

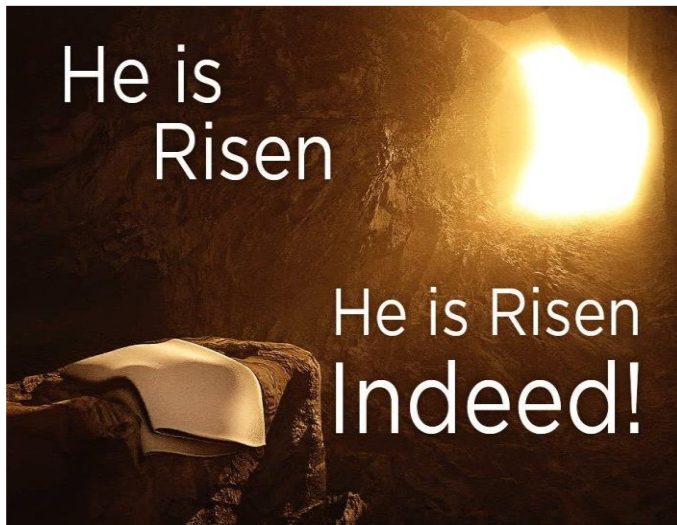
Why Should We Believe in the Resurrection of Christ?

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

A man took a vacation to Israel with his wife and mother-in-law. During their time in the Holy Land, his mother-in-law unexpectedly passed away. The following day, the husband met with the local undertaker to discuss funeral plans.

“In cases like these, there are a couple of options to choose from,” the undertaker explained. “You can ship the body home for \$5,000, or you can bury her in the Holy Land for just \$150.” The man took a minute to think about it, and then announced his decision to ship her home.

The undertaker, intrigued by his decision, said, “That’s an interesting choice. Can I ask why you would pay \$5,000 to ship your mother-in-law home, when you can easily bury her here for \$150?” The man promptly replied, “About 2,000 years ago, a man died and was buried here. Three days later he rose from the dead, and I can’t take that chance with my mother-in-law!”



Well, at least he believed in resurrection! This funny story reveals the fact that many people are aware of the power of Jesus being raised from the dead. However, the reality is that Jesus’ resurrection is more than just a story—it was and still is the most important and significant event in human history. The best part is that through Christ’s resurrection we can be sure that we possess eternal life and will live with Him forever in Heaven.

Why should we believe in the resurrection of Christ? This is the question many people only answer on Easter morning, but we should answer it every day of our lives. It’s a very important question for many today simply do not believe in the resurrection of Christ. To them the Bible is humbug, Easter is about eggs and

rabbits, and they don't actually believe that Jesus was a real person who died and rose again. This is the direction our culture is moving today. The good news is that the message of Easter is still the same. Jesus is alive forevermore (Rev. 1:18) and we must know why His resurrection is so important.

There are three reasons to believe in the resurrection of Christ.

1. Because of the prophecy that Jesus made.

The scene is the temple and Jesus was exposing the religious racket taking place in the temple.

John 2:13-17

“And the Jews' passover was at hand (the Passover was an annual feast commemorating the time when the children of Israel were delivered from slavery in Egypt – it began with the Passover sacrifice on Friday evening), and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.”

The temple was referring to the courtyard part of the temple edifice, the Court of the Gentiles, surrounding the temple enclosure. The buying and selling of animals in the area was probably rationalized as a convenience for the pilgrims coming into Jerusalem for Passover. But abuses developed, and the pilgrim traffic became a major source of income for the city. With money to be made, worship easily became corrupted. The money changers were another convenience for the pilgrims. Temple dues had to be paid in the acceptable coinage, and a high percentage was charged for changing coins. So, this became a religious racket like so many TV ministries today where money is made hand over fist and the saints are taken advantage of by religious hucksters and profiteers.

