

Proofs for the Resurrection

- Read John 19:40-20:31
- Of all the events recorded in the Bible, none carries more importance nor significance than the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth
 - Since the gospels were written, men have debated the meaning of Jesus' teachings
 - They have argued over his identity, or the meaning of his life
 - But there can be no argument nor debate over the meaning of the passage we read this Easter morning
 - The events of recorded here in John leave us with a stark choice, a compelling dichotomy
 - A choice everyone one of us must make for ourselves
 - On the one hand, we can conclude that John's account (and the other gospel writers is false and not to be believed
 - We conclude that Jesus is a fraud
 - A man who lived an ordinary life until about the age of 30
 - Then he developed a messiah complex and marched around the Galilee and Judea making absurd claims and many enemies along the way
 - And after his ignominious death his body was left rotting in the grave – like every man before and since
 - If this is true, then his words are of no significance and his promises are worthless
 - And as Paul says:

[1Cor. 15:17](#) and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

[1Cor. 15:18](#) Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

[1Cor. 15:19](#) If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

- On the other hand, if John's account is true, then we are left with only one other conclusion
 - If Jesus died and entered a tomb but then he returned to life and walked the Earth for many days
 - Then this man is no mere man
 - He has done something no other man has ever done
 - Jesus promised His disciples while still alive that He would die but raise Himself back to life after 3 days
 - And here is a witness claiming that this is exactly what He did
 - He died, and returned to life just as He promised
 - By His promise and His power to keep His word from beyond the grave
 - He has proven He has conquered death itself
 - He proves to us He has the keys to life and death
 - And therefore we must listen to his instructions concerning life here and life eternal
 - We simply have no other option because there is simply no one else who can meet this test
 - Buddha is still in the grave
 - Mohammad is still in the grave
 - Confucius is still in the grave
 - So is every other wise man who sought to explain things eternal
 - Do we trust them to explain a way to eternal life when they couldn't even provide a way for themselves?
- So everything hinges on the resurrection account
 - If it never happened, then nothing written in the gospels is worthy of our attention

- If it happened, then we are compelled to acknowledge and accept Jesus' claims concerning Who He was and what we must do to have eternal life
 - So how reliable is this story? What proof might we consider to know whether the eyewitness accounts of Jesus death and resurrection are believable?
- I want you to consider four factors that argue for the truth of the gospel account of Jesus' resurrection
 - First, consider the accounts surrounding the absence of the body
 - We know from the four gospel accounts that after three days, a couple of women close to Jesus and familiar with His burial location went to the tomb
 - They couldn't go sooner because there had been two Sabbaths in a row during the days following Jesus death
 - But on the third day, they rushed at daybreak with spices to complete the body preparation, since the original preparations had been in haste due to the approaching Sabbath
 - When they arrive, they report the tomb is empty
 - Later they bring a few of the apostles, who likewise verify the tomb contained no body
- Before someone can claim to have been resurrected, it's self-evident that their previously dead body can't remain in the grave
 - Now some theories have been proposed to explain away these accounts
 - Perhaps the women got lost or went to the wrong tomb
 - Unlikely, but what about the apostles and others who no doubt would have taken the same trip to verify their story
 - Perhaps Jesus wasn't really dead?
 - This is pure conjecture, because it contradicts the testimony of all gospel writers
 - It also defies human logic

- It's inconceivable that Jesus could be flogged, beaten, deprived of water, dragged to the cross, crucified, pierced with a Roman sword,
- Left in cold stone tomb without medical care, food and water for three days in an unconscious state
- Then revived himself with enough strength to remove a huge stone covering his tomb
- Leaving his grave clothes behind nonetheless
- No reasonable person could accept this theory as plausible
- Perhaps the disciples stole the body to pretend Jesus resurrected
 - The Gospels have quite a bit to say on this point
 - This theory is so old, it actually predates the resurrection

[Matt. 27:62](#) ¶ Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate,

[Matt. 27:63](#) and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I *am to* rise again.'

[Matt. 27:64](#) "Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may 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."

[Matt. 27:65](#) Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go, make it *as* secure as you know how."

[Matt. 27:66](#) And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.

- There were precautions taken to prevent just such a theft
 - And it worked, according to the testimony of the guard himself

[Matt. 28:11](#) ¶ Now while they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened.

[Matt. 28:12](#) And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers,

[Matt. 28:13](#) and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.'

[Matt. 28:14](#) "And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble."

[Matt. 28:15](#) And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, *and is* to this day.

- So the false rumor that the body was stolen is countered – ironically – by the words and actions of the very men who were afraid of such an outcome
 - Their own guard testified that the body was missing after the third day
 - So the reality of a body missing and unaccounted for without explanation gives support to the claims of the resurrection
- The second critical piece of evidence is the undisturbed grave clothes
 - John was one of the two apostles who ran to see the tomb following the women’s testimony that the grave was empty
 - He arrived first and details the arrangement of the grave clothes
 - They must have made an impact on John and his gospel records them in precise detail
 - Earlier in John’s account, we hear that a linen wrap was used to completely incase Jesus’ body

[John 19:39](#) Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds *weight*.

[John 19:40](#) So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

[John 19:41](#) Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.

