

## 4 Questions about Jesus to Answer This Easter

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### 1. Did Jesus really exist?

Some people claim that Jesus never existed. They say He was just a legend or a myth. That sort of broad denial really doesn't make sense. People might try to dismiss the entire Bible as just a book of old myths, but in fact the same ancient historians who tell us about the Roman emperors also mention Jesus. So, anyone who thinks Julius Caesar was real should admit that Jesus was real, too.

### 2. Was Jesus really crucified?

According to the Bible, Jesus was crucified under the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. All four of the Gospels say so. Several of the epistles in the New Testament refer back to the same event. In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah foretold that Jesus would suffer a gruesome death. (Isaiah 53)

Again, even people who wish to dismiss the Bible as a fairy tale still have every reason to accept the fact that Jesus was crucified. Archaeologists have found an inscription bearing the name "Pontius Pilate" and dating to the first century. The Jewish historian Josephus, writing in A.D. 93, stated that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate. The Roman historian Tacitus, writing in A.D. 116, said the same thing. Although these two writers were neither Christians nor supporters of Christians, they both agreed that Jesus really died.

### 3. Did Jesus also rise from the dead?

As for what happened after Jesus died, the Bible and other ancient records point in the same direction: toward an empty tomb and eyewitness testimony that Jesus had been observed alive after He died on the cross.

Josephus and the Roman historians did not necessarily themselves believe that Jesus had risen from the dead, but they did acknowledge that something unusual had occurred, with Josephus suggesting that eyewitness reports of the resurrection had stirred up quite a lot of controversy.

The Bible reports that Jesus came back to life, appearing to over 500 people in a forty-day span. (1 Corinthians 15:3–8) He was not merely a vision

that they had, or a disembodied ghost haunting the earth. Rather, He spoke with them, He cooked for them, He ate with them, and they saw and heard and even touched Him. (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20–21, Acts 1)

A Jewish leader named Paul, who at first persecuted the Christians, later saw Jesus and had a complete change of life. (Acts 9) Paul became the leading Christian missionary in the Roman empire and wrote about half the New Testament! So convinced was Paul that Jesus truly had risen from the dead, he would ultimately suffer a martyr's death rather than renounce his faith. The same was true for many others in the early church.

### 4. What difference does the resurrection of Jesus make for me?

*Knowing* the fact of the resurrection is one thing, but the Christian faith is above all about *trusting* in Jesus. Through faith, a believer relies upon Jesus. To be a Christian means to rely upon Jesus, to trust in Jesus, for one's deepest need.

What is that need? Forgiveness from God. Reconciliation with the One who made us. Our hearts have turned against God. Our thoughts and our actions have failed to love our neighbor, and also failed to love God. For these sins, we deserve death—not just death of the body, but an eternal death beyond the grave, in hell.

The reason Jesus lived was so that He could live in your place—loving God the Father and loving His neighbors perfectly.

The reason Jesus died was so that He could die in your place—suffering the punishment that you deserve so that you don't have to suffer it.

The reason Jesus rose was so that you, too, may have eternal life with Him.

That's what Easter is about. It's a fact that Jesus loves you. In faith, cling to Him.

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