

The Declaration
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Opening question: **Why is Christ's resurrection central to the Christian faith?**

On Easter Sunday we proclaim: "He's risen!" "He's alive!" Yet some of your neighbors and co-workers think you believe in a "myth." This morning let's not just read Luke 24:1-12, nod our heads and leave. Let's think about WHY we are convinced the resurrection happened and Jesus is alive.

Luke 24:1–12 (ESV)

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. 5 And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? 6 He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." 8 And they remembered his words, 9 and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, 11 but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

- As you'd expect from a doctor of medicine, Luke's writing is very factual and straight-forward.
- **What key facts jump out at you from those verses? What emotions were they feeling?**
- Here's an opinion question. No right or wrong answer because scripture doesn't give us one:
- **Why do you think God chose these women as the first to discover the resurrection?**

- For one thing, **what were they doing compared to what the eleven disciples were doing?**
- God will reveal the reality of Christ's resurrection to anyone who comes looking.
- More than a half dozen times Jesus told His disciples what would happen, for example:

Matthew 16:21 (ESV)

21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

Luke 9:22 (ESV)

22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

- **Why do you think all of Jesus' closest followers weren't camped out at the tomb?**

Darrell Bock writes (in the IVP Commentary):

"...despite six resurrection predictions in Luke...the first people who had to be convinced of the resurrection were the disciples themselves. In a real sense they were the first skeptics to become convinced that Jesus was raised!"

- Until their eyes were opened by the Holy Spirit...until they saw Him in His glorified body...even Jesus' closest followers struggled to grasp the idea that He's alive.
- Yet without the resurrection we have NOTHING!

1 Corinthians 15:14–19 (ESV)

14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen

asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Over the next few days we'll once again see (as we do every year) news stories and TV shows with the question: *Was the resurrection of Jesus true?* All this time, and still that question is asked. It's a LIFE and DEATH question for every person on earth. It's a question with eternal consequences for all of us. If a friend asked you: **Why do you believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ? How would you answer?**

Chip Ingram gives a good summary of the evidence of the resurrection:

- *Predicted by Old Testament prophets*

Old Testament prophets predicted both the resurrection and Jesus' entire life—it wasn't new. Hundreds of years prior to these events they were prophesied, predicted if you will. It was predicted that His side would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10, fulfilled John 19:34), His heart broken (Psalms 22:14 fulfilled John 19:34), His bones left unbroken (Psalms 34:20, fulfilled John 19:33) and that He would be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9, fulfilled Matthew 27:45). These are just a few of over 300 Old Testament predictions that Jesus fulfilled.

- *Jesus predicted it openly and numerously*

Jesus predicted openly and numerously that He would die on the cross and rise again three days later (Matthew 16:21, Matthew 17:9, Matthew 17:22, Matthew 20:18, Mark 9:10, John 2:18, Luke 9:22). It was public, it was known. Jesus made this claim and held onto His intentions.

- *Appeared 12 different times to over 500 eye witnesses*

- *Appeared in multiple locations, multiple times, over 40 days*

He appeared to Mary Magdalene (John 20:14), the women returning from the tomb (Matthew 28:9), Peter (Luke 24:34), the Emmaus disciples (Luke 24:13), the apostles (John 20:26), James (1 Corinthians 1:7), and to the group of 500 believers on a Galilean mountain (1 Corinthians 1:6) just to name a few.

- ***Let's look at some additional facts below and ask: Why they support the truth of the resurrection? What about...***

- *The transformation of the disciples - What was different about them after the resurrection?*
- *Explosion of the church – “in Jerusalem”*
- *Disciples all willing to knowingly “die for a lie” – inconceivable*
- *Conversion of Saul of Tarsus - If Jesus was not alive...*
- *Transformation of Roman empire and the world – test of time*
- *Best legal minds – the evidence is conclusive!*
- *(There are links to articles with this and more information below.)*
- *My testimony – “He changed my life”*
- *The most convincing proof of the resurrection of all: The Holy Spirit has opened your eyes!*

John Piper writes:

Jesus said, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.... He will glorify me” (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit does not do this by telling us that Jesus rose from the dead. He does it by opening our eyes to see the self-authenticating glory of Christ in the narrative of his life and death and resurrection. He enables us to see Jesus as he really was, so that he is irresistibly true and beautiful.

A saving knowledge of Christ crucified and risen is not the mere result of right reasoning about historical facts. It is the result of spiritual illumination to see those facts for what they really are: a revelation of the truth and glory of God in the face of Christ—who is the same yesterday today and forever.

So, What’s The Takeaway?

- If you’re a follower of Christ, then you have decided to believe that Jesus died for your sins and rose from the dead. That’s faith!
- However, having faith, doesn’t mean we should ignore the compelling evidence that has convinced millions that Jesus lives today.
- Hopefully, this morning’s review of some of that evidence has given you an even stronger case to those who are skeptics.
- Of course, the one fact no one can ever dispute is our personal testimony: I believe He’s alive because He changed my heart and life. When someone asks why we believe in the resurrection, that’s the most compelling answer we can ever give!

Article from John Piper: Eight Reasons Why I Believe That Jesus Rose from the Dead - <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/eight-reasons-why-i-believe-that-jesus-rose-from-the-dead>

Full Articles:

<http://livingontheedge.org/why-i-believe-01-in-the-resurrection.pdf>

<http://www.christianity.com/bible/apologetics/why-i-believe-in-the-resurrection-1253812.html>

Lee Strobel, *The Case for the Resurrection*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVoKR_cvJJM