

# Acts 26:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

## Analysis

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**That Christ should suffer** (παθητὸς ὁ Χριστός, pathētos ho Christos)—Paul's defense centers on this scandalous truth: the Messiah must suffer. The adjective pathētos (capable of suffering) was theologically offensive to Jewish expectations of a conquering Messiah. Yet Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, and Daniel 9:26 all prophesy Messiah's suffering and death. Paul's entire gospel hangs on this: Christ's suffering wasn't defeat but divine plan.

**The first that should rise from the dead** (πρῶτος ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, prōtos ex anastaseōs nekrōn)—Jesus is the firstfruits (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23), not the first chronologically (Lazarus, Jairus's daughter preceded Him), but the first to rise to immortal, glorified life. His resurrection inaugurates the new creation, guarantees believers' future resurrection, and validates His messianic claims. The Greek prōtos implies both priority and preeminence—Christ's resurrection is the prototype and power source for all others.

**Should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles** (φῶς μέλλειν καταγγέλλειν τῷ τε λαῷ καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, phōs mellein katangellein tō te laō kai tois ethnesin)—The risen Christ brings light (revelation, salvation, truth) to both Israel (laō, the covenant people) and Gentiles (ethnesin, the nations). This fulfills Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6: the Servant will be 'a light to the Gentiles.' Paul's own mission as apostle to the Gentiles flows directly from Messiah's universal saving

work. The order—'people and Gentiles'—affirms 'to the Jew first, and also to the Greek' (Romans 1:16).

## Historical Context

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Paul spoke before King Agrippa II around 59-60 AD, defending himself against Jewish accusations. His defense became gospel proclamation: he summarized Christianity's core claims (suffering Messiah, resurrection, universal salvation) and rooted them in 'Moses and the prophets' (v. 22). First-century Jewish messianism expected a political liberator who would crush Rome and restore Israel's kingdom. A crucified Messiah was σκάνδαλον (skandalon, stumbling block, 1 Corinthians 1:23). Paul's argument: the Hebrew Scriptures themselves prophesy this suffering-then-glory pattern. The Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53), the smitten Shepherd (Zechariah 13:7), and the pierced one (Zechariah 12:10) all pointed to Jesus. Paul insisted his gospel was no innovation but fulfillment of Israel's own prophetic hope.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

## Study Questions

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1. How does the suffering of Christ challenge modern prosperity gospel or triumphalist versions of Christianity?
2. What does Christ being 'the first to rise from the dead' reveal about the nature and purpose of His resurrection versus other biblical resuscitations?
3. How should the truth that Messiah brings light to 'both the people and the Gentiles' shape the church's mission and self-understanding today?

## Interlinear Text

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|                        |                      |              |                        |                        |                               |             |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| εἰ                     | παθητὸς              | ὁ            | Χριστός                | εἰ                     | πρῶτος                        | ἐξ          |
| <b>That</b>            | <b>should suffer</b> | G3588        | <b>Christ</b>          | <b>That</b>            | <b>he should be the first</b> | <b>that</b> |
| G1487                  | G3805                |              | G5547                  | G1487                  | G4413                         | G1537       |
| ἀναστάσεως             | νεκρῶν               | φῶς          | μέλλει                 | καταγγέλλειν           | τῷ                            |             |
| <b>rise</b>            | <b>from the dead</b> | <b>light</b> | <b>should</b>          | <b>and should shew</b> | G3588                         |             |
| G386                   | G3498                | G5457        | G3195                  | G2605                  |                               |             |
| λαῷ                    | καὶ                  | τοῖς         | ἔθνεσιν                |                        |                               |             |
| <b>unto the people</b> | <b>and</b>           | G3588        | <b>to the Gentiles</b> |                        |                               |             |
| G2992                  | G2532                |              | G1484                  |                        |                               |             |

## Additional Cross-References

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**Luke 24:26** (References Christ): Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

**Revelation 1:5** (References Christ): And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

**Colossians 1:18** (Parallel theme): And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

**Zechariah 12:10** (Parallel theme): And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

**Hebrews 2:10** (Parallel theme): For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

**Zechariah 13:7** (Parallel theme): Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

**Genesis 3:15** (Parallel theme): And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

**Luke 2:32** (Light): A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

**1 Corinthians 15:3** (References Christ): For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

**John 10:18** (Parallel theme): No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.