**The Resurrection of Christ**

**Introduction:**

The bedrock foundation of our faith is the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. If this did not happen, our religion is empty [worthless]. (I Corinthians 15:14) “And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.” NKJV Reading on in verses 15-19 tells our reason for living, our hope, is snatched away from us if Christ was not raised. Let us now turn to answering the question: “Why should we believe in Christ’s resurrection?”

**Body:**

1. **Biblical Prophecy**

The same Bible, which so accurately predicted many worldwide events, [the rise and fall of several world empires, the downfall of certain nations and specific individuals . . .] also predicted the resurrection of Christ.

1. Psalm 16:8-11 10“For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” NKJV On Pentecost, Peter proclaimed, “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.” (Acts 2:29-32)
2. John 2:18-22 19“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’21“But He was speaking of the temple of His body.” NKJV Christ predicted His own death and resurrection. This is solid evidence for believing!
3. **The Empty Tomb**

What happened to His body? Theories:

1. He didn’t actually die; He just fainted. Jesus was revived after being laid on the cold slab in the burial cave. He moved the stone and walked away.

This was not possible for the following reasons: Soldiers were certain that He was dead. (John 19:33) “But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.” NKJV

 Pilate found out for himself. (Mark 15:44-45) “Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.” NKJV Jews were sure He was dead because they ensured that His disciples would not steal the body. Also, Jesus was in no shape physically to move the stone.

1. Jesus is still buried in some grave in Palestine. This is not possible either. If true, when the apostles began to preach about the risen Savior, the authorities would have produced the body and shown the apostles to be liars! (Acts 5:28) “saying, ‘Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!” NKJV Also, the Roman leaders knew where the tomb was because they had set a guard over it! (Matthew 27:64) “Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, He has risen from the dead,’ So the last deception will be worse than the first.” NKJV
2. Enemies stole the body. This theory isn’t viable. On the Day of Pentecost, when Peter and other apostles preached the resurrection of Jesus, the Jews would have dumped His corpse before the multitude of thousands and Christianity would have died before getting started.
3. His disciples stole the body and made up the story of His resurrection. This was the rumor made up by the chief priests. (Matthew 28:11-15) “Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, ‘Tell them, His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.’ ‘And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.’ So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.” NKJV This theory isn’t possible either. Several reasons: How did a group of civilians [Jesus’ disciples] get by professional security guards, [even if they were sleeping, of which there is no evidence] move a huge stone, [megalith] and steal the body without waking up the guards? Notice why the guards were told what to say. (Matthew 28:1-4) “Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.” NKJV

Also, what did the disciples gain by telling the resurrection account? Torture and death! People do not willingly die knowing their cause is a hoax. Example: Acts 4:1-3, 33. “Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 33“And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.” NKJV There is great evidence attesting to the fact of Christ’s resurrection.

1. The only possible explanation for the empty tomb which fits the facts is that Jesus Christ actually rose from the dead!
2. **Many Infallible Proofs**

Luke, the historian of both the life of Christ and the early church, wrote these words: (Acts 1:1-3) “The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” NKJV The word “proofs” translates a Greek term that was used to “denote the strongest proof of which a subject is susceptible.”

Let’s look at some of the many witnesses of the resurrection:

1. Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9-11) also a group of women disciples (Matthew 28:9-10)
2. Apostle Peter (Luke 24:34)
3. Two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)
4. Apostles (John 20:19-23)
5. More than 500 brethren at one time (I Corinthians 15:6)
6. Paul (I Corinthians 15:7-8)

Question: Are these witnesses reliable?

One of the foremost authorities on legal evidence ever to live in this country was the renowned Simon Greenleaf (1783 – 1853), who served as Royall Professor of Law at Harvard and later as Dane Professor of Law at Harvard. In 1852, he published his famous work, *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence*, which “is still considered the greatest single authority on evidence in the entire literature of legal procedure” (Smith, 1974, p.423). In 1847, professor Greenleaf issued a significant work of more than 500 pages under the title of *An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice* (Baker, 1965 reprint). In this remarkable work, Greenleaf concluded that it was “impossible that they [the apostles – WJ] could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact” (as quoted in Smith, 1974, p. 424). Numerous other highly-competent historical and legal authorities have testified in a similar fashion (see: Smith, 1974, chapter 8; McDowell, 1972, pp.196ff.).

Yes, these witnesses are reliable.

**Conclusion:**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is an historical fact, based on solid evidence. We can trust in it completely. Its significance cannot be overestimated.

1. His deity was confirmed by it. (Romans 1:3-4) “concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” NKJV
2. Forgiveness of sins is possible because of it. (I Corinthians 15:17) “And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!” NKJV
3. Our future resurrection is guaranteed by His resurrection. (I Corinthians 15:20-22) “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” NKJV

**Invitation:**

Read – (Romans 6:3-5) “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection.” NKJV

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