

## Co-Belligerents & the Resurrection

### Acts 23:6-11

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 4-5-2009

#### Introduction

I have a book written by President Thomas Jefferson called, *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*. He had clipped out sections of the New Testament and pasted them together to form a kind of Reader's Digest Condensed New Testament. When you read through it you will see that he leaves out the virgin birth at the beginning of the Gospel and he leaves out the resurrection at the end of the Gospel. And in between he systematically cuts out any reference to angels, miracles, Christ's divinity or the supernatural. And he did it on purpose. In one of his personal letters to William Short he describes these things as "rubbish" and the dunghill of superstition in which the diamonds of Christ's real words lie hidden. He was basically a liberal Sadducee when it came to religion and a Pharisee when it came to politics. He was a strange mix. Yet during his career he became a co-belligerent with orthodox Christians in trying to oppose big government. They would have preferred to have a Christian in government, and many of those Christians had actually opposed him running for office. But though he was not a Christian, there was much in his worldview that helped true Christians. And I think there is a kind of parallel in this passage. Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees were opposed to Paul, but Paul brings at least some of the Pharisees to a point where they can at least be co-belligerents against the tyranny of Ananias and the tyranny of the Sadducees.

Last Sunday someone asked me which is worse: Roman Catholicism or apostate Protestant Liberalism. And without hesitation I affirmed that Roman Catholicism is much better because we have much more common ground with them. But they both have problems, and I would rather not have to choose between them. There is not enough common ground that we can in any way be covenanted. But we can certainly be co-belligerents against abortion – working together to end this holocaust. Even Ernie Chambers occasionally stood up for something good – as in the case of the Faith Baptist Church fiasco in Louisville a few years ago.

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## I. Addressing the modern controversy of working with co-belligerent unbelievers (v. 6a)

### A. Co-belligerent Jews

#### 1. Paul sees that he has common ground that can make him a co-belligerent (v. 6)

##### a) Knowing his crowd (v. 6a)

Let me define co-belligerent. A co-belligerent is a person who different enough that you can't be in covenant with him, but you can join him in opposing something critically important that you both agree needs to be opposed. You have a common enemy. And we'll start with the co-belligerent Jews in verse 6. **“But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, ‘Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged.’”** Paul knows that the Sadducees hate this most central doctrine that he has been preaching, and in analyzing his audience he knows that he can pit Pharisee against Sadducee. In his pre-Christ days he had been on the Sanhedrin long enough to know that this was a very fragile coalition and the Pharisees and Sadducees had a great deal of frustration with each other. This happens up in Canada in the multi-party Parliamentary system. Out of five or six parties, there might be two or three minority parties that can become aligned because (even though they don't agree with each other on many issues) they can band together on a few fundamental issues. But it can make for a very tenuous coalition government. Even after a half year of ruling, if they get frustrated with each other, they can have a vote of no-confidence, and you have to have another election again. Well, what Paul is instigating with some of the Pharisees is sort of like that vote of no-confidence that breaks up a fragile coalition. And he does so on a very touchy issue – the resurrection. Verse 8 says, **“For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection – and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.”**

There were enough doctrines that these unbelieving Pharisees held in common with Paul that he could appeal to them. In fact, we know from early church history that it was much easier to convert the Pharisees than the Sadducees.<sup>1</sup> And I think this can inform our politics and our dealings with

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<sup>1</sup> I. Howard Marshall says,

What Paul was now in effect claiming was that one could be a Christian, while accepting the Pharisees' point of view, or more precisely, that Pharisaic Judaism found its fulfillment in

unbelievers in the social sphere – not in the church, but in the social sphere. We've got to really understand our audience. What are the weak points in their anti-Christian alliances? Can they be divided so that their opposition isn't quite so formidable? Are there any issues in which they might be willing to co-sponsor a bill? Is it wrong for a Christian in congress to get pagan Republicans and Democrats to co-sponsor a very conservative bill? I don't think so. Is it OK for them to support us on a given political cause – like say, opposing abortion? That's not covenanting with unbelievers. The Bible is quite clear that we may not enter into covenant with unbelievers. But this is quite different. This is becoming co-belligerents – both united in opposing a tyranny.

