

DID JESUS REALLY RISE FROM THE DEAD?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a central teaching in Christianity today. To the disciples of Jesus, the resurrection was not just a doctrine, but also a reality. Can you imagine seeing someone you loved and knew well tortured to death in front of you? Then after witnessing his execution, he appears to you alive several times over a period of forty days. You talk to him, touch him and even eat with him. This would certainly have a profound effect upon your life! This is the case concerning Jesus and His disciples. There are those today who would have us believe that this is just a myth, and not a reality. Myths take centuries to develop; the Gospel, however, came into life at the same time and place as those who had both seen and heard Jesus before His crucifixion. The focal point of this study will be to examine the importance of the resurrection, doctrine concerning it, and some of the historical evidence to see if such a belief has any validity.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION AND ITS DOCTRINE

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is important to Christian belief because **(1)** Without it the Old Testament prophecy would not be fulfilled; **(2)** Without it we would have no forgiveness of our sins; and **(3)** If Jesus was not resurrected this would make Him a false prophet.

If Jesus had not risen from the dead the Old Testament prophecy would not have been fulfilled.

Psalm 16:10: "For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol; neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay."

Below we see the fulfillment of this prophecy in the New Testament:

Acts 13:33-37: "God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'Thou art My Son; today I have begotten Thee.' And as for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no more to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.' "Therefore, He also says in another Psalm, 'Thou wilt not allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.' For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers, and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay.

(The Apostle Paul is the one speaking in this passage. Peter refers to this Psalm in the same way Acts 2:27-37.)

If Jesus had not risen from the dead, we would have no forgiveness of our sins.

The next thing we read in verse 38 of this same passage (Acts Chapter 13) is: "*He whom God raised did not undergo decay. **Therefore**, let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.*"

Note the use of the word "**Therefore**"; Paul is saying that because Jesus rose from the dead we have forgiveness of sins! This is also confirmed in the following passage:

1 Corinthians 15:14-17: "if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover, we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and **if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.**"

When the Jews asked for a sign Jesus predicted He would rise from the dead. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, He would be a false prophet.

John 2:18-22: "The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, 'What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things? Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'' The Jews therefore said, 'It took forty- six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?' But He was speaking of the temple of His body. When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken."

There are some groups that deny that Jesus rose bodily from the grave. Rather they claim it was a "spiritual resurrection". One such group is the Jehovah Witnesses. They are also known as The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. The following are two quotes from them

Aid to Bible Understanding, 1971, pg.1395 **(PDF pg. 1395)** "Jesus appeared to his disciples on different occasions in various fleshly bodies, just as angels had appeared to men at ancient times. Like those angels, he had the power to construct and disintegrate those fleshly bodies at will, for the purpose of proving visibly that he had been resurrected."

Reasoning from the Scriptures, 1985, pg.334 **(PDF pg. 333)** "At his resurrection from the dead, Jesus was brought forth with a spirit body.". "Why did not others see him too? Because he was a spirit creature and when, as the angels had done in the past, he materialized fleshly bodies to make himself visible, he did so only in the presence of his disciples."

There are a couple of problems with these statements.

(1) First of all, Jesus did not appear "only in the presence of his disciples. "He also appeared to non-believers.

(2) The Bible teaches that Jesus rose from the dead in the same physical body in which he died.

(1) Jesus did not appear "only in the presence of his disciples". "He also appeared to non-believers." Paul was a hostile unbeliever before Jesus appeared to him. This can be seen in Acts 9:1-30. He is called Saul in the context there, but we see in Acts 13:9 and Acts 22:1-21 that Saul is indeed the same person who is later known as the Apostle Paul. This is after the forty-day period that Jesus appeared to the rest of the disciples.

(1a) In John 7:5 we are told that not even the brothers of Jesus believed in Him. James and Jude were sons of Mary and Joseph and were half brothers of Jesus since they had the same mother. Later both become believers. Although it cannot be shown as to exactly when they became believers it seems likely that it was after the resurrection. We have no reference to them being believers until after his resurrection. We see in 1 Corinthians 15:7 that Jesus appeared to James after he arose from the dead. As for reference to show they were the brothers of Jesus, the following verses should be read: Jude 1:1 and Mark 6:3. (Note "Jude" is short for "Judas" — See Greek word #2455 in the Strong's.)

(2) The Bible teaches that Jesus rose from the dead in the same physical body in which He died. John 2:18-22: "The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, 'What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things? 'Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

The Jews therefore said, 'It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?' But He was speaking of the temple of His body. When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken."

When Jesus made this statement, He had a physical body of flesh and bones. This is the temple or body that He said He would raise in three days. Since Jesus said He would raise this physical body, reason and logic tells us it was a physical body, not a spiritual body that was to be resurrected. As seen in Psalm 16:10, Acts 2:27-32, and 13:34-38, this body will not undergo decay. What is the purpose of preserving the body if it is not raised from the dead and being used? I have had some Jehovah Witnesses tell me that the body did not decay, but God destroyed it by gases. Of course, these Witnesses could offer no Biblical reference for such a view, but they had to rationalize it in some way to support this un-Biblical doctrine. Jesus took great pains to show that it was He Himself Who rose from the dead and not a spirit.

Let us consider the following Scripture. Luke 24:39-43: *"See My hands, and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they still could not believe it for joy and were marveling, He said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them."*

Everything Jesus offered them for evidence of his resurrection was of the physical nature. He spoke so they could hear and recognize His voice. Jesus showed His wounds from the crucifixion inviting them to touch Him.

In John 20:27 Jesus told Thomas to put his finger into the wounds in His hands and to put his hand into His side. Jesus purposely asked them for something to eat and ate fish in front of them. Jesus also ate and drank with others (Acts 10:41). Jesus declared that a spirit did not have a body of flesh and bones as He had. He did things like these on several occasions over a period of forty days (Acts 1:3). They watched Him bodily ascend into heaven (Acts 1:9).

