

He Is Risen

1 Corinthians 15:3–4, 55, 57 (NKJV)

³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

⁵⁵ *“O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”*

⁵⁷ But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Paul takes this whole chapter declaring that if Christ has not risen then our faith is in vain
- Its as if he is the defending attorney

He declares that if this is not, in fact true, then why do we put ourselves in jeopardy preaching the resurrection

- Without the resurrection there is no forgiveness of sins

1 Corinthians 15:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins!

- The resurrection is the foundation of Christianity

Fact Number One

Jesus Died by Crucifixion

Luke 23:33 (NKJV)

³³ And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

Crucifixion was a common form of execution employed by the Romans to punish members of the lower class

- Slaves, soldiers, the violently rebellious, and those accused of treason
- It was considered to be the extreme penalty

Tacitus: Roman senator and historian reports, *"Nero fastened the guilt [of the burning of Rome] and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus."*

- Josephus (First century historian) and Lucian of Samosata, (Greek satirist) both mention the crucifixion of Jesus
- The Jewish Talmud never denies Jesus' existence, miracles or resurrection
- It was public, it was extreme, it was final

The Second Fact

Jesus' Disciples Believed That He Rose and Appeared to Them

1 Corinthians 15:5–8 (NKJV)

⁵ and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶ After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷ After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸ Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

It is a virtual consensus among scholars who study Jesus' resurrection that His disciples believed they had seen Jesus after His resurrection

- They claimed it to be true

They were radically transformed from shivering cowards to bold individuals who proclaimed the gospel of the risen Lord

- They remained steadfast in the face of imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom
- They sincerely believed it!
- Paul the Apostle believed their testimony to be true

1 Corinthians 15:10–11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was* with me. ¹¹ Therefore, whether *it was* I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

- Paul knew the apostles personally and writes that they claimed that Jesus rose from the dead
- The sceptic may say, “*Well that’s the bible and I don’t believe the bible.*”

Consider: The New Testament is an ancient volume of literature containing twenty-seven separate books and letters

- Paul is a source independent of the original disciples
- The new testament was written in the first century but was not compiled into one book until about 400 A.D.

Sources that cannot be ignored are the Gospels themselves

- All four were written during the first century
- Each attests to the resurrection
- The Book of Acts is a sequel to the third Gospel – Luke

Meaning: four accounts were written within seventy years of Jesus, at the latest, reporting the disciples’ claims that Jesus rose from the dead

Other early church fathers who knew the original disciples also wrote that the disciples had been dramatically impacted by Jesus’ resurrection

Clement writes, *"Therefore, having received orders and complete certainty caused by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and believing in the Word of God, they went with the Holy Spirit's certainty, preaching the good news that the kingdom of God is about to come."*

- He considered it to be the church's central teaching
- He would have fellowshiped and received this doctrine personally from the original disciples, particularly Peter

Polycarp writes, *"Paul himself and the other apostles." Of them he says, "For they did not love the present age, but him who died for our benefit and for our sake was raised by God."*

- He mentions the resurrection five times in his letter to the church in Philippi
- He had been taught and appointed by the apostles

You need only read through the book of Acts to see how drastically the lives of the disciples had been changed after Jesus' resurrection

- Through Polycarp we know that Paul, other apostles, and other believers suffered for their faith
- He himself would follow their conviction as he faced martyrdom

The disciples' belief that they had seen the risen Jesus is one powerful historical fact in the case of the resurrection

- A sceptic can deny that Jesus rose
- However, you cannot deny that they witnessed something that changed their lives forever

The Third Fact

The Church Persecutor Paul Was Suddenly Changed

Galatians 1:11–12 (NKJV)

¹¹ But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught *it*, but *it came* through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

- A member of the Sanhedrin Council – a Pharisee
- Number one persecutor of the early church
- Present at the stoning of Stephen – **Acts 7**
- His life was drastically changed on the road to Damascus – **Acts 9**
- He became one of the church's influential messengers
- He writes of his conversion to the church in Corinth, Philippi and Galatia

A sceptic may argue that many people's lives change because they hear a message of a particular religion or belief

- However, Paul claimed to have seen the risen Jesus

No other religious belief is based primarily on the founder being raised from the dead

- Let alone provided evidence

The Forth Fact

The Skeptic James, Brother of Jesus Was Suddenly Changed

The Gospels report that Jesus had at least four brothers

- James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon
- Plus unnamed sisters

Matthew 13:55–56 (NKJV)

⁵⁵ Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? ⁵⁶ And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?"

- James appears to have become a pious Jewish believer
- Paul commends him in his letter to the Galatians
- He is referenced as a leader of the Jerusalem council
– Acts 15

He was originally a skeptic of Jesus' claims

John 7:5 (NKJV)

⁵ For even His brothers did not believe in Him.

- His family regularly watched Him from a distance
- They thought He was out of His mind – Mark 3:21

James, the brother of Jesus became a convert to Christianity because he had personally seen the risen Savior

1 Corinthians 15:7 (NKJV)

⁷ After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

Not only did James convert to Christianity, his beliefs were so strong that he also died a martyr

- This is attested to through early first century, Christian and non-Christian historians, Josephus, Hegesippus, and Clement

The Fifth Fact

The Tomb Was Empty

Luke 24:1–3 (NKJV)

Now on the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain *other women* with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. ² But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. ³ Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

- Jesus was publicly executed in Jerusalem

His resurrection had to be witnessed in the same area or Christianity never would have gotten off the ground

Jesus' Enemies Never Attested the Resurrection

The only way Jewish and Roman Enemies of Jesus could have silenced this claim was to have produced a dead body and put it on public display

- There is no historical account of that happening

In fact, they support that the tomb was empty

- They never denied it
- In fact they accused His disciples of stealing the body
- There would have been no need for this if the tomb had not been empty

The Testimony of Women

- Women were the primary witnesses
- All four Gospels agree
- Male witnesses only appear later in two of the Gospels

In both Jewish and Roman culture women were lowly esteemed and their testimony was regarded questionable

- Given the same regard as a robber
- In fact even the disciples questioned their testimony
 - **Luke 24:11**
 - They called it nonsense or idle talk

The writers of the Gospels never would have changed the narrative to be that of women because it would be perceived as less credible

Conclusion:

- Shortly after Jesus' death, His disciples believed that they saw Him risen from the dead
- He appeared to individuals among them
- He also appeared to groups
- Two of those who believed Jesus was a false prophet later believed that He had appeared to them
- Paul the persecutor
- James the skeptic
- They both became Christians and were martyred
- Finally, the empty tomb

If the tomb was empty because Jesus rose from the dead, then God exists, and eternal life is both possible and available

1 Corinthians 15:20–22 (NKJV)

²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.