

Fact 4 The Unlikely Conversion of a Jealous Brother

The Bible records that Jesus' brothers didn't believe in Him while He was alive (John 7:5). Even so, His brother James became the pastor of the church in Jerusalem following Jesus' death. Why would James want to serve a dead Jesus when he wouldn't follow a living One? Something caused James to change his mind. The earliest Christian tradition tells of the risen Jesus appearing to His brother James (1 Corinthians 15:3-9). James was eventually tortured and killed for serving his brother. Why?

James was convinced that he had **in fact** met the risen Christ.

Fact 5 The Empty Tomb

In the aftermath of Jesus' crucifixion, belief in Jesus spread rapidly. Jesus had been killed for the express purpose of preventing this outcome. Both Jewish and Roman governments had every reason to intervene, and limit the growing influence of Jesus Christ. Indeed, Jesus was proving to be a bigger problem after dying than He had ever been before.

Nothing would have smothered Christianity in the cradle more effectively than lashing Jesus' rotting corpse to a donkey-cart, and parading it through Jerusalem for all to see. But that never happened. Why not?

The tomb that Jesus was buried in was the property of a well-known Jewish statesman familiar to both the Jewish and Roman governments. They didn't forget where they put Jesus. **In fact**, on the third day, Jesus wasn't there anymore – but His clothes were.

Did the disciples come out of fearful hiding to steal Jesus' body? Did they lie about it for the rest of their lives to no personal benefit, even enduring torture and death to preserve their lie? Why didn't any of them break?

Because Jesus Is Risen.

Why Does it Matter?

If Jesus is **in fact** risen, then **Jesus IS** in fact who He claims to be. **HE IS** God; **HE IS** with God; and **HE IS** the Lamb of God given to save the world. **Jesus IS Love** come down to die for you, so that in Him you can be raised up to live. Because Jesus is risen, **HE IS** True and Trustworthy. His question for you is:

"Who Do You Say I AM?"

Isaiah 53 – Matthew 16:15 – Acts 4:8-12

Is Jesus Risen?



If **HE IS**, then Easter is not just a fun story for children, it is the most important event in human history.

But if He isn't, then on the Bible's own admission – those who follow Jesus "are of all men the most pitiable" 1 Corinthians 15:19.

So the question is...

Is He or Not?

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“Just the Facts”

There are five historical facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth. These facts are agreed upon by an overwhelming majority of historical scholars, whether they believe in God or not. Not only do you have to decide what best explains each fact. You must decide what best explains them all.

Fact 1

Jesus Really Lived, and Was Executed by Crucifixion

History remembers Jesus of Nazareth as an itinerant Jewish preacher, and the adopted son of a Galilean carpenter. Following a brief but lively public ministry, Jesus was tried by Jewish and Gentile courts on a charge of blasphemy for His claim to be uniquely “One” with God. For this, Jesus was rejected by the leaders of Israel, and then scourged and crucified to death by a band of professional Roman soldiers. The life and death of Jesus are witnessed by the 27 books of the New Testament.

In fact, Jesus’ life and death are established by independent Roman and Jewish sources as well (Josephus, Tacitus, and The Talmud, among others).

Fact 2

Jesus’ Disciples Believed They Saw Him Risen

Prior to His death, Jesus’ disciples anticipated that He, as the long-awaited Jewish Messiah, would deliver Israel from political subjugation to Rome. The furthest thing from their minds was the possibility that their Messiah would be arrested and put to death.

When He was, Jesus’ followers abandoned Him and hid themselves away, lest they join Him in being tortured and killed.

Soon after, all but Judas Iscariot (who betrayed Jesus and died at his own hands) began boldly teaching that they had seen Jesus risen, and that everlasting life with God is promised to those who give their love and trust to Jesus Christ for life and the forgiveness of sin.

The disciples had nothing material to gain from their teachings. Indeed, they suffered poverty, torture, and death for following Jesus. Still, not one of them changed their story. Some profound experience changed and united these men – but what was it?

The disciples were convinced that they had **in fact** met the risen Christ.

Fact 3

The Unlikely Conversion of a Sworn Enemy

Saul of Tarsus was a student of the eminent first-century Jewish Rabbi Gamaliel. Saul was a Pharisee who saw Christianity as a vile heresy to be quickly and decisively stamped out. He oversaw the execution of Christians, and travelled far and wide to pull Christians out of their homes to face torture and death. Saul was a soldier of inquisition.

It was on such a journey that Saul met the risen Jesus (Acts 9). In the aftermath of that meeting, Saul of Tarsus became better known as Paul the Apostle.

Paul is the most influential Christian missionary of all time. It was the sworn enemy of Jesus Christ who eventually penned much of the New Testament, and greatly influenced the rest of it. Something profound caused Paul to change his mind. It is ironic that Paul was eventually tortured and killed for following Jesus. Why?

Paul was convinced that he had **in fact** met the risen Christ.