

Was Christ Really Resurrected?

“Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.” (John 20:25)

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The awful event happened on Friday. It is now Sunday and a group of men are struggling with fear and what had just taken place. That evening suddenly something happened that would change their lives forever (John 20:19-20). But Thomas, one of their number, was not there (John 20:24). When the rest of the disciples saw Thomas they told him of the fantastic and wonderful news, but he did not believe them (John 20:25). Thomas wanted proof. The other disciples claimed to have that proof, but why should Thomas take their word for it? How many of us have physically seen Jesus and put our fingers into the print of the nails and thrust our hands into His side? Why should others take our word that Jesus was raised from the dead? Is there proof that Jesus was raised from the dead? Was Christ really resurrected? To prove Jesus was raised from the dead we will first look at the Biblical proof and then disprove accusations of men who claim Jesus was not raised from the dead.

The Bible clearly proclaims that Christ was raised from the dead,

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. (Matthew 28:1-7)

The question then arises, “I know the Bible says Jesus was raised from the dead, but why should I believe what the Bible says?” The Bible is the infallible Word of God. Paul declared that all scripture is inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17) proving that the Old Testament scriptures are the word of God. Peter claimed that Paul’s writings were scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16) proving that the New Testament scriptures are from God.

Once again, though, the question arises, “Why should I believe what these men said about the Bible?” One of the most powerful arguments for the Bible being God’s infallible Word comes from the fact that all Bible prophecy comes to pass. Throughout the Bible we see prophecies concerning the downfall of nations and cities which came to pass, many times much later in history. For example, God, through the prophet Ezekiel, foretold of the destruction of the city of Tyre. Ezekiel was taken into Babylonian captivity in 597 B.C. Ezekiel dates events by the time from the captivity of King Jehoiachin in 597 B.C. (Ezekiel 1:2). In the eleventh year of Jehoiachin’s captivity (Ezekiel 26:1), Ezekiel prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the city of Tyre (Ezekiel 26:7-8). History shows us that Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the mainland city in 586 B.C.

and took the city in 573 B.C. Unknown to him, however, the inhabitants of the city moved to the island situated offshore. Ezekiel also prophesied that Tyre would be leveled and scraped bare like a rock, and that the rubble of the city would be cast into the sea (Ezekiel 26:4, 12). It was not until 332 B.C. that Alexander the Great conquered the island city by scraping the debris (lumber, rocks, and dirt) of the destroyed mainland city and casting it into the sea to build a causeway to the island. This was two hundred forty years after Nebuchadnezzar conquered the mainland city. That alone shows amazing accuracy of Biblical prophecy, but that is not all we find about Tyre. Ezekiel also prophesied that Tyre would become a place where fishermen spread their nets (Ezekiel 26:5) and that the city would never be rebuilt (Ezekiel 26:14). The city of Tyre was never the same after Alexander the Great conquered it, but it continued to exist. The city was not finally destroyed until the Muslims crushed it in A.D. 1291, almost 1900 years after Ezekiel's prophecy! It is now a place where fishermen spread their nets, just as Bible prophecy declared.

There is also proof of the amazing accuracy of Biblical prophecy within the pages of the sacred text. There are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Here are a few examples:

1. Christ was the One promised by God that would crush Satan's power (Genesis 3:15). The Hebrews writer acknowledges that Jesus did just that "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14).
2. Jesus was prophesied to be born through the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). The genealogies of both Joseph (Matthew 1:1-16) and Mary (Luke 3:23-38) show that Jesus came through the Messianic tribe of Judah.
3. Christ was to be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). About 700 years after this prophecy, it came to pass.

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. (Matthew 1:20-23)

4. The Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Christ was born in that very city. "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem" (Matthew 2:1).
5. The Christ was described as the suffering servant of God that would die for our sins (Isaiah 53:1-12). Peter's sermon on Pentecost proved that Jesus was that suffering servant of God (Acts 8:27-36).

Many other examples could be given of Bible prophecy being fulfilled in Christ, but these should suffice to prove the infallibility of Bible prophecy. No matter what Bible prophecy is about: the downfall of nations, the Messiah, or whatever, we can know that God's Word is trustworthy.

The gospel accounts, part of the trustworthy Word of God, prove Christ was raised from the dead (Matthew 28:1-7; Mark 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-7; John 20:1-18). Christ Himself confirmed He was raised from the dead to Thomas:

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed. (John 20:26-29).

Other New Testament writers, all inspired by God, proved that Jesus was raised from the dead. Paul saw Jesus in His resurrected form. Ananias informed Saul of Tarsus (also called Paul) "And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth" (Acts 22:14). Paul declared "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?" (1 Corinthians 9:1). Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:1) and did the works of an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12). Paul proved Jesus was raised from the dead (Acts 13:27-37). In 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 Paul declared,

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Peter was an apostle of Jesus Christ and proved His resurrection.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia...Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:1, 3; 3:21)

John was an apostle of Jesus Christ and proved His resurrection.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard

declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ... Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 1:1-3; 3:2)

There is no doubt about it: the Bible proves that Jesus was raised from the dead.

We do not have time nor space to discuss the scientific, geographic, and historic accuracy of the Bible. In each case the Bible is always proven to be trustworthy, just as it is in prophetic accuracy. But do not take my word for it, investigate it for yourself.

