

Matthew 28v1-10
Bible study questions and application

1. Consider the argument from 1 Corinthians 15 if Jesus did not rise from the dead.

✓ *Christ has not been raised (v13 and v16)*

If dead men don't rise then Jesus is **still dead**. You can't pick and choose which aspects of truth you will accept or not. It is all or nothing.

This crucial issue of the resurrection illustrates the point. Claims like; miracles don't happen, there is no life after death, you can't change human nature... **are all true or none** of them are true.

✓ *Our preaching is useless (v14)*

If you take out the resurrection of Jesus then there is nothing left in the Christian message. It is **empty and pointless** – a complete waste of time.

✓ *Your faith is futile (v17)*

Take out the resurrection of Jesus, and there is nothing left on which to rest your faith. All you have left is the **decomposed corpse** of an itinerant Jewish carpenter-turned rabbi.

✓ *We are false witnesses about God (v15)*

The reputation and even the character of God is destroyed if there is no such thing as resurrection. We are **saying something that God did** that he did not do.

And if Jesus is not who he said he is and has not done what he claimed to do he is **an imposter**. It would be nothing short of blasphemy to link the name of God with such a person.

✓ *You are still in your sins (v17)*

In v14 Paul had referred to faith being useless (empty), and then here he writes of it being **unable to secure** any results. You remain guilty and condemned before God.

✓ *Those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost (v18)*

Another awful consequence of there being no resurrection is that **death remains**, not just the last enemy (v26), but the one invincible terror.

Death then in not falling asleep in Christ and waking up to see his smile of welcome into the Father's house: it is hard confirmation of the lostness of all men, that we are all **doomed to perish** without God and without hope.

- ✓ *We are of all men most to be pitied* (v19)

Without the resurrection our activity here today is nothing more than living in a fairy world of make-believe. If there is no resurrection then we are stupid – rather get out there and enjoy the sunshine for soon it will all be over.

Do you see **how the truth** of the historical resurrection of Jesus is crucial to your life of faith in the present and also essential to life beyond the grave?

Therefore **the important question**:

2. Did Jesus rise from the dead?

Do we as evangelicals need to walk around with **our heads buried in the sand** or can we stand up and look at the evidence? I want you to decide. Look with me at what is nothing more than a quick glance and see if you can be convinced.

Listen to what **Josh McDowell** on this matter; *“In my attempt to refute Christianity, I made nine acute observations of the resurrection that I previously had been totally unaware of”*.

- **Testimony of history**

Roman history scholar, Professor Thomas Arnold, once holder of the chair of modern history at Oxford, well acquainted with the value of evidence in determining historical facts said, *“I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead.”*

Professor of ancient history Dr Paul L Maier, at Western Michigan University concluded that, *“... the tomb in which Jesus was buried was actually empty on the morning of the first Easter. And no shred of evidence has yet been discovered in literary sources, epigraphy or archaeology that would disprove this statement.”*

One man highly **skilled in dealing with evidence** was Dr Simon Greenleaf. He was Professor of Law at Harvard University. He stated, *“according to the law of legal evidence used in courts of law, there is more evidence for the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus than for just about any other event in history.”*

- **Resurrection foretold**

Jesus actually predicted he would rise on the 3rd day. His claims are substantiated throughout the **4 gospels**.

Matthew 16:21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things ...and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Mark 8:31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things ..., and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

Luke 9:22 And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things...and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

John 2:19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

- **Fact or fable**

The followers of Christ knew the difference between fact and fable, between **reality and fantasy**. Modern liberal theologians like Rudolph Bultman would have us believe that the early believers were naïve and primitive. Why is it that Peter says...?

2 Peter 1:16 We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

1 Timothy 1:4 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith.

They did not have the knowledge we have today **but they knew** that blind men usually stay blind. They were astonished when Jesus healed a blind man.

John 9:32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind.

