

**[3] On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to be bold preachers.** They “turned the world upside down”<sup>39</sup> by proclaiming the gospel of the risen Lord—despite persecution, imprisonment, and martyrdom.<sup>40</sup> **[4] The book of Acts contains the disciples’ confident preaching about the resurrection.** For example, Paul declared that “God raised Him [Jesus] from the dead” as prophesied in the OT.<sup>41</sup> When Peter delivered his first sermon declaring the resurrection, “about 3,000 souls were added to them [the Church].”<sup>42</sup>

## II. THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament (OT) writings, authenticated by historians and highly prophetic, provide the scriptural foundation and promise of Jesus’s resurrection.<sup>43</sup>

### THE MESSIAH’S BODY WOULD BE RAISED FROM THE DEAD

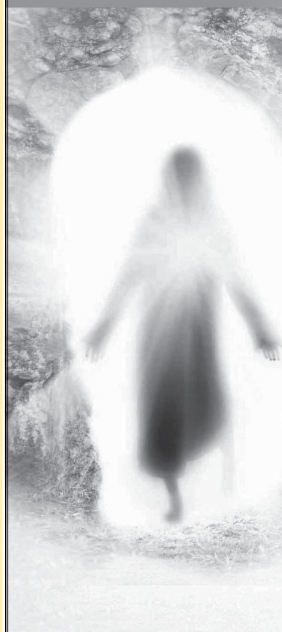
**[1] The theme of the Bible is God’s redemption of humanity.** Jesus Christ accurately fulfilled 300 OT Messianic prophecies in His life, thereby meeting the credentials of the predicted Redeemer.<sup>44</sup> **[2] The coming Messiah would not perish.** According to OT Scriptures, He would pour out “His soul unto death.” Yet God the Father would not allow His Holy One (the Messiah) to see corruption.<sup>45</sup> **[3] The coming Messiah would reign in an everlasting kingdom.** He would bring everlasting righteousness. He would rule from David’s throne forever. After giving up His life to bear our iniquities, God’s plan would prosper in His hand as conquering King. And He would offer an everlasting covenant.<sup>46</sup> **[4] Jesus illuminated OT resurrection passages.** As a sign that He was the Son of God, Jesus likened Himself to Jonah when he was “resurrected after three days in the belly of the great fish.” He also defended the reality of the resurrection of the body by quoting the “I am” statement God spoke to Moses.<sup>47</sup>

## CONCLUSION: “HE IS RISEN!”

The Bible tells us that at daybreak on Sunday, Mary Magdalene and other women went to the tomb of Jesus with heavy hearts. Imagine their surprise to find an empty tomb and an angel that proclaimed to them, *“Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead.”*<sup>48</sup>

The resurrection of Jesus assures us that Jesus lives today, He triumphed over death, and He has reserved for believers the gift of everlasting life in heaven.<sup>49</sup> Even now, Jesus calls to each of us with outstretched arms, *“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.”*<sup>50</sup> “Beloved,” He says to us, “believe in Me and receive the priceless gift of eternal life!”

## A PRAYER TO RECEIVE JESUS



*“Dear heavenly Father, thank You for loving us so much that You sent Jesus to be our Savior. And Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross for my sins and rising again so I can live with You forever. I receive You now as my personal Lord and Savior. Please fill me with Your Holy Spirit’s power so I can live for You. Amen.”*