**b) Was he really still a Pharisee? (v. 6b; cf. 24:20-21; 26:2-32; 15:5; 21:20; Matt 23:2-3)**

Let's read verse 6 again: Paul says, **'Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged.'**" This has been a puzzle to some people. With the Pharisees so hostile to Jesus, how could Paul say that he was a Pharisee? He had already written the entire book of Galatians to oppose the Pharisaic legalistic additions to the Bible. In fact, Paul's opposition to Pharisaic legalism is so strong that some people claim that Paul is lying here – that out of fear he is compromising and identifying himself with one of Christ's enemies. John Calvin himself says, "that was not far from lying."

But as attractive as that interpretation is in trying to explain what is going on, I don't think that explanation will work. We already saw last week that Paul is prophetically speaking right words. Secondly, we saw in chapter 24:20 that Paul claims that he had said absolutely nothing wrong here. In verse 21 he reaffirms that the one thing he was being tried over was the resurrection. So if Paul was lying under pressure here, he is continuing his lie in chapter 24. Then in chapter 26 he reaffirms his statement of being a Pharisee. I don't think we can get out of the problem that easily.

It's interesting that in the early church the Pharisees continued to be called Pharisees even after they were Christians. In Acts 15 the Pharisee group of Christians realized that they had to change some of their beliefs. But they were still called "believing Pharisees." By chapter 21:20 James claims that there were thousands of such pious and believing Christians who were zealous for the law, and most commentators believe those were

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Christianity. The Sadducean religion, however, needed a fundamental change in its presuppositions before it could become Christian.

believing Pharisees. So obviously there was enough doctrinal similarity between Pharisees and Christians that Paul could still honestly call himself a Pharisee – at least on this issue of resurrection, if not on other issues. Now obviously he was not a Pharisee on his view of law – they added to the law and were legalistic, and Paul opposed them on that just as Jesus did. But the minimum that we have to believe here is that Paul was a Pharisee on the resurrection. In a minute I want to show how that is pretty profound stuff when you are trying to understand who is right on eschatology. This is a key verse.

But in the political sphere, it would be sort of like a Republican who agrees with the party platform, but who can't stand the fact that most Republican have moved the party toward liberalism, saying, "I am a Republican, and the son of a Republican. The Democrats are hanging me out to dry over Republican Party principles. The Congress should not have the right to discipline me simply because I hold to historic Republican virtues." Saying such a thing would not commit a person to believing everything that current Republicans like McCain would stand for. Can you see the analogy? He's not committing himself to everything the Pharisees believed, but on the fundamental platform of Scripture doctrine, he is a Pharisee, not a Sadducee.

It's interesting in this connection that even though Jesus blasts the Pharisees for their additions to the Bible and for many of their practices, He agreed with their teaching of Scripture on at least some points. He said, "**The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.**" (Matt 23:2-3) And then He goes on to talk about their legalism and additions to the law (which they should ignore). But there was a lot of doctrinal similarity between Pharisees and Christians or Jesus would not have been able to say that. So we can't criticize Paul here for saying that he was a Pharisee. He has received a lot of criticism for that.

### **c) Was he really being called in question over the resurrection? (v. 6c)**

But there's one more troubling phrase in verse 6 that some people have a hard time believing. It's the phrase where Paul says, "**concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged.**" Again, some people have claimed that this is an outright lie – that neither the Sadducees nor the Pharisees had accused him of this. Their accusation was that Paul was a follower of Jesus; it had nothing to do with the resurrection. But I'll

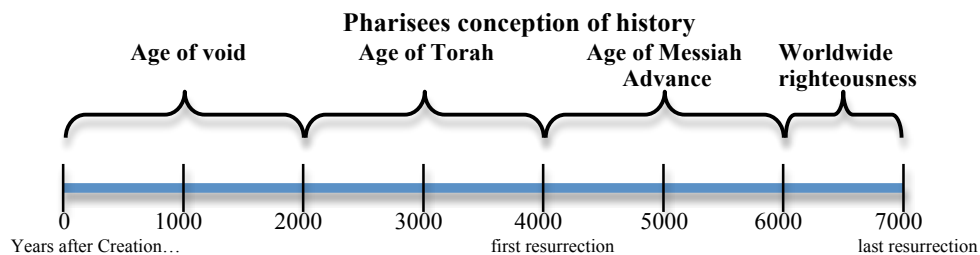
point out in a bit that if you reject the Messiah in the first century and if you deny a first century resurrection, the whole Pharisaic doctrine of the resurrection falls to the ground. Paul is forcing the Pharisees to be consistent here, and he maybe even got some converts out of this conversation. Who knows? But far from being inconsistent, I believe Paul was using a brilliant Presuppositional apologetic here.

