

He IS Risen Indeed
(*Why Should You Believe?*)

“He IS risen... He is risen indeed!”

Have you noticed that when we make that confession – it is stated in the present tense? We are not say “He has risen”, or simply “He arose”... Why “He IS risen”?... Because He IS alive NOW... Jesus was not raised from the dead in order to only die again (as in the case of Lazarus, and all of those who were raised from the dead before Christ’s resurrection)... Jesus is as alive now as the moment He came out of that tomb!

Forty days after His resurrection – Jesus ascended to heaven where He now resides at the right hand of the Father – ever making intercession for His own:

Romans 8:34b (NASB) “... Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

In order to set our minds and hearts clearly upon the truth and significance of Christ’s resurrection from the dead – listen to Dr. Luke’s report:

Luke 24:1-53

¹But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; ⁵ and as *the women* were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, *the men* said to them, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”⁸ And they remembered His words, ⁹ and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the *mother* of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping

and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.

¹³ And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and *began* traveling with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. ¹⁷ And He said to them, “What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?” And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ One *of them*, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, “Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?” ¹⁹ And He said to them, “What things?” And they said to Him, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. ²¹ But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. ²² But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see.” ²⁵ And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

²⁸ And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged Him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is *getting* toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.” So He went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When He had reclined *at the table* with them, He took the bread and blessed *it*, and breaking *it*, He *began* giving *it* to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. ³² They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us

while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining (*opening*) the Scriptures to us?”³³ And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them,³⁴ saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.”³⁵ They *began* to relate their experiences (*the things*) on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

³⁶ While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be to you.”³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit.³⁸ And He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?³⁹ See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”⁴⁰ And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.⁴¹ While they still could not believe *it* because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?”⁴² They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish;⁴³ and He took it and ate *it* before them.

⁴⁴ Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,⁴⁶ and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

⁵⁰ And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.⁵¹ While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven.⁵² And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy,⁵³ and were continually in the temple praising (*blessing*) God.

You have just heard what Dr. Luke discovered when he researched the details surrounding the resurrection of Jesus from the dead... In this chapter, Luke covered the 40 days between the resurrection of Christ and His Ascension... I ask you to take 40 minutes to seriously consider why believing in the fact and exercising faith in the resurrection of Christ is so vital...

You and I live in a time when many people do not understand the significance of this event... In fact many will say they do not believe it happened and furthermore they do not see why believing it is important...

And yet Christians have always known that – that particular Sunday in AD 30 marks the greatest day in history!... It became the first “Resurrection Sunday”... As a result of Christ’s rising from the dead on that particular first day of the week – Sunday became the Lord’s day ([Acts 20:7](#)) – the primary day of worship for Christians ever since...

Before we examine the significance of Christ’s resurrection – we need to be reminded of the fact of Jesus’ death that happened just outside of Jerusalem in Judea, upon a Roman cross by the decree of Pontius Pilate – when he caved to the political pressure from the Jewish leadership and people of that day...

Even the non-Christian historical accounts of Flavius Josephus, Cornelius Tacitus (*TAC-ci-tus*), Lucian of Samosata (*Sa-mOS-a-ta*), Maimonides (*MI-mon-eeds*) and even the Jewish Sanhedrin – all validate the early Christian eyewitness accounts of the historical details of the death of Jesus Christ... To my knowledge – only the Islamic worldview – which did not develop until 600 years after Christ – denies the death of Jesus upon the cross – and their denial of these facts – in my opinion – is found in their desire to avoid the reason for His death – that He IS the “Lamb of God” Who died as the Substitutionary Sacrifice because of our sin...

But – when it come to the resurrection of Christ – are Christians right?... Is our confidence in His resurrection and faith based on a wish only – or in fact?...

Sir Lionel Luckhoo (1914-1997) was a well-known British lawyer... The Guinness Book of World Records - records that he defended 245 consecutive defense murder trials that all ended in acquittals... Luckhoo came to faith in Christ at the age of 64... He expressed his persuasion of Christ's resurrection when he wrote – “I have spent more than 42 years as a defense trial lawyer appearing in many parts of the world and am still in active practice. I have been fortunate to secure a number of successes in jury trials and I say unequivocally the evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt.”

He was only one of many in just the past few decades who came to faith in Christ because of the truth of the resurrection of Christ...

So – let's raise, and answer, a vitally important question today: Why should you believe in the resurrection of Christ?

1. Evidences for Christ's Resurrection

To begin with, we have undeniable and sincere –

➤ **Eyewitness Testimonies**

Early Christian apologists wrote about hundreds of eyewitnesses... Many of those eyewitnesses wrote about their own experiences.

Many of these eyewitnesses suffered persecution and refused to recant their stories of having seen the Resurrected Christ... Many endured prolonged torture and finally death – rather than renounce their testimony... Think about it – all they had to do, to end the torture they were being subjected to, was simply to renounce the faith... Instead, it seems that most opted to endure the suffering and proclaim Christ's resurrection right up to their own death...