Jesus never said anything to them that would indicate these "convincing proofs", as we are told in Acts 1:3, should be interpreted as a spiritual body. If this was merely one of several fleshly materialized bodies to make Himself visible as the Watchtower claims, then Jesus purposely deceived His disciples. The moral implications of this are contrary to the Jesus we read of in the Bible.

So, you see that the previous Watchtower statements are not Biblical. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ arose in the same exact body of flesh and bones in which He had lived and died. It is this same body in which He ascended into heaven. This is not only what the Bible teaches, but also the historical teaching of the church.

HISTORICAL NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCE OF EVIDENCE

Some uninformed people have tried to claim that Jesus never really existed. Others recognize He was indeed a real person in history but reject anything mentioned that is in nature miraculous. Modern historians rule out the resurrection because of their philosophical presuppositions, not because there is a lack of evidence. Because they believe that there is no such thing as a miracle, they rule out the resurrection on that basis alone. I believe it is wise to let the facts speak for themselves, even if it means we are proven wrong and forced to change our views.

As for those who in their presuppositions claim, "miracles do not happen", the question may be asked, "Where is the critic of Scripture who can without error explain everything that happens in the world today by a purely rational and naturalistic means?"

We will now examine some historical writings. We will show that certain events in the life and death of Jesus can be established as history without the use of the Bible.

The following is found in the ***Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*** listing for "Jesus Christ":

"Jesus...as he was known to his contemporaries was a Jew who appeared as a prophet, a teacher, and a sage in Palestine about AD 30. "THE HISTORICAL JESUS: The Christ- myth school of the early 20th century held that Jesus never lived but was invented as a peg on which to hang the myth of a dying and rising God. Yet the evidence for the historical existence of Jesus is good. "Non-Christian sources among Roman historians, TACITUS (Annals 15:44), records that the Christian movement began with Jesus, who was sentenced to death by Pontius Pilate."

In the book *The Historical Jesus* by Gary Habermas (pages 187-188) we find some information and a quote from Tacitus Annals 15.44 as mentioned above. **Cornelius Tacitus was a Roman historian.** He has been referred to as the "greatest historian" of ancient Rome. He lived 55-120 AD.

"Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus (*a variant spelling of Christ from Latin*) 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, and a most

mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of evil, but even in Rome"

From the previous sources we can learn that:

1. Jesus lived about 30 AD.
2. Jesus was sentenced to death by the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate.
3. During the reign of Tiberius,
4. His death ended the "superstition" for a short time
5. but it broke out again in Judaea where it originated,
6. then it spread to Rome.

Note that the reign of Tiberius was 14-37 AD. It should also be noted that Jesus was crucified at Jerusalem (Matthew 20:17-19, Luke 23:6-7). Jerusalem is in Judea — this is where Tacitus the Roman historian says "a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment again broke out" These correlates perfectly with Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection and the proclamation by His disciples.

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian who lived from 37-97 AD. He did not believe Jesus to be the Messiah (this can be attributed in Habermas' *The Historical Jesus* on page 192).

Vol. 3, Tertullian, a theologian around 193 AD. had the following to say about Josephus, Tertullian in Chapter 19 of *The Apology*:

"...their critic the Jew Josephus, the native vindicator of the ancient history of his people, who either authenticates or refutes the others." (Vol.3 PDF pg. 95)

The following quote is found in *The Works of Josephus*, Book 18, Chapter 3, number 3: "Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day." **(PDF pg. 684)**

Here is a non-Christian source of ancient literature that verifies Pilate had Jesus condemned to the cross and people believed they saw Jesus appear to them alive after the crucifixion. As Michael Green points out in McDowell's book *Evidence* on page 187: "Josephus was a Jew writing to please the Romans. This story would not have pleased them in the slightest. He hardly would have included it if it were not true."

Justin Martyr was a Christian writer who lived during 100-165 AD. The following two quotes are his statements:

"And that it was predicted that our Christ should heal all diseases and raise the dead, hear what was said. There are these words: 'At His coming the lame shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the stammerer shall be clear speaking: the blind shall see, and the lepers shall be cleansed; and the dead shall rise, and walk about.' And that He did those things, you can learn from the Acts of Pontius Pilate." **(Vol. 1 PDF pg. 144-145)**

"Jesus Christ stretched forth His hands, being crucified by the Jews speaking against Him, and denying that He was the Christ. And as the prophet spoke, they tormented Him, and set Him on the judgment-seat, and said, Judge us. And the expression, 'They pierced my hands and my feet,' was used in reference to the nails of the cross which were fixed in His hands and feet. And after He was crucified they cast lots upon His vesture, and they that crucified Him parted it among them. And that these things did happen, you can ascertain from the Acts of Pontius Pilate." (Vol. 1 PDF pg. 140-141)

These quotes can be found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume I, The First Apology of Justin*, Chapter XLVIII & XXXV. Justin here was appealing "the Acts of Pontius Pilate" to his readers. Justin apparently believed the critics could verify these things as actual events in this document. We can also see that Justin assumed his readers would know of the document he was referring to. It should be noted here that there is no known manuscript found, which contains the Acts of Pontius Pilate. Also, this should not be confused with later fabrications by the same name. It is not known who wrote the document that Justin references. Gary Habermas notes in his book, *The Historical Jesus*, (pages 215-217) that both Justin Martyr and Tertullian agree that this was an official document of Rome.

Darkness over the Land

The crucifixion of Jesus is marked by profound events, including an unexplained darkness that covered the land during the day. Several ancient historians and theologians provide accounts of this remarkable phenomenon. Below are some short quotes from notable figures that reflect on the darkness that descended during this pivotal moment.

