

## **Thirty Days with Jesus**

### **Did Jesus really arise from the dead?**

**Intro: “Every sermon preached by every Christian in the New Testament centers on the resurrection. The gospel or “good news” means essentially the news of Christ’s resurrection. The message that flashed across the ancient world, set hearts on fire, changed lives and turned the world upside down was not “love your neighbor.” Every morally sane person already knew that; it was not news. The news was that a man who claimed to be the Son of God and the Savior of the world had risen from the dead.” (“Handbook of Christian Apologetics”, Kreeft and Tacelli)**

**Today we consider another important question about Jesus: Did Jesus Really Arise from the Dead?**

**The Apostle John’s testimony to the resurrection**

***John carefully presents the evidence for Jesus’ death***

The soldiers' observation that Jesus was dead

*The Jews therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs; (John 19:31-33)*

The value of this evidence is first of all that the soldiers would be qualified to make a determination about the death of a criminal. Moreover, Kreeft and Tacelli point out that Roman law punished by death those who allowed a criminal to escape including bungling a crucifixion.

In addition, John points out that there was physiological evidence of death:

He personally observed the fluid that came from Jesus’ side

*but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. (John 19:34-35)*

Medical authorities have commented on this phenomenon as evidence as proof that Jesus died of asphyxiation on the cross (not sometime later).

"There remains, therefore, no supposition possible to explain the recorded phenomenon except the combination of the crucifixion and rupture of the heart." - Samuel Houghton, M.D. (physiologist from the University of Dublin)

### ***Then John presents the circumstances of Jesus' burial***

Death confirmed by disciples

*And after these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. He came therefore, and took away His body. (John 19:38)*

The fact that the body of Jesus passed into the hands of two disciples would also confirm the certainty of Jesus' death.

Neither of these men would have buried Jesus had they had the slightest evidence that he was still alive.

But in addition, John gives the details of the preparation of Jesus' body.

Burial wrappings around the whole body

*And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. (John 19:39-40)*

John describes a burial custom common among Jews that involved the formation of a mummy-like carcass. Layer after layer of cloth was placed around Jesus' limbs and then his whole body with spices added between the wrappings.

Unmistakable identification of the tomb in which Jesus was buried.

*Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. (John 19:41-42)*

This evidence makes the location and identify of Jesus' tomb clear. It was not a burial cave among many; but a private tomb near Golgotha.

### ***Then John presents the evidence of Jesus' resurrection***

Circumstantial evidence--The tomb was found unoccupied

The testimony of Mary Magdalene

The stone removed

*Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene \*came early to the tomb, while it \*was still dark, and \*saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. (John 20:1)*

The body gone; her conclusion was that someone had removed the body.

*And so she \*ran and \*came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and \*said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." (John 20:2)*

The return to the tomb by Peter and John

Linen wrappings still there!

*Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were going to the tomb. And the two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first; and stooping and looking in, he \*saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. (John 20:3-5)*

Think about the significance of this scene. A body that had been wrapped in layers of wrappings has disappeared from this carcass of wrappings leaving behind only the wrappings! How could that be? But there is more:

The napkin that wrapped the face is also there and rolled up!

*Simon Peter therefore also \*came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he \*beheld the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. (John 20:6-7)*

Think again of the significance of this scene! Here is the description of a scene that shows deliberative action. Someone has taken the time to take this face covering and carefully roll it up and place it in a separate place. It seems hardly the conduct of a hurried grave robber; if indeed such could have gotten past the guards to the tomb mentioned in the other gospels. The conclusion of this evidence was unmistakable!

*So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also, and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. So the disciples went away again to their own homes. (John 20:8-10)*

Direct evidence--Jesus' appeared alive to his disciples

Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene

John relates the testimony of Jesus' appearance to Mary. Apparently she had returned to the tomb with Peter and John and after their departure, remained weeping. While there Jesus appears to her; but at first she does not recognize him (because of her tears, because of her previous conclusions that he was taken away by someone?). She thinks that he is simply a gardener and asks him to reveal the location of Jesus' body. Only after Jesus calls her name and gets her to take a closer look does she really see who is there.

Now there is no doubt. She returns to the apostles with a message from Jesus himself:

*Mary Magdalene \*came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her. (John 20:18)*

Jesus' appearance to ten of the disciples

Later that evening Jesus would appear to the eleven as they were gathered together. He gave them the opportunity to see his wounds as evidence that it was Himself. And the time they had convinced them that it was the Lord.

*The other disciples therefore were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!"*

Thomas here earned his name, "Doubting Thomas"; for he wasn't present and insisted that he would only believe if he could see what they had seen!

Jesus' second appearance to the disciples with Thomas present

A week later Thomas would indeed see what they had seen as Jesus would make a second appearance apparently where the disciples had gathered the Sunday before! And he could not resist the unmistakable evidence of Jesus' resurrection.

*Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)*

Jesus' third appearance on the sea

Later Jesus would appear the disciples again, this time in Galilee by the sea there.

*None of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus \*came and \*took the bread, and \*gave them, and the fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead. (John 21:12-14)*

## **Examining John's Testimony**

### ***Are the witnesses credible?***

John and his fellow-apostles/disciples were surely competent to know Jesus when he appeared to them and whether or not he was alive after his death.

They spent the remainder of their lives willing to suffer greatly and even die for their testimony. Surely they were honest witnesses.

It would be harder to believe that John and his fellow-apostles created the story of the resurrection and were willing to die for it, while all the time going from place to place urging people to live a life of honesty and integrity.

### ***Is the evidence capable of another viable interpretation?***

Through the ages skeptics of every variety have sought to provide an alternative explanation for the Biblical evidence

Some have argued that Jesus never died but only swooned on the cross.

Some have argued that Jesus “appearances” were only hallucinations by the apostles.

Some have argued that the apostles conspired to deceive their audiences into believing Jesus was alive.

Some have argued that the apostles did not teach that Jesus was alive but myths developed from their testimony.

Each of these theories can easily be answered because each is refuted by important facts from the Scriptural evidence.

The truth is, the evidence of the resurrection has withstood two millennia of scrutiny. As legal evidence it is still unimpeachable and logically undeniable.

**Conclusion: Our investigation today has only considered part of the evidence found in the gospels and the remainder of the NT for Jesus’ resurrection; yet even so, it is enough to convince the honest, unprejudiced and spiritual mind that Jesus arose. The resurrection was Jesus’ last word to a world that had not known Him and rejected Him. It is the ultimate sign of His deity and Messiahship and makes clear that He is capable of making good all that faith in Him promises.**

**The resurrection is a fact of history; but the Lord of the resurrection is a living being! When we think of the resurrection, we should think of it not only as “He arose” but as “He is risen!”**