So back to our question: “Was Paul really being called in question over the resurrection?” And I think we have to say yes for three reasons:

***(1) The resurrection is at the heart of every message in Acts and every defense of Paul (Acts 16,17,23,24,26)***

First, the resurrection is indeed at the heart of every message in Acts and every defense that Paul makes in this book. You can see this in Acts 13, 17,23,24,26. In Acts 17:18 Paul is criticized “**because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.**” In Acts 24:21 Paul repeats his assertion: “**Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.**” That’s the second time he said that. When Paul is defending himself in Acts 26 he asks Herod Agrippa, “**Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?**” *The resurrection really was at the heart of his defense.* And people who deny it (in my opinion) can’t see it because they are blinded by their eschatology. Paul is appealing to the postmillennial eschatology of the Pharisees. Have I gotten you curious?

***(2) The Pharisaic doctrine of their hope of a Messiah is inextricably linked with an imminent resurrection followed by the Messianic kingdom followed by another resurrection (i.e., Postmillennialism)***



But there’s a second reason why Paul tied Jewish hope and resurrection together very accurately. Jewish interpretation said that the first two thousand years of history (from Adam till Abraham) was void. The second two thousand years of history (from Abraham till Messiah) was the time of the Torah. But that means that standard Pharisaic interpretation would make the age of the Torah to end in the first century AD. They

shouldn't be arguing with Paul's doing away with the ceremonial law, or Paul's claim that the Messiah had come, or Paul's claim that the long anticipated resurrection had happened. There were incredible Messianic expectations in the two hundred years leading up to Jesus. Now here is another interesting side note - on their interpretation the next two thousand years would be the time of the Messiah (which by the way, would take us up to approximately when we are presently living). And just to complete out their seven-thousand-year picture that I have started here, the Pharisees believed that there would be one more thousand-year period on their eschatology – and that is a period when the Messiah's teachings would be followed by the whole world. If the Pharisees were right on their eschatology, then we are either living in the last thousand-year period or it is soon to start. By my calculations, the earth's 6000<sup>th</sup> birthday could not be off by more than 70 years. It couldn't be any later than 2070 AD, and likely has already begun. I'm agnostic on whether Paul is endorsing their Sabbatical division of ages. I'm open to it. But maybe we will be here for another 100,000 years. I don't know. But it is an interesting side note. But at the very least, the Pharisees should have seen that Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of their eschatology since the Messianic age was supposed to start four thousand years after Creation. Well, that's when Jesus was born. This was a powerful part of early Christian apologetics. For two hundred years the Pharisees had been expecting something to happen.

***(3) The Sadducees hated the Pharisaic doctrine of a) a Messiah who would judge Israel and Rome, b) a physical resurrection preceding the kingdom and another one after the kingdom***

But the third thing that the Pharisees said would happen was that there would be a resurrection of many at the beginning of the age of Messiah and another resurrection of all of the rest at the end of history. When Paul preached about the resurrection of Jesus and all the Old Testament saints who were raised with Him, it would have struck the Pharisees like a ton of bricks that they had been blind to how Jesus had fulfilled their own theology. It's no wonder that so many Pharisees came to Christ. And it's not wonder that Paul makes the resurrection central to his apologetics.

### **Matthew 27:51-53**

Unfortunately, many Christians today aren't aware of the fact that there was a huge resurrection that took place in Matthew 27. Why don't you

turn there with me? Matthew gives a snapshot of what transpired over the course of three days.

**Matthew 27:51 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, Matthew 27:52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; Matthew 27:53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.**

Notice that none of those people rose out of their graves till after Jesus did. He is said to be the first to rise from the dead. Their tombs opened on crucifixion day, but they didn't come out till resurrection day.

### **Job 19:25-27**

This was predicted many times in the Old Testament. Job predicted that he would be raised when Messiah was raised (Job 19:25-27). Turn with me to Hosea, and I will give you some of the other Scriptures that Pharisees would have used to prove a resurrection at the time of the Messiah. To reject the resurrection of Jesus was to reject any resurrection that the Pharisees could hope in. It would totally destroy their whole system. So Paul is not compromising here. He is presenting the most central and controversial facet of Christianity.

