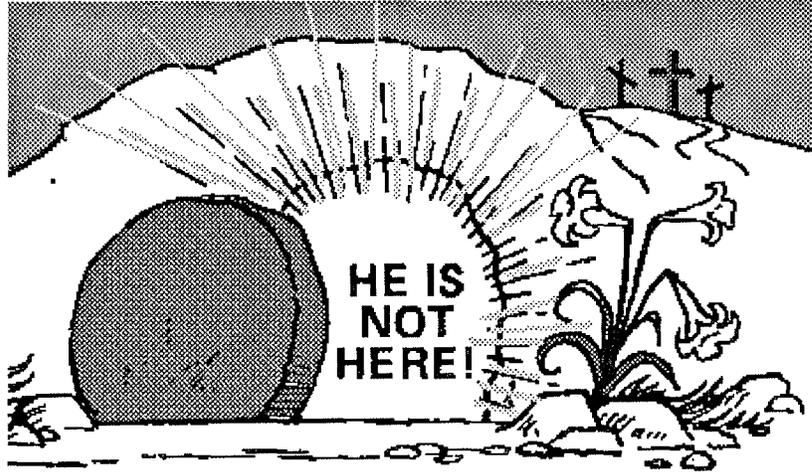


## CHAPTER 15

# The Resurrection Of Christ



If men really want to see the LOVE OF GOD, where must they look? What great historical event demonstrates and proves that God is a God of LOVE (see John 3:16; Romaine 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:14; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:2,25; 1 John 3:16; 4:9-10)?

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If men really want to see the POWER OF GOD, where must they look? What great historical event demonstrates and proves that God is a God of POWER (see Roman 1:4; Ephesians 1:19-20; Philippians 3:10)?

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When God wants to demonstrate His GRACE and MERCY, what (or who) does He point to (Ephesians 2:7 and compare 1 Timothy 1:14-16)?

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### How To Destroy Christianity

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is mentioned at least 104 times in the New Testament. Without the resurrection there would be no gospel, no salvation, no Christianity and no message of hope for men. As Christians we must not only believe in the resurrection (Romans 10:9), but we should also know **WHY** we believe! Our FAITH is founded upon **FACTS** and the greatest **FACT** of all is that "GOD...RAISED UP JESUS" (Acts 5:30). If the enemies of the gospel can destroy this **FACT**, then they have destroyed the basis for our FAITH. Suppose an atheist or a skeptic wished to destroy the Christian faith. Let him prove that Christ never rose from the dead. When that is done, he has destroyed Christianity. His work is done.

## The Claims of Christ

Suppose a religious or political leader living today began to make the following announcement over the radio: "I want you all to know that when I go to London, my enemies will murder me, my body will be buried, but in less than a week's time, I will be raised from the dead and hundreds of people will see me alive!" What an extraordinary prediction coming from the lips of any man!

In **Chapter 6**, we studied some of the remarkable claims of Christ and we learned that Jesus clearly claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God. As you study the following verses, you will see that Jesus made yet another amazing claim--that He would rise again from the dead (see Matthew 16:21; 17:9; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; 26:32; Mark 9:10; Luke 9:22; John 2:18-22; etc.). Was this something Jesus told His disciples only, or did His enemies know about this claim as well (Matthew 27:62-64)? \_\_\_\_\_ If the resurrection was a HOAX (if Jesus never really rose from the dead), then we would have to say that Jesus was a D \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 27:63). Did Jesus really rise again from the dead AS \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 28:6; compare Luke 24:44-46)?

## Something Happened!

Consider **Peter**. He cowardly denied Christ three times (Luke 22:54-62), but 53 days later he boldly proclaimed and confessed Christ before thousands (Acts 2, see especially verses 22-24, 36, 40-41). Not even imprisonments and terrible threatenings by the Jewish leaders could silence this fearless preacher (Acts 4:1-21; 5:27-32,41-42)! **SOMETHING HAPPENED!**

**James**, the Lord's half-brother (the son of Mary and Joseph), did not \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ (John 7:5), but later he became the leader of the great church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:17-18). James even described himself as "a \_\_\_\_\_ of God and of the \_\_\_\_\_" (James 1:1). How can we explain this change in James (see 1 Corinthians 15:7)? **SOMETHING HAPPENED!**

