

Evidence Of Christ's Resurrection

1 Cor. 15:1-8

1. Introduction

- The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation stone of the faith
- Christianity and Christ's deity rest on the truth of His Resurrection
- Paul emphasizes Christ's Resurrection in **1 Cor. 15:14**, "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith."
- Paul's answer to those who doubted Christ's bodily Resurrection
- **1 Cor. 15:13**, "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised."
- He rested his case on these words
- Without the Resurrection, Christianity has no objective validity or reality
- Martyrs in 1st/2nd centuries died because of the reality of the resurrection
- Nationals and missionaries died as martyrs in the past, and still today
- Frank Morison, a British lawyer, sought to expose the Resurrection as a fraud in the 1930's
 - Persuaded against his will that the bodily resurrection was a fact
 - He wrote the book "Who Moved the Stone?"
- William Lane Craig, Christian Apologist
 - "Without the belief in the resurrection the Christian faith could not have come into being. The disciples would have remained crushed and defeated men. Even had they continued to remember Jesus as their beloved teacher, His crucifixion would have forever silenced any hope of His being the Messiah. The cross would have remained the sad and shameful end of His career. The origin of Christianity therefore hinges on the belief of the early disciples that God had raised Jesus from the dead."
- Christ's resurrection is the heart of Christianity
 - Judaism – Jesus died but did not rise
 - Islam – Jesus did not die
 - Christianity – Jesus died **and** rose again
- What evidence do we have for Christ's Resurrection?
 - A. Some facts to consider
 - a. Prophecies
 - b. Pertinent data
 - B. Credibility of historical records
 - a. Scripture
 - b. Extra-biblical sources
 - C. Evidence of:
 - a. Death of Christ
 - b. Burial of Christ
 - c. Resurrection of Christ
 - D. The Empty Tomb
 - E. Appearance of Christ to Eyewitnesses
 - F. Significance of His Resurrection

2. Some Facts To Consider

2.1 Prophecies To Be Considered

- The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ is foretold
- 500 of the 1000 prophecies in the Bible have been fulfilled
- 109 fulfilled in Christ's First Coming

2.1.1 Death Foretold in The OT

- **Ps. 22:16**, " ... they have pierced my hands and feet." -> **John 20:25**
- **Ps. 22:18**, " ... for my clothing they cast lots." -> **Matt. 27:35**

2.1.2 Resurrection Foretold in The OT

- Foretold in **Ps. 16:10**, "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption."
- Quoted in **Acts 2:25-32**, " ... he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. ... This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses."
 - See also **Acts 13:30-37; 17:2-3**
 - Both Peter and Paul refer to David in the OT
- He is risen – **Matt. 28:6; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:46**
 - The Messiah was to die – **Ps. 22; Is. 53**
- The Messiah was to reign from Jerusalem
 - **Is. 9:6**, " ...government will be upon His shoulder ..."
 - **Is. 61:1-2**, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;"
 - **Dan. 2:44**, " ... and it shall stand forever."
 - **Zech 13:1**, refers to the kingdom of the Messiah
- The Messiah must be raised from the dead to reign forever
 - Therefore His Resurrection

2.1.3 Foretold By Christ Himself

- Death, burial, resurrection was prophesied by Christ Himself (7 times):
 - **Matt. 12:39-40**, "... and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."
 - **Matt. 16:21; 17:9, 22-23; Mark 8:31; 9:9-10, 31**
 - **Luke 9:22-27; 11:29-30; John 2:18-22; 10:18**
- Christ's credibility rests on the fulfillment of His prophecy
 - His "Truth test"
 - His Resurrection is the foundation of the Christian faith

2.2 Pertinent Data to Be Considered

2.2.1 The Christian (Sun)Day is a fact

- Sunday (the first day of the week) is the day of worship for Christians
- Shifted from the Jewish Sabbath, the seventh day of the week
- Traced back to 32 A.D.
- **Acts 20:7**, “On the first day of the week we came together,”
- Desire to celebrate the Resurrection (Jews were the first Christians)
- This was a very significant shift

2.2.2 Christian Scripture – The New Testament – does exist

- Independent testimonies to the fact of the Resurrection
- Three eyewitnesses (John, Peter, Matthew) wrote NT books
- **Luke 1:1-4**, “ ... as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses ... ”
- Luke’s gospel written by a historian who traveled with Paul, **2 Tim. 4:11**
- The Resurrection was well known and accepted without question by the readers of Paul’s letters
- The NT books attest to 1) the empty tomb, and 2) the appearances of Jesus Christ following His burial

