

The Reality of the Resurrection 2023

Jesus died alone, in severe pain, beaten and bloodied, humiliated, naked, dehydrated, and with His bones out of joint. Why? Because He chose to; because His purpose was to die for us so that our sins would be paid for; because He loved all people of all time, including those who thought they had won by crucifying the King of kings. But God has the victory. The cross is a disgrace and defeat to Him for unbelievers; but for us, it is the power of God unto salvation.

But Jesus arose from the dead, demonstrating victory over sin and death. The grave had no power to hold Him and He is alive forevermore! The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ make up the essence of Christianity. Without them, we worship a God who is real, but we worship without hope, and we are still in our sins.

THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION?

Why are you a Christian? Why do you believe in Jesus? What makes you so sure Jesus and the resurrection are real and not a myth? People sometimes stumble over these questions because Christianity is a cultural tradition, and they never considered Jesus' veracity. Others have been told that the truth of the resurrection is a matter of faith and not reason.

The thought that the truth of Jesus' resurrection is something that can be defended has done more damage to the Gospel than the atheist who denies that Jesus ever existed. Those who believe that faith and reason are in opposition to one another misunderstand what is meant by faith.

What is the difference between fact and faith? Biblical facts and truth claims are called "the Faith." When a person believes what God has proclaimed, "the Faith" becomes "your faith."

Let's have an honest conversation. Believing that Jesus rose from the dead and is alive forevermore means that I have examined the evidence and that evidence has convinced me of that truth. Other people will see the same evidence and not believe it. Both groups do not understand why.

When we discuss the evidence that Jesus is indeed risen from the dead, we need to establish the parameters for discussing evidence from antiquity. We have some difficulties when we try to find out exactly what happened yesterday, even when we have video, witnesses, and DNA. When we discuss what happened 2000 years ago, we must realize that we have to rely on the data that has been provided. If we lay expectations on historical facts as we do in a current murder trial, we are not being honest.

To avoid the charge of "myth, legend," or "falsified information," the claims of the Bible must take necessary steps to defend the resurrection of Jesus as is accepted by historical reasoning. How we gain historical knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is pertinent.

What rules do we place on determining historical veracity? The "Historical Method" comprises the techniques and guidelines by which historians use primary sources and other evidence to research and then write histories in the form of accounts of the past. The question of the nature, and even the possibility of a sound historical method, is raised in the philosophy of history as a question of epistemology (theory of knowledge). The study of historical methods and writing is known as historiography.

The Reality of the Resurrection 2023

1. When was the source, written or unwritten, produced (date)?
2. Where was it produced (localization)?
3. By whom was it produced (authorship)?
4. From what pre-existing material was it produced (analysis)?
5. In what original form was it produced (integrity)?
6. What is the evidential value of its contents (credibility)?

The Bible, specifically the four Gospels and Acts, is a book of history. The Bible describes places, dates, people, and events in detail. Many people and places mentioned in the Bible have been verified by extra-biblical documents and archeology. Therefore, one cannot conclude that the narrative is a mythological construct. It is set as a historical narrative, and there are multiple authors who all tell the same narrative arc.

Since the Bible is set as a narrative and not a myth, we now have to ask if the New Testament is reliable. The New Testament documents are 99.5% textually pure. This means that there is less than 1/2 of a 1% discrepancy in all the 26,000 copies we have of the various documents included in the New Testament found from Egypt to Rome. Added to this is the incredible redundancy of copies and their almost 100 percent agreement; you will not find a variation in any of the biblical texts that would state that Jesus was not resurrected.

For one to dismiss the New Testament documents claiming that they are corrupted, then he must also throw out all other ancient documents, including the writings of ancient Greece, the history of Europe, and the history of China. Nothing comes close to the Bible for reliability in regard to people, places, and dates. Based on the six evaluations of historiography, the Bible is the best ancient historical document ever.

The difficulty is the recording of supernatural events, specifically the resurrection. If not for the supernatural, the Bible would never be questioned.

The claim of the resurrection of Jesus is not just found in Scripture. The claim is attested by external historians of this era (Josephus, Tacitus).

The Jews were persistently and constantly fighting against the claim of Jesus' resurrection. The report of the empty tomb was never refuted. The opponents of Christianity among the Jewish people did oppose this message, but not by pointing to the occupied tomb.

All historians agree that the apostles began a movement based upon the resurrection claim.

“On the basis of an analogy of how men behave today, it would be impossible for the disciples to have preached with insincerity, for they preached the risen Jesus at the risk of their lives. Men do not risk their lives for what they know to be a fraud.”

Adding all of this to the arc of the revelation of God from Genesis through the Prophets, a resurrection of the Promised One (the Messiah, the God who comes to fix what we have broken) fits the reality of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The Reality of the Resurrection 2023

All this evidence leads us to one conclusion; we assert the validity of the report of the empty tomb and the reports that Jesus was seen alive. We believe in the miracle of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

WHY WAS JESUS RESURRECTED?

1. It was His nature to be resurrected. It is impossible, based on who Jesus is, for death to be Jesus' end (Acts 2:22-24). Jesus is the Life and the source of life (John 1:4, 11:25, 14:6; 1 John 1:1-2, 5:12). Jesus died so that those who believe would live, the Just for the unjust; once Jesus paid for sins and the Father's justice was satisfied, there was no reason for the Life to stay in the realms of death. If for no other reason, it is because of who He is that Jesus bodily rose from the dead and came out of the grave.
2. The promises and covenants of God to Israel would have been false had Jesus not risen from the dead. How does the Promised One crush the head of the serpent if He is still in that tomb? How does the Descendent of Abraham become the Heir of the world if His eyes are still closed? How does the Messiah sit on the throne of David in perpetuity if His flesh decayed and became dust? Jesus rose from the dead to fulfill the promises made to mankind, to Abraham, and to Israel.
3. The gospel is made void if Jesus did not rise from the dead. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 – Christ's death and resurrection are of primary importance. The list of witnesses proves the reality of His resurrection. He died and was buried; He rose and was seen. 1 Cor. 15:13-19 – The promise of God is predicated upon the resurrection. Jesus rose from the dead so that we would be alive and live eternally.
4. Our eternal future is tied to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is similar to the previous point, but we build on the truth of our salvation, and we can see what we will be based upon the resurrection.

The Gospel

The emphasis on the truth of the resurrection is the hallmark of the gospel. Without Jesus coming back from the dead, there is no victory. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:16-19 – “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. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.”

The gospel can be summed up in three points:

1. Who is Jesus?
2. What did He do?
3. What did He promise?

This day we emphasized what He did, what Jesus accomplished. The fact that Jesus died and rose again cannot be under-emphasized, but we must bring it all back to the full concept.

1. Jesus is the God who has come into this world and is willing and able to give life.
2. Jesus died for our sins and rose again.
3. Jesus offers eternal life free to all those who do not work for it but believe in the free gift of eternal life.