

Jesus Rose

Mark 16:1-8

Why are you a follower of Christ? When you boil down all the reasons to believe in Jesus what is the first one? What is the foundational proof?

Brothers and sisters, **the cornerstone of Christianity is the resurrection of Jesus Christ**. All Christian theology and practice rest on this single claim that the angel said:

The Cornerstone of Christianity is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

“You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. **He has risen; he is not here.**”

Mark 16:6

No historian questions the fact that a Jewish Rabbi named Jesus of Nazareth lived and taught around 2,000 years ago. But the questions about Jesus and Christianity hinge on **one crucial issue**: ***did Jesus actually rise from the dead?*** There are lots of creative ways people try to cast doubt on this or confuse things.

- Some say ***he didn't really die*** - he was just mostly dead, not all dead.
- Some argue for ***hallucinations*** so that the apostles *thought* they saw a Risen Jesus because they were hyped up on prophecy and some kind of group hysteria.
- Others believe in ***a grand conspiracy theory*** - that as the church gained power in the time of Constantine they changed the ancient documents and created a supernatural Jesus when he had really just been a nice moral teacher and philosopher like Aristotle.
- Skeptics simply ***deny anything supernatural*** as the ancient superstition of uneducated people. The enlightenment and modern science have replaced the need for God-style explanations of things. They say, “Jesus didn't rise from the dead or do miracles - all of that is just fanciful nonsense, invented to control the masses.”
- One of the most common views today in many churches - dedicated above all to peace, harmony and tolerance among all people - say, ***“It doesn't really matter.*** A real Adam and Eve - doesn't matter. A real Jesus who really died and really rose again - not important. What matters is how you feel and who you love. Can't we all just get along and leave behind these old, hard and fast truth claims that do nothing but divide us?”

But we who stand on the authority of God's Word and the central importance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ have drawn a line in the sand on this point. ***This does matter. In fact, everything depends on it.*** Some battles we don't need to fight, some lines we can back away from or allow to get a little blurry. But the fact that Jesus really died and really rose again **IS THE FIGHT**. It is all or nothing at exactly this place. If we lose this we lose everything.

Paul said it this way in 1 Corinthians 15 -

“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.” 1 Cor. 15:14, 17

Take away the resurrection and there is no salvation. If Jesus died and did not rise then he was not a great moral philosopher - he was a fraud and a liar. You can't hold on to Jesus while denying the main thing he accomplished. Yes, Jesus died. But that was not remarkable apart from the fact that HE ROSE! It all depends on the resurrection. Earlier in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul writes about the gospel:

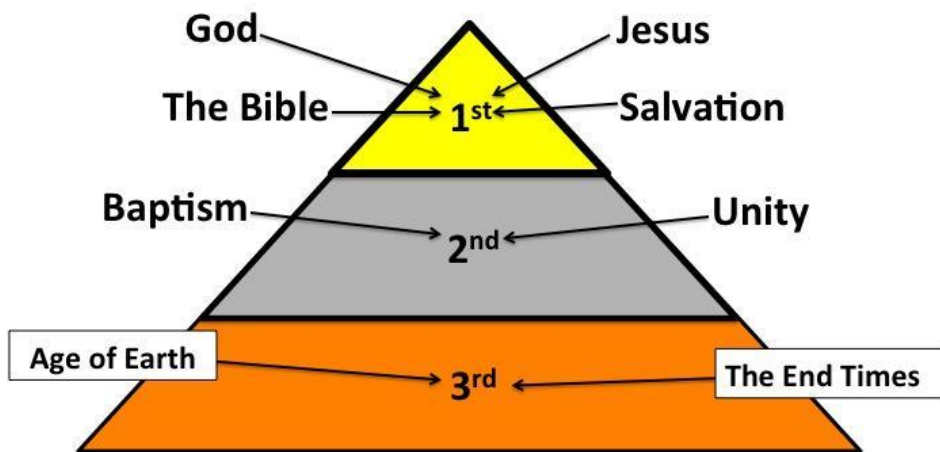
“Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved.” 1 Corinthians 15:1

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus are **matters OF FIRST IMPORTANCE**. These are not secondary matters. Everything depends on these central claims of the gospel. Our salvation, our eternity, our day to day lives - everything rests on this.

Image of 3 Tiers of Priority.

It is helpful to think about three levels of importance. Some things are top tier matters of first importance - like our doctrine of God, the Trinity and Jesus. Also our view of the authority of Scripture and the gospel of salvation. Those are matters of first importance.



But underneath that is a second level of things that are important but there is room to disagree among good hearted believers. We practice baptism by immersion and that is important to us but we have good relations with brothers and sisters who practice baptism in other ways. The second level represents distinctives of our movement and values for our church. They are important but they are distinct from the top tier priorities.

