

“Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life” Series
The Proof is in the Resurrection—Acts 2:29-38

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We have been looking at Jesus’ claim, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” How do we know this claim is true? Who is this Jesus that He could make such a claim?

How can Jesus make this claim, “I am the way, the truth, and the life?” We saw last week that He could make this claim because of His life. Today, we underscore that the proof is also in His resurrection. The question then is “How can we be certain that Jesus was resurrected from the grave? The whole of Christianity stands or falls on the question of the authenticity of the resurrection.

Text: ²⁹ "Brothers, I can confidently speak to you about the patriarch David: he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn an oath to him to seat one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing this in advance, he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah:

He was not left in Hades,

and His flesh did not experience decay.

³² "God has resurrected this Jesus. We are all witnesses of this. ³³ Therefore, since He has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, He has poured out what you both see and hear. ³⁴ For it was not David who ascended into the heavens, but he himself says:

The Lord said to my Lord,

'Sit at My right hand

³⁵ until I make Your enemies Your footstool.'

³⁶ "Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!"

Forgiveness through the Messiah

³⁷ When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles:
"Brothers, what must we do?"

³⁸ "Repent," Peter said to them, "and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction: Christianity stands or falls on the validity and certainty of the resurrection of Christ. It is as Paul said to the Corinthians, “And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty....your faith is futile, you are still in your sins, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, we are of all men the most pitiable.” (1 Corinthians 15:14-19)

The absolute certainty of the resurrection is the most important topic that I could ever choose as a topic for preaching. We should not be surprised that the resurrection is the topic for the first public sermon preached after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus by his followers who have remained. That is the context of our text today. Peter has come to the end of this stirring sermon of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The message pierced the hearts of many who listened that day. We pray that this same message might pierce many hearts today.

Alternative Theories of the Resurrection

Did Jesus really rise from the grave?

The first question that needs our attention is the most fundamental question of all: “Did Jesus really rise from the grave?” Again, this question is the one question that all of Christianity either stands or falls.

Two Possibilities

Would you not agree that there are two possibilities? Jesus either did or did not rise from the Grave. For those who do not believe that He rose from the grave, they have usually posited one of four theories.

1. Wrong Tomb Theory—They went to the wrong tomb.
2. Hallucination Theory—They wanted to believe so they envisioned Jesus alive.
3. Swoon Theory—Jesus fainted. He didn’t die; He just appeared to have died.
4. Theft Theories— This theory is actually as old as the resurrection and is the “cover-up of the Jewish authorities as recorded in Matthew 28. This theory has two accounts—one with the enemies of Jesus stealing the body; the other with the disciples of Jesus stealing the body.

There is much that we could say to shred these explanations of the empty tomb. For example, have you ever known 500 people to all have the same hallucination? Or, isn’t there great irony in believing that not only did the women and later Peter go to the wrong tomb, but also that the angel appeared in front of the wrong tomb and the soldiers were in front of the wrong tomb? The stolen body theory? If enemies of Jesus stole His body, all they would have to do is present the body of Jesus once Christianity really starting gaining momentum. What about the disciples stealing the body of Jesus? People will die for a lie when they do not know something is a lie, but would people be willing to die for what they know to be a lie?

Either one of these theories is true or Jesus literally rose from the grave on the third day!

Evidence for the Resurrection

1. Empty Tomb (Luke 24:1-12)

2. Early Prophecies of Jesus.

- After Peter's Confession Matthew 16:21
- At Mount of Transfiguration Matthew 17:9, Mark 9:9-10, Luke 9:22
- At Galilee Matthew 17:22-23
- Before journey begins to Jerusalem Matthew 20:18-19
- At the Last Passover Matthew 26:32
- At Temple Cleansing John 2:18-22

3. Eyewitness Accounts

Biblical Eyewitnesses:

Outside of the Gospels we have two summary accounts:

- (1) Acts 1:1-3
- (2) 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 (Note His appearance to 500)

Extra-Biblical Eyewitnesses:

- (1) Ignatius (c. 50-115) "He was crucified and died under Pontius Pilate. He really, and not merely in appearance was crucified, and died, in the sight of beings in heaven and on earth, and under the earth. He also rose again in three days....He was crucified in reality, and not in appearance, not in imagination, not in deceit. He really died, and was buried, and rose from the dead."
- (2) Josephus, a Jewish historian, writing at the end of the first century—" Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man if it be lawful to call him man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive truth with pleasure. He drew over many Jews, and also many of the Greeks. This man was the Christ. And when Pilate had condemned to the cross, upon his impeachment by the principal man among us, those who had loved him from the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive on the third day, the divine prophets having spoken these and thousands of other wonderful things about him. And even now, the race of Christians, so named from him, has not died out.

4. Emergence of the Church

- Change in Witnesses
- Courage to Witness
- Changes in Worship—They started meeting on Sunday.
- Capable to Withstand for over 2,000 years. (Gamaliel's counsel in Acts 5:32-39)

What Do We Do With Such Evidence

Acts 2:38

Believe! Repent! Be Baptized!

Believe—The resurrection is not an issue in which you can remain neutral. You must believe that either it happened or it did not happen. I've tried to present the evidence today in a way that is Biblical, but also logical and historical. The decision is yours to make. However, once you make that decision that the resurrection is a historical fact, you must have a response. You cannot sit on the fence. I trust that many today will be like those who heard Peter as recorded in Acts 2 when they responded, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter's response gives us our response.

Repent—Repentance means to turn away from something. Now, when we turn away from something, we must understand that we also should turn to something. Instead of turning, though, to something, we must in repentance turn to somebody—Jesus.

Be Baptized—The second thing that Peter gives as a response is to be baptized. Now some teach that this means that a person must be baptized in order to repent or be saved. However, the whole counsel of the Word of God helps us to understand that the two are separate. In fact, just a few verses later, in Acts 3:19, we read "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." How do you take care of salvation? Repent! What follows? Baptism! You need to respond. You can't wait. The resurrection demands a response. But, understand that you must be baptized after you believe. You cannot be baptized, then believe. You must believe and then be baptized as a signal of your belief.