2.2.3 The existence and growth of the Christian church is a fact

- The church is worldwide
- Church history can be traced back to Palestine in 32 A.D.
- First called Christians in the city of Antioch
- Acts of the Apostles relate how Jesus and His Resurrection stirred whole communities
 - **Acts 2:41**, 3,000 souls added through the power of Peter’s preaching
 - **Acts 17:4,6**, Paul persuaded many, turning the world upside down
 - **Acts 17:11**, Paul in Berea
 - **Acts 17:16**, Paul in Athens, reasoned with Jews and Gentiles
- The Resurrection – basis for their teaching, preaching, living, and dying

2.2.4 Transformed Lives

- Transformed lives of His brothers, His disciples, His followers
 - Peter’s preaching in **Acts 2**
 - Paul’s preaching in **Acts 13**
 - Paul’s testimony before King Agrippa in **Acts 26**
 - Changed life of James, Jesus’ brother
 - Ten disciples died for their faith
- Transformed lives throughout history
 - Early church fathers
 - Numerous converts’ lives changed
 - Skeptics swayed by the evidence – Morison, McDowell, Strobel, etc.

3. Credibility of Historical Records

3.1 What Do the Skeptics Say?

- Gospels were written 40-70 years after the event
- The Gospels contain biased reporting
- The Resurrection should not be considered a literal event
- Islamic Koran – Jesus did not die on the cross, two theories proposed
 - Jesus swooned on the cross and revived in the coolness of the tomb
 - Someone took the place of Jesus on the cross
- Alleged errors in the transmission of the books of the OT and NT
- Moses did not know how to write
- Hittite people never existed
- Sodom and Gomorrah never existed

3.2 Reliability of OT Books

- Half of more than 1000 prophecies in the Bible already fulfilled
- Archaeological finds of the 20th century
 - Dead Sea scrolls found in Qumran in Israel in 1948
 - 40,000 scroll fragments (complete and partial) found in 11 caves
 - Includes all books of OT except Esther
 - Accuracy of transmission of the scroll of Isaiah confirmed
 - Ebla tablets found in 1974 in Syria confirm many OT places, events
 - 17,000+ tablets unearthed
 - Writing confirmed 1000 years before time of Moses
 - More than 5,000 cities, towns named
 - Existence of five city of the plains (Sodom, Gomorrah, etc.) named

3.3 Reliability of NT Books

- Important questions:
 - How close in time are the copies to the original?
 - How many manuscripts do we have?
- Earliest NT documents go back to 125 AD (Gospel of John segment)
- 25,000 NT manuscripts in original Greek, Latin and other translations
- Accuracy of Luke the historian (Luke, Acts) – **Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3**
 - 32 countries, 54 cities, 9 islands
 - Numerous political titles, many not recognized
 - e.g. “Politarch” in Thessalonica confirmed by 35 inscriptions
- More than 100 Messianic prophecies fulfilled
- Documents by non-Christian ancient sources confirm accuracy
 - Josephus, Jewish historian
 - Tacitus, Roman historian
 - Jewish Talmud
- Writings of early church fathers confirm accuracy of Scripture
 - Written in 1st to 3rd centuries A.D.

4. Evidence of Jesus' Death, Burial, Resurrection

4.1 Evidence of Jesus' Death

- His crucifixion recorded in all four Gospels
- Documented by non-Christian ancient sources
 - Josephus, 1st century Jewish historian, "When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him to be crucified ..."
 - Tacitus, early 2nd century Roman historian, "Nero fastened the guilt [of the burning of Rome] and inflicted the most exquisite torture ... Christus, ... , suffered the extreme penalty [i.e. crucifixion] ... "
 - Lucian, mid 2nd century Greek historian
 - Mara bar Serapion, 2nd to 3rd century writing to his son from prison
- Death by crucifixion described by Cicero in 1st century B. C.
- Evidence for His death
 - Flogged and wore a crown of thorns – lead to death many times
 - Too weak to carry the cross
 - Did not use a painkiller, **Mark 15:23**
 - Heavy loss of blood, **Mark 15:25,33,37**
 - Legs not broken, **John 19:33**
 - Side pierced, **John 19:34**
 - Jewish authorities did not want bodies on the cross on the Sabbath
 - Bound in 50+ lbs. of spices, **John 19:39**
- Journal of American Medical Society, March 1986
 - "Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to His side was inflicted ... "
- Even skeptics admit that his death was inevitable

