

Study Five

Why Is Jesus' Resurrection So Convincing?

Please write your name above and fill in the Bible references in the spaces provided.

Jesus Was Seen By Many Witnesses

History happened – and many ancient monuments, like the Egyptian pyramids, remain to prove it. They bear witness to events that took place hundreds of years ago. The resurrection of Jesus also happened, but nothing was left behind because the tomb was empty! Instead, we have something far more convincing – the written record of those who saw Him alive after His death.

The life, miracles, and resurrection of Jesus, say the New Testament writers, are not cleverly invented stories,¹ but eye-witness accounts of what actually happened.² His resurrection has a central place in the preaching of the Early Church³ and once again we must listen to the witnesses and give our verdict.

JESUS WAS SEEN ALIVE BY MANY

We are told that Jesus came alive on the third day after His crucifixion, and that He was seen by many during a period that lasted forty days.

Look up Acts 1:3

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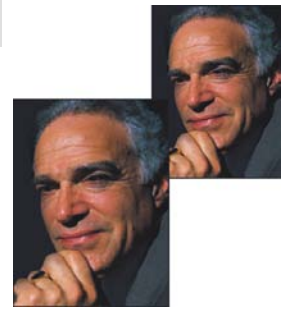
MANY WITNESSES MAKE THE TRUTH MORE CERTAIN

Two or three witnesses were enough to confirm truth and convict a wrongdoer under the Jewish law⁴. See how many witnesses there were to confirm the truth of Jesus' resurrection! Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-9.

Write out verses 7-8

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Note: Christianity is based on historical truth. The key events of Jesus' sinless life, including His death and resurrection, are called the Good News! – Arabic 'Injil'. The Gospel of Jesus is good news. It speaks of God appearing and dying in our place, so that we may be forgiven. Jesus never wrote a book, but the writers of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, wrote down records of the life of Jesus as God inspired them. The fact that God chose four writers, more than fulfils the need for proof under Jewish law.



A monument to past events

Historic Note
Rich men were buried in a cave-like tomb with a stone in front. Jesus "borrowed" a rich man's tomb.



More witnesses than were needed!

¹ 2 Peter 1:16.
² Luke 1:1-4.
³ Acts 4:33.
⁴ Hebrews 10:28.

Jesus ate some food

HE WAS A REAL PERSON - NOT A GHOST

The disciples had a close-up view of Jesus. He was not some distant and shadowy figure, nor was He a spirit or ghost. To convince them, Jesus showed them His pierced hands and feet and invited them to touch Him.

He also ate some cooked food to prove that His body was a real one.⁵

Look up Luke 24:39

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They could not produce the body

The Disciples Were Unlikely To Lie

Jesus had many enemies. Those responsible for His death said He had not come alive. However, they could not produce the body of Jesus to prove that He was still dead. So they spread the rumour that the disciples had stolen the body and were lying about His resurrection.⁶ But it is very unlikely that the disciples would invent the resurrection of Jesus for the following reasons:

LIES ARE INCONSISTENT WITH THE GOSPEL'S HIGH MORAL TONE

The New Testament writers encourage believers to live up to the high standards set by Jesus Christ. Their strong condemnation of lying suggests they themselves are honest and truthful men. **Look up Ephesians 4:25**

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Strictly honest people

It is sinful to lie, but it is even worse to encourage others to believe your lie. The disciples proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus as a truth that had to be believed.⁷

THERE WAS NOTHING TO BE GAINED BY LYING

When people lie they hope to get something from it, or they might just as well tell the truth. The apostles would get nothing from lying about the resurrection of Jesus, as the authorities were bitterly opposed to any mention of it. When the apostles continued to preach that Jesus was alive they were threatened with prison and *death*. Read Acts 5:30-33.

Write out verses 30 and 33

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Nothing to be gained, only death.

⁵ Luke 24:41-43.

⁶ Matthew 28:12-13.

⁷ Consider 1 Corinthians 15:14-15.

The Disciples Weren't Easily Fooled

Some people say that the disciples were honest and sincere men who simply *imagined* they saw Jesus. In other words, they were fooled into thinking that He had come alive. But there are serious reasons why this is far from likely. Consider the following:



Breakfast with Jesus

DAYLIGHT APPEARANCES SUGGEST IT WASN'T IMAGINED

The mind is less likely to imagine things in the broad light of day. Jesus made daytime appearances on several occasions. On one such occasion the disciples joined Jesus for breakfast on the shores of a lake!

Read John 21:1-14. **Write out verse 12**

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Imagination?

IT IS UNLIKELY THAT SO MANY WERE DECEIVED

Consider again the many people who saw Jesus alive. On one occasion 500 men were present. Where they *all* deceived? **Look up 1 Corinthians 15:6**

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Five hundred saw Him at once

LATER PERSECUTIONS WOULD BE A REALITY CHECK

Those prone to a wild imagination are likely to be sobered up by the thought of painful opposition. The threat of death brings a person "down to earth". The disciples were not suffering from an over-active imagination. They were thoroughly convinced that Jesus had come alive, and were prepared to die for it. **Look up Acts 7:59**

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Many in Jerusalem were convinced that Jesus had been raised from the dead. They were very close to these events and would certainly have investigated the matter for themselves before facing opposition and risking their lives. They were prepared to suffer for truth, but not for a lie or an imagined experience.

Some have suggested that it was not Jesus who died on the cross, and that God prevented the early Christians from seeing that it was not Jesus who died. They think that God put someone else on the cross in Jesus' place. To believe such a thing makes God a liar. Even Jesus' own mother, Mary, saw Him die and knew it was Him. If God deliberately made someone else look like Jesus, thousands of people have died because of this trick, including some who were eye-witnesses of his death. A sinless, holy, honest God could not do such a thing.



Why suffer for a lie?



After punishment comes release

The Resurrection Was To Be Expected

We should expect Jesus to be raised from the dead if He was punished for the sin of others. For as soon as the penalty of sin was paid, there was no more reason for death to hold Him.

It is unjust to keep a prisoner in jail for any longer than his crime deserves!

IF JESUS DIED FOR SIN HE HAD TO RISE

If Jesus is not risen, there is no reason to believe that the punishment He received was adequate. The believer would then remain guilty of sin and be denied a place in Heaven.

Look up 1 Corinthians 15:17

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The resurrection of Jesus is therefore essential before sinners can be declared acceptable to God.⁸

The Creator cannot die!

AS THE ORIGINATOR OF LIFE, JESUS HAD TO RISE

If Jesus is God (Study 1) it is impossible for death to conquer Him. The One who gave *life* to everything,⁹ cannot be overcome by *death*.

Look up Acts 2:24

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TO GUARANTEE A FUTURE RESURRECTION, JESUS HAD TO RISE

Jesus was raised as *an example* of how others would be raised when He returns to this world. Jesus paid the price of sin so that all the consequences of sin might be undone. This includes physical death. Believers will be victorious over death, just as Jesus was. At His return their bodies will be raised back to life again.¹⁰

Jesus the first of many

and FINALLY

Jesus had to rise or He would not be able to act as the world's Judge. The resurrection was the ultimate sign that Jesus really would be the judge of the world.¹¹

Faced with these considerations, what is your verdict on the resurrection of Christ? The events considered are so immense, and the issues so important, that they require a response.

⁸ Romans 4:25.

⁹ Acts 3:14-15.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:22-23.

¹¹ Acts 17:31.