

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION? "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then [is] our preaching vain, and your faith [is] also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith [is] vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable (I Cor. 15:12-19)

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THE RESURRECTED CHRIST? On the day of Pentecost, three thousand people believed in the risen Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and the inheritance of eternal life (Acts 2:37-47). These people were deeply pricked in their hearts when Peter informed them that the Jesus whom they wanted crucified was the risen Lord and Christ! Realizing, what they had done they bowed themselves in humble repentance to receive the gift of God's salvation through Christ. (Acts 2:37-40). God invites each of us to do the same today. It was our sins that drove the nails into the hands of the sinless lamb of God. It was our sins that put Him to death, and caused Him to suffer the wrath and judgment of God. (2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Pet. 2:24) The Bible says that the "...wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6:23). Men die because of sin! However, Jesus Christ never sinned. Therefore, we understand it was not the Roman nails that took His life; it was His own willingness to lay down His life on the behalf of every sinner in the world. In John 10:18 Jesus said, "No man taketh it (my life) from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again...". It was truly God's love for sinners manifested at Calvary. Will you realize today, that it was yours sins that caused the death of Christ? Will you received the pardon of your sins He offers to you? He gave His life for you, what will you do with Him? The Bible records, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved... Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:9,13)

God's way of Salvation

The question of being right with God is not "Am I living a good enough life?" Nor is it the statement "I'm doing the best I can". Salvation is not gained by what WE do for God, rather it is a free gift based on the - FINISHED WORK of Jesus Christ! (Eph. 2:8,9) Religion is MAN'S effort to please God. Becoming a Christian, is believing that GOD has already done all that needs to be done for me to be saved. Many religious people on judgment day will discover to their utter despair that "religion" will not allow them into the presence of God in heaven. (Matt. 7:21-23) The vital question is "Are your sins forgiven?" All men are sinners by NATURE and by action. (Rom. 3:23 5:12 Eph. 2:1-3) We don't become sinners when we sin; we sin because we ARE sinners. Our very NATURE towards God is corrupt. (Is. 53:6 Rom. 3:10-13) Because we are sinners we experience death. (Rom. 6:23) Death is not only physical (separation of the soul from the body); but also spiritual (separation of the soul eternally from God) (2 Cor. 5 Gen. 3). Man's only hope of being reconciled to God is through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 5:17-19) Through Christ's death, burial, and resurrection He paid the penalty for man's sin and made it possible for believers to be freed from the bondage and condemnation of sin. (1 Cor. 15:1-7 1 Pet. 2:24) Forgiveness is possible through His shed blood. (1 Peter 1: 18,19) By TOTALLY trusting Jesus as your Saviour as your ONLY hope of being made right with God; you can be saved from the condemnation you justly deserved. (Jn - 1: 12 3:16 Acts 16:31 4:12)

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Jesus Christ made two claims that greatly disturbed the religious leaders of His day. First, He claimed to be equal with God the Father, thus affirming His Deity (John 10:22-38). Second, He declared himself THE ONLY WAY OF SALVATION whereby men could be made right with God (John 3:14-21,14:6). The religious leaders challenged Jesus' unique assertions by demanding a supernatural "sign" from God. God had verified Moses' teaching by signs; they were asking Jesus to do the same (Numbers 16,17). Jesus did many miracles throughout His ministry that validated His claims to deity (John 14:7-12, Matt. 9:1-8) In addition to these miracles, Jesus answered these religious leaders with one irrefutable sign of His claims. He said "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:18-25, Matt. 12:38-41). The temple Jesus referred to was His body. He was boldly foretelling His own resurrection! The Bible tells us that it was this miraculous event that proved the Deity of the Son of God. He was "...declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the spirit of holiness, BY THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD" (Romans 1:4).

Jesus was indeed the sinless lamb of God who was crucified and rose again to make possible the forgiveness of sins to all who believe (1 Peter 1:18-25, 1 Cor. 15:1-19).

WHAT ARE THE PROOFS OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST? Jesus "...showed Himself alive after His passion by MANY INFALLIBLE PROOFS, being seen by them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3)

1 THE CERTAINTY OF HIS DEATH: Some have tried to say that the Lord Jesus didn't really die when He hung on Calvary's cross. The evidence in the Bible overwhelmingly supports the reality of His death. He was beaten and flogged several times before the crucifixion. He was so weak he collapsed while carrying His cross. His hands and feet bled for as much as possibly 7 hours, being nailed to the cross. His side was pierced with a spear and there came out "blood and water" -- an indication of the pooling of blood in death. The soldiers did not carry out the customary procedure of the breaking of his legs because He was already dead. Pilate made a security check with the Centurion leader to verify Christ's death before he granted permission for his burial (Mk.15, Jn. 19).

