

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

A **MANNAHOUSE** RESOURCE



INTRODUCTION

There have been many controversial events in human history that have left us with unanswered questions but none with the significance and potential impact as the question of “Did Jesus Christ really rise from the dead?” To the skeptic and unbeliever it is a ridiculous idea and one that has brought delusion to countless millions through the centuries. But to the one who believes, Jesus Christ’s resurrection offers boundless hope and secures the other promises He made during His short life on earth.

The apostle Peter says: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”* (1 Pet. 1:3) Peter’s life was anchored in what he called a “living hope” because of Christ’s resurrection. “Hope” is a desire that you think might be fulfilled. “Living hope” is a desire that you are convinced is based upon a certainty, in this case the resurrection of Christ from the grave. But is it true? Did He really resurrect? In this booklet we will explore the case for His resurrection and allow you to be the judge yourself.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE, IF TRUE!

If Christ did resurrect from the grave, the implications are enormous! First of all, He did not claim that He would resuscitate or recover from a short bout with death. He claimed He would conquer death by resurrecting after three days and return to His disciples in a glorified body.

No other spiritual leader whether it be Buddha, Mohammed, leaders of Hinduism, or any other leader has made such a claim. These religions are all based upon men's ideas of what is true in the spiritual realm. They all died with nothing to validate their authority other than the appeal of their own spiritual philosophy.

Christ, on the other hand based the validity of His claims of who He was and what He taught upon His ability to conquer death. The resurrection has always been the very foundation of Christianity. If it did not really happen, we could still honor Jesus as a wonderful man with obvious spiritual powers, but we could not receive Him as the Son of God. However, if He did resurrect, it validates everything He claimed about Himself and His mission and demands a decision from each of us.

THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST

1. Jesus Claimed that He was the Son of God

"Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, 'Are you the Christ, The Son of the Blessed?' Jesus said, 'I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.'"
(Mk. 14:61,62)

This and many other scriptures record the claim of Jesus that He was in fact the only Son of God, the very nature and essence of deity, incarnate in a human body to fulfill the purposes of God for our salvation. It was this very claim that ultimately gave the Jewish leaders their justification to kill Him, since this claim was considered blasphemy in Israel and punishable by death.

In the above scripture, Jesus knew He was about to die and declared to the high priest what would happen afterward. Because He was the Son of God, He would be seated at the right hand of the throne of God and later, in the Second Coming, come with the clouds of heaven to execute God's final judgements (Acts 1:11; Rev.19:11).

2. His Death Would Atonement for the Sins of the World

“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed!” (Isa. 53:5)

When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to be baptized he declared, *“Behold! The Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.”* (Jn. 1:29) John knew by revelation that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, the One sent by God in the fullness of time, who came to fulfill the prophets and make a way for us to be restored to our Creator. Sin had brought mankind under the curse and alienated us from God. Sin had to be atoned for, divine justice had to be satisfied, in this case by a sinless sacrifice. Only the sinless Son of God could accomplish this atonement by offering Himself.

Once sin was atoned for, mankind would have access to God through faith. *“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”* (Eph. 2:5)

3. He Would Rise from the Grave

“Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, ‘The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.’” (Mt. 17:22,23)

Of all the claims of Christ, this is the one that really put His reputation and following on the line. People have been resuscitated and brought back from short episodes with death but no one has ever resurrected from the grave after a three day period of time. Such an occurrence is medically and physically impossible. Impossible for man, yes, but not impossible for God! At one point when being confronted by the Pharisees, Jesus declared, *“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself, I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it again.”* (Jn. 10:17-18) Shortly after this occasion Jesus would demonstrate the scope of His power by raising Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11 :43). During that incident He would proclaim to those present, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me shall never die, he shall live.”* (Jn. 11 :26)

MAJOR OBSTACLES TO THE RESURRECTION

There were obviously some overwhelming obstacles facing Christ in His claim that He would be resurrected. The following is a list of these:

1. He was crucified. This is a verifiable historical fact recorded by historians such as Josephus. All of the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, record the details of His betrayal, interrogation, the shuffle between the Jewish and Roman authorities, the beatings and mocking, how He was marched through the streets of Jerusalem carrying His cross, the arrival at Golgotha, and Him being nailed to the cross and lifted up as a spectacle for the crowds to see. *“And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him.”* (Lk. 23:33)

2. He died before being removed from the cross. *“Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.”* (Jn. 19: 32-34) Some have tried to claim that Christ was not really dead but only appeared to be when He was taken down. The apostle John was an eyewitness that when the sword pierced Christ’s side blood

and water came out. The combination of the watery serum with the clots of blood would be proof to a pathologist that Jesus was dead. If not, when the side was pierced, strong spouts of blood would have emerged with every heartbeat. Even if Christ was not dead before being pierced, He would soon have bled to death because of the untreated wound. In addition, it was the responsibility of the Roman soldiers to make sure that each who was crucified had in fact died.