From a scientific viewpoint this is impossible because there was no eclipse at that time. Just the same there are those who claim it did indeed happen

Luke 23:44-46 And it was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, the sun being obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit." And having said this, He breathed His last.
(See also Mark 15:33, Matthew 27:45)

Ancient Quotes and References

Phlegon "In the time of Tiberius Caesar, an eclipse of the sun occurred during the full moon." Reference: Phlegon of Tralles, as cited in the writings of Julius Africanus (Chronography)

Julius Africanus "The whole world was covered in darkness, and the day turned into night." Reference: Julius Africanus, "Chronography"

Origen "There was darkness over the whole land, as if creation mourned the death of its Creator." Reference: Origen, as referenced in later works regarding the crucifixion

Thallus "Thallus, in his history, noted the darkness as an unusual event during the crucifixion." Reference: Thallus, as cited by Julius Africanus

Tertullian "The sun's light was veiled, a sign from heaven, as the earth grieved for the Lord." Reference: Tertullian, "Apology"

How do people in ancient times become convinced that there was darkness everywhere if it never actually happened?

More references from people that actually knew one or more of the original disciples.

Ignatius, according to tradition was a pupil of the Apostle John. He is said to be the second bishop of Antioch after Peter and he lived between 50-115 AD. Ignatius also died a martyr for his faith and belief in the resurrection

The following is a quote by Ignatius, which is found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I

"Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was descended from David, and was also of Mary; who was truly begotten of God and of the Virgin, but not after the same manner. For indeed God and man are not the same. He truly assumed a body; for 'the Word was made flesh,' and lived upon earth without sin. For says He, 'Which of you convicteth me of sin?' He did in reality both eat and drink. He was crucified and died under Pontius Pilate. He really, and not merely in appearance, was crucified, and died, in the sight of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth. By those in heaven I mean such as are possessed of incorporeal natures; by those on earth, the Jews and Romans, and such persons as were present at that time when the Lord was crucified; and by those under the earth, the multitude that arose along with the Lord. For says the Scripture, 'Many bodies of the saints that slept arose,' their graves being opened. He descended, indeed, into Hades alone, but He arose accompanied by a multitude; and rent asunder that means of separation which had existed from the beginning of the world, and cast down its partition-wall. He also rose again in three days, the Father raising Him up; and after spending forty days with the apostles, He was received up to the Father, and 'sat down at His right hand, expecting

till His enemies are placed under His feet.' On the day of the preparation, then, at the third hour, He received the sentence from Pilate, the Father permitting that to happen; at the sixth hour He was crucified; at the ninth hour He gave up the ghost; and before sunset He was buried. During the Sabbath He continued under the earth in the tomb in which Joseph of Arimathea had laid Him. At the dawning of the Lord's day He arose from the dead."

Polycarp is also said to have been a disciple under Saint John. Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna and lived from 69-155 AD. He also died a martyr for his faith. This can be verified in *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, page 9A5; *Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia* (see "Polycarp"); and *American Peoples Encyclopedia*, Vol.15, page 1011. The following is a quote from Polycarp found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume I, Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James: "The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians", Chapter 2:

"Wherefore, girding up your loins," "serve the Lord in fear" and truth, as those who have forsaken the vain, empty talk and error of the multitude, and "believed in Him who raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and gave Him glory," and a throne at His right hand."
(Vol. 1 PDF pg. 24)

The fact that Ignatius and Polycarp wrote these things to others shows that this belief was no secret. This is important, considering the time frame when Ignatius and Polycarp lived. It is believed they personally knew the John who wrote the Gospel of John.

More quotes not from the Bible could be given providing more detail, but this should more than suffice. Without using the Bible, we have shown confirmation for the following: Jesus was a real person in history about 30 AD. Many people believed He was the Christ foretold about in Old Testament prophecy.

They claimed that Jesus healed lepers, blind, mute and even raised the dead. He was sentenced to death by the Roman Procurator Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius in Judea. This death was crucifixion in which they nailed His hands and feet to a cross. There was darkness from the sixth hour till the ninth hour, and there was an earthquake at the time of the death of Jesus. This did not end Christianity, but rather it started up in the very place where Jesus lived and died shortly after his death; from there it spread to Rome. Many people claimed that after three days Jesus arose from the dead and appeared to many over a period of forty days.

Most of our quotes were from people who lived during the 1st century. Later quotes referenced writings from 1st-century authors. It should be evident that what we read about concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus was no secret. Furthermore, these were actual events in history.

Even if one does not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ based on Biblical information, it cannot be denied that it is a matter of historical record — that many people in the 1st century, when Jesus lived and died, did for some reason believe Jesus rose from the dead.

The following is from the book titled *Did Jesus Rise From The Dead?* by **Gary R. Habermas** and Antony G.N.Flew, pages 19 and 20: "Some events are generally agreed to be facts by practically all critical scholars who deal with this topic today, whatever their school of thought or discipline. In other words, critical historians, philosophers, theologians, and scripture scholars who address this subject usually accept this factual basis. At least eleven events are considered to be knowable history by virtually all scholars, and a twelfth event is considered to be knowable history to many scholars.

(1) Jesus died due to the rigors of crucifixion and (2) was buried. (3) Jesus' death caused the disciples to despair and lose hope. (4) Although not as frequently recognized, many scholars hold that Jesus was buried in a tomb that was discovered to be empty just a few days later. "Critical scholars even agree that (5) at this time the disciples had real experiences that they believed were literal appearances of the risen Jesus. Because of these experiences, (6) the disciples were transformed from doubters who were afraid to identify themselves with Jesus to bold proclaimers of his death and Resurrection, even being willing to die for this belief. (7) This message was central in the early church preaching and (8) was especially proclaimed in Jerusalem, where Jesus died shortly before.

"As a result of this message, (9) the church was born and grew, (10) with Sunday as its primary day of worship. (11) James the brother of Jesus and a skeptic, was converted to the faith when he also believed he saw the resurrected Jesus. (12) A few years later Paul the persecutor of Christians was also converted by an experience that he, similarly, believed to be an appearance of the risen Jesus.

