

"The Resurrection"

The Christian faith rests on the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." Did Jesus rise from the dead? Let's look at the evidence!

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. We love the Lord and we're determined to show that love by examining the Scriptures to see what God has done and what He desires of us. God regards examining the Scriptures as a noble act. And we're so grateful that you have an interest in joining us in this noble quest for the truth. We'd love to hear from you and be a part of your life each week.

Today we're going to examine the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Whether Jesus arose matters. If Jesus arose, there is life after death. If Jesus arose, then He fulfilled His prophecies and has proven Himself to be the Son of God. If Jesus arose, then His promises and teaching are true. If Jesus arose and is the Son of God, then He is Lord of all and has authority over your life and mine. If the Lord Jesus arose, then He will one day come again and judge you and me according to His Word.

And since what we are studying today has eternal consequences for our souls, we need to pay close attention. If Jesus arose from the dead, we cannot ignore Him or live as if that was a meaningless act. We cannot hide our heads in the sand any longer. The Bible says in Hebrews 4 verses 12 to 13, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

Now if you want to learn more about the resurrection of Jesus, we offer a transcript of this lesson or a booklet, The Gospel Story, and it's free. Mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or you can send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call us free, it's toll free, 1-800-321-8633. We also stream our programs on our website at www.searchtv.org. You can download study sheets or transcripts any time. Or you can download the audio or video of the program.

Larry Owsley will lead the Edmond church in a beautiful song of worship, and then we'll read from Matthew 28:2 to 7.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Matthew chapter 28 verses 2 to 7. And show and talk about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."

That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead and that so many people saw Him, touched Him, and believe in Him. Help us to have faith too. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

The Lord Jesus predicted His death and resurrection. Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 20:18 to 19, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests

and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up.” Jesus not only predicted He would be scourged and crucified at the hands of the chief priests and the Gentiles but also that He would rise from the dead the third day. Now only the Son of God could make such specific prediction about His death and resurrection and see its fulfillments just as He predicted.

Now before we speak of a resurrection, we must first examine the evidence that Jesus actually died upon the cross. That Jesus was beaten by the soldiers and then scourged is beyond dispute. All four gospel accounts speak of His scourging. A Roman scourging was not merely a beating. Many men died from scourging. The whip they used lacerated the skin with sharp objects and caused the loss of much blood. The Romans did not limit their stripes to 39 as the Jews did.

Now the purpose of the cross was to kill a person slowly and painfully. While the nails through hands and feet were not of themselves fatal, the physical position a crucified person who was hanging upon a cross, that position created tremendous pressure on the heart and lungs. A person had to pull himself up to breathe in and out. And the cross gradually wore a person down to where he couldn't breathe. In the case of Jesus, fluid surrounded his heart until it failed.

The reason soldiers would break the legs of a crucified person was to hasten their death. A person with broken legs could not push himself up to breathe and would die quickly. Well they broke the legs of the two thieves; but these experienced soldiers found Jesus was already dead, so they didn't break His bones in fulfillment of Psalm 34:20 that “not a bone of Him shall be broken.” Instead, a soldier pierced His side with a spear, “and immediately there came out blood and water” (John 19 and verse 34). Now this flowing of blood and water surely reveals that Jesus was indeed dead. If Jesus had not died from the crucifixion, He could not have survived this spear.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus asked Pilate for the body of Jesus, but Pilate would not release the body until it was determined proof positive that he was dead. Well, the two prepared his body for a burial in a new tomb a short distance from where he was crucified. John reveals that they bound the body in linen wrappings with myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight that is at 12 ounces to the pound. Now this burial process would have sealed Jesus in a mummy-like wrapping with the spices sealing the cloth together. Bound up like this, Jesus—even if He by some remote chance had survived—He couldn't have breathed and lived. Jesus was dead in the tomb.

The Pharisees and priests went to Pilate and requested a guard for the tomb. Matthew 27:62- to 66 records what they said. They said, “Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I *am to* rise again.’ Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.”

Well, Pilate said to them, “You have a guard; go, make it *as* secure as you know how.” And they went and they made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone. You see, they were determined to not let anything happen to that tomb. They didn't merely post a couple of guards at the tomb. They made it as secure as they could. Some scholars suggest that there were as many as 28 guards there, and they would have been particularly watchful on the third day, when the threat was greatest. The governor's seal meant that it would be criminal to mess with the tomb.

The Scriptures tell us that the women came very early on the first day of the week to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. Now this was their first opportunity since the Sabbath had passed. They wondered, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” You see, they realized the stone was “extremely large” according to Mark 16:4. Scholars suggest this stone weighed between

one and a half and two tons. Well, they knew moving this stone was far beyond their ability and that it would take a number of strong men to move it.

When they arrived they saw an angel had rolled the stone away. The stone sat in an inclined track. And to open the tomb, they had to roll this stone up the incline. John 20 and verse 1 tells us that they took away the stone. That is the angels. Apparently it was picked up and moved out of its track away from the sepulcher. Well, how could a group of disciples tiptoe among some sleeping soldiers, pick up an extremely large stone, and move it away from the tomb? How could they break this official seal, move the stone, and remove the body of Jesus undetected by the soldiers?

Well, when the women reported to the apostles that the tomb was empty, many of the apostles laughed and they doubted the women; but two apostles, Peter and John, wanted to find out for themselves if the tomb was empty. Peter and John ran to the tomb. And John 20:5 to 7 says that they looked into the tomb. They saw the linen wrappings lying there. And they saw "the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself." Well, this is curious. Why would the disciples, if they stole the body, take the time to loosen the linen wrappings and leave them in the tomb, knowing the guards were just outside?

