

Why the Resurrection of Jesus Is an Indisputable Fact

Imagine that a murder happened in broad daylight on a busy street corner of your city, and more than 500 people witnessed it. Some of them may have taken cell phone videos or photos of the crime. Then all these witnesses appeared in a courtroom, stood on the witness stand, swore in front of a judge that they would tell the truth, and then testified that they knew who the murderer was.

Any jury would find that criminal guilty because of the overwhelming evidence. They had no doubts about who fired the gun because too many people saw it. And that's why the resurrection of Jesus is a fact – even though it's an astounding miracle that defies the normal rules of science.

When Luke wrote about the witnesses who saw Jesus' resurrection, he said, "To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3, NASB). Luke had no doubts about the fact that Jesus had been raised from the dead. He was convinced because the evidence was concrete.

The apostle Paul also spoke of these reliable witnesses. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 that Jesus "was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also" (NASB).

Of course, for centuries skeptics have tried to disprove the

resurrection by concocting various conspiracy theories. They have claimed, for example, (1) that Jesus' followers went to the wrong tomb to find His body; (2) that the early disciples experienced a "group hallucination"; (3) that Jesus had not really died but was rather just unconscious after the brutal abuse His body experienced (this is known as "the swoon theory"); or (4) that Jesus' body was stolen and never found. None of these theories is plausible.

Consider, for example, that in 2,000 years no one ever produced the "stolen body" of Jesus! As for the "swoon theory," it is laughable to think that Jesus could have survived after a soldier thrust his spear into His side and pierced His heart. That kind of medical recovery would be impossible today, even with modern medical technology.

Journalist Lee Strobel, who actually tried to disprove the claims of Christianity by researching ancient documents, became a Christian in 1981 after he came face to face with the overwhelming evidence of the resurrection. He wrote many books including his most popular, *The Case for Christ*. He says: "I became a Christian because the evidence was so compelling that Jesus really is the one-and-only Son of God who proved his divinity by rising from the dead. That meant following him was the most rational and logical step I could possibly take."

Strobel said of the "hallucination" theory: "I went to a psychologist friend and said if 500 people claimed to see Jesus after he died, it was just a hallucination. He said hallucinations are an individual event. If 500 people have the same hallucination, that's a bigger miracle than the resurrection."

For centuries, scholars and even criminal lawyers who have studied the evidence have gone on record to say that the resurrection of Jesus is a fact.

Sir Edward Clark, who served as a solicitor general in the

Victorian era in England, wrote: "As a lawyer, I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the events of the first Easter day. To me the evidence is conclusive, and over and over again in the High Court I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling. ... The gospel evidence for the resurrection is of this class, and as a lawyer I accept it unreservedly as a testimony of truthful men to facts they were able to substantiate."

There are mountains of evidence for us to ponder when we consider the resurrection. The huge stone on Jesus' tomb was miraculously moved (it probably weighed between one and two tons); the Roman seal on the grave was broken; Jesus' graveclothes were left behind; and the Roman guards disappeared. Witnesses heard Jesus talk after He was raised, and some of them, like the apostle Thomas, touched His nail scars.

But perhaps the greatest evidence of Jesus' resurrection is not that hundreds of people in the first century saw Him, but that they were willing to be jailed, stoned, thrown into arenas with savage animals, or burned alive because they would not renounce their belief in Jesus Christ. Almost all of the early disciples became martyrs.

✖ There are many religions in the world, but Christianity is the only religion whose founder was raised from the dead. Confucius started Confucianism, but he died in 479 B.C. Buddha started Buddhism, but he died somewhere around 483 B.C. Muhammad started the Islamic faith, but he died in A.D. 632. Joseph Smith started the Mormon religion, but he died in 1844.

In the case of Christianity, Jesus Christ actually predicted before His death that He would be crucified, killed, buried and then raised to life. And that's exactly what happened. Never underestimate the power of the resurrection of Jesus. Never doubt that He walked out of that tomb alive. Happy

Resurrection Day! {eoa}

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