

RESURRECTION: HOAX OR HISTORY

Jesus died at the cross....but that was only the beginning of the salvation process. He paid for our sins at the cross but if he had not risen from the dead we would still be in our sins - 1 Cor. 15:17. In fact, that would have made Jesus a liar and a sinner, because he had prophesied that he would die and be raised again. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an essential truth of our faith. If he had not risen from the dead, Jesus would be just like the leaders of other religions.....just a teacher with some moral ideas for this life but no answers for the afterlife.

I grew up in church and was born again as a young boy. I believed in the basic doctrines of the Christian faith and believed that the Bible was truly the Word of God. However, in my mid-20's I still wanted to be absolutely sure about it for myself. My answer came from a cassette tape.

At the time I was working 3 jobs. One of my part-time jobs was working at a ski resort hotel on the weekends. It was a fun job because I got to meet interesting people and instead of spending money on the weekends, I was making it. I became friends with a girl Brenda who worked in housekeeping. We had some good chats as both of us were committed Christians. One day she brought in a cassette tape for me which her boyfriend had given her. It was by Josh McDowell on the subject of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Later, after I listened to the message, I was thoroughly convinced in my mind that the resurrection of Jesus was a true historical fact. The evidence was so clear from historical records and from explanations given in the Bible. The transformation of Jesus' disciples was a powerful truth. When Jesus was arrested and went to the cross, they had deserted Him. After he was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven, they became fearless. They went right back to the city where Jesus was killed and began preaching about His death and resurrection. They were willing to risk their lives because they knew it was true!

As a skeptic, Josh McDowell spent over 700 hours studying the resurrection of Jesus. He said:

"I have come to the conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted upon the minds of men, or it is the most fantastic fact of history."

Josh became convinced of the truth of Jesus being raised from the dead. As a teen, he hated his alcoholic father who was known as the town drunk. Josh even urinated in his father's beer bottles out of spite. But God transformed Josh when he finally gave his life to Christ and so did his father, who went on to lead many to Christ in that little town. Since then, Josh has probably spoken to more college students than most anyone in all of history. He has been a great defender of the faith and powerful voice on issues facing young people today. I thank God for his influence in my life.

The religious leaders at the time of Jesus requested that the Roman leader Pilate place a Roman guard around the tomb and place the Roman seal on its entrance. The large stone that was rolled to close the tomb weighed between 3000 and 4000 lbs. A Roman guard consisted of 10 to 30 soldiers. If the seal was broken and the body of Jesus was tampered with, they would face execution.

In the book of Acts we read where Peter was put in prison and was guarded by 4 squadrons of 4 soldiers each. When the church began to pray for his release, an angel showed up in prison and got Peter out. The Roman soldiers were then **executed** because they had not done their duty to keep Peter in prison. - Acts 12:18-19.

When Jesus was resurrected, he left the tomb on his own. An angel came and rolled the stone back from the entrance.....not to let Jesus out, but to let others in to see that he was gone! When Peter looked into the tomb he saw the linens and also the burial cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. **It was folded up by itself.** - John 20:7 NIV. I remember the time that I took note of that and thought of my mother's reminders as a boy.....'make your bed'. :) Think of it.....Jesus is involved

with the greatest miracle of all time, and before he leaves the tomb, he folds up the cloth. Jesus takes care of little details that the average person would overlook. We can draw comfort that **Jesus**, as risen Lord, **knows and cares about the little things** in our lives! [The linens left in the tomb were a sure sign that thieves had not stolen the body because they would have not unwrapped them there.] The Shroud of Turin is another topic for another time.

One of Satan's chief weapons against man was the fear of death. Most people do not like to think about it's reality or if they do, they go through all sorts of rituals to try to face it. We no longer should be afraid of death if we trust Jesus.

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity to that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. - Hebrews 2:14-15

Jesus destroyed/disarmed the one who held the power of death. Jesus has the keys to death and Hades, he is alive for ever and ever! - Rev. 1:18

Jesus is the **firstborn** from the dead. - Colossians 1:18 Some teach that Jesus was 'born again'. Not so. The Greek word used there is not the one that means first created. Instead the Greek word used here for firstborn means: **source of all, pre-eminent in rank**

When a true believer in Jesus dies....his spirit goes to be with Christ in heaven. - Philippians 1:23
When Jesus returns to earth the believer's body is raised from the dead - 1 Cor. 15:20-23.

Jesus is the first person to conquer death. He is not the last. His victory is also ours! Jesus truly is the firstborn (the first in rank) from the dead and we rejoice that we will follow Him all the way to the heavenly places. Amen.

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