

Resurrection of Christ

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Introduction

The death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ are the most important events in human history. That Jesus Christ rose from the dead is an established historical fact verified by many eye-witnesses and by a great deal of corroborating evidence.

This paper provides a concise outline for studying this important topic, including the circumstances surrounding the resurrection of Christ, the various proofs of the resurrection as a historical event, the resurrection of Christian saints of different dispensations, and the importance of the doctrine of resurrection to the church age believer.

In studying this topic, look up all of the scripture verses and read the complete context of each passage. These notes are just a guide for studying the Bible; so the really important information is found in the Bible itself.

Resurrection Order of Events

- After Christ is taken down from the cross, Pontius Pilate orders His body turned over to Joseph of Arimathea for burial. Matt. 27:57–60.
- Pilate then orders a military guard to be placed at the tomb. Matt. 27:62–66.
- Jesus Christ has voluntarily laid aside the powers of His own deity, with respect to His human body. Therefore, in accordance with the divine decrees, God the Father gave the orders for Christ's resurrection from the dead. 1 Cor. 15:15.
- The Holy Spirit was the agent of the resurrection that God used His power to bring Christ to life. 1 Pet. 3:18

This verse does not fit.

- After Christ leaves the tomb, God sends an angel to roll away the stone to demonstrate

to the world that Christ had risen. This is accompanied by a great earthquake. Matt. 28:1,2

- It is at this point that Satan is once again made aware of the victory of Jesus Christ over death and the grave and His triumph in the angelic warfare. 1 Cor. 15:54–57.
- Mary (the mother of James), Mary Magdalene and Salomé come to the tomb. Mark 16:1
- Mary Magdalene, upon seeing the stone rolled away, runs to tell the disciples. John 20:1,2
- Mary and Salomé then see the angel who tells them that Jesus had risen. Mark 16:5,6.
- Peter and John come to the tomb after hearing Mary Magdalene's report. John 20:1,2
- Peter is told that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, he enters the tomb, and he wonders at what he had seen. Luke 24:10-12.
- Mary Magdalene, who had not heard the angel's report, returns to the tomb, and does not recognize Christ when she sees Him. John 20:11–18.
- It is to Mary Magdalene that Christ first reveals Himself in resurrected power. He starts by establishing that He is now operating on a higher level than she is, even though He has not yet been glorified at the ascension. John 20:17

A Description of the Resurrection

Christ was physically dead before being taken down from the cross; He was not merely unconscious, as some critics have claimed in the swoon theory.

- The soldiers declared Him dead! They would have suffered severe punishment for not making sure that any prisoner was dead before being removed from the cross. Mark 15:45; John 19:33.
- The blood and water flowing from His side is a medical indication of physical death. John 19:34

- After being taken from the cross he was prepared for burial and locked in a tomb, eliminating all possibility of His receiving medical attention. Matthew 27:62-66
- The women came to the tomb prepared to anoint a dead body. Mark 16:1
- If He had not died physically, He would not have been worthy to be a sin offering to God. Matt. 26:12 with Lev. 2:1-16

Christ's body could not have been removed by His followers, as some have claimed. There are too many contradictory facts against that conclusion.

- The disciples of Christ were afraid and had already deserted Him. Matt. 26:69–75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:55-62; John 18:15-27.
- Their boldest leader, Peter, had denied Him three times. Matthew 26:69-75
- The tomb was sealed with the imperial seal of Rome; to break it and enter the tomb would itself be punishable by death. Matthew 27:64-66
- The tomb was guarded by Roman soldiers. To attack them would have been suicidal; such an attack was considered an act of insurrection, to be punished by crucifixion. Matt. 27:62-66
- The followers who buried Christ, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, would not have arranged to bury Him in such a prominent place if they had intended to hide His body. Matthew 27:57-60
- His followers believed that he was still in the tomb on resurrection morning, indicating that there was no plot to steal His body. Matthew 27:61, 28:11-15

Christ's resurrection was a bodily resurrection. He came out of the tomb, not as a wounded, crippled man, but as a mighty conqueror. He showed no after effects from the terrible ordeal He had gone through.

- Christ had personally declared before His death that He would be resurrected bodily. John 2:19-21; Matt. 12:40 with Rev. 1:18

- The angels at the tomb declared that He had been resurrected. Luke 24:6–8 The tomb was empty, and the grave clothes were folded and in order only minutes after the tomb was opened. Mark 16:6; John 20:5-7
- Christ declared that He was flesh and bone, eliminating the spirit theory and the vision theory. Luke 24:39-40
- The five women to whom he appeared touched his feet and held him. Matt. 28:9
- Christ ate food after His resurrection. This would have been impossible if it was just a vision or a psychological mass delusion. Luke 24:41-43
- His body was described in detail after the resurrection by various witnesses. John 20:25,27,28; 21:7; Luke 24:34-40
- It would be impossible to understand several other Bible passages except from the standpoint of a literal, bodily resurrection. John 5:28,29; 1 Cor. 15:20; Eph. 1:19,20
- His body could be handled and touched, therefore it had to have substance. Matt. 28:9; John 20:27
- However, His body was able to pass through solid objects like the tomb and closed doors, etc. John 20:19-26; Luke 24:36
- His body was such that He was able to make Himself appear and disappear. Luke 24:15
- His skin showed scars and nail prints; His body retains the scar of the wound in his side and hands. The believer's resurrection body will not have any imperfections! This was prophesied in Zech. 12:10 and Psalm. 22:16; The fulfillment of the prophesies is recorded in John 20:25-27.
- He breathed; but He did not necessarily need to breathe. John 20:22
- He carried on conversations, so He had to have vocal cords and the use of air. His voice was immediately recognizable. Luke 24; John 20:16, 26
- He ate, so His body had a digestive system; but He did not have to eat to live eternally. Luke 24:30
- Christ is able, in His resurrection body, to travel through space. Acts 1:9 with Heb. 1:3.
- His resurrection body is indestructable and eternal. Rev. 19:11-21

Several other individuals had been raised from the dead; but in each case the person died again. Christ's resurrection was thus unique in that He ever lives to make intercession for us.

