



# THE BEREIA PAGE

*“Examining . . . to see if these things are so” ~ Acts 17.11*

## Reflections

*“However, even though the Bible is for us, it was not written to us, nor was it written about us. When we read the Bible, we are entering into a historically and culturally distant world and we must ‘mind the gap’ as they say on the London Tube. In the rush to make the Bible instantaneously relevant, we can inadvertently misuse it by not recognizing the specific situation of the authors and lazily pick up something that seems handy to us on first read. In terms of Bible study, this is like browsing Wikipedia rather than spending a few hours at your local library. Reading Scripture for quick practical application and ignoring the social, historical, and cultural gap, is like looking for instant gratification without the hard labor of study.” ~ Michael F. Bird, *Seven Things I Wish Christians Knew About the Bible* (Zondervan Reflective, 2021), 96*

*“Times of crisis like ours are not evening times, times for going to bed, but morning times, times to rise up and grab our weapons. The battle cry has sounded. The fateful day of decision has dawned. The joy of good battle should be upon us.” ~ Peter Kreeft, *Moral Choices: Practical Wisdom for Everyday Moral Decisions* (Servant Books, 1990), 8*

## This is (Still) Amazing!!!

David Anguish

Have you heard about Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams, the two astronauts who have been stranded on the International Space Station since June 5th? As of August 14th, NASA leaders were still trying to determine “whether their leaky, malfunctioning Boeing spacecraft is safe enough to ride home” (Helling 2024). What was supposed to be an eight-day stay has lasted weeks because of helium leaks and propulsion problems. Testing continues to ascertain whether they can safely pilot the craft home or other arrangements will be necessary.

I didn’t notice their plight until I happened to see a headline in early August. That’s partly because my news focus has been elsewhere, but it’s also due to the fact that space travel doesn’t garner the attention it once did. I’m old enough to remember watching live coverage of Mercury and Gemini launches before catching the bus for school. And my family was also among the millions who watched Neil Armstrong step onto the moon.

But what was new and exciting in the 1960s is old hat now, and so even potentially dramatic events like two stranded astronauts are relegated to the secondary levels of news pages. We take space travel for granted. We can do the same with the story of our faith. We readily answer that “gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον, *euangelion*) means “good news,” but for many of us it may have become the old news we all know and so can take for granted. Let’s step back and try to hear it as if for the first time.

First, know that *everything* depends on this: in the man, Jesus of Nazareth, the infinite, eternal God “became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood” (John 1.14 MSG; note the verb σκηνοῶ, *skēnoō*, “live, settle, take up residence” [Bauer 2000, 929]).

At about age 30, he began his mission to declare profound teaching about God’s reign which he presented “as one who had authority,” astonishing the people who found it unlike what they were used to hearing (Luke 4.42–44; Matt 7.28–29). He also healed the blind, deaf, lame, and lepers, raised the dead, and preached good news to the poor (Matt 11.4–5).

“This example [1 Corinthians 15] is important because it affirms an orthodox teaching about Jesus’ work going back to the apostles, verifiably to AD 57, which is long before the rise of Gnosticism in the early second century or defenses of the faith by Irenaeus in AD 180.” ~ Darrell L. Bock & Daniel B. Wallace, *Dethroning Jesus: Exposing Popular Culture’s Quest to Unseat the Biblical Christ* (Thomas Nelson, 2007), 81-82

“In both creation and redemption, this fellowship is God’s goal, and guides all his actions in the world. It is the fundamental structural principle of God’s story. It shapes his providential work. God intends to have a people for himself—this was true in creation, and it is still true, even in a fallen world. ~ John Mark Hicks, *Yet Will I Trust Him: Understanding God in a Suffering World* (College Press Publishing Company, 1999), 78

## Works Cited

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His people’s leaders were impressed. But they also found their position threatened and so they handed him over to the official representative of their oppressors who ordered his execution (John 1.11; 11.45–53). Many of the crowds who once adored him were stirred to join the clamor for his crucifixion (Luke 23.18–25).

But God raised him from the dead, a reality authenticated by his empty grave and multiple witnesses who saw him after he died (cf. Acts 2.24, 29–32; 1 Cor 15.3–8). Despite his apparently humiliating defeat, God made Jesus both Lord and Christ, the means of the only way to salvation (Acts 2.36; 4.12; John 14.6).

Many were unconvinced. Those of non-Jewish descent thought the story, especially the parts about his crucifixion and the dead being raised, to be moronic, foolish (μωρία, *mōria*; 1 Cor 1.23; cf. 15.35–36). For Jews schooled in Moses’s law, it was a “stumbling block,” a scandal (σκάνδαλον, *skandalon*) they could not get past (1 Cor 1.23; cf. Gal. 3.13). But his disciples wouldn’t let it go. Jesus did not just die by crucifixion, they said; his death was necessary so amends could be made for all of humanity’s sins, making it possible to reestablish fellowship with God (1 Cor 1.17–18; 2.2, 4–5; 2 Cor 5.19, 21; Eph 2.1–10).

Faced with widespread skepticism, and worse, why did they persist? Because they believed his story is *true*. That life has no meaning if Jesus had not died and been raised (cf. 1 Cor 15.32). Because they were sure “that in Jesus the one thing that needed to happen has happened in such a way that it need never happen again” (Neill 1984, 17).

Many today are also unconvinced. A few continue to question whether he really lived. Others grant his existence, but write off the claims and evidence for them as superstitious explanations from a less sophisticated,\* more gullible time. Some are willing to concede some good about him, but suggest he was no more than a wise teacher, prophet, guru, healer, or revolutionary; a real person who has been given mythical status, but who can in no sense be considered one with God (cf. John 10.30). But, as C. S. Lewis observed, Jesus’s story is of such a nature that, “if false, it is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important” (Lewis 1970, 101).

Something that important deserves the time we take to reinvigorate our awe and prepare to testify about it to others. I’ll suggest a direction for that venture in future installments.

\* Cf. as a point of interest the Greek σοφός [*sophos*] and cognates in 1 Cor 1–3  
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