"These historical facts are crucial to a contemporary investigation of Jesus' Resurrection. Except for the empty tomb, virtually all critical scholars who deal with this issue agree that these are the minimal known historical facts regarding this event. Any conclusion concerning the historicity of the Resurrection should therefore properly account for this data. The pivotal fact, recognized by virtually all scholars, is the original experiences of the disciples. It is nearly always admitted that the disciples had actual experiences and that something really happened." (end quote)

The book I just quoted from is a debate between Flew and Habermas. Flew does not believe in the resurrection and Habermas does. I find it interesting that Flew did not challenge this statement quoted here. Why? Because these really are knowable facts of history.

In a court of law when the hostile witness agrees with the defense it is considered a fact. Imagine a murder trial. The prosecuting attorney says that David murdered Albert. The defense gets up and says David did indeed kill Albert, but it was an accident. Since both sides agree that David killed Albert, this would be considered a fact, and it would not be called into question. Since the actual events regarding Jesus' ministry, crucifixion and death are not disputed by those opposed to Christianity in that time frame when Jesus lived and died, the events themselves are considered fact.

From these known historical facts people have tried to come up with various explanations of what happened, to explain away the literal physical resurrection of Jesus. Yet, the account given by the eyewitnesses in the New Testament concerning the resurrection of Jesus is the only theory known that logically and accurately accounts for all twelve known historical facts concerning this event. Since these facts are established by critical and historical procedures, it is not logical reasoning for someone to reject the resurrection simply because they do not accept the inspiration of the Scriptures. These events can be shown in history outside of Scripture. If the resurrection of Jesus is not true then there has to be a reasonable explanation of what might have taken place based upon the known historical facts.

EYEWITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION

I would like to point out something to those who reject the New Testament because it claims to be the Word of God: I have already provided confirmation, in historical writings outside of the Bible, for many of the events surrounding the crucifixion. Yet there is much more confirmation for the historical accuracy of the New Testament through other ancient writings and archaeology. **In fact, the New Testament — the entire Bible for that matter — never has been proven historically wrong on any point.**

People generally disbelieve the Bible because it claims to be the Word of God and records miracles that took place in history. Since it has been proven accurate time and time again and has never been proven wrong, it is not logical to reject it merely because it records also what may be beyond certain philosophical presuppositions. Due to these facts, those who reject the Bible because it claims to be the Word of God should consider the idea that possibly the Bible is true - and it is their philosophy that is wrong.

A former Oxford lecturer, William Wand, stated this very well when he said, "there is no scholarly reason for rejecting possibilities before an investigation. An *a priori* dismissal cannot be allowed, even if we do not like the conclusion that is indicated by the facts. One must decide on the basis of the known evidence" (Pg. 59, *The Historical Jesus*, Habermas). And as Habermas points out in the same reference, "...conclusions that are drawn before and against the facts are both non-historical and non-scientific."

The conclusions in this case should be determined from what most critics would consider the minimal known historical facts that were previously listed.

The following names are people who were followers of Jesus and whom He visited after He was resurrected from the dead. He appeared to His original disciples — Simon Peter, James the son of Zebedee, John the brother of James, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot (Mark 3:16-18, John 20:24-31). Jesus also appeared to Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary the mother of James (Mark 16:1, Matthew 28:1-10). And Luke 24:13-34 tells us that Jesus also appeared to Cleopas, while Acts 1:16-26 reports that He appeared to Joseph and Matthias.

There are of course, repeated visitations; Jesus appeared to some of the same people more than once. At least seventeen different followers are mentioned by name as people whom Jesus visited after His resurrection. As mentioned earlier, Jesus also appeared to unbelievers — namely Paul, James and very likely Jude as well. This brings us to a total of twenty people, mentioned by name, who were eyewitnesses to the fact that Jesus was alive again after He was killed and buried. In any court of law, this would be a lot of eyewitnesses. Furthermore, those opposing Christianity in that era played the role to some extent of the prosecuting attorney. They could not disprove the testimony of these eyewitnesses, and they certainly had motive to try. Should a jury be satisfied by an opposing lawyer claiming that maybe all of these eyewitnesses did not see what they said they saw?

These are only the eyewitnesses we can identify by name, but consider what Paul said in the following passage

(1 Corinthians 15: 3-8):

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He

was buried, and that He 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 it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.”

Paul was saying that there were more than 500 eyewitnesses to Jesus’ resurrection, most of whom were still alive. Many scholars believe that Paul was citing an actual creed that pre-dated his letter to the Corinthians. If they wished, the Corinthians could question all of the eyewitnesses to see if what Paul was saying was true. So, if in fact, the eyewitnesses did not exist, this would have been a very foolish claim for Paul to make. Yet we have no evidence of anyone in that era refuting this claim.

Concerning the disciples, one must consider that they claimed to be eyewitnesses that had seen, heard, touched, and eaten with Jesus after He arose from the dead. We only have two possibilities here. Either they really believed this to be true — or they were lying. What motive would the disciples have had to lie? What would compel them to be willing to be persecuted and die violently for what they knew to be a lie? People might be more compelled to stick together if this happened in a group but they did not die together, but separately.

Unless otherwise stated, the following information concerning how the disciples died can be found in *Fox’s Book of Martyrs*, 1973, pages 1-5 **(PDF pg. 1-5)**

(For those interested, the names of the original twelve apostles are listed in Mark 3:16-19):

Peter was crucified in Rome. Peter was crucified upside-down at his own request, because he said he was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as the Lord.

Andrew, the brother of Peter, was crucified on an X-shaped cross.

James, the son of Zebedee, was beheaded in Jerusalem by sword (Acts 12:1-2).

Philip was scourged (flogged or whipped), thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified at Heliopolis in Phrygia, 54 AD.

Bartholomew was cruelly beaten at length, and then crucified in 52 AD.