2 SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS OF ROMAN GOVERNMENT: Because Jesus had foretold His resurrection, the Roman government took special precautions to ensure that Jesus' body remained in the tomb. First, they posted a 24 hour guard of 16 soldiers who rotated sleeping and guarding. Second, a great stone" estimated to weigh as much as two tons was rolled in front of the entrance of the tomb. Thirdly, the stone was officially made secure by a Roman seal, indicating the authenticity of Christ's burial place and warning severe penalty by Roman law to any who broke that seal (Matt. 27:57-66). All these special precautions were taken as a safeguard to refute Jesus claim to raise Himself from the dead. Instead, they proved that the only explanation of the empty tomb was that Jesus claims were true.

3 THE EMPTY TOMB AND GRAVE CLOTHES: When Simon Peter and John visited the tomb on that first resurrection Sunday, they found the grave clothes in the form of the body, slightly caved in and empty -- like the empty chrysalis of a caterpillar's cocoon. This refutes the claim that Christ's body was stolen! Those who denied the apostles preaching of the resurrection of Jesus Christ could have easily silenced their claims by producing the body of Jesus. The tomb was empty not because His body was stolen but because Jesus was alive (John 19:1-10)! Faced with the undeniable evidence of Christ's resurrection, the high priest bribed the soldiers to say the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus (Matt. 28:11-15).

4 THE WITNESSES OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION: Jesus showed himself alive to over 500 people. If each of these 500 people were to testify just six minutes each, including cross-examination, you would have an amazing 50 hours of firsthand eyewitness testimony to the truthfulness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. These appearances stretched out over a period of 40 days and included a wide variety of people including those who were adverse to Christ's claims. The evidence is conclusive that these were not hallucinations. (1 Cor. 15, Acts 9). When the apostle Paul listed the witnesses of Christ's resurrection, He included some very convicting evidence of the reality of the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ. Many today claim that much of the Bible is unreliable because it is myth or legend. Paul appeals to the fact that most of the witnesses of Christ's resurrection were still alive at the time he wrote 1st Corinthians. They could be questioned to verify the truthfulness of what Paul claimed about Christ (1 Cor. 15:6). Peter refutes the idea that the inspired Scriptures of the apostles was myth or legend -- "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty (2 Pet. 1:16). Ten different appearances of the risen Lord Jesus Christ are listed in Scripture. They are listed here for your further study: To Mary - John 20:11; to the other women -Matt.28:9,10; To Peter - Lk.24:34; to the two disciples - Lk.24:13ff, to the ten apostles -Lk.24:33ff; to Thomas and the ten apostles - Jn. 20:26-29; to the seven apostles - Jn. 21; to all the apostles - Matt. 28:16ff; to above 500 brethren - 1 Cor. 15; to James - 1 Cor. 15:7

#5 THE AUTHENTICITY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTED BODY: The Lord Jesus took special precautions to substantiate His bodily resurrection to those who witnessed His appearances. On one occasion He challenged Thomas to view the scars in His hand and side (John 20:27). On another occasion, when the apostles wondered at the reality of His bodily resurrection, He said, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." (Luke 24:39). Jesus Christ resurrection was not spiritual -- it was literal and physical. Furthermore, it wasn't reincarnation into a different body, but it was a resurrected body that bore the marks of Calvary. Jesus further verified the reality of His resurrected body when He took broiled fish and honeycomb and ate it in the presence of the apostles (Luke 24:41-43). When Jesus ascended into heaven 40 days after His resurrection, the angels testified that ...this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:11). Jesus will return to earth again in His resurrected body to rule and to judge the world, at which time we are told ...every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" (Rev. 1:7).

6 THE TRANSFORMATION OF SKEPTICS: Jesus' own followers doubted the genuineness of His claim to come back to life after three days (Mk.16:8, Matt.28:17, Lk.24:36-43, John 20:19). The apostle PETER who was fearful and timid to the point of denying Jesus on His way to the cross, became the bold and courageous preacher of the risen Christ in the book of Acts. JAMES, who had formerly been a skeptic (Jn. 7:5), became a pillar in the foundation of the early Church (Acts 15:13, Gal. 1:19). PAUL, who once hated Jesus Christ and all He stood for, became a flaming evangel for Him. Because of his love for Christ, Paul spent the remainder of his life as a roving ambassador for Christ throughout the Mediterranean world. At least 13 of the New Testament epistles were written by him. What caused the change in these men? A radical encounter with the risen Christ (Luke 24:34, 1 Cor. 15:7, Acts 9). In fact, most of the disciples died a martyrs' death because they boldly proclaimed Jesus Christ as the risen Messiah who would one day judge every man who has ever lived! (Acts 2:34-36 John 5:25-30)