Mankind, however, makes several accusations that Jesus was not raised from the dead. Some are emphatic that the disciples stole the body of Christ. The chief priests and the Pharisees were prepared for this. They knew whose tomb Jesus was in and where the tomb was. They had Pilate set a Roman guard at the tomb for the three days after Jesus' death so that no one could steal the body. After that they could show Jesus' dead body to everyone and expose Him as an imposter.

Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make *it* as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch. (Matthew 27:62-66)

The chief priests and Pharisees made the sepulcher secure in two ways:

1. They sealed the stone. This was the stone "that was rolled to the door of it, it may be with some public seal, with Pilate's, or with the sanhedrin's; as the stone at the mouth of the lions' den, in which Daniel was put, was sealed with the king's signet, and with the signet of his lords, Dan 6:17, that there might be no change of the sentence upon him, and by which it appeared, that his deliverance was by no human assistance: so the stone at Christ's sepulchre was sealed, that it could not be removed without breaking it; which would show, whether any fraudulent methods were taken to remove the body" (Gill).
2. They set a watch. "The stone was rolled over the door of the tomb and sealed; the Roman guard was stationed around it whose duty it was to watch with unsleeping vigilance on pain of death. In sealing the tomb one or more cords were stretched across the stone rolled before the opening into the tomb and sealed at each end to the rock by wax or sealing clay. The guard of Roman soldiers was placed at the entrance of the tomb as a double means of preventing fraud" (Boles, 551-552).

Jesus disciples were already filled with fear. "But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled" (Matthew 26:56). "Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto

them, Peace *be* unto you” (John 20:19). They had no intention of stealing the body because of their fear and their own disbelief.

And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary *the mother* of James, and other *women that were* with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. (Luke 24:9-11)

The disciples had no desire to remove Jesus’ body and the enemies of Jesus had no motive to remove the body. They wanted it to still be in the grave.

The tomb is sealed, the Roman guard is set, and the disciples are cowering in fear. Without Divine intervention Jesus’ body would still be in its grave after the third day. But what happened?

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. (Matthew 28:1-4)

Divine intervention is taking place! Those hardened Roman soldiers watching the tomb are trembling and are limp as if they were dead. What happened to the body of Jesus? “And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matthew 28:5-6).

The body of Jesus is gone! He has been raised from the dead by the power of God (Colossians 2:12). What will these Roman soldiers do now? They will be put to death if they can not find a way out of this predicament. The Scriptures tell us what they did.

Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. (Matthew 28:11-15)

The Roman soldiers knew Jesus had been raised from the dead. They told the chief priests that Jesus was raised from the dead. The elders of Israel knew Jesus was raised from the dead. So what did they do? They bribed the Roman soldiers to say the disciples stole Jesus’ body while they were sleeping. Why would the soldiers have to be bribed to say this if Christ’s disciples had actually done so, and if they were asleep, as they were told to say, how would they know what actually happened? We also notice that the Jews had enough money to bribe the governor as well to protect the soldiers from death and keep their lie about the resurrection in tact. Something else

to consider is: why would the disciples of Christ suffer such pain, anguish, and death if they had stolen the dead body of Jesus?

Some skeptics claim that Jesus did not die, but merely fainted, or swooned, and the soldiers thought He was dead. Look at the events that took place late on the crucifixion day.

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw *it* bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced. (John 19:31-37)

The Passover was at hand and the Jews did not want these three men's bodies hanging on the cross on the Sabbath day, so they wanted to make sure they were dead and their bodies taken down from their crosses on Friday. The soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves because they were still alive and death on a cross was generally by suffocation. The one on the cross would be forced to lift himself up to exhale. Breaking the legs would stop this process and suffocation would come rather quickly. When the soldiers came to Jesus they saw that He was dead already, but wanted to make sure and pierced His side with a spear. "The common spear which soldiers used in war. There can be no doubt that such a stroke from the strong arm of a Roman soldier would have caused death, if he had not been already dead; and it was, doubtless, to furnish this conclusive proof that he was actually dead..." (Barnes).

We also see that when the spear pierced the Savior's side that blood and water flowed out.

This was evidently a natural effect of thus piercing the side. Such a flowing of blood and water makes it probable that the spear reached the heart, and if Jesus had not before been dead, this would have closed his life. The heart is surrounded by a membrane called the pericardium. This membrane contains a serous matter or liquor resembling water, which prevents the surface of the heart from becoming dry by its continual motion (Webster). It was this which was pierced and from which the water flowed. The point of the spear also reached one of the ventricles of the heart, and the blood, yet warm, rushed forth, either mingled with or followed by the water of the pericardium..." (ibid). And what of the experienced Roman soldiers at the scene who examined Jesus and pronounced Him dead (John 19:33)? They made sure of His death by piercing His side with a spear (John 19:34). That blood and water came forth was a sure sign of death, an indisputable medical sign of death indicating that the red and white blood corpuscles had separated. (Dugger, 530-531)

Jesus had tremendous blood loss from His scourging and from the spikes being driven into His hands and feet. If Jesus had only been unconscious and then regained consciousness, how could

He, in such a weakened state of health, roll away the stone, defeat or escape from the Roman guard, and make His way to the disciples?

Other theories exist for the missing body of Christ, but none of them stand the test of logic. The only reason for the body of Jesus not being in the grave is that He was resurrected from the dead. The Bible is the infallible Word of God. God's Word proves that Jesus was raised from the dead. Unbelievers may make accusations but all are proven to be false. The only reason for the empty tomb of Jesus Christ is that He was raised from the dead by the power of God. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12).

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