

The Foundation of Christianity - the Resurrection of Christ!

1 Corinthians 15:1-26

Christianity hinges on the resurrection of Christ because it is the foundation or centre point of the Christian faith. Without it the church would not be in existence today because our message would be pointless and our faith useless as there would be no solution to the serious problem of sin and God's imposed penalty on humankind of death because it would not have been conquered and overcome through the birth, life, sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The world would be without hope in facing death. But that is not the case, for Christ has been raised, the gospel message is true. Jesus Christ as the Son of God did rise from the dead. His death and resurrection dealt with the problem of sin. Jesus as living saviour gives us hope for forgiveness, pardon, being at one and right with God in this life and then after going through the death of our earthly bodies entering eternity to live with God forever. The only thing to change this process in the life of a believer would be if Christ was to return soon before we die, as he promised, to judge the living and the dead, to sort out this messy world at the end of time once and for all.

The resurrection is therefore what the truth of Christianity rests on because if it did not happen then we are living a lie as it would not be true and this is why Jesus Christ's resurrection is so strongly debated and resisted by atheists, scientists and followers of other religions and philosophies alike, even some foolish clergy in the church itself.

A number of different theories have arisen that seek to disprove the resurrection of Jesus including:

Jesus never died. You notice people will not try to disprove the existence of the historical Jesus because even apart from the Bible there are a number of Jewish, Syrian, Greek and Roman sources from antiquity that record his existence. Myths have been made up about him living and marrying Mary Magdalene and having children together. In order for this to have happened you have to come up with something beginning with the likes of Jesus being in a coma who wakes up three days later in the tomb healed and strong enough to remove his grave clothes which meant he unwrapping himself from over 35 kilo's of linen

bandages and burial spices, then moving and rolling away from the inside of the tomb a one tonne stone, overpowering a detachment of Roman soldiers guarding the entrance to the tomb and then walking quite a few kilometres to meet the disciples on the road to Emmaus. And this is all after the Roman crucifixion squad had officially pronounced him dead the previous Friday where he had been whipped so brutally and viciously that you couldn't recognise him with the amount of skin and flesh ripped off his body. Then he was crucified with holes through his wrists and ankles not to mention a large headed spear that had pierced Jesus' side puncturing his lung and stabbing his heart, making doubly sure that he was definitely 100% dead. Jesus couldn't have had much blood left in his body by that stage. So we need another theory. How about...

The disciples went to the wrong tomb.

You know, they were incredibly upset and could very well have been confused so much so that they couldn't find the tomb where Jesus was buried on the Sunday morning. In broad daylight they went to the wrong tomb, an empty one. But, there could be no mistaking Jesus' tomb because it was the one with the grave clothes left in it, and anyway, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus who buried Jesus, along with the ladies who followed them knew where it was. Lastly, the Jewish religious authorities would have wanted the disciples to find the correct tomb with the body still in it to prove that Jesus hadn't risen from the dead. So you need another theory. How about...

The disciples and others suffered from hallucinations

and therefore never actually saw the physically resurrected Christ. During this time of their intense period of grief, having gone through abandoning Jesus, his trials, his suffering and eventual death on the cross. Suffering mentally, emotionally, spiritually and from a lack of sleep, the result was that they began to hallucinate and just see what they wanted to see and hear in order to console themselves. But the evidence is quite the reverse with over 500 witnessing the resurrected Jesus and that although fearful, the disciples were actually in a good state of mind. So if they hadn't hallucinated maybe...

The disciples saw a ghost. A spiritual apparition, but again, nearly 516 people had verified the physical resurrection of Jesus and the disciples had met with and even eaten food with him. So it must be that...

The disciples stole the body of Jesus in order to stage the resurrection. They were so desperate to prove that what Jesus said was true and to further his cause that they had to remove and hide his dead body. To do so they would have had to take on a detachment of Roman soldiers guarding the tomb who they were no match for, roll the stone away, unwrap Jesus' body from the burial bandages and then hide it somewhere that the authorities couldn't find it and then continue to live the lie for the rest of their lives. There is no way the disciples would live such a lie only to suffer and die for proclaiming the resurrection of Christ. So if it wasn't the disciples who hid the body it must have been that...

The Jewish and/or Roman authorities removed the body of Jesus to hid/bury it elsewhere. A theory which simply does not make sense because the Jewish religious rulers had insisted that a Roman guard be put in place at the tomb to prevent Jesus' body from being stolen by the disciples in order to stage the resurrection. If the authorities had Jesus' dead body in their possession then all they had to do was produce to the body in order to destroy Christianity once and for all which they didn't do because they did not have his corpse.