3. He was buried. The Bible records that Jesus' body was taken from the cross, prepared for burial and placed in a new tomb owned by Joseph of Arimathea. *"And Nicodemus . . . also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury."* (Jn. 19:39,20)

4. The tomb was sealed and a guard was stationed. *"So they went and make the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard."* (Mt. 27:66) The stone was likely sealed by stretching a cord across it and placing a wax seal on each end with the impression of the signet ring of the king. A Roman guard was placed at the tomb, consisting of probably ten or more soldiers who were commissioned to protect the body within upon penalty of death.

At this point the Jewish leaders were reveling in their success. This man, who had caused such a stir and created such problems for them, had now been eliminated, seemingly forever. His claims would be buried with Him. He had been confronted, tried, found guilty of blasphemy, humiliated, crucified, died and been buried. The religious leaders were well aware of Christ's claim that He would arise from the grave so they made sure that the tomb was secured by an armed guard of Roman soldiers, just in case this man's followers tried anything. Everything appeared to be under control until Sunday morning when their worst fear materialized. The body of Jesus was missing and no one knew where it was! We can imagine that a full scale frantic search immediately began in and around Jerusalem in a desperate attempt to find the missing body. It was all in vain and no body was ever found.

TWO DIFFERENT REPORTS

Two different versions of what happened to the body immediately surfaced. The soldiers claimed that the disciples had stolen the body (Mt. 23: 13). The disciples had a completely different version which we find in Matthew 28:1-6: *"Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, 'do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.'*

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BODY?

Who was right, the soldiers or the disciples? Was Christ's body stolen, or did He in fact resurrect? Is it even reasonable to consider the possibility of the disciples stealing the body as the Jewish leaders claimed? Let's consider this:

First, we realize that the Roman guard probably numbered around ten soldiers who were commissioned under penalty of death to fulfill their duty. They knew what was at stake and were there to prevent any possibility of something like this happening. Now consider, that from the testimony of scripture, these disciples were hardly the kind of men to attempt something so dangerous. They had no military training, no history of bravery and in fact, when the chief priest and elders came to capture Christ in the garden, they had fled in fear. Peter, later that night, would deny three times that he even knew Jesus. After Christ's death, the scripture shows the disciples hiding for fear in a secret room (Jn. 20:19). Besides this, even if they had summoned the courage to steal the body, would not there have been bloodshed or someone killed in the attempt, something the Jewish leaders could show as proof of their claim?

TEN PROOFS OF THE RESURRECTION

- 1. The stone was rolled away, the guards were gone and the body of Jesus was missing (Lk. 24:2,3).** That which the Jewish leaders, along with the Roman authorities, had tried so hard to prevent had happened. By early Sunday morning there was no body in the tomb, the stone had been rolled back and the soldiers had disappeared.
- 2. The women who arrive at the tomb have an encounter with an angel (Lk. 24:2,4).** The disciples of Jesus did not expect Him to rise from the dead, even though He told them He would. It took the testimony of a supernatural being to convince the women of what had actually occurred.
- 3. The disciples did not believe their report (Lk. 24:11).** Scripture records their reaction: *“And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.”* This reaction is important for us to understand because it reveals their true state in the aftermath of the crucifixion as being one of unbelief and fear.
- 4. Peter also witnesses the empty tomb and the grave clothes (Lk. 24:12).** After receiving the report in unbelief, scripture tells us that *“Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.”*

5. There were many post resurrection appearances of Christ. It was not the empty tomb that convinced the disciples of Christ's resurrection; it was His post resurrection appearances. Until they actually saw Him in His resurrected body, they were in a state of wonder about what the empty tomb actually meant. The following is a list of many of the recorded appearances of Jesus Christ after His resurrection. He appeared to:

- *Mary Magdalene (John 20: 14)
- *Women returning from the tomb (Mt. 28:9, 10)
- *Peter later on Sunday afternoon (Lk. 24:34)
- *Disciples on the Emmaus Road (Lk. 24: 13-33)
- *the apostles, Thomas absent (Lk. 24:36-43)
- *the apostles, Thomas present (Jn. 20:26-29)
- *the seven by the Lake of Tiberias (Jn 21: 1-23)
- *a multitude of over 500 believers on a Galilean mountain (I Cor. 15:6)
- *James (I Cor. 15:7)
- *the eleven apostles (Mt. 28: 16-20)
- *at the ascension of Christ (Acts 1 :3-12)
- *Saul who became Paul the apostle (Acts 9:3-6)
- *Stephen before the Sanhedrin (Acts 1 :3-12)
- *the Apostle John on the Island of Patmos (Rev. 1: 1-10)

- 6. No body was ever produced by the Jewish leaders.** This is a critical point! If the Jews had been able to produce the body, all claims of a resurrection would have been nullified. They could have marched the body through the streets displaying it to all the people to silence any rumors. The fact was they had no idea where the body had gone.
- 7. The remarkable change in the lives of the disciples.** The post resurrection appearances of Christ changed the lives of the disciples from defeated cowards to bold and courageous witnesses. It also jettisoned them into lives of sacrifice and eventual martyrdom. Eleven of the twelve eventually died a martyr's death. It is impossible to believe that any of them would have perpetrated a lie about the resurrection, knowing the implications to their own lives. It would have been far easier to return to their fishing villages and have a peaceful life.
- 8. The coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-4).** Jesus appeared to His disciples and told them to wait in Jerusalem until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When Pentecost arrived, they were gathered in prayer when the Holy Spirit fell upon them accompanied by the sound of a rushing mighty wind. Those who heard the sound came to see what it was and three thousand were converted in one day. This was the beginning of the church of Jesus Christ.

- 9. The changed lives of those who have opened their hearts to Jesus Christ down through the centuries.** Countless millions have experienced the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God through the centuries. These conversions have happened in many varied personal ways, but stand together as a testimony of the power of the Spirit released through His resurrection.
- 10. The prophecies of Christ concerning what would happen down through human history.** Space in this booklet does not permit a full account of these. The reader can study for himself the gospels and the Book of Revelation. In His death, Jesus fulfilled some three hundred prophecies from the Old Testament. During His life He described the eventual expansion of the Kingdom into all the world, the fall of Jerusalem and characteristics of the end time before His second coming (Lk. 21; Mt. 24; Mk. 13).

IS THERE PROOF OF THE RESURRECTION?

If we will honestly consider the above evidence and take a fair minded appraisal of all that it contains, I believe we will have to say yes! If the case had been tried before an impartial jury at that time in a high court in Jerusalem, given all that's been listed above, with the numerous eye witness accounts, along with the multiplication of Christ's disciples after the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, it would seem only reasonable that a verdict would come forth in favor of the resurrection. Countless millions have experienced the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God through the centuries. These conversions have happened in many varied personal ways, but stand together as a testimony of the power of the Spirit released through His resurrection.

However, each of us must be our own judge and our decision can have a dramatic impact on our life. If we believe in the resurrection, we must receive Jesus for who He said He was; the very Son of God who came to atone for the sins of the world. If not, then life goes on for us the way it has been. We must be careful though, because our rejection of Christ is often not so much "I can't believe it!" but "I won't!" The facts, of what we sense is probably true, run head on into our desire to live our lives our way, giving ourselves to our own selfish pleasures and pursuits.

YOU CAN BE BORN AGAIN

“Most assuredly, I say unto you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God!” (Jn. 3:3)

Those who believe in and receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior will be born again by the Spirit of God. When we are born again, we begin to know God as our Father. We receive forgiveness for our sin as well as all of the spiritual blessings and benefits that He has promised, including eternal life. If you would like to take this step right now, please pray the following prayer: ***Lord Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God and that You gave Your life for me. I receive You now as my Lord and my Savior. I repent for my sin and the way I have lived my life apart from You. Please forgive me and cleanse me through Your precious blood. I ask You to fill me with Your Holy Spirit so that I may have the power of a new life in order to live in a way that pleases You. Please reveal Yourself to me so that I may grow in my relationship of love and service to You. Amen.***

“The book “Evidence That Demands a Verdict “by Josh McDowell provided the inspiration and much of the content for this booklet.



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PORTLAND CAMPUS

9200 NE Fremont St
Portland, Oregon 97220

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Tigard, Oregon 97223

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Vancouver, Washington 98684

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Eugene, Oregon 97408

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WRITTEN BY: TERRY D. EDWARDS

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