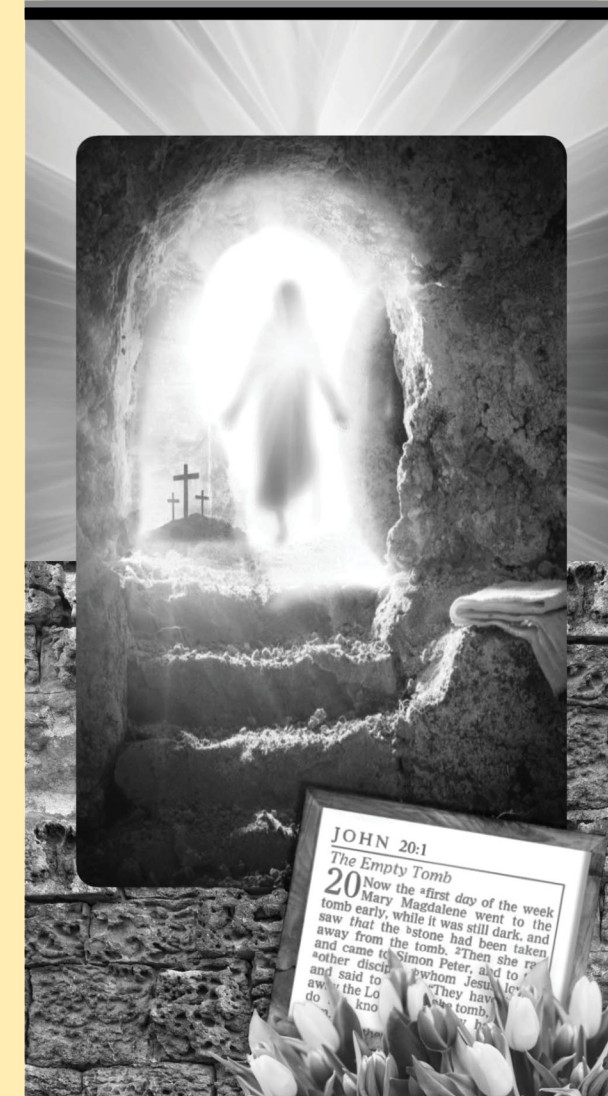
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**ENDNOTES:** <sup>1</sup>Matt. 12:38–40; 16:21; 17:9, 22–23; Mark 9:10; 14:28; Luke 9:21–22. <sup>2</sup>It confirmed that Jesus alone defeated death (Rev. 1:18). <sup>3</sup>John 11:25. <sup>4</sup>1 Cor. 15:55–57. <sup>5</sup>Ps. 2:7; Rom. 1:4. <sup>6</sup>John 3:16; Rom. 10:9. <sup>7</sup>John 14:6; 1 John 1:3; Rev. 3:20. <sup>8</sup>Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Moody Publishers, 2005), 1074. <sup>9</sup>Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:4–8. See also Norman Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection* (Thomas Nelson, 1989), 36. <sup>10</sup>William Lane Craig, *The Son Rises* (Wipf and Stock, 2001), 21; 1 Cor. 15:42–44, 53–55. <sup>11</sup>John Warwick Montgomery, *History and Christianity* (Bethany House, 1986), 34–43. <sup>12</sup>John 1:1–3; see John 20:27. <sup>13</sup>Acts 3:15; 1 Cor. 15:4–5. <sup>14</sup>Craig, 34. <sup>15</sup>Matt. 27:62–66; Mark 16:3–4. <sup>16</sup>Luke 24:12; John 19:38–42; 20:1–9. <sup>17</sup>Craig, 83. <sup>18</sup>Craig, 23. <sup>19</sup>Lee Strobel, *The Case for the Resurrection* (Zondervan, 2009), 28. <sup>20</sup>John 20:10–18. <sup>21</sup>Matt. 28:9–10. <sup>22</sup>Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5. <sup>23</sup>Luke 24:13–35. <sup>24</sup>Luke 24:36–43; John 20:19–25. <sup>25</sup>John 20:24–31. <sup>26</sup>John 21:1–14. <sup>27</sup>Matt 28:16–20; Mark 16:14–18. <sup>28</sup>1 Cor. 15:6. <sup>29</sup>1 Cor. 15:7. <sup>30</sup>Luke 24:50–51; Acts 1:9–11. <sup>31</sup>Acts 9:1–9; 26:12–18. <sup>32</sup>Acts 1:3. <sup>33</sup>Luke 24:39, 42–43; John 20:27–28. <sup>34</sup>John 11:25; Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:3–4, 12–19. <sup>35</sup>John 1:29; 3:16; Acts 2:23–24. <sup>36</sup>Craig, 127–8; Isa. 9:7; John 12:34. <sup>37</sup>Matt. 26:56, 69–75; John 20:19. <sup>38</sup>John 7:3–5; Acts 1:13–14; 8:3; 9:3–19. <sup>39</sup>Acts 1:8; 17:6. <sup>40</sup>Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Kregel, 2004), 56. <sup>41</sup>Acts 13:30–34. <sup>42</sup>Acts 2:41; see also 4:33. <sup>43</sup>Luke 24:46. <sup>44</sup>Herbert Lockyer, *All the Messianic Prophecies of the Bible* (Zondervan, 1988). See also McDowell, 205–231. <sup>45</sup>Isa. 53:12; Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:29–32. <sup>46</sup>Ps. 45:6–7; Isa. 53:10; 55:3. <sup>47</sup>Ex. 3:6, 14; Matt. 12:39–41; 22:23–33. <sup>48</sup>Matt. 28:5–7. <sup>49</sup>1 Pet. 1:3–4. <sup>50</sup>Rev. 1:18.

