

# JESUS' RESURRECTION: SIGNIFICANCE & SUPPORT

## I. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

Why does it matter if the resurrection truly happened or not? The historically true resurrection of Jesus matters immensely, and has resulted in the following benefits:

1. **The Resurrection of Jesus means that He can be t\_\_\_\_\_ absolutely!** Jesus predicted His death and resurrection, and if spoke truthfully about the greatest miracle of all we can trust the rest of His teachings (Mat 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:17-19; John 10:17-18).
2. **The Resurrection of Jesus means that our sins have been f\_\_\_\_\_!** (Rom 4:25; I Cor 15, esp verse 17).
3. **The Resurrection of Jesus means that S\_\_\_\_\_ has been defeated once and for all!** (Col 2:13-15; Heb 2:14-15).
4. **The Resurrection of Jesus means that n\_\_\_\_\_ l\_\_\_\_\_ is now possible!** (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 2:20).
5. **The Resurrection of Jesus means that the final enemy – d\_\_\_\_\_ itself – is defeated!** (Rom 6:9-10; I Cor 15:23,26, 54-57).
6. **God's Resurrection power is available to b\_\_\_\_\_ today!** (Eph 1:18-22; Php 3:10).

## II. SUPPORT FOR THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION

There are two important facts. First, Jesus was dead prior to His placement in His tomb. Second, Jesus resurrected and walked out of the tomb a live man.

### JESUS DIED

Following are some of the evidences that support the fact that Jesus was dead before He was placed in the tomb:

- The gospel writers saw and wrote that He died (Jn 19:30; Lk 23:46; Mk 15:37; Mt 27:50).
- Crucifixion was a very effective means of death. In Jesus case it was preceded by severe beating, crown of thorns, and carrying of cross bar from prison to his place of execution (Mt 27:29-30; Mk 15:17-19; Jn 19:2-3, 17).
- Jesus went through six separate trials, 3 Roman and 3 Jewish. Both Jewish and Roman authorities declared Jesus to be crucified, and both had vested interests to make sure that Jesus was killed and remained dead and buried (Jn 18:13; Mt 26:57, 59; Mk 15:1; Lk 23:7, 11-25).
- A spear was thrust into Jesus side while He was still on the cross to ensure His death (Jn 19:34).
- Soldiers did not break His legs (as was the custom) because Jesus was already dead. (This also fulfilled the prophecies that none of the Messiah's bones would be broken, and that His side would be pierced) (Jn 19:32-33).
- Pilate required certification of Christ's death before the body could be turned over to Joseph of Arimathea. Pilate consented to Jesus being removed from the cross only after the executioner had certified His death (Mk 15:44-45).
- Jesus' body was wrapped in linen clothes along with 75 pounds of applied spices (Jn 19:39-40; Lk 23:50-53; Mk 15:44-46; Mt 27:57-60).

## **JESUS RESURRECTED**

### **A. Tomb Security**

- Jesus body was placed in a solid rock tomb. The entrance was covered by a extremely large stone (weight about 1 ½ to 2 tons), probably rolled into place using levers (Mt 27:59-60; Mk 15:46; Lk 23:53).

- A Roman seal was placed on the tomb entrance. This meant the tomb was protected by the full force of Roman law. Grave tampering was a offense punishable by crucifixion upside down (Mt 27:66).
- A Roman guard unit was placed outside the tomb entrance. Guard units consisted of 4 to 16 men (Mt 27:63-65, 28:11).
- Jesus was buried by Joseph of Arimathea, who was a member of the Sanhedrin, a sort of Jewish Supreme Court. People in this ruling class were too well known for fictitious stories about them to survive (John 19:38-42).

## **B. Empty Tomb**

- The tomb was empty as both Roman and Jewish sources acknowledged. (The site 6  
the tomb was known to Christians, Jews and the Romans) (Mat 28:11-15).
- The Roman Seal on the tomb was broken (a capital crime as mentioned previously).
- The large stone was moved up and away (Lk 24:2; Mk 16:4).
- The Roman guard unit fled. DESERTION OF YOUR POST WAS PUNISHABLE BY DEATH (Mt 28:11).
- The grave clothes were in the tomb, but the clothes were empty (Jn 20:5-7).
- Jesus' tomb was never venerated as a shrine, a striking fact in light of the first century custom to set-up a shrine at the site of a holy man's bones (over 50 such sites have been found). The absence of a shrine suggests His bones were never found!
- No body was ever produced by the Roman or Jewish authorities. THE PRODUCTION OF A BODY WOULD HAVE STOPPED CHRISTIANITY DEAD IN IT'S TRACKS.

