

Is Jesus...Risen? TOUGH QUESTIONS Pt.

At Easter time our minds are drawn to the amazing, sacrificial love of God. Instead of demanding appeasement, God came to give of himself to save us. On the cross we see a God of love giving all to literally rescue you from your own folly and give you life.

1 Corinthians 15:17-19—In 1971, Bill and Gloria Gaither penned the now famous words, "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow, Because He lives, all fear is gone, Because I know He holds the future, And life is worth the living, Just because He lives!" Indeed, if Jesus never rose from the dead, our faith would be futile and we would be hopeless. Many skeptics now doubt whether Jesus ever rose from the dead, others opine that Jesus probably never actually died, He was just unconscious for a while. Let's examine what evidence there really is for the death and resurrection of Jesus.

IS IT POSSIBLE? Believing in the resurrection of Jesus presupposes an acceptance of the supernatural. After all, if you insist that everything must be explained by natural processes alone, then you will be incapable of accepting evidence to the contrary. Those who insist on rejecting the supernatural, show a tremendous amount of arrogance in that they propose to contradict, with their limited knowledge and experience, the experiences and testimony of every generation and nearly every society in known history, including our own. I'm not prepared to accept such a wild assertion, are you? So for the sake of today's sermon, we're going to assume that there may be powers outside of our current scientific understanding, as we look at the evidence.

Did JESUS REALLY Die? John 19:28-30—People didn't kill Jesus, He willingly laid down His life for us (Jn 10:17-18), intentionally following His Father's plan.

John 19:31-34—A common cause of death on a cross is asphyxiation. If you cannot lift yourself up with your legs you will soon suffocate. That is why the soldiers broke the thief's legs to speed up the death process. The soldier was surprised that Jesus had already died so he made sure of the fact by running his spear into his side. The blood and water likely signified a pulmonary edema in which fluid builds up in the lungs and suffocates a person.ⁱ

John 19:35-37—John's gospel is the last one written, apparently by this time people had begun to question whether Jesus had really died. In the earlier gospels there is no question whether Jesus died, just whether He really rose from the dead. John made a point of the fact that he was an eyewitness of Jesus' death.

Mark 15:43-45—The centurion had no reason to fake Jesus' death, in fact he had a personal interest in Jesus being truly dead. If Jesus were not really dead, and managed to get away, that centurion would pay with his own life. This and the fact that he was a professional executioner makes the centurion's testimony very reliable.

Did JESUS REALLY RISE? Matthew 28:11-15—The people who sentenced Jesus to death paid off the guards to tell a lie about what had happened at the tomb. They began to spread the rumor that while the soldiers slept, Jesus' disciples had stolen His body and hidden it. This is disproven by a number of facts. (1) The disciples didn't believe that the body wasn't in the tomb until they saw for themselves. See Luke 24:11. (2) All the Jewish leaders would have had to do was find the body and they would totally discredit the Christians but they didn't even try. (3) Roman soldiers simply didn't go to sleep while on duty. If they did they were put to death.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8—There were more than 500 eyewitnesses who actually saw Jesus. When Paul told about these people he pointed out that most of them were still alive thus showing confidence that these people did indeed exist.

Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-11, Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-18—In first century Palestine a woman's testimony wasn't considered to be very valuable, it would not hold up in court. If the disciples were to make up a story, they would never have made women, who were considered untrustworthy, the prime witnesses to the event. Neither would they have made women the heroes and themselves cowards.

All the disciples were willing to die for their story. Would all those men have been willing to die for something that they knew to be false and would give no advantage to themselves or their families?

WHY DOES IT MATTER? Revelation 1:17, 18—Through His death and resurrection Jesus conquered death and now He has the keys of death and of the grave (the words hades and hell both refer to the place of the dead, the grave). If Jesus didn't rise there would be no hope beyond the grave. But since He holds the keys, when He comes again He can simply put His key in death's "lock" and release all those who have accepted Him from death's grip.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17—Death seems like such a permanent, impenetrable ending, but since Jesus has been through it and risen to take the keys of death, we can have hope for eternity! Because He lives you can face tomorrow, when you place your trust in Him.

ⁱ <http://spartacus-educational.com/ROMarmy.htm>