'Behold, My Servant will prosper, he will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted...The Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as he will bear their iniquities...Because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.' (Isa.52:13; 53:11-12).

If we discovered a 200 year old document that prophesied who would be President in 2008, then that would be pretty significant. If that document spelled out how he would be assassinated and then brought back to life to be President forever, then that would be even more significant, but of course there is nothing like that. But there is with Jesus. God prepared Israel for something huge, for the coming of His Son, and He knew what it would be like and how he would do it, so He told Israel beforehand. That means that God has provided a way to prove Himself. That is a truth encounter. Jesus is absolutely unique. No one else has these kinds of factors on their side. No one else has been that important. Jesus is not fake, flawed, or dead. He is resurrected, therefore he is real and perfect.

No one prophesied the coming of Buddha. No one prophesied the coming of Mohammed. No one prophesied the coming of Moses. In fact, Moses prophesied the coming of *Jesus*. These other people, these religious teachers, really came out of nowhere. There was no advance warning. No one said, 'He's coming!!! Watch for him!!!' You know what that means? It means they weren't as important as Jesus! Jesus was so important that God told us over and over again, 'He's coming!!! Watch for him!!!' With what other great leader do we have a hard, physical copy of a prophecy dating back before that leader came, telling us what that leader will be like and what he will do? No one!!!

### The Second Speech, to the Leaders: 4:1 – 12

That's why five thousand men, not counting women and children, believe in Jesus at that time, and why the leaders of Jerusalem rush in to try and stop this truth about Jesus from spreading. <sup>4:1</sup> As they were speaking to the people, *the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees* came up to them, <sup>2</sup> being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus **the resurrection from the dead**. <sup>3</sup> And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. <sup>4</sup> But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.'

Wow. So here's the setup. The followers of Jesus say, 'Jesus is our hero, our savior.' The government officials say, 'No he's not. There is no resurrection. He's a fake, he's flawed, he's dead.' And because they are so assured of their position, they violate civil justice and throw the Christians in jail without trial. That sets the stage for the second speech.

<sup>5</sup> On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; <sup>6</sup> and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. <sup>7</sup> When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, 'By what power, or in what name, have you done this?' <sup>8</sup> [Peter again transitions from the power encounter to a truth encounter.] Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers and elders of the people, <sup>9</sup> if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man [I love the 'if' there – 'if' this is really what's going on...] as to how this man has been made well, <sup>10</sup> let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, **whom God raised from the dead**--by this name this man stands here before you in good health. <sup>11</sup> He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone.'

That last part, v.11 about the stone and the builders is the prophecy Peter chooses. I'll explain that in a little bit. But here Peter again emphasizes Jesus' resurrection. Jesus is not dead. 'You did crucify him,' he says. But God raised him from the dead. I want to make a few points from this.

First of all, the Sadducees are scandalized. Let's understand why the Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection anymore. They wanted to compromise with a foreign culture that was more powerful than them. Look at this chart for a head to head comparison between the two cultures:

Jewish Beliefs (including Christians)	Greco – Roman Beliefs
Our physical bodies are good	Physical bodies house the immortal soul, which wants to escape the body
Expected 'resurrection' – the renewal of the physical world, including our bodies; God's true humanity will be raised from the dead	Expected 'disembodiment' – the separation of soul from body
Caring for the poor is important	Caring for the poor is not important since the body is not important
Sexual ethics are important and are derived from the Genesis creation story	Have sex with anyone since the body is not important (e.g. Greek Epicureans)
Death is the enemy of God's good creation; it will be overthrown in a new creation	Death is inevitable and is the end; no one comes back from the dead (cf. Homer)
History is linear, based on an experience of God's promise and God's fulfillment	History is circular and repetitious; nothing new

So, in Greco – Roman culture you have a belief system where you can sleep with whoever you wanted and you didn't have to care for the poor! And you had all the assumptions to support you in that. *Who WOULDN'T want to believe that???* I would **TOTALLY** want to believe that, naturally speaking. And it all had to do with the body being not important. Bodily resurrection was therefore impossible, even disgusting, to the Greco-Roman mind. All the pressure pushed you towards being Greco – Roman. The pressure did not push you towards Jewish – Christian beliefs. It's not like people would naturally WANT to believe this! Jewish – Christian beliefs are much harder to live. Now, the Sadducees hear about Jesus

who had been raised from the dead. The Christians are saying, ‘What all the other Jews believe about resurrection is true.’ Does that threaten them? Yes.

