

EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

I. THE RECORD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WITNESSES...AND ITS TRUTHFULNESS

1. Matthew--formerly a Jewish tax collector working for the Roman government—Matthew 28
2. Mark--also known as John Mark, young relative of Peter the fisherman—Mark 16
3. Luke—physician; later a travel companion of Paul on his missionary journeys—Luke 24
4. John—formerly a fisherman, cousin of Jesus; relative of the Jewish High Priest—John 20-21
5. Paul—formerly a rising leader of the Pharisee party of the Jews—1st Corinthians 15:1-11
6. Simon Greenleaf, Professor of Law at Harvard University and author of TREATISE ON THE LAW OF EVIDENCE (3 vol.), a standard textbook in American law. He also wrote: THE TESTIMONY OF THE EVANGELISTS EXAMINED BY THE RULES OF EVIDENCE ADMINISTERED IN THE COURTS OF JUSTICE. Greenleaf said that the testimony of the four gospel writers would hold up in a court of law according to the rules of evidence and testimony.

II. EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT FOR CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

1. Jesus' resurrection was prophesied over 700 years in advance (Isaiah 53:8-12)
2. Jesus predicted His own resurrection from the dead several times (Matthew 12:38-41; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; and John 2: 18-22).
3. Jesus died. He was crucified by professional Roman executioners. He was stabbed in the side, piercing His pericardium, such that blood and water flowed out. Normally the soldiers broke the legs of those being executed to hasten their death. They did not need to break Jesus' legs because He was already dead. He was pronounced officially dead. (Mark 16:44-45; John 19:33-35. [NOTE: Jesus' death was on a Friday, the day of the Jewish Passover Festival when the perfect, hand-picked sacrificial lamb was slain, symbolically taking the guilt and shame of the guilty who were believers.]
4. Jesus was prepared for burial according to the Jewish custom, being wrapped in cloths soaked in aromatic resins and spices (myrrh and aloes) weighing about 75 pounds. (John 20:39-40)
5. Jesus was then buried in a borrowed tomb donated by a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, which was a cave cut out of rock with a large, cylindrical rock used to seal the tomb from grave robbers and tampering. Such stones weighed somewhere between 1200 and 2000 pounds (John 20:41-42).
6. The tomb was certified as sealed by a Roman official placing Caesar's official seal on the wax attaching the ropes to the tomb. Caesar's seal was not to be broken upon pain of death by crucifixion! (Matthew 27:62-66)
7. A guard was posted at Jesus' tomb so that neither grave robbers nor disciples could interfere with the body of Jesus. (The Jewish and Roman leaders did not believe in Jesus but they were not stupid men ignorant about how rumors could get started.) (Matthew 27:62-66) For a Roman soldier to fall asleep on guard duty was punishable by death too!
8. Jesus' disciples all abandoned Him and scattered to their own ways for their personal safety. They thought His movement a failure, the whole ministry a tragic disaster. (Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50)
9. The tomb was found empty on the first day of the week, Sunday, the 3rd day after His death. The grave clothes were empty, the head cloth had been laid to the side. (John 20:1-9)
10. Jesus appeared and presented Himself alive 15 different times to many different people. Some appearances were to individuals (like Paul), some to groups (the Twelve) and some to crowds of 500+. (Matthew 28:9; John 20:17 and verses 20-28; Acts 1:3; 1st Cor.15:6)
11. Jesus' enemies could not produce His body to quell the impact of the eye-witness testimonies of those who saw Jesus alive.
12. The resurrection of Christ from the dead changed lives and transformed the apostles from cowardly men to bold preachers. The reality of the resurrection was the basis for their new found boldness.

13. The resurrection of Christ empowered the preaching of the good news (“gospel”) so that Christ’s life, death and resurrection was proclaimed throughout the Roman world and beyond. This powerful preaching established the Christian church and has faithfully sustained it for over 2000 years.
14. The day of worship was changed from the last day of the Jewish week, Saturday, the Sabbath, to the first day of the week, Sunday, “the Lord’s Day”. (Acts 20:7; 1st Corinthians 16:1-2; Revelation 1:10)
15. The content of this powerful preaching by Christ’s followers was the life, death & RESURRECTION of Christ. (Acts 1:1-9; 2:22-36; 3:14-16; 4:2; and 8-12; 5:29-32; 9:5-6; 10:39-42; 13: 30-37; 17:31-33)
16. The establishment and on-going significance of the Christian sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper are based upon Jesus’ death and resurrection. (Romans 6:3-11; Matthew 26:26-29; 1st Corinthians 15:3-8)
17. The transformed lives of Saul of Tarsus (Paul) and countless individuals throughout history bear testimony to the fact that the risen and ascended Christ is alive today to change lives.
18. The Apostles each died a martyr’s death (except John) to seal by their blood that their testimony was true. (Psychologically, who will die a gruesome death for what he/she knows to be false?!)