Doubting **Thomas** refused to believe in the resurrection unless he could actually see (and touch) the risen Christ (John 20:24-25). He saw no hope beyond the grave (John 11:16). Nothing less than conclusive empirical evidence would convince him. Yet tradition tells us that Thomas later became a great missionary to Persia or India. What changed a skeptic into a believer? What transformed "doubting Thomas" into "convinced Thomas" (John 20:26-29)? **SOMETHING HAPPENED!**

**Saul** was one of the greatest enemies the church of Christ ever had. His life was devoted to destroying Christians (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:9; 1 Timothy 1:13). One day Saul journeyed to the city of Damascus and before he arrived something happened which drastically changed his life (Acts 9:1-9; 1 Corinthians 15:8). The Church's greatest persecutor soon became the Church's greatest Apostle! **SOMETHING HAPPENED** on that road to Damascus!

The **eleven disciples** at the time of the arrest of Christ ran like scared rabbits (Matthew 26:56)! Weeks later these same men became powerful, bold preachers who were willing to be martyred for what they believed! In the first century, the entire Roman empire felt the impact of the gospel that these men preached (compare Colossians 1:5-6, 23)! The gospel they preached was that Christ "\_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:4). Do men usually lay down their lives for a doctrine they do not believe? \_\_\_\_\_ **SOMETHING HAPPENED** to these men (see 1 Corinthians 15:5)!

The **Christian church** was founded in the first century and it has been in existence ever since. As H. D. A. Major once commented, "Had the crucifixion of Jesus ended His disciples' experience of Him, it is hard to see how the Christian church could have come into existence." But the Christian church did come into existence! **SOMETHING must have HAPPENED!**

The Jews' original day of rest and worship was Saturday because in Genesis it says that God had finished His creation and rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:1-3). It was written into their holy laws (Exodus 20:8-11). **The Sabbath** is one of the supporting columns of Judaism. One of the most reverent things in the life of a Jew was the keeping of the Sabbath. From time immemorial the Jews had celebrated the seventh day of the week as their day of rest and worship, but we find the early Christians (most of whom were Jews) in the book of Acts, and also in early Christian writings, assembling on the first day of the week (Sunday). Few things are more difficult to accomplish than the change in a holy day that has been celebrated for centuries and is one of the most cherished customs of the people. These Christians actually succeeded in changing this age-old and theologically-backed day of rest, and they began worshipping God on Sunday. Yet, remember, **THEY WERE JEWS THEMSELVES!** This was one of the biggest decisions any religious body of men have ever made!! Something tremendous must have occurred that led to this change. **SOMETHING must have HAPPENED!** Something spectacular must have occurred on the first day of the week that so impressed the early Christians that they changed their day of worship. [See our study entitled **The Sabbath and The Lord's Day.**]

Has **your life** been transformed by the risen Christ? Have you experienced a wonderful change? **Has SOMETHING HAPPENED to you?**

### **The Appearances of Christ**

There are at least six books in the New Testament, written by five different men, which tell us about the resurrection appearances of Christ--Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, and 1 Corinthians. At least three of these Bible writers actually saw the risen Lord--Matthew, John and Paul--and thus they wrote from first hand experience. As we study these inspired documents, we learn that Christ appeared to the following people, in the following order:

1. Christ was first seen by Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; John 20:1-18).
2. Christ was seen by the women returning from the tomb (Matthew 28:9-10).
3. Christ was seen by Peter, perhaps in the afternoon (1 Corinthians 15:5; Luke 24:34).
4. Christ was seen by Cleopas and another disciple on the road to Emmaus, probably in the late afternoon (Luke 24:13-35; Mark 16:12).
5. Christ was seen by the ten disciples (Thomas absent) and others that first Sunday evening (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-24; 1 Corinthians 15:5).

6. Christ was seen by the eleven disciples (Thomas present) one week later (John 20:26-29).
7. Christ was seen by the seven disciples by the Sea of Tiberias which is the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-22; see especially verse 14).
8. Christ was seen by more than \_\_\_\_\_ people in Galilee (1 Corinthians 15:6; probably this is the same appearance mentioned in Matthew 28:16-18). *Note:* Remember, the book of 1 Corinthians was written about 55 A. D. (more than 20 years after the death and resurrection of Christ). Yet even at this time there were more than 250 (and probably more than 300) people still living who had actually seen the risen Christ (1 Corinthians 15:6) and who could testify that they had seen Him!
9. Christ was seen by James, although little is said about this appearance (1 Corinthians 15:7).
10. Christ was seen by His disciples on the day He ascended into heaven (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:3-12).