### **Hosea 6:1-2**

Turn to Hosea 6:1-2. There is Ezekiel, then Daniel, then Hosea. Hosea 6 begins with a resurrection and then continues with the kingdom in verse 3. And all these passages do that. Look at verses 1-2. **Come, and let us return to the LORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight.** Many commentaries believe that this is the passage Paul had in mind when he said that the Old Testament prophesied that Christ would rise on the third day. It's the only Old Testament passage that explicitly speaks of a resurrection on the third day. But notice who else rose with Him. There were many Old Testament saints who rose with Christ.

### **Isaiah 26:19**

Turn to Isaiah 26:19. This is a passage where Christ is prophetically speaking. And Christ includes the resurrection of others with His own at the time of His kingdom. Isaiah 26:19. **Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust;**

**for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.** So this is a resurrection of many at the time that Christ was raised. Jesus is speaking, and He says, **“together with my dead body they shall arise.”** That’s why the first resurrection was called the “firstfruits” resurrection. It was a resurrection of some, but guaranteeing the resurrection of the rest at the end of history.

### **Daniel 12:2**

Turn to Daniel 12:2. I have a series of sermons that go into more detail on this. But let me give the background quickly. Several years ago I went through over 100 detailed prophecies in Daniel 11 that took us in chronological order from Cyrus all the way up to the death of Herod the Great in verse 45. Chapter 12 starts “At that time” and so must be a description of something that happens in the first century. If chapter 11 ends in the first century and chapter 12 begins in that time, then it too must be in the first century. Verse 1 begins with a summary statement of what would happen during the last days of the Old Covenant – it spans a forty-year period. He says, **At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.** So this summary statement indicates that it would be a time of spiritual warfare ending in the great tribulation: the seven-year war that lasted from 66 AD to 73 AD. So the first two-thirds of verse 1 is a summary statement of what would happen from Christ’s death and over the next 40 years. Then he backs up and looks again at Christ’s death. He says, **“And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book.”** It was on the cross that Christ said, “It is finished,” and delivered all the elect from death through His ransom. The next event after redemption is resurrection and so verse 2 says, **“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to everlasting shame and everlasting contempt.”** Notice that this is not the resurrection at the end of history when *all* who are in the graves come forth. Matthew 27 almost quotes the language here verbatim when it says **“many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.”** This is the first resurrection.

### **John 5:25 with Eph. 4:8-10; Rev. 20:1-6**

Let’s look at two more passages where Christ gives a standard, Jewish, two-resurrection interpretation. John 5:25 deals with two resurrections: one will be soon, and one will be far-distant. It says, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming** [that’s the future and refers to a



resurrection at the end of history. But now notice the change from future to present tense. “the hour is coming [that’s the future] **and now is** [that’s the present tense], **when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.**” Two hours, two resurrections, one distant and one about to happen.

Finally, Revelation 20 says that there will be a first resurrection before the kingdom and a second resurrection when the kingdom is ended and handed over to the Father. Scripture only knows of two resurrections. One at the end of history and the other at the time of Christ’s first coming. That was standard Pharisaic interpretation of the Scripture. It is my interpretation of the Scripture. I believe it was Paul’s interpretation of the Scripture. It is postmillennialism.

Well, if Paul’s doctrine of the resurrection is the same as the Pharisees, it is revolutionary. It settles the debate between pre-, post and amillennialism. It settles the debate on Full Preterism. Full Preterists say that the final resurrection has already happened in 70 AD, which means that they can’t believe in a literal resurrection of bodies. The Pharisees clearly believed in a literal resurrection of bodies. Certainly they will be glorified and different, but there is going to be some connection with the old bodies and our new bodies just as there is a connection between an acorn that dies in the ground and the oak tree that grows out of it. If Paul is a Pharisee on the resurrection, then full-Preterism is wrong. It’s that simple.

## 2. **This doctrine did indeed effectively divide the assembly (v. 7)**

Let’s quickly go through the rest of the passage. It’s no wonder that simply making that statement caused an uproar in the assembly. Paul is not trying to compromise. He is throwing a spiritual grenade. Verse 7 says, “**And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.**” Suddenly it dawned on the Pharisees that this issue of resurrection really was *the* dividing issue between them and the Sadducees. It explained why the Sadducees supported Rome and the Pharisees hated Rome. It explained why the Sadducees would never accept a future Messiah because it would jeopardize their power with Rome. The Sadducean denial of the supernatural, a coming Messiah, a resurrection, angels and demons all were a total denial of the Pharisaic worldview, their hope in a coming Messiah, a coming kingdom, a coming resurrection and an eventual triumph of the law in history. Sadducees compromised the law. Pieces were falling together in the minds of at least

some of the scribes. And it divided them. Truth divides. It always has and always will.

