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What You Need to Know About The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: Part 1

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Please Note: This is the third in the series on the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Due to Spring Break next week and the Easter holiday on the 24th, there will be no Basic Bible Briefs sent out for the next two Mondays. The final segment (part two of the resurrection) will be sent out on Monday, March 31st.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST: PART ONE

I. Why is the resurrection so important?

A. It is the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, and Bill of Rights of the Christian faith.

B. It emphasizes the absolute uniqueness and utter superiority of the Christian faith. The founders of all other religions in human history eventually died. But only the founder of Christianity (who also died) is alive and active today! Thus, in one sense of the word, the empty tomb, not the cross, serves as the official sign of Christianity!

C. It is the final side making up the divine triangle of salvation.

Thus:

1. Jesus' birth made it possible.
2. Jesus' death made it actual.
3. Jesus' resurrection made it certain.

D. It serves as the official measurement of God's power. We are all aware of how man measures power, using such units as candle power, horse power, atomic power, etc., but how is divine power measured? In the scriptures there are two such standards of measurement.

1. In the Old Testament it is the power God used in bringing Israel out of Egypt (Exod. 14:26-31).

Time and again, especially in the Psalms this mighty event is referred to. Note but a few references:

"For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters ... Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers"
(Psa. 74:12, 13, 15).

"Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea. Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known. He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left ... Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea" (Psa. 106:7-11, 22).

2. In the New Testament it is the power of God used in bringing Jesus out of the grave.

"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:19-21).

E. It is the focal point in regards to both salvation and the scriptures.

1. Regarding the salvation:
"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain" (1 Cor. 15:1, 2).
2. Regarding the scriptures:
"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3, 4).

II. What are the biblical predictions and references relating to the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

A. The predictions:

1. Those found in the Old Testament, as given by the prophets
 - a. David's testimony:

"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psa. 16:10).

- b. Isaiah's testimony:
"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:10, 11).
- c. Zechariah's testimony:
"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zech. 12:10).

2. Those found in the Gospel accounts, as given by the Savior Himself. Jesus predicted His resurrection on at least nine occasions:

- a. After the first temple cleansing:
"Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19).
- b. Upon being asked by the Pharisees to show them a sign:
 - (1) First occasion
"But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:39, 40).
 - (2) Second occasion (Matt. 16:4)
"A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed."
- c. After promising to build His church:
"From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things

of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matt. 16:21).

- d. After the Transfiguration event:
”And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry” (Matt. 17:23).

- e. During His final trip to Jerusalem:
”Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again” (Matt. 20:18, 19).

- f. During His sermon on the Good Shepherd:
”Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:17, 18).

- g. Following the Triumphal Entry:
”Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24).

- h. In the Upper Room:
”For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:28, 29).

- i. En route to Gethsemane:
”But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee” (Matt. 26:32).

III. How did the foes and friends of Jesus Christ respond to His resurrection?

A. The response of His foes:

- 1. The Jewish leaders demanded that Pilate seal Jesus’ tomb to prevent the resurrection from happening.

"Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch"(Matt. 27:62-66).

2. The Roman soldiers who witnessed the resurrection were bribed to say it had never occurred (Matt. 28:12-15).

B. The response of His friends:

Sadly, none of Jesus' disciples remembered (or had sufficient faith to believe) His repeated promise to rise again.

1. The women did not remember.

"And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?"(Mark 16:1-3).

2. Mary Magdalene did not remember.

"And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away"(John 20:13-15).

3. Peter and John did not remember.

"For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead" (John 20:9).

"Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass"(Luke 24:12).

4. The apostles did not remember.

"And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene and Joanna, and

Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not”(Luke 24:9-11).

5. The two disciples on the Emmaus Road did not remember.
”Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”(Luke 24:25, 26).
6. Thomas did not remember.
”But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the LORD. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe”
(John 20:24, 25).

IV. What is the evidence supporting the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

”But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”
(Heb. 11:6).

”But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”(1 Peter 3:15).