We have to admit – that the willingness that one may have to actually die for what they believe in – does not in itself validate the truthfulness of what they believe in... But what it does prove – is that the “believer” is definitely sincere in their belief... What makes the earliest Christian martyrs so special

– is that they knew whether or not what they were professing was true...
They either saw Jesus Christ alive-and-well after His death or they did not.

Here is the point – IF it was all just a lie – why would they all knowingly cling to such lie in the face of persecution, imprisonment, torture, and death?

The September 11, 2001, suicide hijackers undoubtedly believed what they professed (as evidenced by their willingness to die for it), but they could not and did not know if it was true. They put their faith in traditions passed down to them over many generations. But, in contrast, the early Christians who were martyred for their faith – were the first generation... Either they saw what they claimed to see, or they did not...

Among the most well-known of the professed eyewitnesses were the Apostles. When you take a look at their lives - they underwent an undeniable change following the post-resurrection appearances of Christ... You remember, that when Christ was crucified – they immediately went into hiding in fear for their lives!... Following the resurrection they became “street preachers” and were boldly proclaiming the resurrection of Christ despite the growing persecution that followed them...

What accounts for their sudden and dramatic change? It certainly was not financial gain. The Apostles gave up everything they had to preach the resurrection, including their lives.

➤ **The Conversion of Skeptics**

Two of the most ardent critics of Christ and His message – prior to His resurrection were Jesus’ own half-brother James and a Pharisee named Saul who was from Tarsus... Saul later became known as Paul the Apostle – and by his own admission – was a violent persecutor of the early Church.

After his encounter with the resurrected Christ, Paul experienced an immediate and drastic change from a brutal persecutor of the Church to one of its most productive and effective defenders... As a result, like many early

Christians, Paul suffered hardship, persecution, beatings, imprisonment, and finally execution for his unwavering commitment to Christ's resurrection.

James was skeptical, though not as hostile as Paul... A purported post-resurrection encounter with Christ turned him into an inimitable believer, a leader of the Church in Jerusalem. We have his letters to the early Church in the NT.

Like Paul, James willingly suffered and died for his testimony, a fact which attests to the sincerity of his belief.

➤ **The Empty Tomb**

Jesus was publicly crucified and buried in Jerusalem. It would have been impossible for faith in His resurrection to take root in Jerusalem while His body was still in the tomb where the Sanhedrin could exhume it, put it on public display, and thereby expose the hoax... Instead, the Sanhedrin accused the disciples of stealing the body, apparently in an effort to explain its disappearance (and therefore an empty tomb). How do we explain the fact of the empty tomb? Here are the three most common explanations:

First, the disciples stole the body. If this were the case, the disciples would have known the resurrection was a hoax – and they would not have been so willing to suffer and die for it... All of the professed eyewitnesses would have known that they hadn't really seen Christ and would have been guilty of purposefully lying.

With so many conspirators, surely someone would have confessed, if not to end his own suffering then at least to end the suffering of his friends and family... The first generation of Christians were absolutely brutalized, especially following what was called "the conflagration in Rome" in A.D. 64 (a fire which Nero ordered allegedly to make room for the expansion of his palace, but which he blamed on the Christians in Rome in an effort to exonerate himself).

Nero illuminated his garden parties with Christians whom he burnt alive. Surely someone would have confessed the truth under the threat of such terrible pain – if the truth was that Jesus had really not raised from the dead... The fact is, however, we have no record of any early Christian denouncing the faith to end his suffering. Instead, we have multiple accounts of post-resurrection appearances and hundreds of eyewitnesses willing to suffer and die for it.

If the disciples didn't steal the body, how else do we explain the empty tomb?

Some have suggested that Christ **faked His death** and later escaped from the tomb... This is absurd.

According to the eyewitness testimony, Christ was beaten, tortured, lacerated, and stabbed... He suffered internal damage, massive blood loss, asphyxiation, and a spear through His heart. There is no good reason to believe that Jesus Christ (or any other man for that matter) could survive such an ordeal, fake His death, sit in a tomb for three days without medical attention, food or water, remove the massive stone which sealed His tomb, escape undetected – then convince hundreds of eyewitnesses that He was resurrected from death and is in good health – then disappear without a trace... Such a belief is ridiculous.

➤ **The Testimony of Women**

In all of the major accounts of the resurrection, women are credited as the first and primary eyewitnesses... If Jesus was not risen – no one would have thought that righting a narrative that He had – depending on the “witness” of a bunch of women – would have been compelling evidence...

In both the ancient Jewish and Roman cultures women were devalued and not seen as credible witnesses... Their testimony was regarded as dismissible in court...

Given this fact, it is highly unlikely that anyone planning a hoax in 1st Century Judea would elect women to be their primary witnesses...