### **3. There are substantive differences between liberal unbelievers and conservative unbelievers (v. 8)**

Verse 8 says, **“For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection – and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.”** Without supernatural to support you, the Sadducees tended to believe in power politics. That’s why they sided with Rome. Without a belief in the afterlife, they weren’t too concerned about God’s judgment. They just saw themselves as dust that would cease to exist anyway. Well, without belief in a future judgment the Sadducees were naturally more corrupt than the Pharisees. Why not sin? Who cares? This doctrine of the resurrection truly was a dividing point on many, many issues between these two groups. And when we get to Roman numeral II, I will give a very quick outline of other practical ramifications of this doctrine.

### **4. Helping pagans to see that they will be losers too in the culture wars (v. 9a)**

But look at verse 9. **“Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees’ party arose and protested...”** Paul had managed to help the Pharisees to see that they too would be losers in the culture wars going on. He got them to finally join in protest against Ananias’ tyranny. We looked at the tyranny of the court last week, and I won’t review that today. But it wasn’t until Paul could show that Ananias’ view would personally hurt the Pharisees that they finally cried out. Paul is not being a co-belligerent for them. He is giving them reason to be co-belligerents for him.

And that is what we need to do with pagans in our own day. We need to help them to see that the Biblical worldview is for their own good. Chuck Colson has successfully done this with a few select Biblical laws. He has convinced people in many countries that prison reform is absolutely necessary; that restitution to victims will be restorative to criminals and healing to society. He preaches the benefits of at least a few laws. I wish he would preach more.

Biblical doctrine is enormously practical, and when I talk with pagans about it I try to show the practical benefits to pagans so that they will hopefully become jealous of the Gospel as Romans 11 says that they should. There isn’t much to be jealous about the *humanism* that dominates in America. It is just as corrupt and ugly as Ananias was. This is the time for a

Biblical worldview to shine forth brightly, and even to conscript a few co-belligerents on a some key principles like contract law, Free Market principles, restorative penalties, the benefits of competition in every area including education, and on and on. There are plenty of things that at least some pagans can like about the Christian position. So verse 9 is getting them to protest corruption. There is plenty of corruption that we protest that other pagans would be happy to protest against as well.

**5. Even though they misinterpret Paul (and in other circumstances were opposed to Paul), they take his side (v. 9b)**

Verse 9 goes on to record their protest: **“We find no evil in this man [and I find that rather remarkable that they could so suddenly change their tune. They go on:]; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.”** *Paul* didn’t say that an angel or spirit had spoken to him. He had made it quite clear that *Jesus* had spoken to him. So it isn’t as if the Pharisees are totally buying Paul’s story. But they have at least recognized that the Sadducees can no longer be their friends.

But this does highlight an important point. Paul is not willing to be quiet about total truth in the interests of getting temporary support. Because of the riot he isn’t able to say more here, but he had already made the full Gospel clear to this group, and he makes it clear again in the next chapter – so clear that in chapter 25 Festus can summarize the whole case in these words to Herod Agrippa: **“but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.”** This is the difference between incremental losing and incremental advancing. This is the difference between a compromising co-belligerence that is unfaithful to or embarrassed by God’s Word and a co-belligerence that is very faithful and that occurs because they agree with some of the things found in the Bible. Thomas Jefferson was an enemy of the faith on some levels, but there were tons of things from the Bible that he loved and promoted with all his might. He was willing to be a co-belligerent with true believers. Paul was never willing to seek alliances with pagans by accommodating himself to their position. The only co-belligerence that he is willing to engage in is calling pagans to some facet of Biblical truth that they can see is good and worth defending. It is incremental here – they accept that a resurrection has occurred, but aren’t yet willing to say that Jesus was raised. But it is the pagans taking steps closer to the truth, not Paul stepping further away from the truth.

What has happened over the past 25 years in Christian circles is that Christians have done the opposite – they have tried to make alliances by compromising; by keeping their mouths shut about Biblical law. And that is a counterfeit kind of co-belligerence that has devastated the moral majority. Morality is not enough. The centrality of Jesus and the resurrection that Paul preached must be there. You may disagree with that, but it is some fodder that I want you to think about.

#### **6. God can use chaos to advance His cause (v. 10)**

Verse 10 makes the division so great that the Roman commander has step in. But it does introduce a different kind of co-belligerent.

