

EASTER EXPOSITION (2024)

Since the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a stupendous event that will never be repeated, we may expect that the events that surround it will not be the norm. This will be very unusual.

There has never been nor will there ever be again anywhere in history the unusual data surrounding the death and burial of Jesus Christ. There has certainly never been the catalog of events anywhere in the world that remotely resembles the events connected to Jesus Christ.

Tell me of any other death where people run to the cemetery and to a grave to see if the dead body is still there.

Let's put this in some perspective. There has never been a debate over whether or not Jesus Christ died. He did die. He was crucified. Not much unusual about that. Secular historians admit that. But what follows His death is anything but normal.

Typically, when a loved one dies, the body is prepared and the family gathers for a memorial service and then they go to the graveside and have a committal service. A few words are said, some verses are read and there is offered up a word of prayer. That's the way it works and that is the way it did work for most people. Not in this case. There are at least 16 odd chronological events that happened:

(Event #1) - Some women go to the graveside three days after Jesus died with the goal of exhuming the body to treat it in a way that should have been done before it was buried.

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna and other women take off walking approximately two miles to the tomb before daylight bringing spices to anoint the body three days after it was buried (Mark 16:1; Matt. 28:1; Luke 24:10).

(Event #2) - Mary Magdalene gets to the tomb first and the tomb was open and the body is gone so she runs to tell Peter and John that the body has been stolen even though Jesus told them He would rise from the dead (John 20:1-2).

In **Mark 8:31** we read "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."

In **Luke 9:22** we read that Jesus instructed His disciples "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and raised up on the third day."

She is telling people the body of Jesus has been stolen three days after burial

(Event #3) - Mary, Salome, Joanna and the other women get to the tomb and find it open (Mark 16:4) and they go inside and find two angels standing in the tomb and one of them informs them Jesus has risen from the dead (Luke 24:4; Matt. 28:5-7)

(Event #4) - All of these women take off running joyfully to find the disciples to report this (Matt. 28:8).

Have you ever known of any group of women who three days after you have buried a body run to tell people two angels were at the grave and told us Jesus is alive?

(Event #5) - Meanwhile, Peter and John take off running to the tomb to see if the dead body of Jesus is really gone. We learn from John's account that he outran Peter to the grave (John 20:3-10).

These guys are not running from the grave but to the grave to see if the dead body is in the grave.

(Event #6) - Mary Magdalene goes back to the grave and she sees two angels (John 20:11-18). While Mary is at the tomb, **Jesus appears first to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9).**

(Event #7) - The other women who have left the grave to tell the disciples that Jesus is risen **meet Jesus Christ in His second resurrection appearance** and He tells them He would meet them all in Galilee. Perhaps 6-8 women claim Jesus told them this.

(Event #8) - Sometime later that same morning **Jesus appears to Peter in His third appearance** of the day. Luke 24:22, 34; I Cor. 15:5.

(Event #9) - That Sunday afternoon two disciples are walking to Emmaus, which is seven miles from Jerusalem and Jesus appears to them, **which is His fourth appearance (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-32; John 20:19-25).**

(Event #10) - That Sunday night **ten disciples are locked in a room and Jesus appears to them, which is His fifth appearance (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25). Thomas is not there.**

So on that first Sunday, as the day ends, there are **at least 21 people who are saying He is risen** from the dead and they have seen Him.

(Event #11) - The following Sunday Jesus appears to eleven Apostles, including Thomas (John 20:26-28). **This is His sixth appearance. Total numbers now who are saying they have seen Jesus Christ alive are at 32-33.**

(Event #12) - Jesus appears to seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-14). **This is His seventh appearance which brings the total to 39-40.**

(Event #13) - Jesus appears to 500 brethren at one time, probably Galilee (I Cor. 15:6), **which is His eighth appearance which now brings the total to 539-540 people.**

(Event #14) - Jesus appears again to the eleven at the Mountain of Galilee (Matt.28:16-20). **This is His ninth appearance and the total number is now 551 people.**

(Event #15) - Jesus appears to James His half-brother which is **His tenth appearance and now the total is 552.**

(Event #16) - Jesus appears to His eleven disciples in Jerusalem and led them outside the city and ascended into heaven. **This is His eleventh appearance and now the total is 563.**

Now many months later He will make one more appearance and that is the one I want to focus on today.

