

## The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is absolutely unique. Both the eyewitness testimony and historical evidence for Christ's resurrection is substantial and undeniable:

- 1) No other person in history prophesied His own death and subsequent resurrection and then proved His assertion by appearing bodily to hundreds after His death (Matthew 20:17-19; Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8). Jesus repeatedly foretold "that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day" (Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; etc.).
- 2) Jesus' life, death, and resurrection changed the course of history as no life has ever done. So much so that our calendars revolve around His birth, from B.C., meaning Before Christ, to A.D., from the Latin *Anno Domini*, meaning *the year of our Lord*.
- 3) The Old Testament prophets foretold of Messiah's death and resurrection centuries before He was born (Job 19:25-27; Psalm 16:10; Psalm 22; Isaiah 26:19; Isaiah 53:8-12; Daniel 9:26). For instance, a thousand years before Jesus was born, King David prophesied of Christ: "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:10), thus anticipating Jesus' death and resurrection (Acts 2:22-36).
- 4) All four Gospels conclude by testifying to Christ's death and resurrection. Today there are more than 24,000 existing manuscript portions of the New Testament – far more than any other book. These are historical documents accepted in any legitimate court of law.
- 5) The Book of Acts, the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation all repeatedly proclaim that Jesus rose from the dead and now rules and reigns from heaven in His glorified body (Acts 3:30-33; 10:40; 13:28-34; 17:31; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Peter 3:21-22; Revelation 1:18; etc.).
- 6) All the apostles, except Judas His betrayer, were eyewitnesses of Jesus after His resurrection (Mark 16:14; John 20:19-26; Acts 1:2-3; 1 Corinthians 15:5; etc.).
- 7) The same men who abandoned Jesus at His arrest, and cowered in fear after His crucifixion, became bold witnesses following His resurrection (Matthew 26:31; John 16:32; John 20:19; Acts 4:31-33).
- 8) Jesus' disciples were now willing to suffer and die for their faith. They spent the rest of their lives witnessing for their risen Lord (Acts 5:42). They frequently went without food; they were mocked, beaten, and thrown into prison (Acts 5:40-41; 12:5; 2 Corinthians 11:23-28). In the end, many died a painful martyr's death (Matthew 20:23; John 21:18-19; Acts 7:58; 12:2). Would they have done this for a lie? No. They were convinced beyond a doubt that Jesus was alive forevermore!
- 9) The ancient Jews had a number of immensely important religious rituals. These included the offering of animal sacrifices, obeying the Mosaic Law, and keeping the Sabbath. But

within weeks of Jesus' death, thousands of Jews had suddenly altered or abandoned these rituals. The implication is that something enormously significant had occurred.

