The Reality of the Resurrection

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1. How important is the resurrection to the Bible’s teaching?
2. That Jesus physically rose from the dead is one of Scriptures’ central teachings.

The news that Jesus is alive from the dead was the substance of the early church’s message to the world, and it remains so today:

*“Others said, ‘He [Paul] seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities’—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.”* (Acts 17:18)

*“Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, ‘We will hear you again about this.’”* (Acts 17:32)

1. The resurrection is a feature of Christianity which makes it unlike any other faith or religion.

As we will see, the Bible’s teaching that Jesus rose from the dead is not simply a fanciful story or a religious oddity: everything Christianity claims depends upon this very fact. There is no Christianity if history does not have Jesus alive after his death by the power of the Holy Spirit through the will of the Father.

1. How do we know that the resurrection happened?

*The resurrection reminds us of how Christianity is grounded in historical realities. For this reason, the New Testament Gospel authors (Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John) give significant attention to carefully document the historical details of the event. How do they document it? Three events:*

1. Jesus really died.
2. The means of his death: crucifixion—criminal execution

The circumstances of Jesus’ death were such that those involved in putting him to death were interested in ensuring that it really happened.

1. The events of his death:
2. Each gospel writer is careful to record the moment of Jesus’ death.

Matt 27:50 “He yielded up his spirit”

Mark 15:37 “He breathed his last”

Luke 23:46 “He breathed his last”

John 19:30 “he gave up his spirit”

1. The Gospel of John records the witness of the soldiers to Jesus’ death (John 19:33–34).
2. The Gospel of Mark records the report of the commanding officer to the Roman governor confirming Jesus’ death (Mark 15:44–45).
3. Jesus’ body was buried.

The ultimate proof that Jesus really did die is the fact that his body was buried. The New Testament makes a point of recording the events of his burial.

1. The body was given traditional burial preparation (John 19:38–42).
2. Jesus’ tomb was sealed with a great stone and guarded because the Jews remembered Jesus’ prediction that he would rise again (Matthew 27:62–66).
3. Jesus’ body remained in the tomb for three days.
4. Jesus was physically raised to life from the dead.
5. The Empty Tomb (John 20:1–7)
6. An Angelic Testimony

*“As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. ‘Don’t be alarmed,’ he said. ‘You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.’”* (Mark 16:5–6)

1. Bribed guards and a false report of a stolen body

*When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.* (Matthew 28:12–15)

1. First-hand observation of numerous eye-witnesses

The ultimate proof that Jesus was alive again was the eye-witness testimonies of those who saw him after his death, burial, and resurrection. The authors of Scripture were careful to draw our attention to how his resurrection was evident to our human senses:

1. His physical resurrection was evident to those who saw and talked with him.
2. Jesus showed himself to numerous people, including to a crowd of over five hundred disciples (1 Corinthians 15:5–7).
3. Jesus ate food in front of some of them to show them he was not a ghost (Luke 24:40–43).
4. His physical resurrection was evident to those who touched him.

*“They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.’”* (Luke 24:37–39).

1. How does the reality of Jesus’ resurrection fit into the teaching of the Bible?

Raising Jesus from the dead was one grand act of God’s vindication over the life and teachings of Jesus.

1. The resurrection confirms that Jesus was who he claimed to be—the Son of God, loved by his Father.

*“[He] was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 1:4)

1. The resurrection exhibits the power Jesus claimed to have—power over sin, death & Satan.

*“God made you [the Colossian Christians] alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”* (Colossians 2:13–15)

1. The resurrection confirms that Jesus can give what he promised—eternal life.

*“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’”* (John 11:25–26)

1. The resurrection identifies Jesus as the Head over God’s New Creation.

*“He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent”* (Colossians 1:18)

1. The resurrection shows the reality of what Jesus himself taught, that the present life is not ultimate and death is not the end.

Jesus taught that everyone who has died will also experience resurrection, some to eternal life and others to eternal judgment (John 5:28-29). For Christians, those who know Christ as their Savior, this reality is a source of comfort and courage:

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21)

*“What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”* (1 Co 15:32)

1. The resurrection certifies Jesus as God’s appointed Judge over mankind.

*“he [God] has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”* (Acts 17:31)

The Apostle Paul summarized all of this well by saying, *“if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins… If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.”* (1 Corinthians 15:17 & 19)

1. How should I respond to the reality of Jesus’ resurrection?

Among those who observed the event, the Bible records two types of responses:

1. Rejection and Denial
2. The Jewish Leaders (Matt 28:12-13, 15)
3. The Guards
4. Worship and Adoration
5. Doubting Thomas: “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28)
6. Disciples worshipped him…

*“Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him”* (Matthew 28:9)

1. In which category does your own personal response to the resurrection fit?