After the ascension, Christ was also seen by Stephen (Acts 7:55-56), by Saul or Paul (Acts 9:1-7; 1 Cor.9:1; 15:8) and by John (Revelation 1:9-18).

It is important to notice that Christ was seen by all kinds of people at different times and under different circumstances. Several times Christ was seen by seven or more people at once. Sometimes just one person was present. On one occasion there were two people present. On another occasion there were more than 500 people present who saw the risen Christ. Of those who saw the resurrected Lord, some were women and some were men. One was a tax-collector, others were fishermen, one was a skeptic and another was an enemy of Christ (Saul of Tarsus).

The risen Lord Jesus was also seen under all sorts of conditions. Some saw Him in a garden; others saw Him in a room; others again talked with Him on a road; others saw Him by the Sea of Galilee. He appeared more than once in Judea; He appeared more than once in Galilee; once He appeared north of Galilee near Damascus (Acts 9). Some met Him on a mountain; some saw Him at the dawn of day; others saw Him during the bright light of day, and others again at night. He was seen for a period of \_\_\_\_\_ days (Acts 1:3). In this same verse, Dr. Luke, the careful historian, underscores the certainty of the resurrection as proven by the post-resurrection appearances of Christ: "He showed Himself \_\_\_\_\_ after His **passion** (death) by many infallible \_\_\_\_\_" (Acts 1:3).

Those who actually saw the living Christ then became WITNESSES of the resurrection. Look up the following verses in the book of Acts, and see how the term "WITNESS" is connected with the idea of the "RESURRECTION" of Christ:

Acts 1:22	Acts 5:30-32
Acts 2:32	Acts 10:39-42
Acts 3:15	Acts 13:30-31
Acts 4:33	Compare Luke 24:46-48 and <b>1 Corinthians 15:15.</b>

Do you believe these men were TRUE WITNESSES or FALSE WITNESSES (compare John 21:24)? \_\_\_\_\_ Keep in mind that these men were persecuted, punished and even put to death because they spoke concerning the resurrection of Christ and joyfully declared Him to be alive (compare Acts 4:2)! Did these men really believe what they preached?

### **Bodily Resurrection**

Many so-called "Christians" claim to believe in the resurrection of Christ, but they deny that the actual body of Christ was raised from the dead. They might say that "His spirit lives on" or "His influence lives on" or "His memory lives on" but they do not believe that Jesus lives today in a glorified, resurrected body. [We could also say that the influence of Abraham Lincoln lives on or the memory of Mickey Mantle lives on, but this certainly does not mean that these men rose from the dead!]

What do the Scriptures really say about this? The living Christ who appeared to more than 500 people on one occasion was no mere "spirit" or "ghost" or "influence" or "memory." He could be held by the \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 28:9). Mary was able to cling to Jesus (John 20:17– "touch Me not" can be translated "stop clinging to me"). He could walk in the country (Luke 24:15). He invited the disciples to \_\_\_\_\_ Him or to touch Him (Luke 24:39). His disciples could see and feel that He had F \_\_\_\_\_ and B \_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 24:39). He could cook F \_\_\_\_\_ (John 21:9) and He could E \_\_\_\_\_ it (Luke 24:42)! The marks and scars of His sufferings could be seen and felt (John 20:25,27). Does the Scripture support a BODILY resurrection, or merely a "spiritual" resurrection?

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### **The Importance Of The Resurrection**

Suppose the resurrection were nothing but a lie--the biggest hoax known to history. Suppose the disciples were deluded and deceived (they thought Christ had risen from the dead, but they were mistaken). Or suppose the disciples were deliberately trying to deceive others (they knew Christ had not risen from the dead, but they tried to fool others into believing that He had). What would this mean? Read 1 Corinthians 15:14-15, 17-19, and list the six things that would be true if Christ had not risen from the dead:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

We **know**, however, that Christ is risen indeed! In 1 Corinthians 15:20 we read the glorious good news: "BUT now \_\_\_\_\_ Christ risen from the dead!" He is risen most certainly! And because He has risen from the dead, the following six things are true (notice how these six things correspond to the six things you filled in above):

1. The early Christians **preached in power** concerning the resurrection and their preaching was true (Acts 4:33)!
2. Our faith is in a risen Saviour who LIVES (Gal. 2:20)!
3. The Christian apostles were not false witnesses but true witnesses because Christ is risen indeed (John 21:24)!
4. Those who put their faith in a risen Christ have complete forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:40-43)!
5. Those believers who have died are now in the presence of their risen Saviour (Philippians 1:21,23; 2 Cor. 5:8)!
6. Those who hope in Christ are the most blessed people on the face of the earth, not only in this life, but in the life to come (1 Tim. 4:8-10; Psalm 146:5)!

