

TWO MEN

VIDEO

Acts 2:29-32

29 “Brothers, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

30 So because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne,

31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.

32 It is this Jesus whom God raised up, a fact to which we are all witnesses.

Suppose you were ministering to the men who crucified Jesus, and you wanted to convince them that the man they had crucified had risen from the dead.

How would you do it?

It's an interesting question because it's not easy to convince anyone that a resurrection has taken place.

I remember when I was teaching in Arizona, I asked the groups gathered round the tables to discuss what it would take to convince them that someone they knew had risen from the dead.

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One person said, “If he told me something that only he and I knew, then I might believe it.”

Another person said, “If we sat down and had a meal together.” Someone else said, “If he appeared to lots of other people who knew him as well as I did, then I would know I wasn’t dreaming or having a strange vision.”

We concluded that it wouldn’t be easy to convince any of us that someone we knew and loved had come back from the dead.

And it would be much harder if we had seen them die, and harder yet if the death had been as gruesome as a crucifixion.

No wonder the disciples had a hard time on Easter Sunday morning.

It’s hard enough to watch someone you love die.

It would be almost impossible to believe they had come back from the dead.

By definition a resurrection is a MIRACLE because a true resurrection means you come back to life never to die again.

That hasn’t happened in 2,000 years!

It was hard to believe then.

It’s still hard to believe now.

The odds are against it.

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There was an old article I read one time (March 28, 2005) of Newsweek magazine? The cover story by Jon Meacham is called ***“How Jesus became Christ.”***

The article asks this question:

“How did a Jewish prophet come to be seen as the Christian savior?” Here is the first paragraph:

The story, it seemed, was over. Convicted of sedition, condemned to death by crucifixion, nailed to a cross on a hill called Golgotha, Jesus of Nazareth had endured all that he could. According to Mark, the earliest Gospel, Jesus, suffering and approaching the end, repeated a verse of the 22nd Psalm, a passage familiar to first-century Jewish ears:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

There was a final, wordless cry. And then silence.

Meacham points out, correctly, that the disciples, rejected and confused, did not expect a resurrection.

The women who went to the tomb intended to anoint the corpse.

But to their surprise, instead of a dead body, they encountered an angel at the tomb who said these amazing words, “Don’t be alarmed.

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Mark 16:6

*6 But he *said to them, “Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; see, here is the place where they laid Him.*

Meacham describes the early reaction to the news of the resurrection this way:

And so begins the story of Christianity—with confusion, not with clarity; with mystery, not with certainty. According to Luke’s Gospel, the disciples at first treated the women’s report of the empty tomb as “an idle tale, and ... did not believe them”; the Gospel of John says that Jesus’ followers “as yet ... did not know ... that he must rise from the dead.”

And from that uncertain beginning sprang the Christian movement, which today numbers over two billion people—one-third of the world’s population.

A recent Newsweek poll reveals that 78 percent of Americans believe that Jesus rose from the dead.

The article notes that you cannot explain the spread of **Christianity apart from the resurrection.**

If the bones of Jesus could be dug up in some first-century tomb, then as Paul says in I Corinthians 15, our faith is vain and we are of all people most to be pitied.

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There are many different ways to argue for the resurrection of Jesus. The Newsweek article mentions two of them:

1) The tomb really was empty on Easter Sunday morning.

This is a simple statement of fact.

- ✓ When the women got there, the tomb was empty.
- ✓ When Peter and John got there, the tomb was empty.
- ✓ When the Romans investigated, the tomb was empty.
- ✓ When the Jewish leaders checked it out, the tomb was empty.

This **one fact** has never been successfully answered by critics of the Christian faith.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, what happened to his body?

Neither the Romans nor the Jewish leaders would have taken the body.

The Romans didn't care about Jesus one way or the other, and the Jewish leaders wanted to make sure he stayed in the grave.

The disciples had no reason to take his body.

And since Roman soldiers guarded the tomb under penalty of death if anyone disturbed it, grave robbers couldn't have gotten near it. So what

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happened to the body? Jesus was in the tomb on Friday night.

The FACT Jesus' body was gone by Sunday morning.

2) Jesus appeared to hundreds of people.

- ✓ He appeared to Mary,
- ✓ to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus,
- ✓ to Peter,
- ✓ to James,
- ✓ to all the apostles,
- ✓ and eventually to 500 people at one time.

These appearances happened at different places in different circumstances over many days.

Jesus invited Thomas to touch him.

He ate fish with the apostles on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

When Paul listed the various appearances of Christ in I Corinthians 15:5-8, it was like a legal brief, as if to say, "If you doubt my word, these witnesses are all available.