4.2 Evidence of Jesus' Burial

- Joseph of Arimathea requested body for burial from Pilate, **John 19:38**
 - A wealthy member of the Jewish Sanhedrin Council
 - To be buried in a tomb that Joseph owned
- Pilate asked for assurance before releasing body
- Pilate hated the Sanhedrin
- A very plausible story
- Joseph and Nicodemus (also Sanhedrin) buried Jesus
- Wrapped body in 50+ lbs. of spices
- Did not expect a resurrection
- Tomb hewn out of rock
- Stone officially sealed
- Guards placed around the tomb (in which no one had been laid)
- Jewish authorities remembered Christ's prediction of His resurrection
 - Did not want anyone to steal his body

4.3 Evidence of Jesus' Resurrection

- Documented by ancient sources:
 - Gospel writers
 - Early church fathers
 - Non-Christian sources

4.3.1 Jesus' Appearances to Disciples

- A number of eyewitnesses attested to seeing the resurrected Jesus shortly after His crucifixion
- Twelve appearances recorded in the NT
- Reports of appearances to friends
 - Clement, a disciple of Peter in Rome, wrote to the church of Corinth in ~ 95 A.D. – The disciples had been “fully assured by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ” and thus preached the good news
 - Josephus, 1st century historian, wrote that the disciples “reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive.”
- Seven ancient sources attest to the disciples' willingness to suffer and even die for their belief in what they were claiming
 - Luke, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, Dionysius, Tertullian, Origin
 - The disciples believed they had experienced a post resurrection appearance of Jesus
 - They did not suffer for a “known lie”
- Critical scholars today do not believe that Jesus' disciples were lying

4.3.2 Jesus' Appearance to Paul (a foe)

- Paul, Jewish leader, persecutor of the church
- Recorded in **Acts 9**
- **1 Cor. 15:8-10; Gal. 1:12-16; Phil 3:6-7**
- Oral tradition of Paul, **Gal. 1:22-23**
- Paul' conversion documented by eyewitnesses
- Paul willing to suffer and die for his conviction reported by seven ancient sources – Paul, Luke, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Dionysius, Tertullian, Origin

4.3.3 Jesus' Appearance to James (a foe)

- James, the unbelieving brother of Jesus
- **Mark 6:3-4**, “Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? ... So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.’”
- **John 7:5**, “For even His brothers did not believe in Him.”
- Jesus' mother entrusted to another disciple

- **John 19:26-27**, “When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold your son!’”
- **1 Cor. 15:7**, “After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.”
- James became a leader in Jerusalem church
 - **Acts 15:13**, “And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, “Men *and* brethren, listen to me:”
 - **Acts 21:18**, “On the following *day* Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.”
 - **Gal. 2:12**, “for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles;”
- James wrote the Epistle of James
- Josephus reports the martyrdom of James

5. The Empty Tomb

- Events could be verified in Jerusalem by Jewish or Roman authorities
- Authorities could not produce His body
 - **Matt. 28:13**, “saying, ‘Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.’”
 - Justin (150 AD) and Tertullian (200 AD) report that the Jewish leaders were still claiming this later on
- Women were the first and primary witnesses, **John 20:1-2**
 - Not regarded as reliable witnesses in 1st century
 - An “inventor” would not make this up
- How to account for the empty tomb?

5.1 The disciples stole the body!

- The earliest explanation circulated – offset anticipated disciples’ story
- **Matt. 28:11-15**, chief priests and elders tried to bribe the soldiers to say that the disciples had stolen the body while they were asleep
- P.S. How did they know it was the disciples if they were asleep?
- This would make the disciples perpetrators of a deliberate lie
- How could a few disciples pull this off without telling the others?
- What motivation did the Disciples have?
 - Why would they want to do this?
 - Where were the guards?
 - What about the grave clothes?
 - How did they move the stone?
- Every Apostle faced the test of torture
- All but John were martyred for their teachings
- People die for what they believe to be true, even though it may be false
- People do NOT die for what they know is a lie

