

Resurrection 101: It's PROOF!

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

Pastor Jason Dennett's Notes

NKJV - ***"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time."***

*Josh McDowell entered university as a young man looking for a good time and searching for happiness and meaning in life. He tried going to church, but found religion unsatisfying. He ran for student leadership positions but was disappointed by how quickly the glamour wore off. He tried the party circuit, but he woke up Monday mornings feeling worse than ever. He finally noticed a group of students engaged in Bible study, and he became intrigued by the radiance of one of the young ladies. He asked her the reason for it. She looked him straight in the eye, smiled, and said, "**Jesus Christ.**" "Oh, for heaven's sake," he retorted, "**don't give me that garbage about religion.**" She replied, "**I didn't say religion; I said Jesus Christ.**" The students invited him to intellectually examine the claims of Christ and the evidence supporting Christianity. He accepted their challenge, and after much study and research, finally admitted that he couldn't refute the body of proof supporting Christianity. Soon after, McDowell received Christ as his Savior, and his research became the background for his ground breaking books "**Evidence That Demands a Verdict - Vol I & Vol II**". One of the major factors in Josh's conversion to Christianity was his inability to ignore the powerful historical evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus. Later, as he became a professor and speaker on university campuses, presenting the evidence for the Christian faith, he was asked by a student, "**Professor McDowell, why can't you intellectually disprove Christianity?**" "**For one simple reason,**" replied*

McDowell. ***"I am not able to explain away the evidence for the greatest event in human history - the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ."***

*"The **greatest proof of Jesus's uniqueness** is his physical resurrection. Jesus Himself intended for us to accept or reject who He claimed to be and what He taught, based on the truth of the Resurrection." - **Dr. Alex McFarland***

*"The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is **the crowning proof of Christianity**. If the Resurrection did not take place, then Christianity is a false religion. If it did take place, then Christ is God and the Christian faith is absolute Truth." - **Dr. Henry Morris***

Over 300 verses are concerned with Jesus' Resurrection in the New Testament. It is declared to be:

- An **EVIDENCE** for unbelievers (Jn 20:24-29).
- The **ANSWER** for the believer's doubts (Lk 24:38-43).
- The **GUARANTEE** that Jesus' teachings are true (Acts 2:22-24).
- The **CENTER** of the Gospel (Rom 4:24-25).
- The **MOTIVATION** for evangelism (Mt 28:18-20).
- The **POWER-SOURCE** to live the Christian life (Rom 6:4-14).
- The **FUEL** for the total commitment of our lives (Rom 7:4).
- The **ANTIDOTE** to the fear of death (Jn 11:25).
- The **PRELUDE** to the 2nd Coming of Jesus (Rev 1:7).
- The **MODEL** of the believer's resurrection (1Thess 4:13-18).
- The **FORETASTE** of Heaven (Phil 3:20-21).

Paul presents 3 areas of Evidence for the Resurrection:

- I. *Historical Evidence (1-2)*
- II. *Physical Evidence (3-5)*
- III. *Testimonial Evidence (6-11)*

Resurrection Evidence #1: The Early Christians

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel.."

- The Early Christian Church, like the Corinthians, experienced a mysterious **EXPLOSION** of growth, and eventually revolutionized the entire Roman world! Why would thousands of slaves and common people, suddenly become followers of Christ, despite being rejected by society, their families, and persecution by the Roman government....unless the reality of Resurrection completely changed them? The Resurrection is the only solid historical explanation for

- the rise of early Christianity! (Acts 2:42-47)
- "The ancient Christians were for the most part slaves and men of low station; the whole history of the expansion of the Church is in reality a victory of the ignorant over the learned, a victory of the lowly over the lofty, until the emperor Constantine bowed in submission, and laid down his crown before the Cross of Christ!" - **Olshausen**

Resurrection Evidence #2: The Gospel proclamation

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the Gospel.."