These verses at first glance may seem to have little in common with the resurrection of Christ, but the fact is they serve to set the stage for us as we contemplate this glorious event. From these passages we learn two truths:

- Above all else, God desires that we, by faith alone, accept His revealed word on any given subject apart from any external evidence that might exist to support it.
- On the other hand as believers, after accepting God’s word at face value, Peter exhorts us to compile whatever relevant evidence that might exist to validate or confirm the scriptures!

Perhaps no other biblical event lends itself more completely to all this than does the resurrection of Jesus Christ! The evidence supporting His resurrection is nine-fold:

A. The empty tomb:

If Christ did not rise again, what happened to His body?

1. His friends did not remove it, for they were as surprised concerning the empty tomb as the rest. See John 20:1-9.

2. His enemies did not remove it, for they were bribed to tell a lie concerning the empty tomb. See Matt. 28:12-15.

Josh McDowell observes:

Another obvious fact after the resurrection was the empty tomb. The disciples of Christ did not go off to Athens or Rome to preach Christ raised from the dead; they went right back to the city of Jerusalem where, if what they were teaching were false, their message would have been disproved. The resurrection could not have been maintained for a moment in Jerusalem if the tomb had not been empty.

B. The tremendous and sudden change in the lives of the disciples.

Two examples will suffice here:

1. That of Simon Peter:
 - a. Just prior to the Resurrection Peter is seen bitterly denying his Savior (Matt. 26:69-74).
 - b. Just after the Resurrection he is seen boldly declaring His Savior (Acts 2:14-40).
2. That of John the apostle:
 - a. Just prior to the Resurrection John displayed total contempt toward the Samaritans.

"And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" (Luke 9:54).

- b. Just after the Resurrection he displays total compassion toward the Samaritans.

"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John ... And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans" (Acts 8:14, 25).

C. The silence from both the Romans and Pharisees. Not once did either of these enemy groups even attempt to deny Christ's resurrection. They hated it and tried to suppress it, but could not refute it. Two examples will illustrate this:

1. First example:

"And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead ... And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus ... So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done"(Acts 4:1, 2, 18, 21).

2. Second example:

"Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison ... And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us ... Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men ... And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go"
(Acts 5:17, 18, 27, 28, 34, 35, 38-40).

The point of all this is simple: If the foes of Christianity could have produced the body of Jesus, no warnings, threats, or imprisonment in regards to His followers would have been necessary.

D. The change from Saturday to Sunday as the main day of worship.

Imagine the following:

While visiting a foreign country you are suddenly seized by some terrorists and held hostage in solitary confinement for 90 days. During this time you are permitted absolutely no contact with the outside world. After three months (for no apparent reason) you are released and allowed to return home. Upon arrival however, you learn some incredible news. During your absence all Christian churches everywhere no longer gather for worship on Sunday, but instead assemble on Monday of each week. Your immediate question of course would be what in the world could have happened during those 90 days causing Christians to abandon their 2,000-year-old custom of worshipping on Sunday.

Yet this is exactly what happened in Palestine shortly after the resurrection of Christ. As ingrained as the Sabbath was in the hearts and history of the apostles, it would have taken some fantastic event to change their thinking here.

E. The existence of the church:

In less than 50 years after Christ's death, the Christian church had become a mighty power, causing the Roman government to view with growing concern its influence upon men and women. Legends and religions do not develop this quickly.

F. The various appearances of Christ following his resurrection:

During the 40 days between His resurrection and ascension, our Lord made ten specific appearances before individuals or groups of individuals.

1. The first day (Easter Sunday)
 - a. To Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18)
 - b. To some women (Matt. 28:9-15)
 - c. To Simon Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5)
 - d. To two disciples en route to Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-35)
 - e. To ten apostles in the Upper Room (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-48; John 20:19-23)

2. The final 39 days
 - a. To Thomas and the 10 apostles in the Upper Room (John 20:24-31)
 - b. To seven apostles by the Galilean Sea (John 21)
 - c. To the apostles and 500 disciples (Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; 1 Cor. 15:6)
 - d. To James, the half brother of Christ (1 Cor. 15:7)
 - e. To the 11 apostles on the Mount of Olives (Luke 24:49-50; Acts 1:3-8)