

Did the Resurrection of Christ Really Happen?

John 11

Introduction:

1. The Bible declares, in a very straightforward manner, that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and that He is alive today. The Bible teaches that:
 - Jesus Christ was crucified, and names the place it happened – Golgotha’s Hill outside of Jerusalem.
 - Jesus Christ rose from the dead bodily after three days and three nights.
 - Jesus Christ walked the earth, being seen by a multitude of eye-witnesses for 40 days.
 - Jesus Christ then ascended to heaven and took an exalted position at the right hand of God the Father. Again, eye-witnesses saw this happen.
2. So the question is, “Did the resurrection of Christ really happen?” Or was it all a big fraud or just a conspiracy at the time?
 - The resurrection of Christ is not simply a philosophical idea whereby His Spirit lives on in our memories.
 - It is a reality of history. You can prove it. You could go into a court of law and use the laws of authenticity that validate historical events, apply those same rules to the resurrection of Christ, and come away with historical certainty that He raised from the dead. **Illustration:** Lee Strobel
 - Someone may debate what that event **means**, but an open-minded, reasonable person cannot deny the **facts** of it.
3. Let’s consider a few facts.

First fact: Christ exhibited total power over life and death.

1. Christ gave life to a ruler’s daughter that was dead. He was not a disciple of Jesus, but a ruler in Israel. Mark 5:35-43
2. Christ gave life to a widow’s son. Luke 7:12-15
3. Christ healed Lazarus after he had been dead for four days. Christ raised him to life and declared that He Himself was the resurrection and the life. John 11
4. It is important to note that Christ performed these incredible resurrection miracles in front of witnesses. Huge crowds of people, believers, and non-believers, saw Him. It wasn’t something behind

- closed doors with two or three people. They came out and said, “She was dead but He raised her.”
5. As we consider whether the resurrection of Christ really happened, we have to ask ourselves, “Did Christ give any evidence of having power over death before His own resurrection?” The answer is a resounding, “Yes, absolutely.” His own resurrection from the dead would be in total harmony with His life and ministry. It would be in character with His actions.

Second fact: Christ declared ahead of time that He would rise from the dead.

1. Christ promised that He would rise from the dead. John 2:19, 21; Mark 8:31; Luke 24:6-8
2. Christ made it clear that He would lay down His life in death. He would give His life up freely to make a payment for our sins. But He made it clear that He had the power to take His life back again. John 10:17-18
3. No religious leader ever did this (Mohammed, Confucius, etc.). Only Jesus Christ dared to make this kind of a promise.
4. Even if another man **did** promise to rise from the dead, it would have no credence because the decayed remains of all the founders of the world’s religions occupy graves.
5. Christ’s tomb is empty! He wasn’t trying to catch anybody off guard. If it was all a hoax, He would not have made it clear what He intended to do. This brings me to my next point.

Third fact: Those in leadership were motivated to keep it from happening.

1. Because Christ made it clear ahead of time what He intended to do, His enemies had every opportunity to try and prevent it. Let’s examine Luke 27:62-66.
2. Notice that we have a joint effort by the religious **and** political leaders of that day to insure that no claim could ever be made concerning a resurrection from the dead. They did not want egg on their faces.
3. They placed Roman soldiers outside of Jesus’ grave. After His resurrection, the religious leaders bribed the soldiers to say that Jesus’ disciples came by night while they were asleep and stole His body. Huh?

- So they were all asleep (seasoned, tough as nails Roman soldiers) and never heard a group of men rolling a stone away (typically 4 tons weight – 3 or 4 cars) from a sepulcher and carrying a body out of it? If you believe that...
4. Even after the resurrection, all they had to do to stomp out Christianity was to simply produce the dead body of Jesus. This all happened in a confined geographical area and they had the political power and motivation to do it. But they couldn't ever do it!

Fourth fact: There were multiple eye-witnesses that saw Christ.

1. We are not talking about one or two people that said, “We saw Him. We’re pretty sure it was Him.” No. Person after person said they saw Him and talked to Him, knowing that it could cost them their lives to say they had seen Him. They gave specific details about this.
2. Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene, then to a group of ladies that had come to the tomb, then to Simon Peter, then to two men on the Road to Emmaus, then to ten of His disciples, then to all of them again with Thomas there this time, then to over 500 believers at one time, then to his brother, James, who was a non-believer during Christ’s earthly ministry, and of course to Paul who wrote 13 books of the New Testament.
 - It wasn’t one of these, “I think I saw an angel at the foot of my bed last night.” No, tons of corroborating witnesses gave detailed accounts.
 - If there is a crime or a hoax, the more people involved, the easier it is to uncover. Somebody breaks down, stories don’t mesh, somebody says, “Don’t kill me. I’ll show you where the body is.”
3. Not only this, they publicly and openly declared it. It wasn’t some sort of secret society. Any evidence or argument for Jesus’ resurrection was open to investigation and challenge. Even after disciples were getting jailed, beaten, and beheaded, they continued to attest to the fact that Jesus was alive and that they had seen Him.

What does the resurrection of Christ mean? What does it mean to people like you and me?

1. To me, logically, it would make sense, that if a man defeated death and rose from the dead, He is the One that I would want to go to in order to interpret what that event means.
2. Jesus Christ, right before He raised up Lazarus from the dead, made it very clear what His resurrection life means to us. John 11:25-26
3. It means that we too can defeat death. We too can have life – eternal, everlasting life. But it isn't an automatic thing. A person must make a choice whether or not they will believe on Jesus Christ or whether they will deny and reject Him. Your choice determines your future. John 3:16, 36