

“There is No Salvation Unless One Believes Jesus Rose from the Dead”

April 5, 2015, Pastor Darryl Knappen, Cornerstone Church, Alexandria, MN

But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:8-9 ESV)

Introduction

Just how critical is the resurrection to us?

No resurrection – no eternal heaven:

(1 Peter 1:3-4 ESV) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,

No resurrection- no forgiveness of sins:

(1 Corinthians 15:13-18 ESV) But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

Did Jesus say he was going to be resurrected from the dead and did he throw this out as a test of His divinity and reliability? See Matthew 12:38-40; John 2:18-22;

- Therefore if the resurrection never happened, Jesus is a fraud. If it did, He is who he says He is.
- This test is infinitely greater than the tests other religions use to prove their validity.
 - Muslims say believe us because the Qur’an could only be written by God!
 - Mormons say believe us because only the Book of Mormon could have been written by God.
 - Both of these religions say their way to God is the only way.

Can the resurrection of Christ be proven?

- That depends on a person’s definition of proof!
 - How do we know George Washington existed? Or that you weren’t created seconds ago by aliens who gave you a fake memory bank?
 - It is impossible to have a 100% certainty, instead we must have a high degree of probability, and when it comes to the resurrection of Jesus we have the highest degree of probability than any other worldview.
 - Historians use sources that are trustworthy to produce a reliable record of actual events, since we don’t have videotape evidence of the event (couldn’t those also be doctored?).
 - Even in our court system, juries are asked to conclude not on the basis of 100% proof (since that is impossible) but proof that is beyond a reasonable doubt.

Will a person become a Christian after being convinced of the reasonableness of the resurrection?

- Not without the H.S. bringing regeneration to the person’s heart, but evidence is one more tool the H.S. will use in bringing regeneration.

Historians are like detectives, they use these sets of principles to ascertain the truthfulness of their position:

1. Multiple witnesses are more reliable than a single witness.

2. Agreement from an enemy is better than agreement from a friend,
3. People usually do not give testimony that would embarrass them,
4. Eyewitness testimony is better than second hand,
5. Earlier testimony is more reliable than later testimony.

The following arguments are attested to by nearly every scholar as reliable facts regardless of their stand on the divine origin of Scripture.

Fact #1 Jesus died by crucifixion.

- Besides the four gospel accounts of the crucifixion, both Josephus, Lucian of Samasota and Tacitus specifically reference the crucifixion of Christ.
- The Talmud also records that “on the Eve of the Passover, Yeshu was hanged (being hanged on a tree was used to describe crucifixion in antiquity).

Fact #2 Jesus’ disciples believed that he rose and appeared to them.

- They remained true to their testimony even to death. They had no motive to lie.
- Their testimony was backed up by outside sources, one being the Apostle Paul who was a former enemy of the Christians.
- Oral traditions that pre-dated the New Testament agree that the disciples believed he rose. 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 is a creed memorized by the early church.
- The four gospels and the Book of Acts all testify the resurrection and even if someone claimed they were not inspired, they are still original documents that any historian would use to reconstruct history accurately.
- The Church fathers, who rubbed shoulders with the apostles testified that the apostles believed they had seen the risen Lord, including:
 - Clement, Bishop of Rome (30 A.D. -100 A.D.)
 - Polycarp, Bishop of the Church in Smyrna (69-155 A.D.)

Fact #3 The Greatest persecutor of the Church (Paul) was suddenly changed by a personal appearance of the resurrected Christ.

- Remember, Paul was an enemy of Christ and he was willing to suffer and die for what he saw.

Fact #4 James, the skeptical half-brother of Christ, was suddenly changed.

Fact #5 The tomb was empty!

- If the body were still in the tomb, it would have been simple for the Sanhedrin and people like Saul (Paul) to request an exhumation to discredit the new religion. No such request was made because no such body could be exhumed. The distinguishing marks on Jesus’ body would have been plainly identifiable, even after several weeks of decomposition.
- Even the enemies of Christ had to admit the tomb was empty! (Matthew 28:12-13 the critics charge the disciples with stealing the body when if the body were still in the grave they could have pointed to an occupied tomb.
- The testimony of the women. Women were not considered to be reliable witnesses at all in Jewish culture and were not allowed to testify in legal court settings. Why then would the early disciples, if they were concocting a false story put the women first as their main sources of eyewitnesses?
- Former Oxford University church historian William Wand writes, "All the strictly historical evidence we have is in favor of [the empty tomb], and those scholars who reject it ought to recognize that they do so on some other ground than that of scientific history."¹

¹ William Wand, *Christianity: A Historical Religion?* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson, 1972), 93-94. As quoted in *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* by Gary Habermas and Michael Licona Kindle edition