#### ***B. Co-belligerent Romans (v. 10)***

##### **1. The commander's fears**

Verse 10 says, **“Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks.”** Paul has even less in common with the Romans than he did with the Pharisees, yet Luke makes it clear that this Roman commander had vested interests in rescuing Paul. It says that the commander feared that Paul would be pulled to pieces. He feared something. And we can only guess why he would fear instead of being glad that Paul was killed and off of his hands. But my guess is that the commander wanted law and order in order to protect his own position. If he lost control, his position could be lost. It just happens that on this occasion, that desire for law and order worked to Paul's advantage.

##### **2. Note that Paul has even less in common with the Romans, yet they can help the Christian cause (see Nebuchadnezzar, Ahasuerus, etc)**

It might be questioned whether this is truly a case of co-belligerence because Paul had no choice in being rescued. But whether Paul asked the Romans to or not, they are still co-belligerents.

In the book of Ezra, Ezra has no problem accepting the help of a pagan emperor for a righteous cause. We can see cases of the co-belligerence of pagan kings in Ezra 1,5,6 and 7 and an unsuccessful attempt to get co-belligerence against adversaries in Ezra 4. But it was never a situation where the believer compromised his position. It was always a situation where the pagan was given a reason to support a true Biblical

principle. It was never a situation of incremental loss; it was always a situation of getting unbelievers to incrementally support the truth. You can see the same thing in Nehemiah, Esther and Daniel. I won't say anything more about this subject, but hopefully this information will give you some subject matter to chew on when it comes to how perfectionistic we should be in the arena of politics. There is a difference between covenanting with God's enemies and being co-belligerents with them.

## II. How central was the doctrine of the resurrection to Paul's defense?

### *A. Compare verse 6 with 13:29-41; 17:3,18,31-32; 24:15,21; 26:5-8,13-23; 28:20.*

But I want to end by looking very, very briefly at how central the doctrine of the resurrection was to Paul. I've listed several Scriptures from Acts to show that the doctrine of the resurrection was at the heart of every message of Paul. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul says that you have destroyed Christianity if you start fooling with the doctrine of resurrection and claiming that there is no future resurrection. Full Preterism is heresy because it denies a future resurrection at the end of history. In fact, it denies that there will be an end to history.

### *B. What is the significance of the Pharisaic doctrine of two resurrections?*

We've already looked at the significance of the Pharisaic doctrine of the two resurrections. Premils put the first resurrection of Revelation 20 as future to us. Now wait a minute – if the first resurrection is future to us, what is the resurrection in 30 AD? I believe the first resurrection has already happened at the beginning of the kingdom (what the Pharisees referred to as the age of the advance of the Messiah). And Revelation 20:5 says, “**But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.**” It lists a first resurrection, which we have already seen has happened when Christ was raised, and then says that the rest of the dead won't be resurrected till the end of the thousand years. That makes it a post-millennial resurrection and a post-millennial return of Christ.

### *C. Why this was so central and so controversial?*

Paul's statement in verse 6 makes it clear that the resurrection was critically important to Paul. Charles Hodge said, “The resurrection of Christ is not only asserted in the Scriptures, but it is also declared to be *the*

fundamental truth of the gospel. ‘If Christ be not risen,’ says the Apostle, ‘then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain’ (1 Cor. xv. 14). ...It may be safely asserted that the resurrection of Christ is at once *the most important*, and the best authenticated fact in the history of the world.” (vol 2, p. 626). Let me end with nine reasons why this is true.

**1. It affirmed that the Messiah had already come, the first resurrection has already happened, and the kingdom of Messiah has started**

If the first resurrection has already happened, it meant that the Pharisees had missed the start of the kingdom; missed the coming of the Messiah; indeed had crucified their Messiah. This meant that without converting to Christianity, they were (on their own theology) destined to be destroyed by Messiah if they did not repent. This is Presuppositional apologetics. It was showing them on their own hope that they had missed the hope.

**2. It affirmed that the incarnation was forever (Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 20:12)**

Secondly, the resurrection guaranteed that his incarnation would be forever. Why is that important? The incarnation and birth of Christ demonstrate that Jesus was fully a man. That is extremely important, because unless Christ was fully man He could not be our substitute or representative, and unless Christ was fully God and fully man He could not represent both God and man or bring man into union with God. So the incarnation is a very important doctrine and we rightly celebrate Christmas with enthusiasm. But the resurrection just as important as Christ’s birth because the incarnation would be temporary without the resurrection. The resurrection shows that the humanity of Christ was not temporary or illusory. It is an eternal reality.