- 10) Shortly after Jesus' resurrection, we see the rapid increase in the number of disciples. And within a few decades the disciples had spread the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. A defeated and dead Deliverer would not explain the disciples' enthusiasm and fortitude to spread the Gospel in the face of severe persecution.
- 11) Since the first century, millions of believers have chosen persecution, torture, and even death rather than deny their risen Lord.
- 12) Then there's the strong evidence of the skeptics: Some of those who were most hostile to Jesus prior to His death became His most ardent supporters afterwards. The Apostle Paul is the most notable. Paul zealously persecuted the early church until he met the risen Lord (Acts 9:1-6; 26:9-11). After meeting Jesus, Paul became a passionate evangelist. Paul endured decades of extreme hardship to preach the Gospel "knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus" (2 Corinthians 4).
- 13) The Lord's brothers – James and Jude – became devoted believers only after the resurrection (Matthew 13:55-58; Mark 6:3; John 7:3-5; Acts 1:14; 1 Corinthians 9:5; Galatians 1:19; James; Jude). If they were not willing to commit to Jesus before His death, why would they have lived a life of self-denial afterward unless Christ was risen?
- 14) The Apostle Paul writes that over 500 people witnessed the resurrected Jesus at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6). Paul uses as evidence the fact that most of the witnesses were still alive at the time of his writing (55 A.D.). In other words, if Jesus didn't truly rise from the dead then the hundreds of living eyewitnesses would have easily exposed the lie. Yet none of the hundreds of eyewitnesses testified against the resurrection. In fact there is no historical refutation of the resurrection that has proven reliable.
- 15) No opposing theory has ever held up. For example, the "swoon" theory claims that Christ never died, but rather fainted while being crucified on the cross, and revived later. Yet all the evidence contradicts this speculation.
- 16) Jesus endured six trials, was beaten, whipped, crucified, pierced with a sword, wrapped in linen with about a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, and buried in a tomb hewn out of solid rock (Matthew 26:47-27:65; Mark 14:32-15:47; Luke 22:39-23:56; John 18:1-19:42). The scourging by the Roman guards alone could kill a man. Furthermore, Jesus sweated great drops of blood the night before – in anticipation of bearing the sins of the world (Luke 22:44). He also would have lost a significant amount of blood from the crown of thorns (John 19:2), being repeatedly struck while blind-folded (Luke 22:63-64), and having His beard plucked out (Isaiah 50:6). Seven hundred years before Christ was born, the Prophet Isaiah foretells of His passion: "His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men" (Isaiah 52:14). There is no question that Jesus died.

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- 18) Furthermore, there were at least four Roman soldiers who watched over Jesus' crucifixion (John 19:23; Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39, 44-45). We know from Roman historians that four Roman executioners would have certified His death.
- 19) Jesus' body was laid in a tomb which was hewn out of solid rock. A very large stone was rolled in front of the tomb and a Roman seal was placed on the stone (Matthew 27:60-66; Mark 16:4). In order to cover the tomb opening, the "very large" stone likely weighed 2 tons or more. Furthermore, the penalty for breaking a Roman seal was execution by crucifixion.
- 20) In the first century Rome would set a guard of at least 4 soldiers. In this case, because the Jews and Rome were so determined to keep Jesus in the grave, there were probably more (Matthew 27:62-66; 28:4-15).
- 21) The Jewish and Roman authorities went to great lengths to ensure Jesus' death and seal and guard the tomb. As the only ruling authorities they used every means at their disposal to keep Jesus in the grave. If the resurrection were some sort of hoax, certainly the world power of that day, Rome, would have exposed the deception, produced the body, and ended the much hated Christian sect. Yet, neither Rome nor the Jewish establishment presented the body or offered any other evidence to refute the resurrection.
- 22) The resurrection is reported by historians such as Flavius Josephus (*Antiquities* 18.3.3). Many other scholars, historians, and legal experts have performed exhaustive evaluations of the facts surrounding the resurrection of Jesus Christ and concluded that there is no event of ancient history that is better supported by the eyewitness testimony and historical evidence. These statements have been compiled in the book *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, by Josh McDowell, San Bernardino, CA, Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1972, 1979.
- 23) The empty garden tomb still exists (John 19:41-42). You can visit it today!
- 24) The location and even the names of the political leaders who sentenced Jesus are historically recorded.
- 25) Jesus remains the central figure of world history because of His resurrection. As we begin the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium, there are over 2 billion professing Christians. Multitudes more regard Jesus as the greatest man ever.
- 26) Then there is the ongoing encounter with the resurrected Christ which continues today all over the world, in every culture, to people from all kinds of backgrounds and personalities. All will testify that more than any single thing in their lives, Jesus Christ has saved and changed them!
- 27) Creation itself points to the Resurrection (John 12:24; 1 Corinthians 15:35-38). Each year we observe seeds fall to the ground and die. Yet when spring arrives the unassuming seed sprouts and "God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body" (1 Corinthians 15:38). This is a beautiful picture of the believer's Resurrection, when the Lord Jesus Christ "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His

glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). When a follower of Christ dies, though “the body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). Because of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection for our sins, believers can now rejoice because “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15: 54)!