At this point, the disciples were reminded of Psalm 69:9 where it was predicted that when the Messiah came, He would be utterly consumed with a zeal for the things

of God. It's here they saw Jesus manifesting an intense determination that the worship of God should be pure, and they realized that this was the One of whom the Psalmist had spoken. This reminds us that we should have a real intense zeal for the things of God, living for God, serving Him, and doing what pleases Him. We need to get off our lazy boy chair and live for God, do something for God, and stop living in the past. Zeal is contagious!

In John 2:18-22 Jesus now uses the temple incident to teach the truth about His own resurrection (the temple of His body): "Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building (, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."

The Jews did not question the legitimacy of His actions against the merchants and money changers, but they questioned His authority in doing so. So Jesus tells them that His authority rests on the fact that as the Son of God He would be killed and three days later He would rise from the dead. Of course, the Jews did not understand Him. They were more interested in material things than in spiritual truth. The only temple they could think about was Herod's temple which was then standing in Jerusalem. It had taken forty-six years to build this temple, and they could not see how any man could possibly rebuild it in three days.

We know that Jesus' physical body was considered to be God's unique temple. It was the body in which the Word had become flesh (John 1:14). The Father indwelt this body as did the Son (John 14:10-11) and the Holy Spirit also indwelt His body (John 1:32-33). The entire Godhead manifested itself in Christ's temple. Christ's body was now the site where God manifested Himself on earth, as He had done previously, though to a lesser extent, in the wilderness tabernacle and in the Jerusalem temple. Christ's temple or body was now to be the center of true worship following the Incarnation for we are called upon "to worship him in spirit and truth" (John 4:20-24).

Today when I worship, I don't need to go to a physical temple, but I can look to the living Christ and open my heart to Him for "in him all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily" (Col. 2:9). By the way, I worship a living Savior and Lord – not a dead one! I know He is alive because I talked with Him this morning!

A little girl was asked by a skeptic, "Which Jesus do you believe in?" The little girl without hesitation replied, "The One who rose from the dead!"

Do you realize that there is no other religion or cult whose leader or deity makes the claim to have risen from the dead? Only Christianity has a leader and Savior who has risen from the dead. Buddha is dead. Confucius is dead. Allah is dead! Mohammed is dead. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young are dead. Charles Russell is dead. Hare Krishna is dead. Jim Jones is dead. Pope John Paul is dead. They are all dead except Jesus Christ! He is alive forevermore!

It has been said that Jesus Christ is either a liar, lunatic, or Lord of all! By virtue of His resurrection from the dead, He has proven that He is Lord.

Romans 14:9

"For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."

"He Is Lord; He Is Lord
He Has Risen From The Dead
And He Is Lord,
Every Knee Shall Bow,
Every Tongue Confess
That Jesus Christ Is Lord."

As we reflect on Christ's temple (body) we need to ask what difference does it make whether Jesus rose in a material body or an immaterial one (as only as a spiritual being)? The view that denies the literal, physical resurrection of Christ has some serious theological problems and repercussions.

There are four reasons for a literal resurrection.

A. It maintains Christ's integrity.

In John 2:19-21 Jesus said He would be raised bodily (the temple of His body).

B. It maintains Christ's deity.

The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important event in history providing irrefutable evidence that Jesus is who He claimed to be – the Son of God.

Romans 1:3-4

“Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared *to be* the Son of God (sharing God's existence in the Trinity) with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

C. It maintains the foundation of the Gospel message.

The Gospel message is built upon the foundation of a bodily or physical resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ (the Messiah - revealed to be God in the flesh) died for our sins (in a physical sense) according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again (in the same sense He died – He rose physically) the third day according to the scriptures.”

Jesus died in a body, and He was raised in the same kind of body, a physical and literal body to authenticate His claims and confirm that sin's payment was fully paid.

D. It maintains the future hope of our bodily resurrection.

John 14:19

“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.”

1 Corinthians 15:22-23 reveals: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.”

Jesus Christ arose physically from the dead to never die again in order to give us the promise of a physical resurrection someday, just like His.

