

## Is the Resurrection Fact or Fiction?

April 2021

What is the most important question in all human history? The answer to that question is really quite obvious. The most important question in all human history is:

### Did Jesus really rise from the dead?

This is the most important question because if Jesus did rise, then Christianity is proven true, and the doors of paradise have been opened to all believers. It also means that all contrary religions and worldviews are known to be false.

There is an amazing amount of evidence that Jesus actually did rise from the dead. First of all, the New Testament documents are unanimous in saying that Jesus did, in real time and real history, rise from the dead. These New Testament documents have proven to be accurate time and time again.

In addition, there were numerous eyewitnesses of Jesus' appearances after his resurrection. Paul, for instance said: "After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." (1 Corinthians 15:6–8)

Imagine a courtroom trial where one side had 500 eyewitnesses to back up its side of the case. Under normal circumstances, the outcome of the case would not be in doubt.

And why should we suppose that the Apostle John began his biography of Jesus at the time of Jesus' baptism? Why didn't he begin with Jesus' birth as Luke did? The Apostle John explained his reason at the end of his gospel by emphasizing that he had first-hand knowledge of everything he wrote in his gospel. (John 21:24) The Apostle John became a follower of Jesus at the time of His baptism by John the Baptist. This means that John was a witness to the resurrected Jesus, too.

The resurrection accounts also explain a number of historical facts that otherwise have no reasonable explanation.

For example:

1. The resurrection explains how Jesus' followers were transformed from terrified cowards in hiding to become the courageous spokesmen with no fear of death who transformed the world with their claim that Jesus had risen.
2. The resurrection also explains why Jesus' opponents could not produce His body—a feat that would have stopped the Christian church in its tracks if it could have been done.
3. It explains why the Jewish leaders tacitly admitted that the tomb was empty by claiming the disciples stole the body—which would have been impossible given the Roman guard unit at the tomb.
4. The resurrection explains the conversions of the Apostle Paul and James, Jesus' brother.
5. The resurrection explains the change in the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday.
6. And it explains how Christianity could arise in Jerusalem—in a culture that was hostile to the claim of Jesus being the Messiah.

All in all, the resurrection of Jesus is one of the best supported events of ancient history. The New Testament documents are unanimous in proclaiming that it happened; over 500 eyewitnesses testified that it happened; and, the resurrection explains a number of historical facts that we otherwise cannot explain. All in all, we have very good reasons for believing that the marvel of the resurrection is true.

Not only is the resurrection the most important fact among all *past* events, but it also is of utmost importance to our *future*: trusting in the risen Christ, we have peace with God and the sure hope of heaven.

**Allen Quist** is author of *The Reason I Believe: The Basics of Christian Apologetics*. For a free video archive of his "Evidence for Easter" presentation, visit [www.blc.edu/apologetics/events](http://www.blc.edu/apologetics/events).

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