- These verses, written about 55AD, are historical proof that the message of the Resurrection was **ALWAYS** front and center in the **Gospel preaching** of the apostles. From the birth of the Church at Pentecost (Acts 2), the Resurrection has been and remains the spiritual "nucleus" of the Good News. It is only the reason that we can say there is hope beyond the grave! (1Pet 1:3)

Resurrection Evidence #3: The Scriptural Prophecies

"I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.."

- **General Stats on Bible Prophecy:**

*Approx. **27%** of all the Scriptures are prophetic!*

*There are over **1,000** individual prophecies!*

*There are over **8,000** verses are prophetic!*

- **Messianic prophecies:**

***125** of Jesus' 1st Coming - ALL were literally fulfilled!*

***329** of Jesus' 2nd Coming - Will ALL be literally fulfilled!*

- Many Messianic Prophecies declare the bodily Resurrection of Christ:

Psalm 16; Isa 53; Gen 22

- Out of all the books of the ancient world, the New Testament contains the best manuscript copies in terms of their **Quality** and their **Quantity**. We have roughly **25,000** copies of the NT (more than any other ancient document in history!) and our copies today are **99.5%** similar to the original autographs.

Resurrection Evidence #4: The Death of Christ

"...that Christ died for our sins...and that He was buried.."

- **Roman executioners** killed professionally, ruthlessly, and regularly. These soldiers knew when a man was **TRULY DEAD**.

Therefore, we know for certain that Jesus of Nazareth was certainly dead when laid in the Tomb.

- The **Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)** actually produced a **DEATH CERTIFICATE** for Jesus of Nazareth in light of the excruciating traumas of crucifixion!
- Some scholars believe that we even possess the actual **BURIAL SHROUD** that Jesus was wrapped in, called today the "*Shroud of Turin*". Many believe it shows the definite image of a Jewish man who was crucified, pierced by a spear, whipped, crowned with thorns, and lived during the reign of Pontius Pilate! The shroud's fabric, dirt, and mites, and pollen within it all point to 1st century Israel...and it contains NO traces of bodily decomposition at all!
- "*The French atheist and mathematician, Auguste Comte, was talking about religion one day with the writer Thomas Carlyle. Comte suggested they start a new religion to replace Christianity, based on positive thinking and mathematical principles. Carlyle thought about it a moment and calmly replied, "Very good, Mr. Comte, it should be very simple for a man like you. All you will need to do will be to **speak as never a man spoke**, and **live as never a man lived**, be ruthlessly **executed by crucifixion**, and **physically rise again** the third day, and get the world to believe that you are still alive. Then your religion might have a chance to catch on!"*

Resurrection Evidence #5: The Empty Tomb

"..He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.."

- Everyone admitted that the Tomb of Jesus was **EMPTY**, even the enemies of Christ. If this wasn't truly the case, why didn't someone just produce Jesus' body to easily disprove the Resurrection? Unless of course, no one had the body...since Jesus had risen!
- There was usually **A HUGE STONE DISC** weighing **1-2.5 tons**, rolled in front of tombs. These were customarily used in the burying of wealthy family members, to prevent the grave site from being vandalized or desecrated. These huge stone discs can still be seen in Israel today. If Christ didn't rise, who moved this gigantic stone? The women couldn't have done it, the soldiers wouldn't have done it, the disciples didn't attempt it either.
- "*A Sunday school teacher asked the children in his class to bring plastic eggs on Easter Sunday, with each egg filled with something that symbolized the meaning of the Resurrection. The day came, and the teacher took each child's egg in turn, opening it and*

explaining its meaning. One child had **a tiny flower**, and the teacher spoke of the new life that springs forth at Easter. Another had **a small nail**, and the point was made about the nails of the cross. Another had **a small stone** that represented the stone that had guarded the tomb. But the teacher was dumbfounded when he opened the egg of seven-year-old Brian, a mentally-challenged boy, and found nothing there. But not to worry, Brian himself spoke up and announced: "**It's full of emptiness** - just like the tomb of Jesus."