John, the brother of James, was the only disciple who escaped a violent death (although the Romans once tried to boil him in oil). He was banished to the Isle of Patmos (Revelation 1:9).

Matthew was slain with a halberd (a type of battle-ax and pike mounted on a handle about six feet long) in 60 AD.

Thomas was thrust with a spear.

James the son of Alphaeus was beaten and stoned by the Jews; finally, his brains were dashed out with a fuller's club.

Simon the Zealot was crucified in 74 AD. Thaddaeus was martyred about 65 AD.

Judas, of course, killed himself before Jesus was resurrected (Matthew 27:3-5). Judas, one of the original twelve disciples, was replaced by Matthias (Acts 1:16-26). Matthias was stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded.

Paul was not part of the original twelve, but his words are recorded in the New Testament. He also should be mentioned, since he likewise was an eyewitness of the resurrected Jesus. Paul was executed by soldiers; they allowed him to pray, then he gave his neck to the sword.

The remarkable thing is that these men were killed separately, over a period of about thirty years, because of what they believed and taught. None of them ever recanted their story about the resurrection of Jesus Christ! What motive could they possibly have to die for what they knew to be a lie? On the contrary, it is because they knew the resurrection to be true that they were willing to give their lives!

There is an interesting contrast in history of another group of twelve men and their leader and how they stood up for what they had said was true. The men I am speaking of are the followers of Joseph Smith, who was the founder of the Mormon Church. Jesus willingly laid down his life (Acts 8:32-35, 1 Peter 2:23) while Joseph Smith died in a gunfight in which he was fighting for his life (*History of the Church Vol.6*, pgs.617-618 **(PDF pg. 2580)** *Vol.7*, pgs. 100-103 **(PDF pg. 1741-1742)**)

The following is a quote from Ezra Taft Benson, who is a former president of the Mormon Church (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p.89): "Six of the original Twelve Apostles selected by Joseph Smith were excommunicated. The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon left the Church. Three of Joseph Smith's counselors fell—one even helped plot his death."

Why is there such a contrast between the followers of Jesus, who saw Him after He rose from the dead, and the followers of Joseph Smith? I believe the difference is simple: one group was standing for what they knew to be true; the other group was standing for what they knew to be false.

This fact can be seen in the following quote by Brigham Young, a former “prophet” of the Mormon Church (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol.7, page 164 **(PDF pg. 172)** “Brigham Young, June 5, 1859 —Some of the witnesses* of the Book of Mormon, who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of God, were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel. One of the Quorum of twelve— a young man full of faith and good works, prayed, and the vision of his mind was opened, and the angel of God came and laid the plates before him, and he saw and handled them, and saw the angel, and conversed with him as he would with one of his friends; but after all this, he was left to doubt, and plunged into apostacy, and has continued to contend against this work.”

I find it interesting that these men were not sure if they saw an angel or not. In contrast, Paul and the disciples of Jesus never doubted that they saw Jesus after He was resurrected from the dead. They were even persecuted, and eventually killed, for this belief. Would you stand under persecution and even death for something that you were not thoroughly convinced was true? If you were to trust the testimony of a group of men, which group of testimonies would you consider more credible — those followers of Jesus, or the followers of Joseph Smith?

It is true; others in history have died for a lie. However, you will find they usually *considered* their cause to be the truth. The disciples believed the resurrection to be true because they saw the resurrected Jesus. In fact, the disciples saw Jesus, off and on, for a period of forty days (Acts 1:3). They talked with Him, they touched Him, and they ate with Him. They never doubted or denied their testimony to these facts. There seems to be no motive for their willingness to die for this testimony other than they really believed it to be true! This is much more than just believing in some sort of cause. Consider their own words:

Acts 5:30-32 (Peter's statement): "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."

2 Peter 1:16 (Peter's statement): "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty."

1 John 1:1-2 (John's statement): "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life, and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us."

Acts 4:33 (comment from Luke): "And with great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all."

CONSIDERING THE FACTS

1. Known historical fact

We have already shown that many of the events concerning Jesus' life and death are established as historical fact. The Bible has never been proven historically wrong. The reason people reject the Bible is because it records miracles as events in history. The event in this case is the resurrection of Jesus. There is circumstantial evidence for the resurrection, as well as eyewitnesses. Also, there has never been an explanation given using naturalistic means which accounts for all of the known historical facts.

2. Jesus was indeed a person in history who died on a cross.

The fact that Jesus was a man in history who was crucified was already covered. This is a matter of historical record. There are some who believe that Jesus lived through the crucifixion, and that when the disciples saw the resurrected Christ, they were really only seeing someone who hadn't died. A similar belief is found in the *Koran*, the sacred writings of Muslims. In the Holy *Quran* we read the following: Surah 4:157 — "*And because of their saying: 'We slew the **Messiah Jesus son of Mary**, Allah's messenger'—They slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of conjecture; they slew him not for certain...*"

(PDF pg. 30)

We have already established that Jesus was crucified and that this is a matter of historical fact. The next question is whether Jesus died because of crucifixion?

There is an article found in ***The Journal of American Medical Association***, Vol.255, No.11, March 21, 1986, pages 1455-1463. This article makes some interesting points and comments. The quotes below are from this article.