5.2 The authorities, Jewish or Roman, moved the body

- What would the Romans gain by moving the body? They put guards there

- These authorities were silent on this issue in the face of the Apostles' bold preaching in Jerusalem about the Resurrection
- The authorities arrested, beat and threatened Peter and John, **Acts 4:1-3**
- They could have paraded His body (if they had it) through the streets of Jerusalem

5.3 The Wrong Tomb

- The distraught women, overcome with grief, missed their way in the dimness of the morning
- They imagined Christ had risen because the tomb was empty
- Why did the high priests and other enemies not go to the right tomb and produce the body?
- Note the bribe to the soldiers, **Matt. 28:11-15**
- Joseph of Arimathea, owner of the tomb, could have solved the problem
- This was a private burial ground, not that many tombs around

5.4 The swoon theory

- Christ actually passed out from exhaustion, pain, and loss of blood
- He revived when laid in the coolness of the tomb
- He came out of the tomb and appeared to His disciples, who mistakenly thought He had risen from the dead
- First proposed in the late 1700's
- He was pierced in His side
- He was wrapped in graveyard clothes
- He could not have slipped past the guards
- He could not have rolled away the stone
- He could not have walked on pierced feet
- Jesus Himself would have been involved in flagrant lies

5.5 The hallucination theory

- All were only supposed appearances
 - People had hallucinations
- Problems with this theory
 - Christ appeared to large groups of people at once
 - Hallucinations are linked to individuals
 - Occur to people expecting to see something
 - Christ's followers were caused to believe against their will
 - Those who hallucinate do not become moral heroes
 - What about the Ascension?

5.6 The tomb was empty!

- The only adequate explanation
- **2 Pet. 1:16**, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty."
- William Lane Craig, Christian Apologist

- “When therefore the disciples began to preach the resurrection in Jerusalem and people responded, and when religious authorities stood helplessly by, the tomb must have been empty. The simple fact that the Christian fellowship, founded on belief in Jesus’ resurrection, came into existence and flourished in the very city where he was executed and buried is powerful evidence for the historicity of the empty tomb.”
- With other religions, the tomb becomes a shrine of worship
- With Christ, the empty tomb is a place where Christians rejoice!

6. The Appearances of Christ to Eyewitnesses

6.1 Introduction

- Ten (twelve counting two related private meetings with Peter and James) distinct recorded appearances of the risen Christ
- His Resurrection was physical, not spiritual
 - Those to whom He appeared, saw, heard, and touched Him, but some also ate with Him
- From the morning of His resurrection to His ascension forty days later,

Acts 1:3

 - Time, place and people varied
- Lies or legends cannot explain the empty tomb
- We cannot dismiss the appearances of Christ
- Those who saw Christ were not hallucinating, they were credible eyewitnesses
- Christ appeared to different people:
 - Peter and James as individuals
 - Disciples as a group
 - 500 assembled believers
 - Two disciples on the road to Emmaus
- Christ appeared in different places:
 - In the garden near the tomb
 - In the Upper Room
 - On the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus
 - In Galilee
- **1 Cor. 15:5-8**, more than half of the 500 still alive
- **John 20:27-28**, “Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.’ And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God.’”
- Christ stopped appearing abruptly after 40 days
- **Acts 1:9**, “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”

6.2 The Specific Appearances of Christ

1. Mary Magdalene at the tomb, **John 20:1-2**. She had gone to anoint His body with the other women
2. The other women at the tomb (Mary the mother of James, Salome), **Matt. 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-11**
3. Peter at the tomb in private, **1 Cor. 15:5, Mark 16:7, Luke 24:34**
4. Two disciples on the way to Emmaus, **Luke 24:13-35; Mark 16:12-13**
5. Ten disciples in Jerusalem, Jesus walked through the walls, showed them the scars, and ate with them, **Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23**
6. Eleven disciples (w/ Thomas) on the following Sunday, **John 20:26-31**
7. The seven at the Sea of Tiberias fishing. Jesus instructs the disciples to throw their nets on the right side of the boat to catch fish. **John 21:1-14**
8. A second appearance to Peter, Jesus asks Peter 3 times “Do you love Me?” Jesus instructs Peter to “Follow Me.” Jesus addresses Peter’s concern about John, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?” **John 21:15-22**
9. Great Commission appearance, **Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-18**
10. 500 disciples (and James), **1 Cor. 15:6-7**
11. Special appearance to James, who became leader in the Jerusalem church, **1 Cor. 15:7, Acts 15:13**
12. At the Ascension, **Acts 1:6-9**
13. [Jesus appearance to Paul, **1 Cor. 15:8; Acts 9:1-9**]

