

Triumphant Love

Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. 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."

Matthew 28:1-7 (NASB)

Jesus' determined love lead to the ultimate sacrifice and then revealed the greatest triumph ever known. He arose from the dead. The Lord exhibited authority and power. However, today there are some who question whether the event is even real. Let's look at four questions to see if we can better understand the event of the resurrection.

To have a clear understanding of the resurrection you need to know:

1. Did Jesus really die?

Documents offering evidence of Jesus' death.

Writer	Position	Approximate Date
Matthew	Disciple, eyewitness	40-60 A.D.
Mark	Disciple, eyewitness	45-60 A.D.
Luke	Disciple, eyewitness	57-62 A.D.
John	Disciple, eyewitness	55-65 A.D.
Paul	Apostle, eyewitness	50-58 A.D.
Peter	Disciple, eyewitness	61-64 A.D.
Author of Hebrews	May be Luke	60-67 A.D.
Cornelius Tacitus	Roman historian	55-120 A.D.
Flavius Josephus	Jewish historian	37-97 A.D.
The Jewish Talmud	Jewish writings	70-200 A.D.
Mara Bar-Seripion of Syria	Prisoner writing son	about 70 A.D.
Lucian of Somosata	Greek satirist	100-200 A.D.

Mark 15:43-45 (NASB) Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.

Flavius Josephus (37-97 AD), court historian for Emperor Vespasian:

“At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good and he was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die.”

2. Do we have early accounts that actually confirm the resurrection?

Creed of Early Church: written 3-6 years after the resurrection of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:3-6 (NASB) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

What do we learn by this creed?

1. Jesus died.
2. Jesus was buried.
3. Jesus was resurrected on the third day.
4. Jesus appeared in physical bodily form to multiple people.

3. Do we actually have evidence of an empty tomb?

Jewish Response:

Roman Response:

All four Gospels: Matthew 28:1-8, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-10, John 20:1-8

4. Do eyewitness reports confirm the resurrection?

Acts 2:32, 3:15, 4:18-20, 5:30-32, 10:39-40, 1 Pet. 5:1, 2 Pet. 1:16, John 20:24-30, 1 John 1:1-2, Luke 1:1-2, Heb. 2:3-4

Acts 26:24-29 (NASB) While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad." But Paul *said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. "For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. "King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do." Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." And Paul said, "I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains."

Do you see how brave, almost brash, Paul is? He not only boldly witnesses to the king and the governor, but he has the audacity to tell the king that he already knows Paul is telling the truth! Why is Paul so confident of this? Because the events of Christianity were "not done in a corner." They were common knowledge and surely had not "escaped [the king's] notice." Imagine a defendant challenging a ruler or judge in that way! Such a witness must know that the events he describes are well-known.

Norman Geisler, *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*.