"Perhaps **the transformation of the disciples of Jesus is the greatest evidence of all for the Resurrection**. It was the Resurrection which transformed Peter's fear into courage and James' doubt into faith. It was the Resurrection which changed the Sabbath into Sunday and Jewish believers into the Christian Church. It was the Resurrection which changed 'Saul the Pharisee' into 'Paul the Apostle' and turned his persecuting into preaching." - **John Stott**

Resurrection Evidence #6: The Apostle Peter

"and that He was seen by Cephas."

- In any court of law, **EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY** is the strongest type of testimony available. Peter declared that he was an eyewitness of the Resurrection of Christ (*1Pet 1:3; 3:21; Mk 16:14-18*), and the other disciples said he was as well (*Jn 20:1-10*). Peter was crucified upside down, after watching his wife be executed, for his belief in the Resurrected Christ. Was he lying?!?
- The Gospels, and most of the New Testament Epistles are recorded eyewitness testimony of the highest caliber, and very reliable as ancient historical documents.

Resurrection Evidence #7: The Twelve

"..then by the Twelve."

- Not one of the 12 Apostles recanted their belief in the Resurrected Christ, even under torture and pain. Men don't knowingly die for a lie...but they will if they know that death and sin have been conquered by the reality of Resurrection - and they witnessed it with their own eyes.

Resurrection Evidence #8: The 500 Witnesses

"After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of

whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep."

- Paul declares that at the time of this letter in 55AD, there were over 500 witnesses who **ALL AT ONCE** saw the Resurrected Christ appeared to them! Surely, the majority were alive and could have either recanted, or been questioned/challenged by their enemies.

Resurrection Evidence #9: The Skeptical brother, James

"After that He was seen by James.."

- This is what is called "**Enemy Testimony**" and is a **VERY STRONG EVIDENCE** of truth in historical documents. Even the enemies of Jesus gave testimony to the truth of the Resurrection, and became followers of Christ, and worshipped Him as God in the flesh - even His brother James! (*Jn 7:1-10; Jas 1:1*)

Resurrection Evidence #10: The Apostolic Leaders

"..then by all the apostles."

- "Apostle" is the Greek word "*apostolos*" meaning "one sent as an authoritative messenger." These were a group of men who, though not apart of "*the Twelve*", were ordained to share the Gospel of the risen Jesus, and were empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- Here, "*..all the apostles*." also included others who were recognized as apostles, such as **James** (*1Cor 15:7; Gal. 1:19*), **Barnabas** (*Acts 14:4, 14; 1Cor 9:6*), **Andronicus and Junias** (*Rom. 16:7*), possibly **Silas and Timothy** (*1Thess 1:1; 2:7*), and **Apollos** (*1Cor 4:6, 9*). This latter group had the gift of apostleship (*Eph 4:11*) but not original the apostolic "office" as did the Twelve. Apostles, then, were those who carried the gospel message with God's authority.

Resurrection Evidence #11: The Ex-Persecutor, Paul

"Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time."

- This is what is called "**Enemy Testimony**" and is a **VERY STRONG EVIDENCE** of truth in historical documents. Even the enemies of Jesus gave testimony to the truth of the Resurrection, and became followers of Christ, and worshipped Him as God in the flesh - even the murderous Jewish Rabbi Saul of Tarsus...who became Paul the Apostle!
- The **HISTORICAL FACT** that this murderer became a minister, and finally a martyr, has skeptics and critics baffled! What else but a life-changing event could radically change this man's life forever...like

Christ rising from the dead and appearing to Paul on the road to Damascus?!?

*"It is fitting that **a supernatural person should enter the earth and leave the earth in a supernatural way.** This is in fact what the New Testament teaches and the Church believes. His birth was natural, but His conception was supernatural. His death was natural, but His resurrection was supernatural." - **John Stott***

*"The most important single statement in the Bible is that 'Christ rose from the dead'. This is the thing for which the whole Bible was written, apart from which it would mean nothing." - **Dr. Henry Halley***