[John 19:42](#) Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

- And as they carefully wrapped His body, they sprinkled powdered myrrh and spread oils in between the folds of the linen
 - John says they used about a hundred pounds of spice
 - So the bandages were wrapped tightly with a hundred pounds of additional embalming powder weighing it down
- John says Jesus was wrapped in the custom of the Jews
 - The customary of wrapping a body involved leaving the neck and face exposed

- The head wrap went around the chin and covered the head except for the face
- So a body wrapped in this way would have been completely immobilized
 - It couldn't have moved an inch
 - And if somehow the body had been resuscitated and walked away or perhaps was stolen
 - They would have considerable difficulty removing so many bandages and the accompanying weight of the spices and aloes
 - But John's account says that

[John 20:6](#) And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying *there*,
[John 20:7](#) and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

- John and Peter see the clothes lying there
 - Lying meaning collapsed
 - After Jesus body was resurrected, the weight of the spices on the linen caused it to collapse onto itself
 - It create a flat pile of linen in the rough outline of His body
 - Even more convincing, John says the head bandages are lying nearby but separate from the rest,
 - The Greek words for separate means disconnected from the rest or adjacent
 - In other words, separated just like the head is separated from the body by the space of the neck
 - Finally, the description of the head bandages is rolled up

- Actually that doesn't mean balled up but rather wrapped up like they would have been on His head
 - All the linen is lying just as you would expect if Jesus' body had instantly disappeared and been transformed into a new body
 - In other words, resurrected
- So the evidence of the body's disappearance is consistent with a miraculous transformation into new life
 - That brings us to the third factor: His appearances
 - In the gospel record we have ten separate accounts of Jesus appearing in a resurrected body to men, women, apostles, crowds, even pilgrims on the road to Emmaus
 - All consistently reported a Jesus who was real, tangible, and very much alive
 - What explanations might we have for these reports?
 - Well CS Lewis once said that Jesus was L, L, or L
 - The same three explanations could be applied here
 - They were either liars, lunatics or they were telling the truth
- Could all the apostles and other witnesses be lying about seeing Jesus?
 - First, consider the obvious details that you would expect in a deliberate lie but yet are missing from the eyewitness accounts
 - The four gospel accounts are considerably different in ways that wouldn't make sense if it was a conspiracy to concoct this event
 - The accounts lack a description of the resurrection moment itself
 - They use a woman as the first witness
 - Finally, the apostles themselves behaved in ways that were inconsistent with a conspiracy

- The eleven men and many others who personally attested to their belief in the resurrection
- And most if not all of them suffered tremendous persecution for their belief
 - Men often participate in a fraud to gain something
 - But none will hold to a story they know to be false when they have no hope of personal gain and face certain execution for their story
- Accusing the witnesses of being liars simply doesn't make sense
- What about lunatics? Were all these people crazy? Were they seeing things?
 - Consider that two factors mitigate against them seeing things
 - First, this wasn't the outcome they preferred
 - When people hallucinate, they will imagine things they prefer or at least are consistent with their desires
 - For example, someone waiting for a husband to come back from the war
 - Or a child who has died
 - Psychologically, it's rare to see something counter to your expectations
 - And these witnesses weren't expecting the resurrection
 - The women were surprised to see Jesus in the garden and were afraid
 - The disciples were doubters, and actually asked for proof before accepting what they saw
 - If anything, they were skeptical of their own eyes
 - Secondly, the visions were consistent across many people and many situations over weeks of time
 - Some were close friends, others barely knew him

- Some were distraught, others were doubting, others were oblivious at first
 - Even Paul experiences an account of seeing the Lord years after the resurrection
- These sightings simply don't fit the pattern of crazy people hallucinating a vision of Jesus
- Finally, the fourth proof of Jesus resurrection: the changed lives of the apostles
 - If the crucifixion and death of their master and teacher had left the apostles scared, sorrowful and disillusioned
 - Then their belief in his resurrection left them hopeful, determined, and transformed
 - Each of them embarked on a life of difficulty and personal jeopardy in the name of the risen Lord
 - Peter, for example, denies Christ on the way to the cross
 - And then later returns to fishing, only to leave his nets a second time at the sight of the risen Lord
 - He then returns to lead the church from the heart of persecution, in Jerusalem
 - Later going to the cross
 - Then there's James, one of Jesus' brothers who wouldn't believe in Jesus when he was living, were told by John 7:5
 - But after the resurrection, James becomes not only a believer in Jesus' claims but a fellow leader in Jerusalem with Peter
 - Clearly the resurrection changed James' mind like nothing else could
 - Then there's Paul
 - The chief persecutor of the church, a man breathing fire against believers
 - But after the risen Lord appeared to him, he became the greatest evangelist in the church

- How do we explain these changed lives?
 - Or the thousands of changed lives at Pentecost?
 - Or the millions of changed lives that have come since?
 - Does a lie change men's hearts in this way?
 - Do crazy people grow and persevere and love in the way that Jesus true followers do?
 - The only explanation that holds water is that they witnessed and believed in a risen, resurrected Jesus
 - And by that resurrection, they stood convinced in His claims concerning Himself
- The proof is clear and overwhelming
 - Jesus died, remained in the tomb for three days, and then on the first Easter Sunday His body left the grave never to die again
 - And as Paul says,

[1Cor. 6:14](#) Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.

- What does it say to our hearts to know that 2000 years ago this man returned to life and walked the Earth to prove He kept His promise?
 - It says He has the power over death
 - It says He has the power of God
 - It says He was who He said He was...Jesus, the Son of God, the one appointed to save men from sin and reconcile us with the Father
- But you know this isn't the end of the story
 - Easter isn't just about recognizing Jesus was raised from the dead
 - It's really about recognizing that we too will be raised one day
 - All men will be raised to a new body
 - We could just as easily this morning celebrate our own resurrection

- For it is no less assured for those who place their trust in Jesus

[Rom. 8:11](#) But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

- Our own Easter awaits us one day in the future
 - On the rapture when we receive our new bodies and walk again in a perfect, uncorrupt nature
- You too can have an Easter to look forward to
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