6.3 Witnesses Persuaded Against Their Wills and Unexpectedly

- Mary came to the tomb to anoint the Lord’s dead body
- She mistook Him for the gardener, did not expect to find Him risen from the dead
- When the other disciples heard, they did not believe – story seemed an idle tale
- Jesus’ appearance to the disciples frightened them – thought He was a ghost
- **Luke 24:39**, “Touch Me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”
- Jesus was hungry and they gave Him a piece of fish, ghosts don’t eat
- Jesus invited the doubting Thomas to examine the evidence of His hands and His side
- **John 20:28**, “My Lord and my God.”
- Peter was a changed man, public denial 3 times -> sermon at Pentecost in which he preached the resurrection
- The two disciples on the road to Emmaus were not expecting to see the risen Lord

6.4 Contemporary Truth

- If Christ rose from the dead, He is alive today
- Millions bear testimony to the fact that Jesus has revolutionized their lives

- **Ps. 34:8**, “Taste and see that the Lord is good!”
- Without the resurrection of Christ, there is no Gospel,
 - **1 Cor. 15:14**, “If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.”
- The evidence for Christ’ resurrection is overwhelming
- In a court of law, the evidence passes the test of “beyond any reasonable doubt”

7. Significance of His Resurrection

7.1 Immediate Results

- Disciples, the faithful women, Jesus’ brothers were competent witnesses
- We see an utter change in their demeanor immediately following the Resurrection
- They became bold in their proclamation of the Gospel
- Pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost followed
- Peter’s sermon after the Ascension
 - **Acts 2:32-33**, “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.”
 - **Acts 2:41**, “ ... and there were added that day about 3,000 souls.”
- Founding of the Christian church followed
- Thrown into prison for preaching Christ crucified and risen again
- Most of the converts after the Ascension were Jews
- Change in the day of worship followed the resurrection
- Gentile brothers and sisters also worshipped on Sunday
- Paul and others took communion on Sunday
 - **Acts 20:7**, “Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ... “

7.2 Significance of His Resurrection

1. Proof of Christ’s person
2. Essential to our salvation, **Rom. 4:25**
3. Essential to Christ’s present work of:
 - Intercession (**Heb. 7:25**)
 - Advocacy (**1 John 2:1**)
 - Preparing a place for us (**John 14:2-3**)
4. Essential to His future work of the resurrection of humanity, His judgments, and His reign on David’s throne (**1 Cor. 15:20**)
5. Evidence of the inspiration of Scripture (fulfillment of prophecy)
6. Start of the Great Commission (**Matt. 28:19**)

7.3 Today’s Significance

- Jesus Christ’s life, death, and resurrection assure us:

- His purpose is to “rescue us” from sin
- His power will give us “eternal life”
- His suffering demonstrates the extent of His love for us
- His resurrection clinches the evidence of who He is – The Son of God

7.4 Jesus Did Arise From The Dead

- All other theories fail to explain the facts
- Key historical facts
 - Changed day of worship to Sunday
 - Jewish religious leaders did not refute the fact of His resurrection
 - New church grew rapidly, starting in Jerusalem, where the resurrection occurred
 - Conversion of James and Paul
- The empty tomb is a monument to Christ’s victory over death

7.5 Implications of His Resurrection

- Jesus spoke the truth about Himself
 - **John 11:25**, ‘Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.”
- Eternal life is through Christ alone
 - **John 14:6**, ‘Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”
- Jesus’ tomb is empty
 - Tombs of other religious leaders are occupied
- We have victory over death
 - **1 Cor. 15:54**, “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

7.6 Summary Observations on His Resurrection

- Testimony of history
 - Historical (Arnold, Maier)
 - Literary (C.S. Lewis)
 - Legal (Greenleaf, Morison)
- Resurrection foretold
 - By Christ Himself, **Matt. 16:21**; **Mark 8:31**
- Basis of Christianity
 - Paul in **1 Cor. 15:13-17**
- Intelligent faith
 - **John 8:82**, “You shall know the truth ...”
- Historical criteria
 - **Acts 1:3**, “many convincing proofs”