Well, Jesus predicted that the sign of His bodily and physical resurrection from the dead would prove that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, and Savior of all mankind. Amazingly, the Old Testament predicted Christ's resurrection some 1,000 years before He was born.

Psalm 16:10-11

"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (*sheol*); neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption (*bodily decay*). Thou wilt shew me the path of life (*resurrection*): in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore" (*ascension*).

So here Jesus revealed what the Old Testament prophecies already confirmed. He would be raised from the dead on the third day. This is the prophecy that Jesus made about Himself. The record of Scripture is clear. Jesus predicted His own resurrection based upon the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, but He also based it upon the event of Jonah's experience in the belly of the great fish.

Matthew 12:38-42

"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's (*ketos – a huge fish like a whale, sea monster*) belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (*a Jewish reckoning of three days and nights*). The men of Nineveh (*who were far less privileged*) shall rise in judgment with this generation (*the unbelieving generation of Jews during Jesus' day*), and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here (the incarnate son of God). The queen of the south (*Queen of Sheba who was outside the Jewish privileges*) shall rise up in the judgment with this generation (*the unbelieving generation of Jews during Jesus' day*), and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon *is* here" (*Jesus Christ, God's Son*).

Here is a point of application. How great is Jesus Christ in your life today? What kind of personal relationship and walk do you have with Him in your Christian life? Do you need signs instead of the Savior to satisfy your life?

The unbelieving generation of Jews were always seeking a sign to confirm who Jesus was and His authority. Despite all the miracles Jesus had performed, the scribes and Pharisees had the audacity to ask Him for another sign, implying that they would believe if He would prove Himself to be the Messiah! But their hypocrisy was transparent. If they had not believed as a result of so many wonders, why would they be convinced by one more?

Jesus spoke to the rich man in hell in Luke 16:31:

“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

The attitude that demands miraculous signs as a condition for belief does not please God. The religious leaders were blind to the personal presence of their own Messiah! Their Creator-God, a unique Person combining absolute deity and perfect humanity, stood in their midst speaking to them, yet they dared to ask Him for a sign.

Jesus said to Thomas in John 20:29:

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Many conclude that seeing is believing but God’s Word reveals that believing is seeing!

Hebrews 11:1 declares:

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

We must believe and when believing we will see the truth as clear as the noonday sun! Of course, Jesus was teaching that Jonah’s experience was similar to His own death, burial, and resurrection. Jonah’s experience of being swallowed by the giant fish (probably a whale) and then disgorged (Jon. 1:17; 2:10) prefigured the Lord’s passion and resurrection. His rising from among the dead would be the final and climactic sign of His ministry to the nation of Israel.

This raises a question. If, as generally believed, Jesus was buried on Friday afternoon (Good Friday) and rose again on Sunday morning, how can it be said that He was three days and nights in the tomb? The answer is that in Jewish reckoning, any part of a day and night counts as a complete period. A Jewish idiom concludes “A day and a night make an onah, and a part of an onah is as the whole.” Jesus taught in John 11:9, “Are there not twelve hours in the day?” The Jewish reckoning of time was different than ours today for they spoke of part of a day as being a day.

So Jesus died on Friday at 3:00 (one day – consisting of only 3 hours), was still dead on Saturday (second day – the Sabbath), and was still dead on Sunday (third day) but rose again on Sunday very early in the morning. Although many argue for a Wednesday crucifixion by interpreting the days as 24-hour days, there is a Biblical argument for a Friday crucifixion which meets the criteria for a Sunday resurrection.

Mark 9:31 says:

“For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.”

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

“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.”

Since Jesus rose on the third day (Sunday) He had to be crucified on Friday to meet this resurrection criteria. It was actually Good Friday when Jesus rose from the dead – not Good Wednesday or Good Thursday.

Over the years the most Bible students understanding that Christ’s death occurred on Friday which actually makes the resurrection of Christ occur on Sunday morning (the third day).

