

Christ's Resurrection is the Foundation of Christianity
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It's fascinating when engineers strategically place explosives and then set them off so that an old skyscraper collapses into a heap of rubble. With the Christian faith, you only have to set the explosives at one point: Blow up the resurrection of Jesus and the whole thing comes tumbling down.

That's what the apostle Paul said. If you can blow up this one thing, you totally destroy Christianity. That foundation is the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Paul said, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, and your faith also is vain.... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:14, 17).

What evidence is there for the resurrection of Jesus? Books have been written on this, so I can only be sketchy. First, there was the fact of the empty tomb. If Jesus' tomb had not been empty, when the disciples began proclaiming his resurrection from the dead, their enemies would have simply marched to the tomb, produced the body, and the disciples would have been laughed out of town.

There are several ways to account for the empty tomb. Jesus' enemies could have stolen the body. But they had no motive to do so. It was to their advantage to leave the body where it was, which is why they had Pilate post the Roman guard and seal the tomb.

Another possibility is that the Roman guards stole the body. But again, they had no motive to do so. They weren't concerned about this Jewish religious trial. The Jewish leaders, who were scrambling for ways to explain away the resurrection, didn't accuse the soldiers of taking the body or allowing it to be stolen.

A third possibility is that the disciples stole the body. The Jewish leaders actually promoted this theory by bribing the Roman guards (Matt. 28:11-15). But there are many reasons the disciples could not have moved Jesus' body. The tomb was secured by the Roman guard. The stone was large and heavy and could not have been moved without cooperation from the guards. The guards would not have risked their lives to allow the body to be stolen, even for a bribe. If the disciples had bribed the guards and stolen the body, they would not later have suffered beatings, imprisonment and even death to preach Jesus' resurrection.

A second major evidence for Jesus' resurrection is his many post-resurrection appearances to the disciples. These happened in varied circumstances to many different people. J. N. D. Anderson, formerly Professor of Oriental Laws and Director of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies at the University of London, wrote, "The most drastic way of dismissing the evidence would be to say that these stories were mere fabrications, that they were pure lies. But, so far as I know, not a single critic today would take such an attitude. In fact, it would really be an impossible position" (*Christianity Today* [3/29/68], p. 5). He goes on to give several solid reasons for his assertions.

A third evidence is the changed lives of the many different witnesses. None of them were expecting a resurrection, in spite of Jesus' repeated predictions of such. They were confused, frightened, and depressed after the crucifixion. At the first reports of the resurrection from the women who saw Jesus, the disciples were skeptical. But they all became convinced witnesses to the point that they boldly proclaimed Christ to the very audience that had crucified him. Many endured persecution and martyrdom. What could account for such dramatic change, if not the fact that they had seen the risen Jesus Christ?

A fourth evidence (and my list is far from exhaustive) is the unique person of Jesus Christ. Study the Gospel accounts of who Jesus was, what he taught, the miracles he performed, and the prophecies he fulfilled. As C. S. Lewis observed in *Mere Christianity*, no mere man, let alone a great religious teacher, could have said and done the things that Jesus did. The only options, said Lewis, are that Jesus is a liar, a lunatic, or Lord of all. Although formerly an atheist, Lewis became convinced of the third option.

If you've never done so, Easter would be a good time to go to a church that proclaims Christ's resurrection. Read the Gospels. Carefully weigh the evidence. Your conclusion may, as it did with the apostles and as it has done with many millions since, dramatically change your life.