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The Evidence Supporting the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

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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:

- **The empty tomb**

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

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

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

- **The tremendous and sudden change in the lives of the disciples**

Two examples will suffice here:

A. That of Simon Peter:

1. Just prior to the Resurrection Peter is seen bitterly denying his Savior (Matt. 26:69-74).
2. Just after the Resurrection he is seen boldly declaring his Savior (Acts 2:14-40).

B. That of John the Apostle:

1. 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).

2. 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).

- **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:

A. 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).

B. 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 regard to His followers would have been necessary.

- **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 ninety 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 ninety 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.

- **The existence of the church**

In less than fifty 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.

Some 2,000 years ago the resurrected Jesus Christ appeared to a prisoner on the lonely Isle of Patmos, both assuring and reassuring him by the following words:

"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death" (Rev. 1:18).