

Did Jesus Really Rise From The Dead?

Bible Answers About God & Christ

Did Jesus really rise from the dead? Does it really matter whether He did or not? Yes, it does matter because the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the central fact of the Christian faith. Notice Paul's statement, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." (1 Cor. 15:17) The entire structure of Christianity stands or falls with Christ's resurrection. In fact, if we are to have any hope for eternal life and the understanding of the meaning of life, then the resurrection of Christ is essential because these things depend on His resurrection from the dead!

The fact of His resurrection is the most important event of history and therefore, is the most certain fact in all of history. It is supported by a wider variety of testimonial and other evidence than any other historical event that has ever taken place since the world began. When Jesus was confronted by the religious leaders of His day, Jesus was asked for a sign to demonstrate that He was the promised Messiah. He answered, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matt. 12:39-40)

Jesus meant that His resurrection from the dead would set Him apart from anyone else who ever lived, and it would designate Him the Son of God. Paul noted this when he said, "Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom 1:4)

There can be no doubt whatsoever that the apostles and early Christians, by the tens of thousands, believed and preached the resurrection. Most of them suffered severely for their faith, losing their possessions and often their lives in the great Jewish and Roman persecutions of the first century. They would hardly have persisted in their testimony unless they had been firmly persuaded, after thorough consideration of all the facts, that their Savior had conquered death and now reigns as King of kings, and Lord of lords. (1 Tim. 6:15)

The accounts of His appearances are recorded for us by eyewitnesses to whom Jesus appeared alive over a 40-day period after His public crucifixion. Luke says, "To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over [a period of] forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3) The apostle Paul writing about 56 A.D. mentions many of these, "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He

appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also." (I Cor 15:1-8 NAS) This statement is somewhat of a challenge to those who might not have believed, since Paul is saying that there were many people then living who could be interviewed to find out if Christ had indeed risen.

A witness may be a witness, but not be a valid or reliable witness. Jesus chose reliable witnesses. A reliable witness is (1) one who is in the position to know the facts of a given circumstance or situation, and (2) one who will tell the truth about what he/she knows. Those witnesses chosen by the Lord were in a position to know Him should they see Him again following His attested death and resurrection. In every detail they were acquainted with Him. They recognized the familiarity of His kingly voice; they responded to His every characteristic: His walk, His mannerisms, all that went to say "This is Jesus!" Should He return from the tomb alive, they would be the first to recognize Him and at the same time to repudiate a fraud! These witnesses were so convinced that Jesus really did rise from the dead that they sacrificed everything including their very lives for this undeniable fact.

The disciple whom Jesus loved wrote graphically, "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life--and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete" (I Jn 1:1-4 NAS). This is why the witnesses to the resurrection of Christ sacrificed everything including their very lives for this undeniable fact. They heard, saw, and handled Him and went forth to proclaim Him to the world and in the end sacrificed their very lives for preaching His resurrection. Would you sacrifice everything you have including your very life for a lie? Of course you would not. Neither would have those witnesses if they were not fully convinced of His resurrection.

What about you? Do you believe Jesus rose from the dead? Your soul depends on your answer.

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