In his book A Case for Christ, Lee Strobel quoted **William Lane Craig** – “When you understand the role of women in first-century Jewish society, what's really extraordinary is that this empty tomb story should feature women as the discoverers of the empty tomb in the first place. Women were on a very low rung of the social ladder in first-century Israel. There are old rabbinical sayings that said, *'Let the words of Law be burned rather than delivered to women'* and *'blessed is he whose children are male, but woe to him whose children are female.'* Women's testimony was regarded as so worthless that they weren't even allowed to serve as legal witnesses in a Jewish court of Law. In light of this, it's absolutely remarkable that the chief witnesses to the empty tomb are these women... Any later legendary account would have certainly portrayed male disciples as discovering the tomb - Peter or John, for example. The fact that women are the first witnesses to the empty tomb is most plausibly explained by the reality that - like it or not - they were the discoverers of the empty tomb! This shows that the Gospel writers faithfully recorded what happened, even if it was embarrassing. This bespeaks the historicity of this tradition rather than its legendary status.” (Dr. William Lane Craig, quoted by Lee Strobel, The Case For Christ, p.293)

2. Effects of Christ's Resurrection

There are a number of things that Jesus' death, burial and resurrection accomplishes – such as:

- *Satisfying God's Just Wrath against sin*
- *Validates the teachings and claims of Christ*
- *Affirms the Person of Christ*
- *Confirms the purpose of Christ's death for our salvation*
- *Conquers death for us*
- *Defeats Satan*
- *Displays the Power of God*
- *Demonstrates the uniqueness of Christianity (all other “religious founders” are dead...)*

Of all of the things that the resurrection of Jesus accomplishes – there are a couple of very practical things that it accomplishes for us when we come to know the Risen Lord:

First, it is through Jesus' death, burial and resurrection that

➤ **We Receive New Life**

If all Jesus accomplished for us on the cross was forgiveness for sin and nothing more, then we would still be hopelessly stuck in slavery to our sin. Jesus would have taken the punishment we deserve, but our hearts and lives would have remained the same. That doesn't seem like very good news.

Thankfully, through Christ's "new life" (his resurrection) we also receive new life. We are no longer bound to and slaves to our sin. We are set free and given a new heart with new desires. That is why Paul gives this beautiful exhortation –

2 Cor. 5:17 (NASB) "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

Phil. 1:21 (NASB) "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

➤ **We Have Hope for the Future**

In both **Romans 5** and **1 Corinthians 15**, Paul emphasizes that just as sin and death entered the world through one man's failure (Adam), in the same way life is brought through one man's righteousness (Jesus).

Adam's sin brought death... Jesus' righteousness brings resurrection from the dead.

1 Cor. 15:21(NASB) "For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead."

Jesus went before us, and the promise for Christians is that just as death was not the end for Jesus, neither is it the end for us.

The day is coming – it could be tomorrow; it could be millennia from now – but the day is coming when God will make all things new. We already know

the end of the story; Jesus has already won. And on that day when history is complete, sin will be no more. No more pain, no more suffering, no more tears, no more hatred, no more terrorist attacks, no more fleeing refugees, no more corrupt governments, no more celebration of wickedness. All of it will be gone, and in its place will be a perfect world, unstained by sin, where everyone who trusts in Christ will enjoy perfect communion with God the Father.

That's what Jesus' resurrection accomplished for us, and that is most definitely good news.

Bailey Smith – "... light came through the darkness. The crucifixion turned to resurrection. Death turned to life. Darkness turned to light. Remember: God's delays are not God's denials, and God's detours are not God's desertions. God may delay you, but He will not deny you. God may detour you, but He will not desert you."

Questions to consider in Community Group:

- How important is it to cite “evidences” of Christ’s resurrection? What should our response be to those who claim that we are guilty of accepting this merely on the basis of “faith”?
- Why should we consider the “sincerity” of belief of 1st century Christians more trustworthy than the “sincerity” of belief of those who high jacked planes and flew them into the twin towers on 9-11?
- What was the common attitude toward women during the 1st century? Why would addressing this issue be germane to the issue of Christ’s resurrection from the dead?
- It seems that “the empty tomb” is always being held up as strong evidence to the resurrection of Christ – why so? What are some of the explanations offered to account for the empty tomb by those who reject the resurrection of Christ? Why is it important to address alternative explanations?
- There were several things that were briefly cited that were accomplished by the resurrection of Christ, which of them do you think we should be discussed in some detail and why? (*Satisfying God’s Just Wrath against sin; Validates the teachings and claims of Christ; Affirms the Person of Christ; Confirms the purpose of Christ’s death for our salvation; Conquers death for us; Defeats Satan; Displays the Power of God; Demonstrates the uniqueness of Christianity (all other “religious founders” are dead...)*)
- Please discuss the Bailey Smith quote: “... light came through the darkness. The crucifixion turned to resurrection. Death turned to life. Darkness turned to light. Remember: God’s delays are not God’s denials, and God’s detours are not God’s desertions. God may delay you, but He will not deny you. God may detour you, but He will not desert you.” Do you think this quote was worthy of the time it was given in this message? Why or why not?