### **C. Jesus appeared to many**

- The tomb was discovered empty by women. Important because testimonies of women in first century Jewish culture was considered worthless. If the disciples wanted to perpetuate a myth, they would have chosen men.
- After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to many during a period of 40 days. He performed many convincing proofs.
- Jesus appeared before more than 500 people, most of who were still alive when the New Testament was written and circulated. He appeared to people that knew Him very well – family, friends, followers.

Included in the people who saw Jesus after resurrection included the Apostles and skeptics like Saul of Tarus. The effect on their lives was very radical (see point D).

(Reference: Gospel accounts; Acts; I Cor 15)

### **D. Radical Transformation of the Disciples and Skeptics like Saul of Tarus AFTER They Saw the Resurrected Christ**

At the time of the trials of Jesus and through the third day after His death, the apostles were confused and fearful. Peter strongly denied Christ three times during the trials (he even cursed!), and the Apostles were in hiding (Mat 26:56, 69-75; Mk 14:50, 66-71).

**BUT**, all of a sudden, three days after the death of Jesus, the apostles were **RADICALLY TRANSFORMED** and became extremely bold in proclaiming the gospel! Peter appeared in Jerusalem boldly preaching to thousands (at threat of death) about the resurrected Christ.

The Apostles' zealousness in proclaiming the good news of the resurrection and salvation by Jesus alone came at a very high price to them. The apostles were beaten, jailed, and 11 of the 12 died horrible martyr deaths. The 12th, John, was exiled to a terrible island called Patmos. The Apostles never backed down from their testimony of the resurrection – even in the face of torture and death. **WHY THE SUDDEN**

## TRANSFORMATION?

Some skeptics theorize that the apostles conspired together to start a new religion, knowing that Jesus never resurrected. This theory is absolutely without support and does not even make common sense. **NO ONE DIES FOR A LIE THAT THEY KNOW IS A LIE!**

There have been religious zealots outside of Christianity over the years that have been willing to die for what they believe. But the key is that they **THOUGHT** they were dying for the truth!

The obvious answer why the apostles were so radically transformed is that **THEY WERE EYEWITNESSES TO THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS!** They saw Jesus for 40 days after His resurrection.

Jesus performed many convincing signs for them. Even "doubting" Thomas was totally convinced when he saw Jesus face to face. The apostles knew that everything that Jesus ever taught them was true, and they were committed to spend the rest of their lives to share the good news no matter what the cost (2 Pet 1:16; I Jn 1:1-3; Lk 1:1-3; I Cor 15; Acts 5:40-42).

**Saul:** Saul was a brilliant, highly educated and very devout Jew. He was Christianity's most rabid antagonist (enemy) and had a goal to destroy the new Christian church.

Then something happened. The resurrected Jesus met Saul on the road to Damascus, and Saul was immediately converted and radically transformed. Saul's conversion had a tremendous impact on his character, his relationship with followers of Jesus, his message and his mission.

Saul became the Apostle Paul and became the world's foremost evangelist and defender of Christianity. He went to suffer tremendously for his outspoken support of Christianity and died a martyr's death.

**James:** Another skeptic who came to believe in Jesus as the Messiah was his half-brother James. James eventually was stoned for his commitment to Jesus.

(Reference: Book of Acts).

## CONTRADICTIONS IN THE STORY?

What about apparent contradictions in the resurrection story? Here are some good and truthful responses:

- \* Minor differences in the four gospels argue strongly against collusion and argues for the truth of the gospels.

- If all four gospels gave EXACTLY the same story, in EXACTLY the same order, with EXACTLY the same details, we would immediately be suspicious.
- No four people will describe events in exactly the same way, detail for detail. If they did, then likely collusion would exist.
  
- \* There are no differences in the main/important parts of the story.
  
- \* None of the detail differences necessarily flatly contradict each other, but in some plausible way they correlate together to paint the larger picture.
  
- \* All of the apparent contradictions have been logically explained over the years.