

Evidence of Christ's Resurrection

Introduction

All the claims that the Bible makes about Jesus are either true or false. The credibility of the Christian faith depends upon whether or not Jesus actually came out of the grave as he claimed he would. If Christ did not rise from the dead, the entire Christian faith is discredited, the Bible is false, and those who follow Jesus as a religious leader are fools (1 Corinthians 15:17-19). However, if the resurrection is true, then Jesus is Lord and all of the claims about Him in the Bible are absolutely true.

In this study, we will examine four witnesses for cross examination. It is your task to be a jury member and listen to the testimony presented. Ultimately, you must decide for yourself if there is sufficient reason to believe the resurrection claim based upon the evidence in existence.

I. Witness #1: The remarkable change in the life of Christ's disciples

A. Luke 24:10-12

1. Did the first report of the resurrection of Christ seem like foolishness to Christ's friends? _____
2. Why do you think they reacted in this way?

B. John 20:24-29

1. Did his followers change their attitudes shortly? _____ Why?

C. Acts 2:32; 4:33; 10:40-42

1. Did this resurrection claim become the main theme of his followers public teaching? _____
2. NOTE: they went from being sceptics to believers and then to publicly proclaiming this fantastic claim in a period of only 40 short days or so.
3. What ulterior motive might they have for doing this?

D. Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-33; 40-42

1. Were these men willing to suffer verbal and physical punishment for their testimony about this resurrection claim? _____
2. What attitude did they have about this opposition to their message (4:20; 5:41-42)? _____
3. Would normal men go against this type of opposition if they knew they were telling a lie? _____

E. Acts 12:1-2; 8:1-4

1. Did these men lose their lives because of their conviction about Jesus and the claim that he rose from the dead? _____
2. How many people do you think would give up their lives for something they knew was false? _____

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- F. The followers and personal friends of Jesus lost their businesses, their reputations, some lost their families, their credibility, their personal well-being, and even their lives for their testimony that they ate and drank with Jesus after he rose from the dead. Other than the resurrection itself, can you think of another *reasonable* explanation for why they would make this claim? _____

II. Witness #2: The changed life of Saul of Tarsus

A. Acts 7:54 - 8:3

1. Was Saul of Tarsus persecuting people who were followers of Jesus? _____
2. Did he believe in the resurrection of Christ at this time? _____

B. Acts 9:1-9; 17-24

1. What event happened to Saul? _____
2. In verse 20, did Saul immediately begin going to the synagogues and proclaiming that Jesus really was the Christ? _____
3. From verses 23-24, did the Jews try to kill him because of his testimony? _____

C. Acts 22:1-22

1. Did Paul repeat his conversion story to this crowd of Jews? _____
2. What reaction did the crowd have toward him? _____

D. Galatians 1:11-24

1. Saul became the apostle Paul (Acts 13:9) and eventually wrote 13 of the New Testament books.
2. Did people claim that "He who once tried to destroy the faith was now preaching the faith?" _____

E. Acts 17:30-31

1. Did Paul claim that Christ had been raised from the dead and that the resurrection was evidence of a coming judgment? _____
2. Did some think that he was strange for teaching this doctrine (32-34)? _____

F. Who converted Paul and convinced him that Christ rose from the dead?

1. Do you think that the Christians who he was killing changed his mind? _____
2. Do you think that the Jews changed his mind and then tried to kill him? _____
3. Did Paul claim that Christ Himself convinced him? _____

G. Philippians 3:4-11

1. Did Paul give up a lot because of his belief in the resurrection of Christ? _____
2. From verses 7-11, what attitude did he have about this?
3. Other than the resurrection itself, what reasonable explanation can you think of that would cause an important, influential, intelligent man like Saul of Tarsus to change his beliefs and jeopardize his life and his freedom? _____

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III. Witness #3: The Jews could not produce a dead body

A. Acts 2:36-41; 4:1-2

1. Did the apostles preach the resurrection claim publicly? _____
2. If the Jews would have produced the dead body of Jesus, do you think the resurrection claim would have been discredited? _____

B. Acts 2:32; 10:40-42; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

1. Did the apostles claim that they ate with Jesus after the resurrection and that he was seen by over 500 people at one time? _____

C. Acts 1:9-11

1. What happened to the body of Jesus according to this verse? _____

D. NOTE: remember back to the first two witnesses. Some say the friends stole the body. But, if they stole the body, would they die for something they knew was really false and would Saul of Tarsus have changed his mind about the resurrection of Christ?

IV. Witness #4: The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost

A. John 16:5-13

1. Jesus is talking to his disciples. In verse 7, what did Jesus say MUST happen BEFORE the Holy Spirit would come? _____

B. Acts 1:1-11

1. Verse 2, to whom is Jesus talking? _____
2. Verses 5-8 what did Jesus say the apostles would receive? _____
3. Verse 9, what occurred in this verse? _____
4. Does this passage say that Jesus ascended back to heaven? _____
5. Is this what Jesus said must happen before the Holy Spirit could come (John 16:7)? _____

C. Acts 2:1-4

1. What occurred in this section? _____

D. Acts 2:31-33

1. Did Peter say that God promised to raise Jesus and then exalt him to his own right hand? _____
2. Did Peter say that what the crowd was seeing and hearing was evidence that God had accomplished what he promised? _____
3. In verse 36, what was Peter's conclusion? "*Jesus is both _____ and _____*"

E. Acts 2:36-41

1. What reaction did the crowd have to what they were seeing and hearing?
2. From verse 41, how many people responded to the teaching about Jesus and the resurrection? _____
3. Do you think that many people could have heard and seen something that was not there? _____

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V. Conclusion:

- A. The evidence for the resurrection of Christ is strong and logical. The disciples of Jesus were changed in a very short time and were willing to die for the claim that they ate and drank with Jesus after he rose from the dead.
- B. Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor of the Christian message, was changed rapidly and was willing to forfeit his inheritance as a Jew, his freedom, and even his life for the claim that he saw Jesus after the resurrection.
- C. The Jews, who do not believe in the resurrection of Christ to this very day, have yet to produce a simple dead corpse to discredit the resurrection claim.
- D. The Holy Spirit's appearance on Pentecost was evidence enough for over three thousand Jews to be convinced of the resurrection of Christ.
- E. Do you believe that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead as recorded in the Bible? _____

If you do, then here are the implications:

- 1. Jesus is the divine Son of God.
- 2. Sin is a reality. Unless people believe in Jesus, they will die in their sins and be lost for all eternity (John 8:24; Romans 6:23).
- 3. There is a judgment day coming and Jesus will be the judge (Acts 17:30-31; 2Corinthians 5:10).
- 4. The Bible is true because Jesus confirmed the Old Testament as true (Luke 24:44-47) and authored the New Testament (Hebrews 9:15).
- 5. Christianity is the one and only religion acceptable to God (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).