No other view (Wednesday or Thursday crucifixion) has Christ rising “on the third day” as the Bible states. It’s rather



obvious that if He rose on the third day, He could not already have been buried for three whole nights and three whole days.

Let me show you a chart so you can visually see this.

Jews calculated time from 6:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

➡ **DAY ONE according to Jewish Friday**

Thursday sunset – Friday sunset (6:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.)

***Christ was buried before 6:00 pm
late on Good Friday (Luke 23:54).**

Being in the grave for approximately 3 hours is considered day one.

➡ **DAY TWO according to Jewish Saturday**

Friday sunset-Saturday sunset (6:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.)

“Silent Saturday” (The Bible says nothing about this day)

➡ **DAY THREE according to Jewish Sunday**

Saturday sunset – Sunday sunset (6:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.)

Jesus had risen from the dead early on Sunday morning sometime before dawn to complete the three-day prediction and this is the day the early Church began to meet in commemoration of Christ’s resurrection (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).

Mark 16:9 says:

“Now when *Jesus* was risen early the first *day* of the week (Sunday), he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.”

Since the tomb was already empty in the morning (Matt. 28:1), it’s understandable that Jesus rose from the dead at some point during the early hours of Sunday morning after completing the three-day cycle.

“Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o’er His foes,
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives forever, with His saints to reign.
He arose! He arose!
Hallelujah! Christ arose!”

Someone has said:

“The best news the world has ever had – came from a graveyard.”

An ancient legend says that in the early church a believer was to be martyred for his faith. As they tied his hands and led him to the stake, he was asked if he had any last words. He shouted out, “He is risen.” Unknown to the authorities, in the surrounding hills, the Christians had gathered to watch the execution. When they heard the words, “He is risen,” they cried out with one voice, “He is risen indeed.”

This is one way they greeted one another in the early church. He is risen! He is risen indeed!

So Jesus made a prophecy about His own resurrection. This is one reason we should believe in the resurrection. But there is another reason why we should believe in Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

2. Because of the proof that we can claim.

You might ask: “How can I be sure Christ rose from the dead?” Examine the evidence. Look at the proof for Christ’s resurrection. Weigh the evidence and you will find that Jesus did rise from the dead.

When I know that the Bible is true; I will also know that the resurrection is true. This is because the Bible speaks of the resurrection of Christ. Jesus taught in John 17:17 – “thy word is truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15 speaks of “rightly dividing the word of truth.” But how do we really know the Bible is true? There are a number of reasons that the Bible is true.

A. Redeemed lives

We see evidence of the Bible's trustworthiness by the lives that have been changed and redeemed by it. One example would be John Newton, a former slave-ship master who converted to Christianity and penned "Amazing Grace." Another example would be me! And you! Untold millions upon millions of followers of Jesus Christ have had their lives transformed by His saving grace.

B. Documentation

There is significantly more documentation for the books of the Bible than there are for other historically recognized authors and literature, including Plato, Aristotle, and others. The Bible excels all other writings in documentation. If we accept the writings of other ancient writers as being legitimate, then we must accept the Bible as being an authentic documented book through many centuries of writing.

C. Manuscripts

Added to this documentation are the thousands upon thousands of matching manuscripts which exist today, written during different centuries, prove the authenticity of Scripture. There are now approximately 5,700 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, which agree to the accuracy of the Bible. Of the extant (existing) Greek manuscripts, fifty-nine have the complete text of the New Testament. Most have verses, chapters, or books of the New Testament. There are also more than 10,000 manuscripts in Latin and more than 1,000 in other languages.

Some of the manuscripts date back to the early centuries of Christianity and the New Testament can be objectively judged more reliable than other historical works. This is because they have a much smaller time gap between when they were written and the first preserved copies. Also, the number of ancient handwritten copies of the Bible greatly exceeds the number of other ancient documents of antiquity.