From the beginning skeptics have attacked the resurrection. Dr. Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, offers this helpful perspective:

Those who would attack the Church and reject its gospel must direct their arrows at

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the most crucial truth claim of the New Testament and the disciples:

That Jesus Christ, having suffered death on a cross, though sinless, having borne the sins of those He came to save, having been buried in a sealed and guarded grave, was raised by the power of God on the third day.

Today on Easter Sunday 2026, we need to keep two perspectives in mind:

A) It is the chief cornerstone of our faith and the ultimate miracle.

The resurrection is God's stamp of approval on his Son.

That's why Peter says in Acts 2:24, "God raised him from the dead."

He says it again in verse 32, "God has raised this Jesus to life."

It didn't just happen by chance that Jesus rose from the dead.

God raised his own Son on the third day.

B) Jesus defeated death when he rose from the dead.

We have heard a great deal in recent days about how normal and natural death is.

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We see death celebrated almost as if it is a good thing in and of itself.

If death is so good, why do we not want to talk about it?

If death is so good, why do we make up euphemisms like “passed on” and “crossed over” and “slipped away”?

If death is so good, why do we cover people with makeup when they die?

Death isn't natural. Life, given to us by an abundantly generous Creator, is natural.

Death is the enemy that separates us from ourselves, from our loved ones, and most importantly, from God.

It is such a curse that it required the Son of God himself to remove it so that we might live once again.

I think he is right on the money.

We need to do some clear thinking on this topic.

We celebrate Easter because Jesus came back from the dead.

Death could not hold him.

That alone should tell you that death is not “natural” or “normal” or “good” in the truest sense of those words.

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The euthanasia proponents like to talk about “death with dignity” and death as a beautiful thing.

If you’ve ever seen anyone die, you know there’s nothing beautiful about it.

I’ve never believed in the beauty of death, not for a moment, and I don’t see how you can square that with Christian theology.

1 Corinthians 15:26

The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

We ought not to fall for the secular, pro-death viewpoint that death is somehow noble or good or dignified.

If death is so good, why did Jesus come back from it?

Why didn’t he stay dead?

I wholeheartedly agree that there are better and worse ways to die, and I thank God for those doctors and nurses and hospice workers and loving family and friends that give themselves tirelessly for the dying.

God bless them all.

They are doing God’s work.

But let us not confuse compassion for the dying with a mushy, misty, touchy-feely view of death.

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Death may be a release from pain, and in that sense it can be a blessing, but death is also the result of pain and suffering.

The Bible says that death came into the world because of sin

Romans 5:12

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all mankind, because all sinned—

That's why Revelation 21:4 says He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

Death, suffering and pain all belong to the "old order" that even now is passing away. Thank God, there will be no graves dug into the hillsides of heaven. Jesus made sure of that on Easter Sunday morning.

Back to the Original Question

And so I return to my original question: Suppose you were preaching to the men who crucified Jesus, and you wanted to convince them that the man they had crucified had risen from the dead.

How would you do it? That's the challenge Peter faced on Pentecost, exactly 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead.

As he preached in the temple courts, a vast crowd gathered to hear him.

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Among those present were many who had consented to the death of Christ.

If they had not actively participated, they had gone along with the crowd.

If they had not cried out, "Crucify him!" they had also not done anything to stop the miscarriage of justice.

Whether actively or passively, they had crucified the Lord of glory.

But word had spread that his tomb was empty and wild rumors circulated that Jesus had appeared to his disciples.

They didn't know what to believe.

Suppose you were Peter on that day.

How would you convince them of the resurrection?

Peter did something very unique.

He told them a simple story and he quoted Psalm 16 to prove his point.

He told them a tale of two men. You can read all about in Acts 2:24-32.

Here is his story in short form:

- ✓ Two men died. One was famous. One was not so famous.
- ✓ Both men were buried not far from here
- ✓ One man stayed dead. The other man didn't

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- ✓ You can check out the story for yourself
- ✓ David's tomb is not far from here
- ✓ He was a patriarch and a prophet
- ✓ He spoke of the coming resurrection of Jesus
- ✓ He predicted that God would not allow his body to stay in the grave
- ✓ He wrote this down in Psalm 16
- ✓ What David predicted came true 50 days ago
- ✓ God raised Jesus from the dead
- ✓ We saw him with our own eyes

I can tell the story even shorter than that:

- ✓ Two men died
- ✓ One man stayed dead
- ✓ The other man didn't
- ✓ The first man predicted it
- ✓ The second man fulfilled it
- ✓ David was the first man
- ✓ Jesus was the second man
- ✓ God was the one who made it happen

It was a stroke of genius because the Jews revered three men above all others:

Abraham, Moses and David.