III. ALTERNATIVE THEORIES PUT FORWARD TO EXPLAIN AWAY THE RESURRECTION

1. **“The Stolen Body Theory”**—first put forward by the Jewish leaders (contra 5-6-7 and 10 above)
2. **“The Disciples Were Drunk” Theory**—(contra 1-18 above)
3. **“The Swoon Theory”** (i.e. Jesus did not die on the cross but merely passed out and was revived by the cool tomb, opened the tomb’s sealing rock, evaded the guards and convinced His disciples that He has risen from the dead!) (Again, points 3, 4, 5 , 10-16 above refute such nonsense.)
4. **“The Disciples Went to the Wrong Tomb” Theory**—(see points 9-11 above)
5. **“The Disciples All Saw a Vision or had a Mass Hallucination” Theory**—(see points 1-18)
6. **“The Magic Mushroom Theory”** (i.e. the disciples were all high on drugs)—(contra points 1-18)
7. **“The Disciples Just Made It Up” Theory**—(i.e. it was all just a hoax perpetrated upon naïve humanity by scoundrels)— (contra points 1-18 above)

IV. THE ONLY VERDICT THAT FITS ALL THE FACTS: JESUS IS WHO HE SAID HE WAS !

1. Jesus is not a dead 1st century hero but a living Savior, the God-man, able to save and change anyone!
2. Jesus is alive today and forever. He will be the Judge of those who do not bow to Him as Savior.
3. Intellectual honesty does not allow us to say: “Well, I just don’t know”. That is the expression of personal animas and sinful prejudice revealing itself as “passive-aggressive rebellion”. One cannot shrug their shoulders and avoid accountability. They do not have that luxury.
4. Almighty God has pronounced judgment upon rebel law-breakers, guilty of cosmic treason and under the sentence of God’s wrath, awaiting execution. (John 3:16-20 and 36).
5. The only sane and safe thing is to humble yourself before Jesus Christ, confess your sin and rebellion against Him, and be like doubting Thomas who upon overwhelming evidence presented to him cried out to Jesus, **“my Lord and my God”** (John 20:24-29).

V. YOU CANNOT IGNORE JESUS—HE IS THE DIVIDING POINT OF YOUR ETERNITY

“I am trying to prevent the thing people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God’. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with a man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit on Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great moral teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

C. S. Lewis, *MERE CHRISTIANITY*; pp. 56-57

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIANITY BEING A FACTUAL RELIGION

MANY LOOK FAVORABLY UPON A RELIGION THAT IS “USEFUL”

1. It makes me feel better.
2. It answers a lot of my intellectual questions about life and reality.

BUT FEW SEEM TO ASK THE QUESTION—“IS IT TRUE ?”

1. Did the things reported in the Bible really happen? Is God a God of truth and can He so superintend the writing of the Bible such that the human co-authors were kept from errors?
2. Is God the God of truth, or some mean trickster or crazed joker or pathological liar?
3. Did God really visit this planet in the person of Jesus Christ?
4. Did Jesus really die on a Roman cross in 1st century Palestine?
5. Did Jesus really rise from the dead? Was His tomb really empty that Easter morning?

MORE QUESTIONS NEEDING GOOD ANSWERS

1. So what?
2. Do we have to commit intellectual suicide to believe in Jesus life, death and resurrection?
3. What are the implications if Jesus really did live, die and was resurrected on the 3rd day?
4. Do I have biases or warping that might keep me from processing reality rightly and truly?

“The natural man (a person as they are by nature; how they are born naturally) does not accept the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolish to him and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually appraised.”

Paul to the church in Corinth (1st Corinthians 2:14)

Perhaps you need to pray and ask God for His grace to help you overcome your fallen bias against spiritual reality so that you can rightly interpret the things written for us.

5. What does all of this have to say about Jesus’ claims to be God come in the flesh? That He was truly raised from the dead to prove that His claims to Deity were true? That His dying as a substitute for those who would put their trust in Him was truly accepted by God the Father? And that He is coming again to lovingly receive His own and to judge those who reject Him?