Once again, we readily accept other books of history written by historical authors such as Homer and Caesar even though documentary confirmation is far less substantial, and the copies are much further removed from the original autographs. Therefore, we can have significantly greater confidence in the accuracy of the transmission of the Bible. The text of the Bible is better preserved than the writings of Caesar, Plato, or Aristotle. less than one hundred years from the original writings.

D. The unity of the Bible

The 66 books of the Bible were written by forty different authors over a period of 1,600 years. Four hundred silent years separated the 39 books of the Old Testament from the 27 of the New Testament. Yet, from Genesis to Revelation, they tell one unfolding story. Together they give consistent answers to the most important questions we can ask: What is truth? Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? The Bible in its production, preservation, and proclamation stands as the most unique book ever written.

E. Fulfilled prophecy

Unique among all books ever written, the Bible accurately foretells specific events in detail many years, sometimes centuries, before they occur. Approximately 2,500 prophecies appear in the pages of the Bible, about 2,000 of which already have been fulfilled to the letter—no errors. Entire civilizations and world empires were prophesied to appear in the world long before they were in existence (Medo Persia, Greece, Rome).

E. Archeological findings

Excavation sites and artifacts also provide evidence that many of the events, people, and places mentioned in the Bible really existed, including the Hittite people and the city of Jericho. We could say a lot about this.

The point is this, since the Scriptures are true then the resurrection is also true which is documented in the Bible.

F. Eyewitness accounts of Bible events and Christ.

Let's think through the various witnesses to the resurrection of Christ.

➤ We have the WITNESS of the Gospel writers.

The writers of the Gospel records give multiple points of view and much of what they wrote about occurred within their own lifetimes. In other words, what they actually witnessed, they also wrote about, and we have their records in the Bible.

Writers focused on different aspects, but they had the same message: Jesus taught, healed, performed miracles, died on the cross, and rose from the dead.

- We have the WITNESS of secular historians.

Let's think for a few moments outside the bounds of the Bible (Scriptural revelation). The fact that Jesus was a real, historical person is clearly documented by Jewish manuscripts, even before the apostle Paul and the writers of the Gospels provided their eyewitness accounts. Other ancient cultural documents also reference His existence.

For example, the Roman leader and historian, Tacitus, wrote:

“Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus (Christ), from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus...”

Perhaps the most remarkable reference to Jesus outside the Bible can be found in the writings of Josephus, a first century Jewish historian. Josephus wrote: “About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he . . . wrought surprising feats. . . . He was the Christ. When Pilate . . . condemned him to be crucified, those who had . . . come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared . . . restored to life. . . . And the tribe of Christians . . . has . . . not disappeared.’

The Bible reveals that it's true (authenticates itself) in all these ways. The historical records of people who lived during Bible times, what they said and witnessed cannot be denied. In fact, that Christ died by crucifixion, along with accounts of His resurrection, appear in the writings of non-Christian historians of this period. Even Paul's conversion on the Road to Damascus, when seeing the resurrected Christ, is reported by early sources. Although some of these historical sources did not believe in the resurrection, their records demonstrate that the resurrection was certainly embraced and practiced by early apostolic Christianity.

The claim of Jesus' disciples that Christ had been raised and had appeared to them is preserved in an ancient oral tradition that predates all the New Testament writings and can be traced with certainty to the Jerusalem Church within just a few years of Jesus' crucifixion.

I believe the resurrection of Christ is supported by the conclusions of historical investigation. Of course, the evidence the Bible gives is overwhelming evidence that He rose from the dead and is the only evidence I need! But the Bible itself is also proven to be true for the reasons stated above.

- We have the WITNESS of hundreds of people.

The Biblical record (trustworthiness of Scripture itself) reveals that many people saw the risen Christ! All these witnesses provide “many infallible proofs” or evidence to His resurrection (Acts 1:3).

In 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 Paul states:

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins (***paying the penalty for the sins of all humanity***) according to the scriptures (*OT Scriptures*); And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day (***providing the assurance the Father accepted His sacrifice***) according to the scriptures” (*OT 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 (*they are deceased*). 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 (***proving to the world that He rose from the dead!***).

