

THE RESURRECTION: Seven Reasons to Believe It

- The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central fact of the Christian faith.
- Every sermon preached by every Christian in the New Testament focuses on it.
- There is no historical evidence of any form of early Christianity without it.
- Without the resurrection, Christianity falls. We have a dead savior who cannot help us.

To begin let's read **Matthew 28**.

The Resurrection: Seven Reasons to Believe It

1. Early Testimony
2. Lack of Legendary Embellishment
3. Enemy Testimony
4. Unflattering Testimony
5. The Transformation of the Apostles
6. The Rise of the Christian Church
7. Our Personal Experience of Jesus Christ

Reason 1: Early Testimony

- The New Testament contains eyewitness testimony to Christ's resurrection, but that is not all.
- The eyewitness testimony is early.
- Read **1 Corinthians 15:3-8**
- Paul says he received this information. (v.3)
- He most likely received it on his first trip to Jerusalem, just a few years after his conversion.
- This was within a just few years of the resurrection itself.
- And as Paul wrote, many eyewitnesses were still alive who could back him up.

Reason 2: Lack of Legendary Embellishment

- The resurrection accounts in the Gospels and Acts are plainly written.
- They sound like ancient history when written by ancient historians.
- They do not sound like the fiction or legendary stories of that day.
- Listen to an excerpt from the inauthentic Gospel According to Peter.

Excerpt from the later and legendary Gospel According to Peter.

9 And in the night ... as the soldiers kept guard two by two in a watch, there was a great voice in the heaven; and they saw the heavens opened, and two men descend from thence with great light and approach the tomb. And that stone which was put at the door rolled of itself and made way in part; and the tomb was opened, and both the young men entered in.

10 When therefore those soldiers saw it, they awakened the centurion and the elders; for they too were hard by keeping guard. And, as they declared what things they had seen, again they see three men come forth from the tomb, and two of them supporting one, and a cross following them: and of the two the head reached unto the heaven, but the head of him that was led by them overpassed the heavens. And they heard a voice from the heavens, saying, Thou hast preached to them that sleep. And a response was heard from the cross, Yea.

The New Testament says nothing about:

- Seeing men or angels descending from heaven with lights and voices and so on.
- Watching the stone roll away of itself.
- Giant crosses.
- Giant angels leaving the tomb with heads extending up to heaven.
- A giant Jesus whose head goes higher than heaven.
- This sounds more like the religious literature of that time – and unlike historical reporting.

Reason 3: Enemy Testimony

Read **Matthew 28:11-15** again.

- None of Jesus' enemies ever produced his body after the time of His death.
- Rather, we have stories like this – from enemies of Christ – that indicate the body was really gone.
- From what we know of the disciples, they were not clever enough to pull this off.
- Further, if the guards really all slept, and that is why they did not stop the disciples from taking Jesus' body, how do they really even know who took it?
- The best they could say was, "We woke up and the body was gone!"

Reason 4: Unflattering Testimony

- Read **Matthew 28:5-10** again.
- All four Gospels say that women were the first witnesses to the resurrection.
- In those days, the testimony of women was snubbed and not even acceptable in court.
- This makes for an awkward beginning to a worldwide religious movement.
- Why report it this way unless it was true?

- Read **Matthew 28:16-17** again.
- Jesus appeared to the eleven, and they worshiped Him.
- But some doubted!
- The gospels consistently paint the apostles in an unflattering light, which would not help their case in the public eye.
- Why report it this way unless it was true?

Reason 5: The Transformation of the Apostles

- We recall that at Christ's arrest the apostles all ran away and hid.
- Peter tried to hang around for a while, but denied Jesus three times that very night.
- From the Book of Acts till the day they died, these same disciples became courageous witnesses to Christ's resurrection.
- If Jesus was still dead, what motivated such a sudden, deep and lasting change?

Reason 6: The Rise of the Christian Church

- Christianity did not begin as a powerful movement.
- By all accounts, both Christian and secular, it started out weak and floundering, in an environment of conflict and persecution.
- It was only centuries later that it became popular and politically influential.
- If Jesus was dead, then His followers were either deluded or a bunch of liars.
- So what need did Christianity fill?
- If the resurrection was really false, and Jesus was powerless, what kept the church going?
- Why did it grow?
- And why does it still exist today?

Reason 7: Our Personal Experience of Jesus Christ

- Millions of people living today have had a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ.
- Scholars who study religious data refer to this as “self-authenticating religious experience.”
- Our experience alone does not make the story of Christ’s resurrection true.
- People have “religious experiences” all the time, but we shouldn’t hold God responsible in most cases.

- Nor is dramatic experience necessary to prove what God has done.
- But experience contributes to our faith.
- If no one ever had such experience, it would cast serious doubt on the claims of Christianity – including the resurrection.
- And our continuous experience of Christ’s presence in our lives is perhaps the most convincing experience of all.

- Those of us who experience Christ’s presence in this way cannot deny this daily reality.
- And our experience adds to the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- He is risen and He is alive!

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The Resurrection: Our Response

- Read **Matthew 28:18-20** again.
- All authority has been given to Jesus Christ.
- He will ultimately return and judge the world.
- The assignment He has given the church is to go and make disciples – to recruit followers of Christ from all nations.

- Please consider where you stand with Jesus at this moment today.
- Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins?
- Do you believe that He rose from the dead?
- Have you received forgiveness and eternal life from Him?
 - These are essential points of the Christian faith.

- Are you consciously living a life that is submitted to God's will as expressed in God's word, the Bible?
 - Obedience is a necessary follow up to faith.

- Are there areas of greed, anger, rebellion, bitterness toward God or others – or any other sins that you need to confess to God, reject, and totally leave behind?
 - Letting go of sin is an important part of obedience.

- Let's close by praying a simple prayer of faith together.

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and that I need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died for my sins when You died on the cross.

I believe You rose from the dead.

I want to turn away from my sins and follow You. I invite You to come into my life. I trust You as My Savior and respect You as my Lord. Thank You Lord, for hearing my prayer. Amen.

He Is Risen!!