Under these is the third level. Lots of Christians who love the Lord and believe the Bible have different views on things like the age of the earth and the nature and timing of the rapture. Some of you don't even know the word "rapture" and that's ok because it's a third tier issue - not necessary for salvation and not a distinctive of our church or denomination. These are good things to study and discuss but not good things to fight about. Other things are more important.

The resurrection of Jesus, for example, is a matter of first importance. Everything depends on this!

And the clear message of the New Testament is that ***the Gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection provides a firm foundation***. In fact, it is the ONLY firm foundation there is. "*There is no other name, under heaven, by which we may be saved*" (Acts 4:12). It is only when we build our lives on Jesus and his word that we are like the wise man who built his house on the rock. Christ alone is our cornerstone. He promised to die for our sins and to rise again.

And thanks be to God, Jesus was true to His Word. Three times he made this prediction:

We can trust Jesus' Word

"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again." Mark 8:31

Jesus knew he would be rejected, that he would suffer and die. That was the plan. But the fruition of the plan was that he would rise from the dead! Death was not the end game. His death was necessary to pay for sin. But it was the resurrection that definitively confirmed that his death was sufficient - that ***his offering was accepted*** - that justice was satisfied and our salvation was accomplished. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of our faith and it is an unshakeable cornerstone.

Be confident that your faith rests on this firm foundation. The tomb was empty. No body was ever found. The resurrected and living Christ appeared first to the women by the tomb, then to Peter and to the 11, to two men on their way to Emmaus. Paul details the eyewitnesses in 1 Corinthians 15 - listen to this:

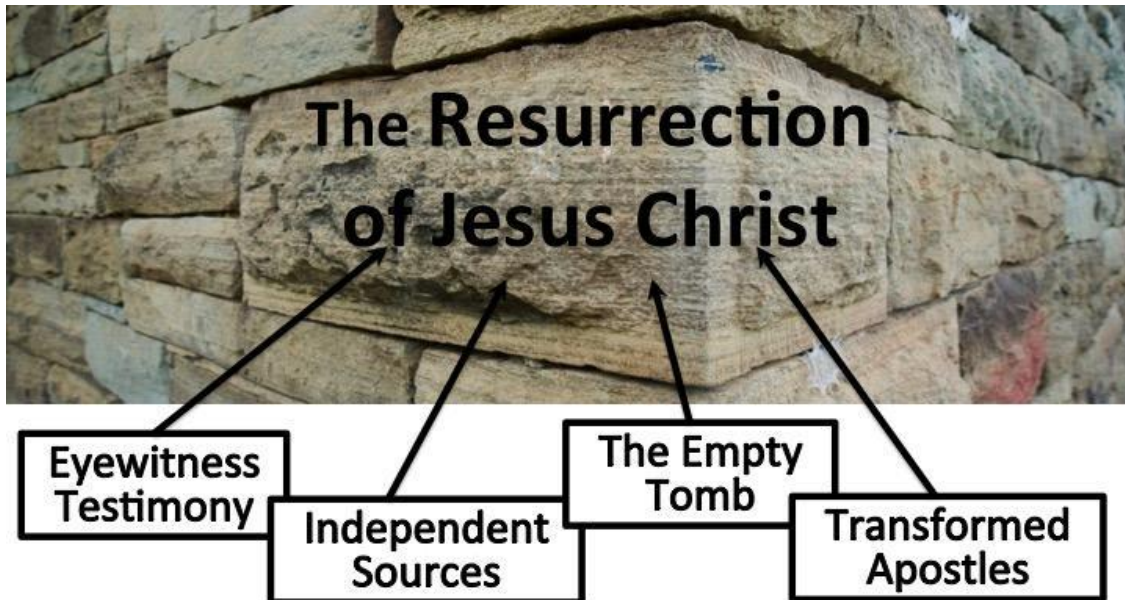
"Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep." 1 Corinthians 15:6

After rattling off all of the people who saw Jesus risen, Paul includes this critical line: ***most of whom are still alive***. Paul was inviting the believers in Corinth to confirm this central claim of the gospel. If you doubt it, go find them. Most of them are still around. Talk to them. Ask them about Jesus. Seeing the Risen Christ is not something they were likely to forget. Visit the church

blog for more on the historical evidence for the resurrection:

(<http://www.oakwoodfl.org/2018/05/01/reasons-to-believe/>).