We have the witness of Gospel writers, secular historians, and hundreds of people.

Most importantly:

- We have the WITNESS of the Empty tomb!

The Biblical record or trustworthiness of Scripture itself reveals that the tomb of Jesus Christ was empty.

Matthew 28:5-6

“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.”

A man in the ministry shared this true story:

“It’s Easter Sunday. At Greenwood Cemetery everything is quiet, peaceful, beautiful. There are no resurrections—yet. I’ll never forget the first graveside service I ever performed. It happened soon after I became the pastor of a church in California. It was a service for someone I didn’t know. I stood at the graveside and tried to say a few words. When I prayed, I said something like, ‘As we await the resurrection day.’ To my surprise, the words stuck in my throat. I barely finished my prayer. I was humiliated. I called myself a preacher, and I couldn’t perform a simple graveside service.

What was wrong? I had come face to face with death for the first time as a pastor. It overwhelmed me. The awful finality of death hit me square in the face. Then I knew the truth. I wasn’t sure I believed in the resurrection of the dead. I went home and thought about it. Was it true? Could I believe it? Many people have been to the cemetery and wondered the same thing. If you just go on what you see, it’s a hard doctrine to believe. The odds seem to be against it. No one living today has ever seen a resurrection because there hasn’t been one for 2000 years. If you go to the cemetery and wait for one, you’ll have to wait a long, long time.

“As I thought about these things, the Lord seemed to say to me, ‘Son, you’ve been looking in the wrong place. Come with me.’ It seemed as if the Lord took me to a great city, to a grove of trees on a hillside outside the city walls. Among the trees on the hillside, I saw a cemetery. The Lord pointed to a certain tomb. The stone had been rolled away. ‘Look inside.’

“When I looked inside, I didn’t see anything except for some rumpled linens and a cloth folded in a corner. Then it hit me. The tomb was empty. Jesus Christ was gone. And He left his grave clothes behind.

“My friends, I do not believe in the resurrection of the dead because of anything I can see with my eyes. Everything I see argues against it. On every hand, I see death and decay. If you go only by what you see, you’ll end up believing that death wins in the end. But that’s not what the Bible says. I believe in the resurrection of the dead because I believe in the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday morning. The Bible says, “the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).”

Jesus once again said in John 14:19 – “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

Yes, we have all these witnesses. The evidence is in for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have both secular but more importantly Scriptural witness to the fact of Christ's bodily and physical resurrection.

A sceptic shared this:

"Like many sceptically-minded people, I have a hard time believing it happened. Indeed, I find it strange that some people think that a strong case can be made for its occurrence based on the scant historical record. You often hear apologists suggesting that there is overwhelming evidence for it, and that it is only those predisposed to disbelieve, or with some bias or ulterior motive, that deny this evidence. But when I look at the evidence I think: that can't be right. I won't say that there is *no evidence* for the resurrection; there is some. But overwhelming? Undeniable? Surely not."

Well, with the historical and Biblical records anyone could defend Christ's resurrection. We don't need Perry Mason or any other big shot lawyer to prove it. Jesus is alive! I was looking through a list of church ads and found one from a church that I liked very much. It said, "The tomb is empty ... No bones about it." That sums it up very well!

All that Christianity asks is that men be consistent with themselves. Sift the evidence, judge the record, examine the testimony, then come to your conclusion. Stop doubting and start believing! Don't let your doubts keep you away from believing in Christ and His death and resurrection. Romans 1:4 says that Jesus Christ is: "declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

Jesus Himself asked in Matthew 22:42:
What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?..."

Before you answer, here is the evidence for you to consider. Go to the tombs of the founders of the great world religions. Call the roll:

Mohammed "Here"

Buddha "Here"

Confucius "Here"

Pope John Paul "Here"

Jesus Christ

No answer ... Because He is not there! The tomb is empty!!! Doubt if you will, but the tomb is still empty because Christ is not there. He is risen, just as he said.