Abraham was buried in Hebron, a town south of Jerusalem.

Nobody knew for sure where Moses was buried. But everyone knew where David was buried.

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His tomb was well-known in Jerusalem. I imagine Peter even pointed to it and said, “Go out there and check it out for yourself.”

David had died 1,000 years earlier, and his body was still in the tomb.

But Jesus borrowed Joseph’s tomb for about 36 hours.

Then he left it behind forever.

That’s why they call it a “borrowed” tomb. He didn’t plan to stay there very long.

Peter then comes to his stirring conclusion in

Acts 2:36, Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

He is the Lord. So worship him.

He is the Christ. So follow him.

In his book *World Aflame*, Billy Graham tells the story of Auguste Comte, the French philosopher, and Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish essayist.

Comte said he was going to start a new religion that would supplant the religion of Christ.

It was to have no mysteries and was to be as plain as the multiplication table; its name was to be positivism. “Very good, Mr. Comte,”

Carlyle replied, “very good.”

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All you will need to do will be to speak as never a man spake, and live as never a man lived, and be crucified, and rise again the third day, and get the world to believe that you are still alive.

Then your religion will have a chance.”

Dr. David Seamands tells of a Muslim who became a Christian in Africa:

“Some of his friends asked him, ‘Why did you become a Christian?’ He answered, ‘Well, It’s like this.

Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions and you didn’t know which way to go, and there at the fork in the road were two men, one dead and one alive.

Which one would you ask for directions?’”

We hear a great deal these days about which religion is the right religion.

How do you know which religion has the truth?

Here’s a simple way to answer that question.

Find the religion whose founder rose from the dead.

That’s the one you need to follow.

Worship Team

I end today with the words of Jesus in

Revelation 1:18,

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and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

This is the message of Easter.

This is the reason for our hope.

One day sooner or later, we're all going to die.

In that day we'll lose everything we have on this earth, but we'll keep everything that matters most because death cannot separate us from Jesus Christ.

No enemy remains that he has not already conquered.

In 2005 I sat down with a young man who said this:

In several months I will be going to Iraq to work in a Dignitary Protection Unit. 12 people, including several of my friends, have been killed in the past 6 months working in this role.

As a Christian what can I do to find more courage and peace in this?

What do I tell my family in helping them with their fears?

How would you answer that?

What does Easter have to say to him?

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In my answer I quoted several verses about God's sovereignty over all of life,

including Psalm 139:16, our eyes have seen my formless substance; And in Your book were written All the days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.

That word "**ordained**" is very strong. It means that every day of your life was laid out by God before you were born. Then I told him this:

When you go to Iraq, you cannot possibly die unless God wills it so.

I've heard it said this way, "A man of God is immortal until his work on earth is done."

You might die in Iraq, but then you might die in Arizona too.

And from God's point of view, you are just as safe in Iraq as anywhere on the face of the earth. ...

On one hand, I guess it's easy for me to say that because I'm not going to Iraq and you have the additional burden of knowing that several of your friends have died doing the very work you are being called to do.

I cannot begin to understand what that means for you.

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But this much I know is true: God has called you to go to Iraq, and you are safer being with God in Iraq than being in the US without Him.

Nothing can touch you in Iraq that does not first pass through the Father's loving hands.

I Told that young man this

I'm happy you came to me during Holy Week. What a week this is. This is the week when we remember that Jesus conquered death.

If he can beat death himself, he can raise us up also.

I pray you will have an exuberant Easter.

Thank you for serving our country on the front lines of freedom.

If you forget everything else I've said this morning, remember this:

Jesus holds the keys to death and Hades.

Let that thought fill your heart with joy.

The voice of the risen Christ calls to us this morning,

John 11:25-26

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25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in Me will live, even if he dies,

26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Rejoice, child of God. You have nothing to fear.

O death, where is your victory?

Christ the Lord is risen today.

Rejoice.

Fear not.

A light shines from the empty tomb.

Death is swallowed up in victory.

Let me ask you this question

Do you know him?

Easter is a wonderful time to trust Christ as your Lord and Savior.

I can't think of a better time or a better place or a better moment to come to Christ.

Run to the cross.

Run with all your might and lay hold of Jesus who died for you and rose from the dead.

Trust him with all your heart, and you will never be disappointed.

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Trust in him and whether you live or whether you die, you can know for certain that you are going to heaven.

Trust in him and when you die, you won't stay dead forever.

Christ the Lord is risen today.

Amen!