



Did Jesus Resurrect?

“I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again.” (John 11:25, NLT)

Unless the resurrection of Jesus is a historic fact, there would be no Christianity. The resurrection is the foundation of the Christian faith. Our faith is in the **risen** Christ of history. The Apostle Paul said, *“And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless, and you are still under condemnation for your sins...and if we have hope in Christ only for this life, we are the most miserable people in the world.”* (1Corinthians 17, 19, NLT) Why is the resurrection of Jesus so important?

The sacrifice of Jesus

When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, their nature changed, and they lost their relationship with him. As a result, all their descendants inherited a nature that made them want to sin. Who could restore that relationship with their Creator? Who could satisfy the justice demanded by God? Because man is sinful, no man could. Only God could. He so loved the world that he gave himself for you. (John 3:16) In order to die, he had to become a human. Love took him to the cross where he became your substitute. He let evil men put him on a cross where he took the punishment for your guilt and sins. *“He personally carried away our [your] sins in his own body on the cross so we [you] can be dead to sin and live for what is right.”* (1 Peter 2:24, NLT) Jesus also had to deal with death, part of the punishment of Adam and Eve’s sin. How did he do that? He defeated death by resurrecting so that you could have a new life.

Why Jesus resurrected

Because the experience of death is unknown, people fear death. When Jesus resurrected, he destroyed the power of death. Paul shouts, *“How we thank God who gives us victory over sin and death through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* (1Corinthians 15:57, NLT) The good news? Death became a door to a new life for you. How can you know that? Because Jesus resurrected, you will, too. You will have a new, perfect body like those of Adam and Eve. (The only way to get rid of your sin-contaminated body inherited from Adam is for it to die.) You will live forever in a new heaven and a new earth, enjoying the loving fellowship of God, inhabited by his Holy Spirit. (See “What Is Heaven?”) If Jesus had not resurrected, there would be no hope! Because he resurrected, you can know him personally, trust him and follow his plan for your life. Your new life begins now! The kingdom of heaven begins now. Because he lives in you, he is your life. Do you know that by his resurrection power in you that you can overcome sin? Do you know that even in the most difficult circumstances you can have peace? Do you know that God can give you joy and fellowship in your relationships with your peers?

The burial of Jesus

What proof is there that Jesus resurrected? The events surrounding the burial of Jesus witness to his resurrection. After Jesus died, Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple, and Nicodemus, who visited Jesus by night, went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. After cleansing the body, they wrapped it with linen cloth, mixing in about seventy-five pounds of a gummy substance called myrrh and aloes. The grave clothes would have been hard to remove. They put a separate cloth around his head and then placed him in a tomb cut into a rock. They rolled (downhill) an enormous stone, estimated to be one to one and a half tons, in front of the tomb.

The resurrection of Jesus

Mary Magdalene was the first to go to the tomb. She looked in, saw the empty tomb, ran and told Peter and John. Although Jesus had told them that he would arise again, they didn't believe her. Peter and John ran to the tomb, took one look, and believed. Why? There was no body, only the undisturbed grave clothes **in the form of the body, slightly caved in and empty** – as if Jesus had evaporated! No robber could have done that.

Interestingly, if the disciples had made up this story, they would never have had a woman or women discover the empty tomb. Women were low class citizens and could not even testify in court!

The guards

Because the Jewish leaders remembered that Jesus prophesied that he would rise again in three days, they asked Pilate to send a Roman security guard to keep anyone from stealing the body. Pilate ordered the guards to place the Roman seal on the tomb. A death penalty awaited anyone who removed it.

On the morning Jesus arose, there was a great earthquake, and an angel removed the enormous stone, placing it some distance from the tomb. The guards fell as dead men. Later, they went to the priests and told them what had happened. After calling a meeting of all the priests, they decided to bribe the soldiers to say that the disciples had come and stolen the body. Why bribe the guards unless the tomb was empty? Today, some say the disciples stole the body. Do you think the disciples had the courage to try to steal the body surrounded by guards? They were hiding away in a room, fearful for their lives!

The witnesses

After careful research, the historian Luke wrote in Acts 1:3 (NLT), *“During the forty days after his crucifixion, he appeared to the apostles from time to time and proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive.”* Jesus proved he was alive by showing the disciples his nail-scarred hands. He invited them to touch him to make sure he wasn't a ghost. When they still doubted, he ate a piece of broiled fish while they watched. (Luke 24:37-42) He

said, “Ghosts don’t eat.” On one occasion, he cooked breakfast for them. He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. Another time he appeared to two men on the road to Emmaus and explained how the Scriptures prophesied about him. (Luke 24:225-27) Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 (NLT) that after Jesus resurrected

“He was seen by Peter and then by the twelve apostles. After that, he was seen by more than five hundred of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died by now. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all, I saw him, too...”

Jesus’ brother James did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah until after he resurrected. Then he became a follower, a leader in the Jerusalem church and became the first martyr. He knew his brother was alive!

The Gospel writers wrote their accounts when many witnesses were still alive who could have corrected them. Secular historians also wrote about Jesus but not in detail.

The witness of changed lives

To the anger and dismay of the Romans, the disciples immediately began preaching the resurrection of Jesus. They arrested the disciples and warned them to stop. If they could have found a body, they would have silenced them. There was no body!

Thousands of converts in Jerusalem formed the first church. They changed their worship day to Sunday, resurrection day. Believers quit sacrificing animals because Jesus is the Lamb of God. On fire, they spread the gospel to other cities and countries. The disciples endured persecutions, beatings, imprisonments and all but John were martyred. Do you think they would endure all that, even death, if they knew the resurrection was a lie?

However, it is the changed lives of believers, freed from sin, guilt and the power of death that are the final witnesses. Jesus said, “Go into all the world and make disciples.” Some believe the time is short. Jesus is coming soon. Will you ask Jesus to give you the “fire” of the early disciples to spread the Good News?

Attitude check:

- How does the resurrection story affect your attitude toward sharing about Jesus?

Explore:

- Read, “Jesus is Divine.” (Colossians 1:15-20) Write in your journal why the resurrection is important to you.

Talk with God:

- Father, may the promise of my resurrection help me to set my sights on the realities of heaven.