

Reasons for Believing In The Resurrection



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The Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote some staggering words concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They are found in 1 Corinthians 15:12-15...

“But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised.”

Wow! So much for that business of trying to accept Jesus simply as a great social model or a great moral teacher. Here’s the reality...if Jesus was not resurrected, he should have no followers at all. It’s plain and simple...there would be no church, no Christianity, in fact, there would be no Christ without the resurrection.

This leaves us with a very important question...

Question: How do we know we can trust the preachers, missionaries and Bible scholars when they make their claims about Jesus rising from the dead?

However, there may be some who wonder why such a question even needs to be asked. Here’s why...

Needs:

1. Non-Christians need this question answered so they can trust the claims of Jesus when he says things like, *“I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me”* (John 14:6).
2. Christians need this question answered so they may be prepared to give a reason for the hope that lies within them (1 Peter 3:15).
3. And both need the question answered for simple peace of mind, because many ask, “Can Jesus truly make a difference in my life?”

So, how about it? Do you think we can answer all of this to any degree of satisfaction?

Answer: We know we can trust the preachers, missionaries and Bible scholars based on several distinct areas of investigation. Each of these areas must be explained away in order to refute the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Three of these areas are...

A. The Church

1. Its formation: Everywhere the early Christians went they preached the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was the cornerstone of their faith in him. While it might seem plausible that a few people might concoct such a story for their own personal advancement, it is very unlikely that thousands would testify to the resurrection of Jesus when they had nothing earthly to gain except persecution and death.
2. Its day of worship: In order for those early believers—most of whom were Jewish—to move their primary day of worship from the last day of the week (Sabbath) to the first day of the

week something extraordinary had to have occurred...that something was the resurrection.

3. Its documents: There are six separate testimonies of the resurrection reported in the New Testament. Three of the New Testament writers, Peter, John, and Matthew, were eye-witnesses. The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:1-6, clearly addresses the historical reliability issue by referring to hundreds of eye-witnesses still alive during the years of his writing—decades after the resurrection. Like the very formation of the Church and the switch from Saturday to Sunday, these documents would never have been produced without their authors' profound certainty in the historical veracity of their faith.

B. The Empty Tomb

1. Did the disciples snatch the body: This is so ridiculous, Matthew included it in his record (Matthew 28:11-15) without even attempting to refute the notion. Given the political and religious climate of their day, had the disciples taken the body they would have participated in their own death sentences. Paul Little said it this way, "Men will die for what they believe to be true, though it may actually be false. They do not, however, die for what they know is a lie."

2. Did the authorities take the body: The Jewish leaders simply wanted to be rid of Jesus. Taking his body would have been the worst thing they could have done. The Roman leaders wanted order restored to the Judaic Province. For them to have removed the body would also have been foolish. Neither leadership group had any reason whatsoever for removing the body—to have done so would have been their own foolish way of giving the early followers of Christ hope...that's crazy. If they could have gotten their hands on the Lord's body they would have produced it immediately in order to quench the preaching of the resurrection.

3. Did the disciples go to the wrong tomb: Well, this is just silly...no one with any common sense could believe such a flimsy excuse for rejecting the historical fact of the resurrection.

4. Did Jesus simply pass out: Some refer to this as the Swoon Theory. It was never mentioned in antiquity and only came into vogue during the 18th century. The problem is this: how could someone so beaten as to be unrecognizable, stabbed in the side and bleeding, fully wrapped in burial cloths, without food or water, without care or attention, lying in a cold and damp tomb for parts of three days, ever pick himself up, remove the wraps, push the stone away, get past the Roman guards, and walk miles on feet that had been pierced with stakes?

C. The Appearances of Jesus

1. They were historically documented: Once again, read 1 Corinthians 15.

2. They changed Peter from a wimp to a warrior: Compare Mark 14:66-72 with Acts 4:1-22 and 5:17-42

3. They changed Paul from a persecutor to a preacher: Read Acts 9.

Now this is indeed remarkable. Paul was no simple citizen. His transformation would be like the Archbishop of the New York Diocese converting to Satanism. Paul's hatred for anything other than Judaism was very well known. His coming to Jesus was miraculous.

Well then, it's no wonder that so many have set out to discredit the resurrection only to find themselves accepting the historical reliability of the resurrection. For example, take the case of an attorney by the name of Frank Morrison. He determined that he would look at any and all evidence that had bearing on the resurrection

so that he could once and for all lay to rest any claims that the resurrection was true. He even predetermined the title of that would-be book. He was going to call it "Who Moved The Stone." However, after researching the subject thoroughly from both the legal evidence and historical evidence points of view, he named the first chapter of his book "The Book That Refused To Be Written." Frank Morrison weighed all the evidence and rather than refuting the resurrection he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Finally, since we know the resurrection of Jesus Christ actually occurred, what is the meaning for us today? Well, it's as simple as this...

since he took up his life again...

we know he is alive
we know he is God

and since he is the Living God...

we know he is both able and willing to do what he said he would do

he is able and willing to save those who ask for salvation
he is able and willing to give us meaning and purpose in our lives
he is able and willing to give us answers for our deepest longings
like...who am I...where did I come from...where am I going...