

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Matthew 28

Seven Reasons to Believe It

The Resurrection

Introduction

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- The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central fact of the Christian faith.
- Without the resurrection, Christianity falls. We have a dead savior who cannot help us.
- 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.

The Resurrection

Introduction

- Read **Matthew 27:57 – 28:20**

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1. Early Testimony

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2. Lack of Legendary Embellishment

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

Reason 1: Early Testimony

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- The New Testament contains eyewitness testimony to Christ's resurrection, but that is not all.
- The eyewitness testimony is early.

Reason 1: Early Testimony

- **1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (ESV)**

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve ...

Reason 1: Early Testimony

- **1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (ESV)**

... ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

Reason 1: Early Testimony

- Paul most likely received his information 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 (v.6).

Reason 2: Lack of Legendary Embellishment

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- Resurrection accounts in the **Gospels** and **Acts** are plainly written.
- They sound like history written by ancient historians.
- They do not sound like the fiction or legendary stories of that day.
- Listen to the opinion of **C. S. Lewis**, someone who knew this type of ancient literature.

Reason 2: Lack of Legendary Embellishment



Now, as a literary historian, I am perfectly convinced that whatever else the Gospels are they are not legends. I have read a great deal of legend and I am quite clear that they are not the same sort of thing. They are not artistic enough to be legends ...

– C. S. Lewis, in What Are We to Make of Jesus Christ?

Reason 2: Lack of Legendary Embellishment



... From an imaginative point of view they are clumsy, they don't work up to things properly. Most of the life of Jesus is totally unknown to us, as is the life of anyone else who lived at that time, and no people building up a legend would allow that to be so.

– C. S. Lewis, in What Are We to Make of Jesus Christ?

Reason 2: Lack of Legendary Embellishment

- In other words, the **Gospels** are **not creative enough** by the standards of their day to be fictional.
- The simplest explanation for their lack of creativity is that they are true.

Reason 3: Enemy Testimony

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- 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**.

Reason 3: Enemy Testimony

- From what we know of the disciples, they were not clever enough to pull this off.
- Further, if the guards really all slept (v.13), how do they really even know **the disciples** took the body?
- The best they could say was, “**We woke up and the body was gone!**”

Reason 4: Unflattering Testimony

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- 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 generally considered unreliable.
- This makes for an awkward beginning to a worldwide religious movement.
- **Why report it this way unless it was true?**

Reason 4: Unflattering Testimony

- Read **Matthew 28:16-17** again.
- Jesus appeared to the eleven, who worshiped Him.
- **But some doubted!**
- The **Gospels** consistently paint the apostles in an unflattering light.
- **Why report it this way unless it was true?**

Reason 5: The Transformation of the Apostles

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- 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.
- Then, from the **Book of Acts** till the day they died, something changed.

Reason 5: The Transformation of the Apostles

- 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

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- Christianity **did not** begin as a powerful movement.
- It was born into a setting of **conflict and persecution**.
- Both Christian and secular accounts say it started out weak and floundering.
- It was only centuries later that it became popular and politically influential.

Reason 6: The Rise of the Christian Church

- 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 false, and Jesus was powerless, what kept the church going through all its troubles?
- Why did it grow?
- And why does it still exist today?

Reason 7: Our Personal Experience of Jesus Christ

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- 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.”

Reason 7: Our Personal Experience of Jesus Christ

- 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.

Reason 7: Our Personal Experience of Jesus Christ

- While experience may not **prove** what God has done, experience contributes to our faith.
- If **no one** ever had such experience, that would cast serious doubt on the claims of Christianity.
- Our continuous experience of Christ's presence in our lives is perhaps the most convincing experience of all.

Reason 7: Our Personal Experience of Jesus Christ

- Those of us who experience Christ's presence in this way **cannot deny** this daily reality.
- Our **experience adds to** the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- And it gives us hope for our own resurrection one day.
- **He is risen and He is alive!**

Making It Personal

Making It Personal

- **Romans 3:22-24** (ESV)

For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Making It Personal

- **Isaiah 59:1-2** (ESV)

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened,
that it cannot save,
or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;
² but your iniquities have made a separation
between you and your God,
and your sins have hidden his face from you
so that he does not hear.

Making It Personal

- Our sin gave God three choices:

1. He could have judged our sin and simply allowed us to be lost.

Making It Personal

- Our sin gave God three choices:

2. He could have ignored our sin and compromised his own holiness.

- **Proverbs 17:15** (ESV)

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD.

Making It Personal

- Our sin gave God three choices:
 3. He could execute a plan that allowed our sin to be forgiven without his holiness being compromised.

Making It Personal

- Before we ever sinned God chose Option #3.
 1. He could have judged our sin and simply allowed us to be lost.
 2. He could have ignored our sin and compromised his own holiness.
 3. He could execute a plan that allowed our sin to be forgiven without his holiness being compromised.

Making It Personal

- **Ephesians 3:8-10** (ESV)

⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Making It Personal

- **Romans 5:7-9** (ESV)

⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person— though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

Making It Personal

- Acts 17:30-31 (ESV)

³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

An Invitation

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- Revelation 22:17 (ESV)

The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

A Prayer Expressing Faith in Christ

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- *Dear Lord Jesus,*
- *I know that I am a sinner and that I need Your forgiveness.*
- *I believe that You showed your love for me by dying 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.*

A Prayer Expressing Faith in Christ

- *I desire to receive that free gift of the water of life that you offer without price.*
- *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.*