This is why the Greeks were not at all offended with the incarnation, but were very offended with the doctrine of the resurrection because it meant that God would forever be God in the flesh, and the Greeks wanted to escape from the physical. They had no problem with God invading humanity so long as it was a case of Him rescuing man from his humanity. The doctrine of the resurrection was an offense to them. The Greeks had their versions of gods becoming men, but the Greeks would be absolutely opposed to any idea of a resurrection.

Let me just give you a sample case in Acts 17. The Athenian philosophers are willing to put up with his talk of knowing God (vs. 22-23),

that this God created all things out of nothing (vs. 24ff), of His omnipresence (v. 24), His providential control of all things (v. 25), His teaching that all men were created from one ancestor and were not evolved (vs. 26ff), of being made in the image of God and responsible for seeking Him (vs. 27-29) of God's rejection of idolatry (vs. 29) and even of His demand that they repent (v. 30) and a day of judgment (v. 31). But when he mentions the resurrection they stop Paul. Verse 32 says, "**And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked...**

This is why there were several heretics in church history that accepted the incarnation, but denied a bodily resurrection. The resurrection guarantees for all eternity that we have a mediator between God and men - the man Christ Jesus. It guarantees that we have a representative; it guarantees our eternal salvation. In 1 John, John calls anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and he uses the perfect tense - a past action with a continuing ongoing result (He's still in the flesh) - he calls that denier an antichrist.

**3. It is the guarantee of our justification (Romans 4:25; 5:16; 8:34) and the whole of our salvation (1Cor. 15:17-19). It guarantees the forgiveness of sins (1Cor. 15:17), and the undoing of everything Adam did (Rom. 5:15)**

Hurrying on - Romans 5:16 says that Christ's resurrection guarantees our justification. 1 Corinthians 15:17 says, "**if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.**" He goes on to say that it is critical to every aspect of our salvation.

**4. It is the guarantee of Christ's sympathy and intercession (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:24-25)**

Christ had to be raised from the dead to be able to be our intercessor and sympathizer (Rom. 8:34).

**5. It guarantees a coming judgment (Acts 17:31)**

Acts 17:31 says, "**because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.**" Paul is saying that Christ's resurrection guarantees a coming judgment. It guarantees that God is not going to put up with sin forever.

**6. It guarantees our future resurrection (Acts 26:23; 1Cor. 15:20,23)**

The whole argument of 1 Corinthians 15 is that Christ's resurrection guarantees our future resurrection and that if Christ is not raised, we can't be raised, and that if you deny a future resurrection of the saints you have to logically deny that Jesus rose from the dead. You can't divide Christ's resurrection from our own. This is what some Full Preterists try to do.

**7. It gives hope (1 Peter 1:3,21; Acts 23:6; 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:58)**

Point 7 gives Scriptures that show how Christ's resurrection gives us hope that our labors in the Lord are not in vain. His resurrection is guaranteeing the progress of His kingdom. It is guaranteeing that He will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

**8. It proves Christ's Sonship (Ps. 2:7; Rom. 1:4)**

Point 8 gives Scriptures that show that Christ's resurrection proves His Sonship.

**9. It sets Jesus on His throne (Acts 2:130-32) and ensures His exaltation (Acts 4:10-11; Phil. 2:9-10).**

Point 9 gives passages that prove that Christ's resurrection sets Jesus on His throne and ensures His exaltation over all things. I won't go over all of those things. I've just included them in your outline for further study. But it is no wonder that Paul can say with absolute truthfulness, "**concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!**" It was not a lie. The resurrection of Jesus, the saints with Jesus and our future resurrection are all part and parcel of the good news of the Gospel.

H. P. Liddon said, "Faith in the resurrection is the very keystone of the arch of Christian faith, and, when it is removed, all must inevitably crumble into ruin." B.B. Warfield said, "Christ Himself deliberately staked his whole claim to the credit of men upon his resurrection. When asked for a sign he pointed to this sign as his single and sufficient credential." Josh MacDowell says, "The resurrection of Christ has always been categorically the central tenet of the church." (p. 188) I would add – the cross and resurrection are the central tenet, because the two cannot be separated.

