

Apologetics: Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?

Apologetics: The intellectual defense of the truth of the Christian religion, usually considered a branch of theology.

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?

- All ancient cultures understood resurrection. There was no misunderstanding of what the disciples meant when they said Jesus was resurrected. All cultures would have understood this as rising from the dead and being alive on the earth. They knew resurrection as a bodily resurrection.
- Christianity is the only religion to purport that their founder is raised from the dead.
- Why is believing the resurrection so important?
- **1 Corinthians 15:12-20** Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁴ And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. ¹⁵ Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. ¹⁶ For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. ²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.
- This passage does 2 major things:
 - To be a Christian you must believe in the Resurrection of Jesus
 - If there is no resurrection, then Christianity does not exist.
 - This is why it is so contested by atheists.

Jesus predicted His own resurrection

- **Matthew 16:21** From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.
- **Matthew 17:22-23** 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,²³ and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.” And they were exceedingly sorrowful.

The early church fathers that were alive at the time of the resurrection testified of Jesus’ resurrection:

- Clement of Rome in AD 95 wrote of it in 1 Clement
- Ignatius in Letter to the Smyrneans writes of it.
- Polycarp writes about it in Letter to the Philippians in AD 110.
- Justin Martyr wrote about it, though through second hand experience.

There were literally thousands of people that testified of being with Jesus after His death, many recorded in the Bible, most recorded outside the Bible.

- We cannot get a thousand people to believe Elvis or JFK is still alive

The disciples testified that Jesus raised from the dead.

- “I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Every one was beaten, tortured, stoned and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world-and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible.” — Charles Colson

Argument #1 – Jesus did not actually die

- The Roman empire was exceptionally good at killing people. While they did not invent crucifixion they had perfected it over more than a century. Jesus was a high-profile figure and nothing would have been left to chance. It was a public execution during one of the busiest times in the city, so there were thousands of witnesses. The Roman government would only gain from Jesus' death and would risk revolution – which is why He was put to death anyways.
- Jesus' execution is a matter of public record and recorded in many extra-biblical resources.
- Josephus records that only one person survived a crucifixion. 3 people were being crucified that did not deserve it, and while they were still alive, they were taken down and given the highest levels of medical care. 2 of them died anyways. Josephus also testifies that Jesus definitely died.
- There are no serious scholars or medical professionals that have looked into Jesus' death (atheists) that support this theory. 100% say this is unimaginable and not possible. Only people speaking off the tops of their heads trying desperately to come up with something support this.

Argument #2 – Theft Theory. Jesus' body was stolen

- The oldest theory, and the only one dating back to the actual event. It is even recorded in the Bible as a theory that some tried to pass on.
- Justin Martyr and Tertullian also said that this was an untrue rumor.
- Some have suggested that Jesus did not bodily rise, but spiritually, however the Roman government would have only needed to produce the body to quell this. So for this argument, it would have needed to be the disciples or some ally stealing the body.
- But we already looked at why it is unlikely that the disciples would have given their lives for something they knew to be untrue but...
- The disciples had nothing to gain by lying and starting a new religion. They faced hardship, ridicule, hostility, and martyr's deaths. In light of this, they could never have sustained such unwavering motivation if they knew what they were preaching was a lie. The disciples were not fools and Paul was a

cool-headed intellectual of the first rank. There would have been several opportunities over three to four decades of ministry to reconsider and renounce a lie.—J. P. Moreland

- How? Guards, large stone, seal...
- Also, the disciples lives are radically changed after being with the risen Jesus.
- James, Jesus' brother, had rejected Jesus' teachings while Jesus was alive, but embraced them after His resurrection. Why? Why embrace a lie after rejecting Jesus all his life? There was no gain, only loss and suffering and death.
- It could not have been someone other than the followers of Jesus – the resurrection was not expected by anyone else. Also, there are thousands of eye-witnesses to the resurrection.
- The disciples were despondent, scattered, and fearful between the death and resurrection.

This theory does show something though – the Roman government and Jewish leaders knew exactly which tomb and that the tomb was empty. Otherwise they would have produced the body.

Argument #3 – The Wrong tomb theory

- Some have argued that when checking the tomb, they got the wrong tomb and assumed Jesus resurrected.
- This does not account for people claiming to have seen Him.
- Joseph of Arimathea was a prominent, wealthy man. His tomb would have been readily verified.
- Paul would never have bought into this.
- There is no evidence to support this, but there is evidence to show that the tomb's location was well known and is empty.

All arguments against the resurrection, including 2 others not addressed here, the Family tomb theory and the hallucinogenic theory, do not account for the facts and are speculative at best.

Evidence for the Resurrection:

- Accounts by eye-witnesses
- The empty tomb
- The changed lives of the disciples
- The 3000 that converted at Pentecost
- The Roman historical records
- The testimony of billions of Christians of the work of Christ in their lives which could not happen without the resurrection.

What does it matter in our lives?

Romans 6:4-11 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. ¹⁰ For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Our salvation is based on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.
- Even baptism symbolizes these things.
- As Jesus was raised from the dead, so are we in Christ. Therefore we have newness of life. His resurrection is the power for us to be transformed, otherwise we are still slaves of sin.
- Since we died with Christ, we also live with Christ. This means that death has no more power over us. We will be united with Jesus for eternity.
- We are alive to God and are in Christ Jesus.

It is the death and resurrection of Jesus that gives real and actual change to the believers life. Paul's point is clear: something dramatic and life changing happened in the life of the believer. You can't die and rise again without it changing your life. The believer has a real death and resurrection with Jesus Christ.

It is too easy for some Christians to focus solely on the "crucified life," failing to see that it is a part (an essential part) of a bigger picture: the *resurrection* life.

Our new life gives us power, the ability to reject sin and live righteously, hope for a future, an assuredness of our position with God, and eternal life with Christ.