

"The Resurrection"

The Christian faith rests on the 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 really rise from the dead? Well, let's look at the evidence!

Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and we're here to search God's Word for the Lord's Way. We love the Lord and we're determined to show that love by examining the Scriptures to see what God desires of us. God regards examining the Scriptures to find the truth 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 want to 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 greatly. 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, 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.

Now, since what we're studying today has eternal consequences for our souls, we need to pay close attention. If Jesus arose from the dead, we can't ignore Him or live as if that was a meaningless act. We can't hide our heads in the sand any longer. The Bible says in Hebrews 4, verses 12 and 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 is 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 or a CD of our study for this month free. So, 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 us at 1-800-321-8633. We also stream our programs on our website at www.searchtv.org. You can download study sheets or transcripts at any time. Or you can download the audio or video of the program. Ken Helterbrand will lead the Edmond church in a beautiful song of worship, and then we'll read from Matthew 28, verses 2 through 7.

God's Word in Matthew chapter 28, verses 2 to 7 says, "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 from Matthew chapter 28. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we are thankful for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, which encourages our hearts and helps us to know that there is eternal life. Father, help us to follow Your risen Son and to give You glory for all that He has done for us. In Jesus' name, 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.” This is an amazing and a specific prediction. 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. Only the Son of God could make such a prediction about His death and resurrection and see its fulfillment just as He predicted.

Before we can speak of a resurrection, we have to 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. You see, many men died from scourging. The whip that 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.

You see, the purpose of the cross was to kill a person slowly and very painfully. While the nails went through the hands and feet were not of themselves fatal, the physical position of a crucified person hung upon a cross created tremendous pressure on the heart and lungs. A person had to pull himself up to breathe in and out. 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 couldn't push himself up to breathe and would die quickly. 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 and verse 20 that “not a bone of Him should be broken.” Instead, a soldier pierced His side with a spear, “and immediately (the Bible says) there came out blood and water” (John 19, verse 34). Now, this flowing of water and blood is a sure sign that Jesus was truly 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 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, now these pounds are at 12 ounces to the pound. This burial process would have sealed Jesus in a mummy-like wrapping with spices sealing the cloth together. Well, bound up like this, Jesus—even if He by some remote chance survived the crucifixion and the spear—why He couldn't have breathed and lived. Jesus was dead in the tomb.

The Pharisees and the priests went to Pilate and they requested a guard for the tomb. Matthew 27, verses 62 to 66 records what they said, “ ‘Sir, (they said) 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.’ Pilate said to them, ‘Well, you have a guard; you go and make it as secure as you know how.’ And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.” They were determined not to 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 at the tomb, and they would have been particularly watchful on the third day, when the threat was the very greatest. Now, 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, and they came to anoint the body of Jesus. This was their first opportunity since the Sabbath had passed; and they wondered, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” And

they realized the stone was “extremely large” according to Mark 16, verse 4. Now, scholars again suggest that this stone weighed between one and a half and two tons, three to four thousand pounds. And they knew that moving this stone was far beyond their ability and that it would take a number of strong men to move it.

Well, when they arrived they saw that 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. Now, John 20 and verse 1 tells us that they took away the stone. 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, remove the body of Jesus undetected by the soldiers?

When the women reported to the apostles the tomb was empty, many of the apostles laughed and they doubted the women; but two apostles wanted to find out for themselves if the tomb was empty. Peter and John, you remember, ran to the tomb. John chapter 20 verses 5 to 7 says that they looked in the tomb and saw the linen wrappings lying there. 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.” Now, 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 that the guards were just outside?

Whatever understanding you have 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 hesitation that Jesus arose from the dead. According to Matthew 28, verses 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 that we can test the credibility of the report that we have of the resurrection?

Well, first, let’s remember that Jesus believed and taught His people to be honest. The Lord hated hypocrisy and deceit. You remember that Jesus praised Nathanael for being a person in whom there was no deceit (John 1 and verse 47). And Jesus spoke of the devil as a liar and He condemned lying in John 8 and verse 44. Well, how could His disciples abandon everything 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 from the dead was to produce the body of Jesus. If the Jews produced the body of Jesus, they could end Christianity. But, you see, they never tried. Why! Because they knew they couldn’t. All they could do was bribe the soldiers to lie and punish the disciples.

Now, let’s look at the change in the disciples. Before the resurrection the disciples did not know for sure that Jesus had been raised on that third day; they didn’t know that, they doubted it; and so they hid in the upper room with the door locked for fear of the Jews. They doubted and they laughed, you remember, when the women came and told them that Jesus had risen. Their hard hearts kept them from believing until Jesus revealed Himself to them. You remember that one apostle, Thomas, persisted in his disbelief even when the others insisted they had seen the Lord. Thomas said in John 20 and verse 25 that, “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.”

John 20, verses 26 to 29 says that, “After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. And Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ And then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here

your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.' And 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 He 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 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 a very different group of men at Pentecost than we do on the day that Jesus arose. After they disbelieved, hiding themselves as cowards, and doubting the prophecy of Jesus; Jesus then showed Himself alive with many convincing proofs.

So 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 had crucified Jesus whom God for certain had made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2 and verse 36). In Acts chapter 3, verses 1 through 8 the early disciples endured beatings, those chapters, those first chapters; they endured imprisonment, but they wouldn't stop preaching Jesus as the Christ resurrected from the dead.

And when the Sanhedrin, that is 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." Oh, they were convinced that they must obey God and continue preaching the gospel.

In Acts chapter 5, the Council arrested the apostles, flogged them, commanded them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, and 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.

Oh, the disciples didn't become rich or find it easy from their preaching. It was not a good situation; they suffered much to tell the story of Jesus. They stoned Stephen in Acts 7 and they beheaded James the son of Zebedee in Acts 12. Not one, 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. Would you die for preaching something that you knew was a lie?

The disciples gained no earthly advantage by preaching Jesus Christ. The only reason they spoke out so boldly about their faith was they believed Jesus was truly the Christ, the risen Son of God. And their bold faith assures us that we too can place our faith in Jesus as Lord. Let's pray. Father, we are thankful for the testimony of the Scriptures and for the lives of the apostles, how that they gave themselves preaching the truth and gave their testimony to us through the Word. Help us to have deep faith in Your Son. It is in His name we pray. Amen!

Saul of Tarsus was originally devoted to Judaism and a violent persecutor of the church, but He saw Christ on the road to Damascus. And his conversion is especially important in view of his earlier zeal

against Christianity. He gave up everything to become a Christian. What he wrote about, when he wrote about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 is really the earliest documentary evidence that we have. You see, no one can satisfactorily explain the conversion and the later life of the apostle Paul except in the way that he himself explained it. You see, he had seen 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 how He frightened the guards to get away. 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 before the women arrived, or how the guards were frightened. Nor does it explain how they were able to touch Jesus.

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

Oh, to become a Christian believe with all your heart that 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.

We hope that today's study of the resurrection has blessed you and challenged you to think. And if you want a transcript of this month's programs on Jesus Is Lord or a CD of the message, 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, call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now, our programs appear on our website at www.searchtv.org. We offer free study sheets that go along with our programs and you can download them free at our website before each program or call and request them. We won't ask you for money or put you on a mailing list.

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