But wait, there’s more. There are some uniquely Christian beliefs.

<b>Uniquely Christian Beliefs</b>	<b>Greco – Roman Beliefs</b>
Jesus is the Lord of the world	Caesar is the Lord of the world.
Jesus is the <i>resurrected</i> Lord of the world	No past Emperor gets resurrected, because it would mean that that person should be Emperor eternally! And certainly no ordinary person should get resurrected!
People must switch loyalties to Jesus	People must maintain loyalty to Caesar
We want to be reconciled with our enemies under Jesus	We want to defeat and tax our enemies under Caesar
We will proclaim this message	We will shut down opposition
We want to go outside the Roman Empire to proclaim this, e.g. European barbarians, Africa, Asia	We want to keep the best people here in Rome. No brain drain allowed.
We are willing to suffer until we die or Jesus returns	We are willing to kill to maintain social order

So if you were to ask Greco-Roman people to believe in the resurrected Jesus, what were you asking them to do? Change their heart and mind about politics, their enemies, their money, the poor, the body, sexuality, their willingness to go to another culture, their willingness to die, well, EVERYTHING. The fact that tons of Greco – Roman people left their old beliefs to become Christians – what does that mean? The early Christians had a darn good case. They would ask you, ‘What’s your reason for believing all this?’ You would answer, ‘Because Jesus was resurrected.’ They would say, ‘Yes, well, your hero being resurrected does have huge implications. Are you aware of this?’ You would answer, ‘Yes. It is not just one little idea that’s disconnected from other ideas. It is the tip of a huge iceberg of a worldview shift. The resurrection of Jesus forces us to believe all the rest of this.’ They would ask, ‘And is there evidence for this?’ You would answer, ‘Yes. It is a matter of history and prophecy.’

Let’s explore the history angle. The resurrection of Jesus is a matter of history. Go to the tomb. It’s empty. His body is not there. If you want to shut Christianity down, just produce the body of Jesus. Or at least produce a plausible theory for how his body got out of the tomb, out from under the noses of the Roman guard. But no one could do that, either. Or torture the first Christians enough so they confess to lying about the whole thing. After all, trained soldiers will give away secrets under torture, and the first Christians were not trained soldiers. People will snitch on other people if you pressure them in the right way. But not one of the first Christians caved. And what did they have to gain from it? Nothing! If they just wanted to ‘preserve their Jewish culture,’ they could have just stayed in the *Jewish* worldview. They didn’t have to become *Christians*. What do they gain from that? Well, death. Yet not a single one broke down and admitted to lying. Not just the 12 disciples but the 120 disciples from Acts 1 who said they saw Jesus raised from the dead. Jesus’ resurrection is a matter of history.

Secondly, Jesus’ resurrection is a matter of prophecy. Again, it wasn’t out of the blue. It was important enough for God to say beforehand, it’s coming; he’s coming. Isaiah 53 I already mentioned. Jesus would die, then rise. In this second speech, Peter mentions Isaiah again. In verse 11, Peter says, ‘He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone.’ That is Isaiah (8:14; 28:16) and Psalm 118 together (see 1 Peter 2:4 – 8 for how Peter ties together Isa.8:14, Isa.28:16, and Psalm 118:22). Those Scriptures said the new king would be a new ‘stone’ for a new Temple, though many will stumble over it; that is, they won’t like it. Jesus certainly did that. He said he was starting a new Temple, a living Temple, where God lived in him. But by rising again, Jesus was able to pour God’s Spirit into those who believe in him. So the new Temple is Jesus and his community of followers. The old Temple, with its old priests and old privileges, was out of commission. They didn’t like that. But it was prophesied in Scripture. This was not a new idea. It was God’s idea, which He told us in advance.

## **Conclusions**

And the result is in v.12 that 'there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.' Salvation means deliverance and rescue from sin, guilt, and especially death in all its forms. There is salvation in no one else but Jesus. No one else delivered or saved people out of sin. No one else brought God back to dwell among us. He is the only hero, the only Savior, who did this.

I want to share the story of a woman in Northern California. She is not a personal friend of mine, but we have friends in common. She said this a few years ago at a church that I've been to.