So what we know at this point is that there are well over 500 people who are telling people that they have actually seen Jesus Christ alive from the dead.

At the time Jesus was doing all of this, and at the time those people were testifying of this, there was a guy who did not believe it. He did not believe the people; in fact, he wanted them silenced. His name was Saul. He had studied under the best Jewish teacher in Jerusalem, Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Gamaliel was known for his strict instruction in the O.T. law. Saul was a rigid Pharisee and he did not believe the eyewitnesses and he wanted them all dead.

I want to tell you a story that I read in Florida. It is a famous story concerning Clayton Moore, who played the Lone Ranger on TV.

Clayton Moore made public appearances at various places as the Lone Ranger. He was dressed in his famous blue suit and red scarf. He wore two guns with silver bullets. He had a white hat and he wore his mask.

In the mid 70's, a Dodge Dealership in North Carolina hired him to appear at their dealership. Clayton Moore went to North Carolina and appeared one afternoon as the Lone Ranger. Now in the 70's I can testify that we did remote broadcasts for clients. A client would want us to be there on the radio to promote the event and we did several of them. Jay Thomas was a radio announcer who was there broadcasting while the Lone Ranger was there. He was signing autographs and visiting with the people.

Well the event ended and Clayton Moore, who was still dressed as the Lone Ranger, was waiting for his ride to take him back to the motel. As the radio guys were packing up their equipment, they noticed that his ride had not come so they offered to give him a ride back to the motel. He accepted and got in the back seat of the guys' car and they headed to the motel.

They stopped at a red light and a car backed into their car and broke the headlight and the guy took off and did not stop. So the radio announcer and his friend chased the guy until he stopped and got out of the car. The two guys got out.

The man who backed into the car said what do you want? They said you backed into our car and broke out our headlight and took off and did not stop. We want to report this and call the police. The man said who do you think the police will believe, you two long hairs or me?

At that point, the Lone Ranger got out of the car. He had his suit. He had his guns. He had his white hat and he had his mask. He looked at the man and said, "They will believe me, citizen." The man said, "Oh, I did not know it was you."

Saul was one guy who did not believe Jesus had been raised from the dead. Even though there were well over 500 people telling the world that He had been raised from the dead, he did not believe them.

So Jesus said I'll step out of heaven for a moment and appear to him because he will believe Me. In fact, he too would say, "I didn't know it was you."

The story is of the Apostle Paul. Paul was on a rampage against Christians who were saying Jesus was the resurrected God/Savior/Messiah/King. He did not believe He had risen from the dead so Jesus decided to step out of heaven and show him that He was alive.

THE CONVERSION AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE APOSTLE PAUL IS ABSOLUTE PROOF THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS LITERALLY RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

How do we explain the fact that Paul goes from being a persecutor of Christ to become a preacher for Christ? Only one plausible and possible explanation—Jesus Christ was literally alive and He appeared to Paul and that changed his life.

Paul writes in I Corinthians 15:8-9: "and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God."

There are three accounts of the conversion of the Apostle Paul in the book of Acts:

- 1) Acts 9:1-18 gives us Luke's third person researched historical account of Paul's conversion.
- 2) Acts 22:6-21 gives us Paul's own first person historical account of his conversion to Jews.
- 3) Acts 26:5-18 gives us Paul's own first person historical account of his conversion to Gentiles.

The conversion of Paul happens 2-3 years after Christ has ascended back up into heaven.

(Fact #1) - Saul/Paul hated these Christians who were telling people Jesus was alive and he had legal documents to track down men and women and put them in jail (Acts 9:1-2). Saul was breathing out threats and murders against these believers. He would literally go into houses and drag off men and women and put them in prison (Acts 8:3)

(Fact #2) - Many of these Christians had moved away from Jerusalem to Damascus which was about 150 miles to the Northeast and Saul/Paul was going to go after them (Acts 9:3).

