

# Evidence for the Resurrection

William E. Johnson

This lesson is based on a wonderful sermon preached by Dr. Richard D. Patterson, entitled "Resurrection Day 2004" and published in "The Biblical Evangelist," volume 35, number 2. You can find that sermon on the Biblical Evangelist website<sup>1</sup>.

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## Introduction

The resurrection is a vital truth, and one which every believer in Christ needs to consider. It is what makes Christianity different from other religions, and in *1 Corinthians 15*, Paul goes so far as to say that it is the determining factor in determining the reality of our faith. *For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. (1 Corinthians 15:16-17)*

ILLUS - As Vice President, George Bush represented the U.S. at the funeral of former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. Bush was deeply moved by a silent protest carried out by Brezhnev's widow. She stood motionless by the coffin until seconds before it was closed. Then, just as the soldiers touched the lid, Brezhnev's wife performed an act of great courage and hope, a gesture that must surely rank as one of the most profound acts of civil disobedience ever committed: She reached down and made the sign of the cross on her husband's chest. There in the citadel of secular, atheistic power, the wife of the man who had run it all hoped that her husband was wrong. She hoped that there was another life, and that that life was best represented by Jesus who died on the cross, and that the same Jesus might yet have mercy on her husband. (Gary Thomas, in *Christianity Today*, October 3, 1994, p. 26)

And so, it behooves us to study this topic, not just because it is Easter and the subject that seems appropriate to that holiday, but because it is vital and important.

Let's begin with some general discussion about the resurrection.

QUESTION - Is it possible to be saved and not believe in the resurrection?

QUESTION - When we say the Jesus was resurrected, are we saying that he physically rose from the dead, or are we describing something spiritual that took place apart from His body?

QUESTION - If someone were to ask you why you believe in the resurrection, what answer would you give? What evidences exist that Jesus really rose from the dead?

ANSWER - There are many things that could be cited, but let's notice seven evidences that the resurrection was real - it really occurred.

## Evidence that the resurrection was REAL.

### The Empty Tomb

*And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. (Mark 16:6)*

Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. (John 20:6-7)

All that was necessary to refute the Apostles' teaching about the resurrection was the body. Why didn't anybody just run to the tomb, point to the dead body, and say "AH HA!"

No one ever disputed that the tomb was empty! Their concocted lie about the disciples stealing the body actually provides further proof that the tomb was, indeed, empty!

It DID contain something, however, and that was the amazing grave clothes lying undisturbed. This was such a sight that the Bible says John saw it "and believed." *Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. (John 20:8, KJV)*

## **The Moved Stone**

*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. (Matthew 28:2, KJV)*

*And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. (Mark 16:3-4)*

*see also Luke 24:2; John 20:1*

**Note:** The tomb was guarded by trained guards - *Matthew 27:62-66*

QUESTION - How was it moved? What possible explanation can there be for this stone being moved out of the way right under the noses of the guards?

## **The Disciples' Transformation**

QUESTION - Before Jesus died, while He was on trial, how would you rate the disciples' courage?

ANSWER - Peter denied Him. All of them forsook Him and fled for fear.

QUESTION - After the crucifixion, how would you rate their courage? Were they proclaiming the message of Christ? What were they doing?

ANSWER - They were cowering in fear.

QUESTION - What happened to these same people AFTER the resurrection?

From utter despair and disbelief to absolute certitude - to the point of death!

*This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. (Acts 2:32, KJV)*

## **Post-resurrection Appearances of Christ**

Five distinct instances on resurrection day alone:

- *Matthew 28:1-10*
- *Mark 16:9-11, cf. John 20:11-18*
- *Luke 24:34, cf. 1 Corinthians 15:5*
- *Luke 24:13-35, cf. Mark 16:12-13*
- *John 20:19-23, cf. Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:36-40; 1 Corinthians 15:5*

There were many known appearances before His ascension

- To the disciples - with Thomas present - *John 20:26-28*
- To Peter beside the sea - *John 21:1-23*
- Paul recorded a whole series of appearances - *1 Corinthians 15:3-8*
- Luke said there were so many appearances that it provided "infallible proof" - *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3)*

QUESTION - How do such appearances provide evidence of the resurrection?

QUESTION - How does Paul's statement in *1 Corinthians 15:6* provide especially strong evidence of the resurrection?

## **The Christian Message**

Most prominent early theme was the resurrection.

- Peter at Pentecost - *Acts 2:22-24, 32*
- At Solomon's porch - *Acts 3:15*
- Before the Sanhedrin - *Acts 4:10; 5:19-21*
- Peter to Cornelius - *Acts 10:39-40*
- Stephen - *Acts 7:56*

## **Origin of the Christian Church**

Changed day of worship from the sabbath to the "Lord's Day" on Sunday.

*Acts 20:7ff, 1 Corinthians 16:2, Revelation 1:10*

## **Evidence that the resurrection was PHYSICAL.**

QUESTION - And so, we see that there is a tremendous amount of evidence that the resurrection of Jesus Christ really happened. On that first Easter Sunday morning, the tomb was indeed EMPTY. However, let's clarify it a little bit - what evidences are there that the resurrection was PHYSICAL? What evidence is there that the actual BODY of Jesus Christ rose from the dead?

QUOTE - "The Gospel writers unanimously attest the fact that Christ's post-resurrection appearances were no mere phantom. Matthew (28:9-10) 28:9,10 reports that the women who met the risen Jesus held Him by the feet. Mark records the missing body (16:6) and Jesus' personal appearances to Mary Magdalene (16:9-11), to the two travelers (16:12-13), and to the eleven as they dined (16:14ff). Luke rehearses the fact that Jesus' grave clothes lay still intact (24:12), and that the risen Christ walked and talked with two who were traveling to Emmaus (24:15-28), and at their constraint ate with them (24:29-30) and how that He afterward showed Himself to ten of the disciples, inviting them to handle Him so that they might be assured that he was no mere spirit. John (20:26ff) reveals that the eleven recognized Him, even to the very nailprints in his hands and the wound in his side." (Dr. Richard D. Patterson)

## **Conclusion**

ILLUS - Little Philip, born with Down's syndrome, attended a third-grade Sunday School class with several eight-year-old boys and girls. Typical of that age, the children did not readily accept Philip with his differences, according to an article in leadership magazine. But because of a creative teacher, they began to care about Philip and accept him as part of the group, though not fully. The Sunday after Easter the teacher brought Leggs pantyhose containers, the kind that look like large eggs. Each receiving one, the children were told to go outside on that lovely spring day, find some symbol for new life, and put it in the egg-like container. Back in the classroom, they would share their new-life symbols, opening the containers one by one in surprise fashion. After running about the church property in wild confusion, the students returned to the classroom and placed the containers on the table. Surrounded by the children, the teacher began to open them one by one. After each one, whether a flower, butterfly, or leaf, the class would ooh and ahh. Then one was opened, revealing nothing inside. The children exclaimed, "That's stupid. That's not fair. Somebody didn't do their assignment." Philip spoke up, "That's mine." "Philip, you don't ever do things right!" the student retorted. "There's nothing there!" I did so do it," Philip

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insisted. "I did do it. It's empty. The tomb was empty!" Silence followed. From then on Philip became a full member of the class. He died not long afterward from an infection most normal children would have shrugged off. At the funeral this class of eight-year-olds marched up to the altar not with flowers, but with their Sunday school teacher, each to lay on it an empty pantyhose egg. (Source unknown)

### **Notes**

1. <http://www.biblicalevangelist.org>