*"Jesus, apparently knowing that the time of his death was near, suffered great mental anguish, and as described by the physician Luke, his sweat became like blood (Luke 22:44). Although this is a very rare phenomenon, bloody sweat (hematidrosis or hemohidrosis) may occur in highly emotional states."*B2 The article then relates how the trials of Jesus went throughout the night. Jesus was forced to walk about 2-1/2 miles between the various trials. During this time, as we are told in Mark 14:65 that He was beaten with fists, spit upon, and slapped in the face. These events led up to the scourging. The article at this point states, *"These physical and emotional factors may have rendered Jesus particularly vulnerable to the adverse hemodynamic effects of the scourging". "the usual instrument was a short whip (flagrum or flagellum) with several single or braided leather thongs of variable lengths, in which small iron balls or sharp pieces of sheep bones were tied at intervals."* [This was] *"intended to weaken the victim just short of collapse or death."* *"the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin and subcutaneous tissues. Then as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh. Pain and blood loss generally set the stage for circulatory shock. The extent of the blood loss may well have determined how long the victim would survive on the cross."*

Later we are told that the soldiers put a crown of thorns upon His head. Then, with a staff made of some sort of reed, they began to beat Jesus on the head (Matthew 27:30). Jesus apparently was weakened enough due to this physical punishment that He could not carry the patibulum (the horizontal piece of the cross) 1/3 of a mile, so the soldiers made a man named Simon carry it (Luke 23:26). And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, which means "Place of a Skull", they drove spikes through His wrists and his feet (Matthew 27:33, John 20:25).

(The article states "*the ancients customarily considered the wrists to be part of the hand.*") Going by archaeological findings it is determined the spikes would have been, according to the article, "5-7 in. long with a square shaft 3/8 in. across".

"The major pathophysiologic effect by crucifixion, beyond the excruciating pain, was a marked interference with normal respiration, particularly exhalation." "Adequate exhalation required lifting of the body by pushing on the feet and by flexing the elbows and adducting the shoulders. However, this maneuver would place the entire weight of the body on the tarsals and would produce searing pain. Furthermore, flexion of the elbows would cause rotation of the wrist about the iron nails and cause fiery pain along the damaged median nerves. Lifting of the body would also painfully scrape the scourged back against the rough wooden stripes. Muscle cramps and paresthesias of the outstretched and uplifted arms would add to the discomfort. As a result, each respiratory effort would become agonizing and tiring and lead eventually to asphyxia."

We are also told that one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water (John 19:34).

The article continues,

"By custom, one of the Roman guards would pierce the body with a sword or lance. Traditionally, this had been considered a spear wound to the heart through the right side of the chest — a fatal wound probably taught to most Roman soldiers. The Shroud of Turin documents this form of injury." "Therefore, the water probably represented serious pleural and pericardial fluid, and would have preceded the flow of blood and been smaller in volume than the blood. Perhaps in the setting of hypovolemia and impending acute heart failure, pleural and pericardial effusions may have developed and would have added to the apparent water. The blood, in contrast, may have originated from the right ventricle or perhaps from a hemopericardium."

*"Thus it remains unsettled whether Jesus died of cardiac rupture or of cardiorespiratory failure. However, the important feature may be not how he died but rather whether he died. Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and the heart and thereby insured his death. Accordingly, **interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge.**"*
(end quote)

The article in *The Journal of American Medical Association* stops at this point, but the Gospels have a little more to add. Jesus was also wrapped in grave clothes with 100 pounds of spices (John 19:39) and placed in a tomb with a very large stone placed in front of it (Matthew 27:60).

Even without being beaten, scourged, and crucified, this would kill a man. Being wrapped up with the 100 pounds of spices would probably suffocate a person. Even if the person got out of that, how would they move a large stone uphill out of a ravine from the inside of the tomb? The average stone for this type of tomb has been estimated to weigh about one-and-a-half to two tons (*The Resurrection Factor*, pg. 54). Moving such a large stone would be remarkable for anyone, especially someone in critical condition.

3. Precautions taken concerning the grave.

In Matthew 27:63-66, the Jews, speaking to Pilate about Jesus, said: "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again.' Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, lest the disciples come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first.' Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how.' And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone."

They really did not do themselves any favors by taking these precautions — it only makes the disciples' testimony more credible. The penalty a Roman guard suffered for leaving (or falling asleep at) his post was death. This punishment also applied to the rest of the men in the unit, even if only one of the guards deserted his post. The Roman seal itself was no small matter, either. To break that seal would be considered a violation against the Roman government. As we see in the Gospels, crucifixion was the sentence for the thieves who were next to Jesus (Mark 15:27) If a thief was crucified, it is likely that anyone who committed a violation against the Roman government would not be treated lightly.

What caused the Roman guard to leave the post at the tomb even though the penalty for doing so was death? We are told an angel came and rolled the stone away (Matthew 28:2-4).

This would account for them leaving, as well as reporting first to the religious leaders (Matthew 28:11-15). The religious leaders would be the only ones who might possibly have the influence in their culture to be able to save the guards' necks for leaving their post.

Remember, it was because of the religious leaders' influence that a guard was given to secure the tomb in the first place.

4. No motive for the disciples, as well as unbelievers, to lie.

Remember that the disciples endured persecution and died for their belief, never recanting their story. In addition, their testimony carries improbabilities of a contrived story. For example, the fact that Jesus appeared first to a woman (Mark 16:9): according to Jewish principles of legal evidence, a woman's testimony would not be admissible in court. In such a male-dominated culture, it makes no sense to make up a story in which Jesus first appears to women, when it would hinder the belief of many.

The disciples at Jesus' arrest ran away; Peter even denied knowing Him at all (Matthew 26:69-75). After the crucifixion of Jesus, which was their point of sorrow and despair, the disciples soon became bold witnesses of the resurrection. If the resurrection of Jesus were not true, then why would they do this?

There also would be a conflict of morals. Jesus and His disciples taught that one should live a life of good moral values. If they invented a story, they would also have to knowingly go against what their beloved leader Jesus taught. Their entire lives would have to become patterned after this lie, and they would have to be willing to die for what they knew to be a lie. And how would they influence

Paul, James, and Jude to go along with this lie? Paul was very zealous in persecuting the church before he claimed to see the resurrected Jesus. It would take a powerful motive for him to change sides and then be persecuted and die for this belief, as he did. If his testimony is also untrue, what motive could there possibly be for him to do this?