Steven had been stoned in Jerusalem, so many believers got out of there. People who believed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ were being persecuted so they moved north. Saul heads out to track them down. Paul is not going to Damascus to befriend these people, but to destroy them. He wants nothing to do with them or their message concerning the fact that Jesus Christ is the Savior who is alive.

(Fact #3) - As he is traveling to Damascus he is stopped by a flashing light from heaven. (Acts 9:3)

We learn from **Acts 22:6** that it was about noon and the light was flashing and according to **Acts 26:13** the light was brighter than the sun. That light was shining all around Paul. That light specifically targeted him. It was apparently like a strobe light brighter than the sun that was flashing. The others, traveling with Paul, saw this light. When Paul sees this light he fell down on the ground (Acts 9:4; 22:7),

(Fact #4) - As the light is flashing from heaven there is a voice from heaven that all hear but only Paul understands (Acts 22:9). The voice is speaking to Paul in Hebrew (Acts 26:14).

The voice speaks to Paul and says a series of messages:

Message #1 - The voice uses a double proper noun repetition “Saul, Saul” (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14).

Only about 15 times in the Bible is a name repeated twice - i.e. Martha, Martha; Simon, Simon; Jerusalem, Jerusalem. When this happens it is emphasizing something very emotional and personal.

Message #2 - The voice asks Paul, “Why are you persecuting Me?” Acts 9:4; Acts 22:7; Acts 26:14

The exact grammatical emphatic construction all three statements: *ti me diwkeiç* Paul is after Christians and this voice says it is persecuting Me personally.

Message #3 - Paul responds by asking a question “Who are you, Lord?” Acts 9:5; 22:8; 26:15

When Paul uses the noun “Lord,” he does admit I am talking to God here. He truly knows this is the God of heaven audibly talking to him. He is on the ground and knows he is talking to God.

Message #4 - The voice said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” Acts 9:5; 22:8; 26:15

What a shock for Paul to hear this.

In the account Paul gives to the Jews in Acts 22, he says the voice also said, “I am Jesus the Nazarene whom you are persecuting.”

Paul despised people from Nazareth and so did the Jews. They said, “can any good thing even come out of Nazareth.” So this is a doubly powerful point because Paul would not ever concede that a Savior and Messiah could come from Nazareth unless something miraculous had changed him.

Message #5 - Paul is told to get up and go to Damascus and he would be told what to do next.
Acts 9:6; 22:10

Message #6 - Paul is told his specific purpose and the reason Jesus appeared to him.
Acts 26:16-18

- 1) Paul was an appointed minister.
- 2) Paul would be a witness of things he had seen and a witness of future appearances.
- 3) Paul would be rescued from Jewish people and Gentiles to whom he would be sent.
- 4) Paul’s ministry would be to proclaim to people that their sins could be forgiven by faith in Jesus Christ. 26:18

Paul immediately went to Damascus and his life was forever changed.

Now listen to what he said in Acts 26:22-23:

“So having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer, **and by reason of His resurrection from the dead** that He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and the Gentiles.”

Now the message Paul proclaimed is recorded for us in I Corinthians 15:1-4. He is out proclaiming Jesus Christ is raised from the dead and is the only one who can save you from your sins.

How do you explain the fact that a man who did not believe Jesus had been raised from the dead ends up preaching He was raised from the dead? He ends up being executed for his testimony. There is only one possible answer to this—Jesus Christ said Paul won’t believe them, but he will believe Me, and He literally stepped out of heaven and appeared to Paul. It changed him forever.

Now here is the question for you today—in whom do you believe? In what do you believe when it comes to saving you and forgiving you of all your sins? Here is what I know; you don’t have to believe me. But there will come a day when you will stand before Jesus Christ and you will believe Him. The problem is if you don’t believe in Him now, it will be too late so call on Him to save you and you will be saved.