What we have today and from throughout the ages then are many people with a number of theories who seek to disprove the physical resurrection of Jesus. Why is it so important to so many that the resurrection is proved to have not occurred? Because there is so much at stake for the person who claims that it never happened. You see if it didn't happen then Jesus is not God and neither then is he the Messiah, God's Son who takes away the sins of the world. Therefore everything Jesus said is not true which means I am not a sinner in need of repenting from sin and receiving forgiveness from God through the sacrifice of Christ's blood because, well there's no God, no heaven and hell, no Satan, there's going to be no judgment of the world because I am my own god in control of my own actions, author of my own destiny and am accountable to no superior power in my life in this world.

And when I die that will be the end of things because there's nothing to come afterwards.

But then there is the apostle Paul who just a few brief years after the resurrection personally experienced the resurrected Christ in a way which forever changed his life on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6). This is where Christ appeared to him (v.7) the moment when he personally encountered the display of God's power in his life walking head on into the resurrected Christ, the living saviour and hope of the human race, an encounter which served to confirm for him Jesus' identity as LORD, Israel's Messiah and deliverer, the anointed one. The resurrection for Paul became the key to faith in Christ. The very message that Paul as a zealous Jewish Pharisee had been seeking to stamp out as he pursued Christ's followers to capture, imprison, torture and even put them to death in order to stop them from openly worshipping, preaching, teaching and ministering in Christ's name. What a change that occurred when we consider what it is that the apostle Paul is saying to the church in Corinth when he writes another 20 years later making these following points with regards to the resurrection:

Jesus' physical resurrection was an historical event that has been recorded at a particular time in history as Paul says in vv3-4, it happened on the third day. This forms the basic case for the resurrection that the tomb was empty. Now Paul is not the original source of this information because he directly points to others who have passed it on to him. For instance, the Apostle Peter and Jesus' brother James who would have directly communicated the facts of Jesus' resurrection to Paul just a few years after it occurred. Facts which lead Paul to write...

Jesus' physical resurrection was confirmed by over 500 witness' vv3-8. Approximately 516 individuals saw the physically resurrected Jesus on at least 12 separate occasions over a period of 40 days. Some didn't just see Christ. The eleven disciples we know heard Christ, entered into conversation with him, even ate with him. And if we remember the disciple doubting Thomas who actually reached out and touched him. This appearance of the resurrected Christ...

It is the absolute foundation of Christian faith v14 says Paul meaning for you and me that the resurrection is the key to one's personal faith because it's useless if you don't believe in it; And what's more...

It is proof that Jesus has defeated Satan and will one day defeat and destroy him vv21-24. All forces opposing God will be done for including Satan because Jesus will personally destroy them;

It's all the evidence you need that Jesus has defeated death and will destroy it for good vv21-26; when he again returns to rule and reign; Lastly Jesus' resurrection...

It's proof that those connected to Jesus by faith will be resurrected vv20-23 themselves from the dead, which is good news for the believer!

To Conclude: The resurrection of Christ is true- it happened. The tomb was discovered empty by the disciples. He had risen from the dead! And then Christ over 40 days appeared to more than 500 individuals. Beginning with the 11 remaining apostles were transformed by Jesus' resurrection appearance and furthermore by the coming of the Holy Spirit another 10 days later after Jesus' ascension to heaven, transformed from a small scared bunch of disciples into a mighty movement of God going out to the ends of the earth preaching the good news of the gospel, proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus Christ the Son of God from the dead, not seeking the things of this world in their lives but to actually give their own lives for the truth of the gospel which for them meant persecution, suffering and death for their faith, and they did not live and give their lives away as martyrs in vain because today, we the church, are the living proof of the Resurrection of Christ which remains as the foundation for our faith which our Christianity hinges on! The resurrection recorded in God's Word, the Bible, and passed down from generation to generation of Christians, originating from the first disciples, who were actually there and witnessed it, and were later martyred for proclaiming the truth. We have this truth both in the Word and by the Spirit that lives within us to testify as to the truth that Jesus Christ has risen, he has risen indeed from the dead, and he is LORD! So, for today, the challenge remains for us to be sure to make Jesus Christ our LORD and Saviour, and to pray, and then take the news of his resurrection and share it with the world.