Simon Greenleaf was a famous Royall Professor of Law at Harvard University. He produced a well-known work entitled *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence*, which is considered by some the greatest single authority on evidence of legal procedure. While Greenleaf was still a professor at Harvard, he took the challenge of applying the Gospels and the claims of the eyewitnesses to see if they would stand as reliable when the rules of evidence were applied as in a court of law. He showed that they would indeed stand reliable. He wrote a book concerning this which is entitled *The Testimony of the Evangelists, The Gospels Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice*. On pg. 32 of his book, speaking of the disciple's testimony he concludes, "If then their testimony was not true, there was no possible motive for this fabrication".

5. These people claimed to be eyewitnesses.

There were more than 500 eyewitnesses. Can you imagine all of these people testifying in a courtroom? If the cross examination and testimony only lasted six minutes per person, you would have fifty hours of eyewitness testimony. The disciples said they talked with Jesus, ate with Him, and touched Him as well. Not all these eyewitnesses were followers of Jesus before the resurrection.

The Pharisees had political and personal motive to expose the disciples as fraudulent by producing the body of Jesus. Why didn't they do this if they could do it?

(International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database, 1996, by Biblesoft.)

"Reasons for Pharisaic Hatred of Christ: The opposition of the Pharisees to Jesus was intensified by another reason. They were the democratic party; their whole power lay in the reputation they had with the people for piety. Our Lord denounced them as hypocrites; moreover He had secured a deeper popularity than theirs. At length when cajolery failed to win Him and astute questioning failed to destroy His popularity, they combined with their opponents, the Sadducees, against Him as against a common enemy."

7. The empty tomb.

In Acts Chapters 3 and 4 we see that Peter delivered a sermon on the resurrection of Jesus in the very town where Jesus was crucified and buried shortly before. Thousands believed and Peter and John were arrested and told not to speak of Jesus anymore. It would be rather hard to explain why so many believed, and why the religious leaders did not simply produce the body of Jesus if the tomb had not been empty. We also need to remember that the empty tomb itself is not what caused the disciples to believe. In Luke 24:11, we find that when the women told the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead, the disciples would not believe them, because these words appeared to them as nonsense. They believed after Jesus appeared to them also. There is also an interesting note we find in John 20:7 — the facecloth, which had been on His head, was not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. This is rather puzzling if we are to believe that the disciples stole the body. Even if they did manage to get past the Roman guard, break the Roman seal, and move the stone, why would they take the time

to undress the body and roll up the face cloth and leave the grave clothes there? It does make sense why the risen Jesus would do this, but why would the disciples do it?

8. Change in the day of worship.

The Jews highly regarded the Sabbath, which is Saturday, as the day of worship. In the Jewish mind, to change from Saturday to Sunday was an appalling thing to do. When and why did this change take place? We see hints of this change within the New Testament writings in Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2. This gives us a clue as to when.

Acts 20:7: “And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.”

1 Corinthians 16:2: “On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.”

The first day of the week is Sunday. In these texts we see hints that a meeting was taking place on Sunday. Since Paul instructed the Corinthians to make their collection on this day, it appears that this was done on a regular basis. So, in these passages we see collections, preaching, and the breaking of bread taking place on Sunday. Since we found this in the New Testament, it appears this change from Saturday to Sunday gatherings took place at the very beginning of the church. But why did this change take place? Justin Martyr, a Christian writer who lived 100-165 AD, tells us that they met on Sunday because this was the day Jesus rose from the dead. So, Sunday worship is celebrating and bringing into remembrance the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The following are the words of Justin Martyr: (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 1)

The First Apology of Justin, Chapter LXVII, “Weekly Worship of the Christians”: “...on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying ‘Amen’; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But **Sunday** is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, **because** it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and **Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead.** For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, **He taught them these things**, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.” (Vol. 1 PDF pg. 152)

THEORIES PEOPLE HAVE USED TO EXPLAIN AWAY THE RESURRECTION

The disciples stole the body. This idea originated with the religious leaders in Jesus' day. We find this in Matthew 28:11-15. The problem with this theory is that there is no motive. The disciples gained nothing out of telling of the resurrection except persecution. They would have to knowingly go against everything that Jesus, as well as they themselves, taught. What would cause someone to die for what they knew was a lie? Also, this would leave the dilemma of Paul, who changed from being a persecutor of the church to being a strong witness who proclaimed the resurrection. How could the disciples have convinced him that he himself had seen the risen Jesus? Furthermore, this leaves the 500 other eyewitnesses — why would they all say they had seen the risen Jesus, if they had not? How could the disciples have gotten past the Roman guards that were guarding the tomb? In Matthew the story is that the disciples stole the body while the guards were asleep. If they were asleep, and did not wake up when the huge stone was rolled away from the tomb, then how would they know the disciples stole the body? Sleeping guards are also very unlikely as falling asleep would mean death for the whole unit. Some people try to claim the Jews, or the Romans stole the body. Since neither group wanted the story of the resurrection being spread, then why did they not produce the body to silence this movement?

The swoon theory. This theory states that Jesus did not die on the cross. Instead, Jesus was merely unconscious when His body was removed from the cross. The cool air in the tomb revived Him, and He got up and went to His disciples. They believed He had died; hence when they saw Him again, they believed Jesus had risen from the dead.

To accept this theory, you must believe that Jesus survived the flogging, the crucifixion, the thrust to the side with a spear, and being wrapped up in 100 pounds of spices. Then, He moved a stone that weighed one-and-a-half to two tons uphill out of a ravine. This accomplished, He fought His way past the Roman guard to appear to His disciples as the Lord of life. That takes more faith than believing the resurrection itself. Still, it does not end here: Jesus then convinced 500 other people, besides His disciples that He raised from the dead. He also convinced Paul, the very one persecuting the church, that He was resurrected. Finally, He ascended bodily into heaven on a cloud while they were watching.