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## DID JESUS RISE FROM THE DEAD?



by m.j. tyner, m.a.  
christian apologetics

biblical christianity

# HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS'S RESURRECTION

## INTRODUCTION

Did Jesus return to life on the third day after His death on the cross, just as He predicted to His disciples?<sup>1</sup> The answer to this question is of infinite importance. If it's true, then Jesus's resurrection—the supreme miracle—sets Christianity apart from all religious systems.<sup>2</sup>

The Bible teaches that Jesus opened the door to heaven for all who will follow Him as their Savior. He declared, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."*<sup>3</sup> If the Bible is the revealed Word of God (as established by evidences such as fulfilled Bible prophecy), we would be wise to consider its extraordinary claims that:

- *Jesus conquered sin and death by His miraculous resurrection.*<sup>4</sup>
- *Jesus demonstrated His deity by His victory over death.*<sup>5</sup>
- *We can enjoy a relationship with the living God through His Son, Jesus.*<sup>6</sup>
- *Jesus offers everyone the free gift of eternal life.*<sup>7</sup>

### DEFINITION OF "RESURRECTION"

The resurrection refers to "the return of Christ to bodily life on the earth on the third day after His death."<sup>8</sup> In His physical resurrected body, He appeared to hundreds of witnesses for 40 days before He was taken up into heaven.<sup>9</sup> Today He is exalted at the right hand of God the Father.

### RESURRECTION vs. RESUSCITATION

When a person is revived or resuscitated, he returns to this earthly life temporarily but will die again. In contrast, when someone is resurrected, he rises in a new, eternal body not subject to death or decay.<sup>10</sup>

## I. THE NEW TESTAMENT

Historians have authenticated the New Testament (NT) documents on the basis of accepted principles of historical analysis (bibliographic, internal, and external evidence). These documents are regarded as reliable sources of information from the first century. They are "primary source evidence" of the life and claims of Christ.<sup>11</sup>

These documents contain eyewitness reports from the original apostles, who:

- *walked and talked with Jesus for 3-1/2 years and physically touched Him*<sup>12</sup>
- *witnessed Jesus's death and resurrection*<sup>13</sup>
- *told the enduring, miraculous story for which they labored and suffered.*<sup>14</sup>

### THREE TOP EVIDENCES:

#### a. THE EMPTY TOMB

All four Gospel accounts refer to the empty tomb on the third day after Jesus was crucified and buried. And no naturalistic theory has provided a plausible explanation.