In order to understand the sweetness of where I am today, you have to understand where I've come from. [Jesus] snatched me from death and gave me life. I was born to a woman trying her luck on her third marriage. By the time I was a year old, they were divorced, and I've never met him. When I was three, my mother married her fourth husband, my stepfather. Up until then, we lived with my grandparents, who were raging alcoholics. I was sexually molested at age 6 by my great grandfather. My stepfather was physically and emotionally abusive. No conversations between adults and children occurred at the dinner table, unless we were being belittled. I kept my eyes on my plate. I was fairly isolated and lonely. Mostly, I remember being told continually how stupid I was and how I knew nothing.

When I turned 16, [I got pregnant, then I got an abortion. Then I left home and moved in with friends of my boyfriend's family.] After graduation, I went wild. There would be periods of time when I would not come home for days. I'd go from one party to work, then off to another party. It was the time of hippies and free love. I heard about a group of people driving a purple school bus from New Jersey to Colorado. I knew some of them, so I packed up my belongings and was on my way.

At this time I was searching for God. I tried transcendental meditation, eastern religions, agnosticism, even dabbling into witchcraft. While in Denver, I was reading 'Rama Krishna and His Disciples.' The only line I remember from the book was, 'If you cry out to your god, he won't deny you.' So one starry night, in an empty parking lot, I looked up and cried, 'Show me yourself! I can't find how to reach you!' I waited for a sign, a shooting star, anything out of the ordinary. Nothing happened. I was very depressed. Maybe there was no God. Maybe there was but He was not mindful of us. Within two weeks, I went to Arizona to visit my aunt. I was up late one night in December and I saw *The Robe*. I have no idea why an Easter movie was on just before Christmas. I cried after watching it.

[Not too long afterwards,] on Easter morning, 1971, I had this overwhelming urge to go to church, which was really strange, since I hated Christianity. Church was so superficial. An offer was made to go boating down the river, so the river won out. The following Sunday, I awoke with a stronger urge to go to church. So off I went and I stopped at the first church I came to, the Assemblies of God. While there I was overwhelmed by the music and message. I remember, when we were all standing at the end of the service, I had the thought, 'I need to get out of here!' I turned to go, but my feet wouldn't move. Then the invitation came for those who wanted to know Christ to come forward. I heard God quietly say, 'This is what you've been looking for. Go forward!' I did.

[Then she began to experience the living Jesus.] Through many ensuing events, God led me down to Valencia, California, toward the end of the summer of 1974. There I took a job at Magic Mountain as a receptionist in the business offices. That's where I met Ed, my husband. After our first date, I knew he was the one I would marry, even though he wore plaid pants with cuffs. One evening, in May, after we had been dating awhile, I was talking with him about marriage, to be more specific, that we should get married. He wasn't convinced. He wanted to develop the friendship more. That same night, while trying to sleep but just tossing and turning, it felt as though God was tapping me on the shoulder. Unable to ignore His persistence, I sat up and said, 'What do you want?' He said, 'You will marry Ed, but in My timing. Let it go.' I replied, 'Fine, but if he doesn't ask me by the end of November, I'm outta here!' On the last day of November, at 11 p.m. on the Santa Monica pier, Ed asked me to marry him. I had forgotten my ultimatum to God. It was then I remembered what I had said to Him. I laughed. God has a sense of humor!

Four years into our marriage, I began counseling to work on my shame of having an abortion and to work on my family of origin issues. Perhaps the event that pushed me into seeking counsel was now Ed and I wanted children. After trying to get pregnant for nine months, with no success, I thought it would not happen. I didn't deserve children, [after all that I had been through and done]. I later had a [daughter.] Her name is Jessica, which means 'wealthy.' I would make sure my daughter knew that she was valued and a precious gift. [Then we had a second daughter.] Her name is Ashlee, which means, 'a dweller among ash trees,' which is where I long to be. How could God be so good to me? [Jesus has also encouraged me in

my new academic pursuits and especially my love of woodworking.] The walls of fear, designed to protect me, continue to fall little by little. I have every confidence [Jesus] will continue His restoration process in me.

So, the first 21 years were spent surviving my family. The second 21 years [Jesus] has spent restoring my spirit. In my forty-third year of life, I am learning the true freedom I have in Christ. There is nothing in my family history or life circumstances that would indicate a sweet or satisfied life, but as you heard my story, understand that it's really a story of what magnificent things God can do with one's life. He reached into the depths of my darkness and has brought and is bringing me life abundantly.

Jesus is not fake, not flawed, and most importantly, not dead. He is real, perfect, and resurrected. Because he is still alive, he saves us today. He shares life with us. There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among humanity by which we must be saved.