The disciples hallucinated. Some people have claimed that the disciples hallucinated, so real that they believed in the resurrection. People under great mental stress, as the disciples were, have hallucinated before, but this still leaves some problems. To accept this, you would have to believe that more than 500 people hallucinated the same thing. This was not just one short episode or vision, but sightings that went on forty days. The disciples touched Jesus, talked with Him, and ate with Him. Later Paul, who was against the church, also “hallucinated” this same thing. These are not typical hallucinatory phenomena. There simply is no other case in history where this kind of hallucination took place. And even if the hallucination theory made sense, why didn't the Jews or the Romans simply produce the corpse of Jesus to prove that He was dead? Several people did go to the tomb and found it empty, except for the grave clothes. Did the whole world also hallucinate the idea that the tomb was empty?

The women went to the wrong tomb. The idea here is that during their time of sorrow and confusion, the women simply forgot which tomb Jesus had been laid in. The problem with this theory is that you would also have to believe that the Roman guards, the Jews, and all the disciples also forgot which tomb Jesus was in. This is very unlikely. And, even if the whole world was confused and did not remember what tomb Jesus was laid in, there are still all those pesky eyewitnesses. 😊

Jesus had an identical twin. This theory says that Jesus' twin brother was not in Jerusalem during the ministry of Jesus. He came back home right after Jesus was crucified and pretended to be his brother, Jesus. This of course caused everyone to believe that Jesus rose from the dead. The problem with this theory: the empty tomb.

How did this “twin brother” get past the Roman guard and steal the body of Jesus? How did he rise into heaven on a cloud while they were watching? We also need to remember that the risen Jesus still had the wounds from being crucified. He also still had the wound from being thrust by the spear. He offered this as evidence that it was, He Himself to Thomas (John 20:27-29). Most importantly of all, how would this “twin” convince his other brothers, James and Jude, that he was Jesus? Since they also were half-brothers of Jesus, they would certainly know if Jesus had a twin. Yet they were so convinced that Jesus was resurrected that they also died martyrs believing and proclaiming that resurrection.

THE THEORY THAT FITS ALL 12 OF THE KNOWN HISTORICAL FACTS: JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD, JUST AS HE SAID HE WOULD!

(1-2) Jesus did not survive the crucifixion but died and was buried (John 19:31-42). (2A) An angel removed the large stone, hence breaking the Roman seal, and frightened away the guards (Matthew 28:2-15).

The disciples lost hope because they believed that Jesus was dead (Luke 24:17-21, John 16:20, Mark 16:10-11).

The tomb was empty because Jesus rose from the dead (Matthew 28:5-7).

The disciples of Jesus, although they did not at first believe He would rise from the dead, came to believe in the resurrection because they saw Jesus alive afterwards, talking, touching, and eating with Him. They also watched him bodily ascend into heaven (Luke 24:10-11 and 24:39-43, John 20:27 and 21:9-13, Acts 1:9-11).

(5A) The Jews and Romans could not stop the teaching that originated in the very place where Jesus died, because the tomb was empty and there were more than 500 eyewitnesses to Jesus alive after the resurrection (John 20:1-8, Acts Chapters 3 and 4, 1 Corinthians 15: 1-8).

The disciples' motive for being willing to die for this belief in the resurrection was because they knew Jesus' resurrection to be true. At this point, rejecting Jesus, who they were convinced was the Christ and God in the flesh, would be worse than death itself (Matthew 16:16, John 1:1 and 14, and 21:24, Luke 9:25-26).

(7,8,9) The resurrection was the central teaching of the early church, which was growing rapidly even in Jerusalem, where Jesus was crucified and buried. This should have been very difficult if it were not true (Book of Acts).

Sunday became a day of worship in the church, celebrating the day Jesus rose from the dead (Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2). Note that the first day of the week is Sunday.

(11-12) Paul, who was an unbeliever before, and who was persecuting the church, changed totally. He became willing to be beaten, persecuted and killed for a belief in the resurrected Christ, because Jesus appeared to him after He rose from the dead.

Another former unbeliever, James, became a devout follower after he had seen the risen Christ (2 Corinthians 11:23-33, Acts 9:1-26, 1 Corinthians 15:7, Book of James).

HOW THEN SHOULD WE LIVE?

Jesus is the only religious leader in history to be foretold, in detail, before He was born. Jesus performed many miracles, offering them as evidence of who He claimed to be. Jesus predicted His own death and resurrection, and then actually rose from the dead. How then should we react? Jesus said that He was the only way in which mankind could come to God the Father (John 14:6). He said all those who were not for Him were against Him (Matthew 12:30). Jesus said He is the one who will judge the world (John 5:22). I suggest to you that the only wise thing to do is to commit your life to Jesus.

Similarly, some people in the Old Testament were told, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). If you deny Him, He will also deny you (Luke 12:8-9).

If you have already committed yourself to Him then remember that Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). As Paul said, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father" (Colossians 3:17). It is not through any church, or by doing good deeds, but only through Jesus Christ that you can be saved (Acts 4:12).

RECOMMENDED READING

Of course, the most important book you should read is the Bible. If you would like more information as to why you should believe the Bible I recommend, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Vol. 1, by Josh McDowell. As far as the resurrection itself, I have read and feel comfortable recommending the following books to read for further study:

For a very detailed argument against the false doctrine of a spiritual resurrection of Jesus rather than a physical resurrection I would suggest reading *The Battle for the Resurrection*, by Norman L. Geisler, 1989, published by Thomas Nelson Publishers.

For an easy reading, yet detailed examination of Jesus' crucifixion and evidence for his resurrection I suggest reading *The Resurrection Factor*, by Josh McDowell. Also, in this category I would list *Who moved the Stone?* by Frank Morison.

If you would like to read a good debate between a believer and a non-believer of the resurrection of Jesus, I recommend *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* by Gary R. Habermas and Antony G.N. Flew.

For more information on ancient history concerning the life of Jesus Christ I would recommend reading *The Historical Jesus, Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*, by Gary R. Habermas.