Remember again that in the early church Christians greeted each other this way: One would say, "He is risen." Another would answer, "He is risen indeed."

It is true ... and we have staked our lives upon it!

There is a final reason why we should believe in the resurrection.

3. Because of the promise that Jesus gave.

John 11:25-26

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life (*His authority to raise the dead and give eternal life to people*): he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live (*physically live in a new glorified body someday*): And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die (*never die spiritually in hell and damnation*). Believest thou this?"

In these verses Jesus gave the promise of physical and spiritual life. Jesus moves from the promise of the physical resurrection of our human body to the promise of spiritual and eternal life. A dead Christ could never give the promise of physical or eternal life. But because Jesus passed through death and rose again from the dead, we also have the promise of a future resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20, 23) and eternal life with Him in Heaven (John 6:47). Jesus Christ has the authority to both save us and raise us from the dead!

The question I must ask you is this: "Do you believe this?" With all the evidence you should believe what Christ says about His death, burial, and resurrection and place your personal faith in Him to be your Savior from Hell and the giver of eternal life. This means a decision must be made. You must get off the fence and make a personal decision to express belief in Christ. What I mean is that you must come to express your personal faith in Christ's death and resurrection to save you from Hell and give you eternal life.

Romans 10:9

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

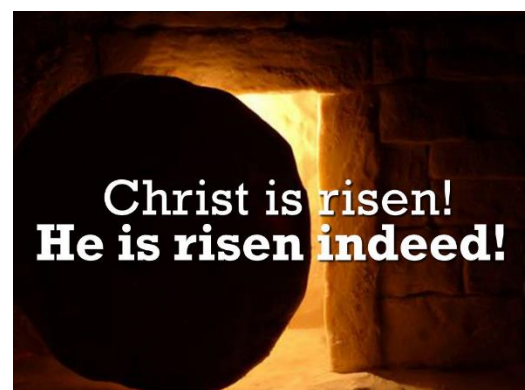
The issue on Easter morning is quite simple. Where do you stand regarding the resurrection of Jesus? There is more than enough evidence for those who choose to believe.

At this point we need to recall the words of Jesus to Thomas ... “Stop doubting and believe!” (John 20:27). At some point you must make up your mind one way or the other. Acts 16:31 says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...” A preacher shares this story of his trip to the Holy Land. “Last year I visited the Holy Land for the second time. During our visit to Jerusalem, we spent some time at the Garden Tomb, the spot believed by many to be the actual burial place of Jesus. It is located next to Gordon’s Calvary, that strange rock outcropping that appears to be worn into the shape of a skull. In Jesus’ day we know it was used as a burial site. Many believe it was the spot of the crucifixion.

“The Garden Tomb is located about 100 yards from Gordon’s Calvary and is in fact the spot of a beautiful garden built over an ancient Roman aqueduct. To your left as you enter is a typical first-century tomb dug into the hillside. A trench in front of the opening was apparently designed for the massive stone that once covered the entrance.

“Because the opening is very small, I had to duck to go inside. For a few seconds, you see nothing until your eyes adjust to the darkness. Then you can easily make out the two chambers. Visitors stand in the mourner’s chamber. A wrought-iron fence protects the chamber where the body was laid. You soon notice that the burial chamber was originally designed for two bodies. However, one ledge was never finished for some reason. The other one was. It appears to be designed for a person slightly less than six feet tall.

“As I looked around the burial chamber, I could see faint markings left by Christian pilgrims from earlier centuries. After a few seconds another thought enters the mind. There is no body to be found in this tomb. Whoever was buried there evidently left a long time ago. The Garden Tomb is empty! As you exit back into the sunlight, your eyes fasten upon a wooden sign: ‘Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, for he



is risen, as he said.” On Easter morning I am happy to declare those ancient words of hope once again. “He is risen! He is risen indeed.”