They also knew that dead men tend to stay dead. Paul's ministry **on Mars Hill** (*Acts 17v32 – 33*) shows that the resurrection was just as difficult for people to believe in the ancient world as it is today.

Then there was **Thomas** – doubting Thomas

John 20:26-28 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

- **Scientific method**

Scientific proof is based on showing that **something is a fact** by repeating the event in the presence of the person questioning the fact. The main thrust of Science is being able to collect data from continuous observation of the testing of a hypothesis.

Therefore modern scientific method is **applicable only to repeatable events** or facts.

As a **unique event** in history, the resurrection of Jesus is outside of the realm of scientific inquiry. The inability to repeat in a controlled environment invalidates the key technique of the scientific method.

- **Historical Criteria**

The resurrection of Jesus must be examined by **the same criteria** as other past event in history.

The faith of the early church was founded on experience in the factual realm. The followers of Christ said

Acts 1:3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

- **Reliable historical document**

The New Testament provides **the primary historical source** for information on the resurrection. Because of this, many critics during the 19th and 20th centuries attacked the reliability of these documents.

They argued that the manuscripts were not written until **the late 2nd century**, thus concluding that these writings came basically from myths and legends.

By the end of the 19th century, however, **archaeological discoveries** confirmed the accuracy of the NT manuscripts. Discoveries of early papyri manuscripts bridged the gap between the time of Christ and the existing documents from a later date.

Dr John A T Robinson, one of England's more distinguished critics decided to investigate the arguments on the late dating of the NT books – a field largely dormant since the turn of the 20th century.

The results stunned him. He said that owing to scholarly “*sloth*”, the “*tyranny of unexamined assumptions*” and almost “*willful blindness*” by previous authors, much of the previous reasoning was untenable.

He **concluded**; **the NT** is the work of the Apostles themselves or of contemporaries who worked with them.

Did you know that **Homer's Iliad** has 643 surviving manuscripts and is thus accepted as authentic? The NT has as of 1981 has 24633 manuscripts and thus according to Sir Fredrick Kenyon, a leading authority of ancient manuscripts, says “*both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the NT may be regarded as finally established.*”

The **trustworthiness of the NT** records of Christ is further reinforced in that they were written by eyewitnesses or from eyewitness accounts.

- **Security precautions**

Many **religious fears and political motives** caused Jews and Roman governor Pontius Pilate, to kill Jesus. To make sure he remained dead and buried important security precautions were taken:

- ✓ Jesus was **put to death by crucifixion**, one of the most effective, cruel and hideous methods of execution ever devised. They made sure he was really dead.
- ✓ The body was buried in **a solid rock tomb**. Later both the Jews and the Romans admitted that the tomb was empty.
- ✓ His **body was wrapped** with more than 100 pounds of spices according to precise Jewish burial customs. The undisturbed grave clothes no longer contained a body.
- ✓ **The stone** rolled in front of the tomb entrance weighed about 2 tons. This 2 ton stone was somehow moved from the tomb entrance while a Roman guard stood watch.
- ✓ A **Roman security guard**, one of the most effective fighting units devised (not ADT or Chubb), was positioned to guard the tomb
- ✓ The **tomb was sealed shut** with the official authority and seal of Rome.

Comments

Christ subsequently **appeared to as many as 500 witnesses** at one time in a variety of circumstances.

I have found, with a little effort, **so much that points to** the historical resurrection of Jesus. A 30 minute sermon can't do justice to all the material.

The "niggle of doubt" is gone. Jesus had indeed been **raised** from the dead.

- ✓ Our preaching is not useless or in vain
- ✓ Your faith is in not futile
- ✓ We are not misrepresenting God, but we are his ambassadors
- ✓ As a believer you are no longer in your sins
- ✓ We will one day see our deceased loved ones who were saved
- ✓ We as believers are of all men most to be envied

Believe and rejoice that Christ died for sins according to the Scriptures, that he was raised on the 3rd day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve. After that he appeared to more than 500 of the brothers at the same time...