#### JESUS LEFT THE TOMB BY SUPERNATURAL RESURRECTION

- [1] *Several security precautions at the tomb failed.* Heavy security was set up to ensure that Jesus's body would remain in the tomb, including an enormous stone covering the entrance and a Roman guard unit.<sup>15</sup>
- [2] *Two apostles discovered Jesus's undisturbed graveclothes in the tomb.* When Peter and John ran to the tomb, they saw that the empty body wrappings, enmeshed with about 100 pounds of embalming spices, had retained their original head and body shape.<sup>16</sup>
- [3] *No early Jewish writings refuted the empty tomb.* Instead, the Jewish records presumed that Jesus's tomb was empty.<sup>17</sup>
- [4] *Contemporary scholarship has rejected the anti-supernatural theories.* One

such passé theory even claimed that the hundreds of eyewitnesses hallucinated all at the same time.<sup>18</sup> [5] *The stolen body claim is unfounded.* The Roman and Jewish leaders would have no motive for stealing the corpse of Jesus. The disciples didn't have the motive or means to take the body, nor would they benefit from locating a dead Messiah.<sup>19</sup>

## b. JESUS'S POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

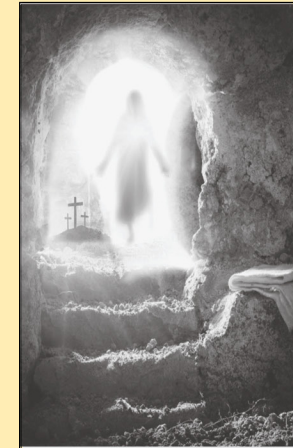
The NT documents record appearances of Jesus during the forty-day period between His resurrection and ascension.

#### JESUS APPEARED REPEATEDLY AFTER HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

[1] *Jesus appeared to individuals or groups on at least twelve distinct occasions in His resurrected body:*

- Mary Magdalene at the tomb<sup>20</sup>
- Mary and other women leaving the tomb<sup>21</sup>
- Simon Peter in Jerusalem<sup>22</sup>
- Two disciples on the road to Emmaus<sup>23</sup>
- Ten disciples without Thomas<sup>24</sup>
- Eleven disciples including Thomas<sup>25</sup>
- Seven disciples fishing at Sea of Tiberias<sup>26</sup>
- All disciples at the commissioning<sup>27</sup>
- 500 brethren at one time<sup>28</sup>
- James, half-brother of Jesus<sup>29</sup>
- All apostles at Jesus's ascension<sup>30</sup>
- Paul (Saul) on the road to Damascus.<sup>31</sup>

[2] *Jesus demonstrated He was truly alive.* Jesus "presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by [His apostles] during forty days and speaking of ... the kingdom of God."<sup>32</sup> [3] *Jesus's resurrected form was not merely a spirit body, but physical.* Jesus showed the disciples that He had flesh and bones and then invited them to touch Him. He directed Thomas to touch His death wounds. And He ate fish and honeycomb with His disciples.<sup>33</sup>



### THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

Jesus's resurrection is the core of Christianity and the heart of the gospel.<sup>34</sup> Out of divine love, Jesus came to earth to ransom us from the kingdom of darkness. As the holy Lamb of God, He died on the cross, taking

upon Himself the penalty for all the sins of humanity. Then Jesus rose from the dead, and He lives today! He carried out God's plan so we could know Him personally and live with Him forever.<sup>35</sup>

## c. THE CHURCH WAS FOUNDED ON THE RESURRECTION

The Christian Church began 50 days after Jesus's ascension (on the Day of Pentecost). Its central proclamation was Jesus's resurrection.

#### THE RESURRECTION WAS THE ORIGINAL APOLOGETIC OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

[1] *When Jesus died, His disciples quaked in fear of being identified with Him.* Their hopes of Jesus being the long-predicted Messiah were shattered, for He was to reign forever.<sup>36</sup> They fled after Jesus's arrest in the garden. Some hid behind closed doors. Peter denied three times ever knowing Jesus.<sup>37</sup> [2] *Yet after the disciples encountered the risen Savior, they became fearless followers.* Jesus's miraculous resurrection proved His Messiahship to them. Even James the skeptic (Jesus's half-brother) became a devoted disciple. And Saul the Church persecutor became the prominent apostle Paul.<sup>38</sup>