Do you believe in your heart that GOD HAS RAISED THE LORD JESUS FROM THE DEAD?

\_\_\_\_\_ The Bible clearly teaches that those who disbelieve and deny the resurrection of Christ are **not saved** (**Romans 10:9**; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4)! To be saved you must believe the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4) and the resurrection is one of the fundamental facts of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:4).

### **False Theories**

Those who deny the resurrection have tried in vain to come up with satisfactory explanations for why the tomb was empty. Different people have suggested the following weak theories (except for #5 which I made up myself):

#### **1) The disciples stole the body of Jesus.**

First of all, how would they have gotten past the Roman soldiers who guarded the tomb and how would they have moved the giant rock which was rolled against the tomb's entrance? But even more significant is this: If the disciples had stolen the body, then they would have known that Jesus was dead. Why then would they have gone forth and fearlessly preached that He rose

again? Most of them were killed because of the message that they preached. Men seldom lay down their lives for what they know to be a lie or a falsehood.

**2) The women went to the wrong tomb and found it to be empty.**

If they had made such a mistake it is certain that the authorities would have quickly called this fact to their attention. If the enemies of Christianity had known where the body was, would they not have produced it? This would have proven once and for all that the resurrection was a falsehood. All they had to do was to produce the body, but they never did.

**3) The people who claimed to see Christ actually had hallucinations and visions. They thought they saw Christ but they really didn't.**

This might answer one or two isolated cases, but it's impossible that 500 people on one occasion would all be afflicted by mass hallucinations (1 Corinthians 15:6). And again, this could have easily been answered by bringing forth the dead body of Jesus.

**4) Jesus did not really die on the cross, and when He was put in the tomb He was still alive. When people later saw Him alive, it was because He had never died!**

I once read the following in a newspaper clipping: Q: Our preacher said, on Easter, that Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think?  
A: Beat your preacher with a cat-of-nine-tails with 39 heavy strokes; buffet him repeatedly; nail him to a cross, hang him in the sun for six hours; run a spear through his heart, embalm him; put him in an airless tomb for many hours and see what happens!

**5) A UFO came and took away the body out of the tomb by means of a molecular transporter device.**

Can you think of any other theories or explanations that the unbelievers could dream up to explain away the resurrection?

### **Two Men Who Were Willing To Examine the Evidence**

The eighteenth century was the darkest period religiously in the history of England since the time of the Reformation. It was the age of the great deists, agnostics, rationalists and unbelievers, when "all men of rank are [were] thought to be infidels." Like so many of the literary men of his time, George Lyttelton and his friend Gilbert West were led at first to reject the Christian religion.

Fully persuaded that the Bible was an imposture, they were determined to expose the cheat. Lord Lyttelton chose the Conversion of Paul and Mr. West the Resurrection of Christ for the subject of hostile criticism. Both sat down to their respective tasks full of prejudice; but the result of their separate attempts was, that they were both converted by their efforts to overthrow the truth of Christianity. They came together, not as they expected, to exult over an imposture exposed to ridicule, but to lament over their own folly and to felicitate each other on their joint conviction that the Bible was the Word of God. Their able inquiries have furnished two of the most valuable treatises in favor of revelation, one entitled "OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL" and the other "OBSERVATIONS ON THE RESURRECTION CHRIST."

--From "Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul" (introduction by J. L. Campbell) as published in *The Fundamentals*, 1917 (Volume 2).

Other Religious Leaders

Abraham's tomb	occupied
Moses' tomb	occupied
Confucius' tomb	occupied
Buddha's tomb	occupied
Mohammed's tomb	occupied
<b>Jesus' tomb</b>	<b>EMPTY!</b>

The decision is now yours to make; the evidence speaks for itself. It says very clearly--

Christ Is Risen Indeed!!!

Has your life been changed by the risen Christ (2 Cor.5:14-17)???