If that is the case, then we ought to study the implications of the resurrection in our homes. It is the point at which all of history changed. The cross and resurrection of Jesus did not start a repeat of the downward spiral of history. No. It reversed history. It gives us such hope that Paul could say



in 1 Corinthians 15 that this one doctrine saves us from a passive, “eat, drink and be merry – for tomorrow we die” philosophy and enables us to have a mindset of enthusiastically advancing the cause of Christ until all enemies are placed under His feet.

Next week I want to give a sermon on the radically transforming implications of the resurrection of Jesus. We are going to deviate from this chapter for one Sunday. But I believe this section gives me warrant for giving special emphasis for this marvelous doctrine. Even though I have only given you a tiny glimpse as to why this was such an explosive doctrine, I hope it is a glimpse that will cause you to praise God and say, “Glory Hallelujah. Amen” Let’s pray.

## Co-Belligerents & the Resurrection Acts 23:6-11

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 4-5-2009

### Introduction

- I. Addressing the modern controversy of working with co-belligerent unbelievers (v. 6a)
    - A. Co-belligerent Jews
      1. Paul sees that he has common ground that can make him a co-belligerent (v. 6)
        - a) Knowing his crowd (v. 6a)
        - b) Was he really still a Pharisee? (v. 6b; cf. 24:20-21; 26:2-32; 15:5; 21:20; Matt 23:2-3)
        - c) Was he really being called in question over the resurrection? (v. 6c)
          - (1) The resurrection is at the heart of every message in Acts and every defense of Paul (Acts 16,17,23,24,26)
          - (2) The Pharisaic doctrine of their hope of a Messiah is inextricably linked with an imminent resurrection followed by the Messianic kingdom followed by another resurrection (i.e., postmillennialism)
- Pharisees conception of history**

The diagram is a horizontal timeline from 0 to 7000 years after creation. It is divided into four distinct periods, each with a bracket above it: 'Age of void' (0-2000), 'Age of Torah' (2000-4000), 'Age of Messiah Advance' (4000-6000), and 'Worldwide righteousness' (6000-7000). Below the timeline, two specific points are marked: 'first resurrection' at 4000 years and 'last resurrection' at 7000 years.
- (3) The Sadducees hated the Pharisaic doctrine of a) a Messiah who would judge Israel and Rome, b) a physical resurrection preceding the kingdom and another one after the kingdom  
 Matthew 27:51-53  
 Job 19:25-27  
 Hosea 6:1-2  
 Isaiah 26:19  
 Daniel 12:2  
 John 5:25 with Eph. 4:8-10; Rev. 20:1-6
  2. This doctrine did indeed effectively divide the assembly (v. 7)
  3. There are substantive differences between liberal unbelievers and conservative unbelievers (v. 8)
  4. Helping pagans to see that they will be losers too in the culture wars (v. 9a)
  5. Even though they misinterpret Paul (and in other circumstances were opposed to Paul), they take his side (v. 9b)
  6. God can use chaos to advance His cause (v. 10)
- B. Co-belligerent Romans (v. 10)
  1. The commander's fears
  2. Note that Paul has even less in common with the Romans, yet they can help the Christian cause (see Nebuchadnezzar, Ahasuerus, etc)
- II. How central was the doctrine of the resurrection to Paul's defense?
  - A. Compare verse 6 with 13:29-41; 17:3,18,31-32; 24:15,21; 26:5-8,13-23; 28:20.
  - B. What is the significance of the Pharisaic doctrine of two resurrections?
  - C. Why this was so central and so controversial?
    1. It affirmed that the Messiah had already come, the first resurrection has already happened, and the kingdom of Messiah has started
    2. It affirmed that the incarnation was forever (Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 20:12)
    3. It is the guarantee of our justification (Romans 4:25; 5:16; 8:34) and the whole of our salvation (1Cor. 15:17-19). It guarantees the forgiveness of sins (1Cor. 15:17), and the undoing of everything Adam did (Rom. 5:15)
    4. It is the guarantee of Christ's sympathy and intercession (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:24-25)
    5. It guarantees a coming judgment (Acts 17:31)
    6. It guarantees our future resurrection (Acts 26:23; 1Cor. 15:20,23)
    7. It gives hope (1 Peter 1:3,21; Acts 23:6; 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:58)
    8. It proves Christ's Sonship (Ps. 2:7; Rom. 1:4)
    9. It sets Jesus on His throne (Acts 2:130-32) and ensures His exaltation (Acts 4:10-11; Phil. 2:9-10).