Whatever you think of this event, you must explain who moved the stone, how the tomb became empty, and who took the linen wrappings from the body of Jesus. The people who examined these events argue without hesitance Jesus arose from the dead. According to Matthew 28:11 to 15, the soldiers reported all these events to the chief priests, who paid the soldiers a large sum of money to lie and promised to keep them out of trouble with the governor. But down deep these soldiers and the chief priests knew the truth.

So, we now ask whether the testimony we have about the empty tomb is true. Is there some way we can test the credibility of the report that we have of the resurrection? First, let's remember that Jesus believed and taught His people to be honest. The Lord hated hypocrisy and deceit. Jesus praised Nathanael for being a person in whom was no deceit (John 1 verse 47). Jesus spoke of the devil as a liar and condemned him in John 8:44. Well, how could His disciples abandon everything that they had been taught and spread a lie throughout Jerusalem. By the way, all the Jews had to do to prove Jesus had not resurrected was to produce the body of Jesus. If the Jews produced the body of Jesus, they could end Christianity. Well, they never tried, because they knew they couldn't. All they could do was bribe the soldiers to lie and punish the disciples.

Now, let's consider the change in the disciples. Before the disciples knew Jesus had been raised on the third day, they hid in an upper room with the door locked for fear of the Jews. They doubted and laughed at the women's testimony. And their hard hearts kept them from believing until Jesus revealed Himself to them. One apostle, Thomas persisted in his disbelief even when the others insisted they had seen the Lord. And Thomas said in John 20:25, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Well, John 20:26 to 29 says that: After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

Jesus appeared to the disciples and proved Himself to them in a variety of ways. Luke 24:36 to 39 says that: He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." But they were startled

and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? “See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

Acts 1 and verse 3 tells how Jesus “presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.” So strong did He convince them that we see, in the apostles, a very different group of men at Pentecost than we see on the day that Jesus arose. At first they disbelieved, hiding themselves as cowards, and doubting the prophecy of Jesus; but Jesus showed Himself alive with many convincing proofs.

At Pentecost they were bold and unrelenting in their preaching of the gospel. They told everyone they were eyewitnesses of the resurrection. They called the people to repent of their sins, because they crucified Jesus whom God for certain had made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2 and verse 36). In Acts chapters 3 through 8 the early disciples endured beatings and imprisonment, but they would not stop preaching Jesus as the Christ resurrected from the dead.

When the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Council, commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus, Peter and John answered in Acts 4 verses 19 to 20, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” They were convinced that they must obey God and continue preaching the gospel.

In Acts 5, the Council arrested the apostles, flogged them, commanded them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, and then they released them. But the apostles rejoiced “that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5 verses 41 and 2). They later suffered imprisonment, beatings and even death for their faith, but nothing kept them from continuing to preach Jesus as the Christ, risen from the dead. They would rather die than deny the Lord’s resurrection.

You see the disciples didn’t become rich from their preaching. They suffered much to speak in the name of Jesus. You remember they stoned Stephen in Acts 7, beheaded James the son of Zebedee in Acts 12. Not one of the disciples ever denied the resurrection. They died for preaching it. According to tradition, they were all martyred for their faith except John. Let me ask you would you die for preaching something that you knew was a lie? Would you die for it? The disciples gained no earthly advantage by preaching a resurrected Jesus Christ. Their bold faith assures us that we too can place our faith and confidence in Jesus as the resurrected Lord. And that He will one day come again and will judge us. Yes we can believe that Jesus was raised from the dead.

Let’s pray together. Heavenly Father we’re thankful for the reassurance that is in the word of God. That Jesus has indeed risen from the dead. And we study and as we research the things that are taught there, we pray that our faith may grow stronger because of the evidence. And this is our pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Saul of Tarsus was originally devoted to Judaism and a persecutor of the church, but He saw Christ on the road to Damascus and was baptized three days later to become a Christian. His conversion is especially important in view of his earlier zeal against Christianity. He gave up everything to come to Christ. And what he wrote about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 is the earliest documentary evidence that we have. No one can satisfactorily explain the conversion and later life of the apostle Paul except as he himself explained it. He saw the risen Christ.

Some say Jesus fainted on the cross and revived in the cool of the tomb; but this doesn't explain how Jesus survived the linen wrappings, how He moved the stone, or what frightened the guards. Others say the apostles only imagined they saw Jesus after His resurrection, but this doesn't explain why there were linen wrappings in the empty tomb, how the stone was moved or before the women arrived, how the guards were frightened. Nor does it explain how they were able to touch Jesus.

Though we have barely discussed the evidence of the resurrection, we've seen enough to say confidently with Peter and the apostles that God raised Him from the dead. If He is risen, He is the Son of God and the Lord of all. And according to John 12:48 and Acts 17:31 He will one day judge you and me according to His Word.

To become a Christian believe with all your heart Jesus is the Christ, turn from your sins in repentance, confess Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins as the Bible teaches in Acts 2 and verse 38.

Well we hope that today's study of the resurrection has blessed you and challenged you to think. If you want a transcript or the booklet, The Gospel, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area at www.searchtv.org. Now you can watch SEARCH on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and like the programs because this helps spread the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry if you get ahold of us, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

Focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church home and a church family. And I realize that some of you for health reasons cannot attend worship; but I'm speaking to those who can attend and haven't been going. There's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. Let em know that your watching and encourage them to watch as well. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.