- The son of the widow of Zarephath, 1 Kings 17:17-24
- The Shunammite's son, 2 Kings 4:17–37
- Jairus's daughter, Mark 5:22-43
- The young man of Nain, Luke 7:11-17
- Lazarus, John 11:1-44
- Tabitha, Acts 9:36-42
- Eutyclus, Acts 20:9-12

The Resurrection Body of Christ

- The risen Christ had a real human body that was recognizable as such. Luke 24; John 20:26–29
- His body was composed of flesh and bones but had no blood. Luke 24:39,40

The Appearances of Jesus Christ After His Resurrection

- To Mary Magdalene - John 20:15-17; Mark 16:9-11
- To Mary Magdalene and another woman - Matt. 28:9-10
- To Peter on the afternoon of the resurrection and to the twelve living disciples- 1 Cor. 15:5
- To two Christians on the road to Emmaus (Cleophas and another person) - Luke 24:13–33; Mark 16:12
- To ten disciples - John 20:19-25
- To eleven disciples including Thomas - John 20:26-29; Mark 16:14

- To seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee - John 21:1,2
- To five hundred Christians - 1 Cor. 15:6
- To Jesus' half brother James, who had been an unbeliever until the resurrection - 1 Cor. 15:7 (This verse is pre resurrection of Christ); Acts 1:14
- To eleven disciples on a mountain near Galilee - Matt. 28:16-20
- To the believers at the ascension - Acts 1:3-11
- To Stephen after the ascension - Acts 7:55,56
- To the Apostle Paul on several occasions after the ascension - Acts 9:1-8; 18:9; 22:17-18; 23:11; 27:23; 1 Cor. 15:8; Gal. 1:12-17.
- To John on the island of Patmos - Rev. 1:12-20; (This verse does not fit the context).
- The unbelieving chief priest and the elders of the Sanhedrin were eyewitnesses to the empty tomb. Matt. 28:11-12
- Mary Magdalene, Matt. 28:1,6; John 20:15-17; Mark 16:9-11
- Three women, including named as Mary, the mother of James, Mary Magdalene and Salomé, (This verse is silent on names and number of people.) Mark 16:1-6
- (Peter is not mentioned in this verse and the verse context differs.)
- Matthew, by written testimony, Matt. 28:6.
- John, by written testimony, John 20:1-8
- The written testimony of facts as given by witnesses, Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:3. All people, in fact, mentioned in the previous section, to whom Christ appeared after His resurrection, were eyewitnesses.
- The fact of the resurrection of Christ may also be inferred from a number of other sources. For example, Josephus, in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, chapter 3:3, states that Jesus Christ was resurrected and had made appearances on the earth.
- The word of God is the written testimony that Christ was resurrected from the dead. 1 Cor. 15:3,4.
- God Himself is a witness to the resurrection. 1 Cor. 15:15; (Verse context does not fit.) 1 Peter 3:18.
- Christ's resurrection is testified to by angels. Matt. 28:5,6; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:5,6; Acts 1:10,11
- The resurrection was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Job 19:25-27; Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 52:13-15; Zech. 12:10

Proofs of Facts Surrounding the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The proof that the resurrection of Jesus Christ actually occurred as a historical event is established by numerous supporting facts or evidences. Two of the best study sources for extensive historical information about the resurrection are two books by Josh McDowell entitled *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* and *More Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. These books are available at Christian bookstores and are highly recommended.

The most important proof is that of the testimony of the people who were actual eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Christ. It is important to note that the following people would be qualified eyewitnesses in any court of law, either in Roman or Hebrew courts of the time or in modern American courts. To qualify formally to give eyewitness testimony, the witness must be shown to be mentally competent as well as having been competent at the time the events occurred. The witness must also be able to withstand an examination of his own character as a basis for accepting his testimony.

- The Roman soldiers assigned to guard the tomb were objective witnesses to the resurrection, even though they did not believe in the deity of Christ. Matt. 28:12-15
- The facts of Christ's resurrection are part of a full presentation of the gospel to unbelievers, 1 Cor. 15:1-4. Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again.

Importance of the Doctrine of the Resurrection of Christ

- An understanding of the resurrection is necessary as a believer in Christ begins to learn basic doctrines, especially those related to salvation. Rom. 10:9,10
- The doctrine of the resurrection supports all of Christian faith, so much so that every aspect of Christianity depends on the fact of the resurrection. 1 Cor. 15:12–19. Apostolic preaching is worthless without it. Without the resurrection the believer's faith is without substance and his hope is in vain. Without the resurrection, no man can be reconciled to

God (Rom. 5:8–10).

In application, the doctrine of the resurrection supports many of the features of the Christian life. The resurrected Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 1:19–23). His resurrection must predate the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the church age (John 1:33; Acts 2:32,33 with John 15:26 and 16:7). Without Christ's resurrection there would be no spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:8-13). Without resurrection, He cannot be the Prince and the Savior offered to the nation of Israel. Acts 5:31 with Daniel 12:1-3.