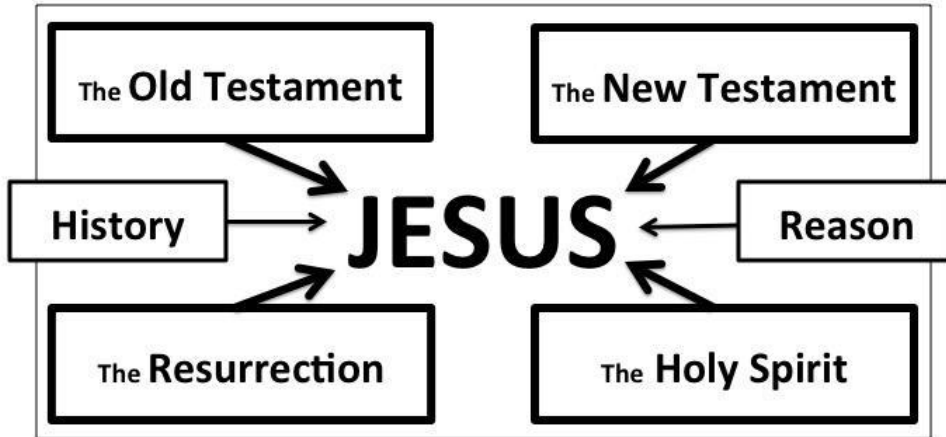
IMAGE of the Resurrection Cornerstone Slide



Using basic methods of historical testing, the resurrection stands up as far and away ***the most likely explanation of all that we know surrounding Jesus' death***. Numerous eyewitnesses independently and convincingly testified that they saw Jesus alive. The four gospel accounts - whatever their minor divergences - all describe an empty tomb. Pilate and the Jewish authorities had every motivation to produce a body and silence this Jewish sect called Christians. And the apostles were suddenly different. They were no longer scared and hiding out in their homes. Something happened that turned eleven common men from Galilee into an unstoppable force.

Of course we know that something was the resurrection. They saw Jesus alive after he had been crucified. So - ***why do we believe in Jesus?***

Image of Reasons:



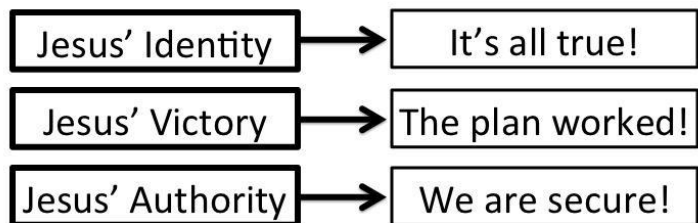
We believe Christianity is true for a lot of reasons: the Bible tells us so; the Holy Spirit confirms the truth in our hearts; history supports our beliefs and logic shows Christianity to be the most comprehensive and cohesive worldview. But the starting point and the cornerstone of our faith is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Fundamentally, we

believe in Jesus because he lives - because he rose from the dead. That single event proved everything else he said was true.

So let's look at *three conclusions we can draw on the basis of the resurrection.*

Overview Image

The Resurrection Proves:



The resurrection proves first, that Christianity is true - Jesus is who he said he was. Second, it proves that God's plan of salvation worked - Jesus' offering for sin was accepted by the Father. And third, the resurrection proves that our future is secure in Christ - we can trust Him with our sin, our souls and our eternity. Because he rose from the dead we can have confidence in Jesus' identity, his victory and his authority. Let's look at each of these conclusions.

First, the resurrection proves **Jesus' identity** - it's all true!

The Resurrection proves:

1. ***Jesus' Identity*** → It's all true!
 - We can trust Jesus' Word

*"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. **He has risen; he is not here...** But go, tell his disciples... that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, **just as he told you.**"*
 Mark 16:6-7

Three times Jesus predicted his suffering, death and resurrection. If he died but did not rise then why would we believe anything else he said? Nobody has said this better than C.S. Lewis:

“I am trying to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. ***A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher.***”

“He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. ***You must make your choice.*** Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.

“You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. ***But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher.*** He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Either Jesus was and is the Son of God or he was a fraud and a liar, sent straight from the devil. ***There is no middle ground with Jesus*** and the resurrection forces that issue. Either he rose from the dead and proved his claims to be divine and sent from the Father or he did not rise and everything he said about himself was a lie.

Here is how Paul says it in Romans 1:

We know Jesus is the Son of God

“The gospel of God... concerning his Son, who... ***was declared to be the Son of God in power... by his resurrection from the dead,*** Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 1:2-4

In other words, the resurrection proves that Jesus was and is the Son of God - the very Lord of heaven and earth. He “was declared to be the Son of God in power ***by his resurrection from the dead. Jesus Christ our Lord.***” Because he lives, we know it’s all true. Everything Jesus said is true. We can trust His Word completely. The resurrection confirms his identity and integrity. He proved Himself faithful at every turn and demonstrated this with ultimate finality by coming back from the dead.

Second, the resurrection proves Jesus’ Victory - that God’s plan of salvation worked.

The Resurrection proves:

2. *Jesus’ Victory* → The Plan Worked!

- Our sin debt has been **paid in full!**

“It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and ***raised for our justification.***” Romans 4:24-25

The resurrection has been compared to a receipt stamp. Jesus' death was the payment for sin. By raising Jesus from the dead, God the Father confirmed receipt of that payment and marked it as sufficient: **PAID IN FULL**. Jesus was delivered up - handed over to sinful men, delivered over to sin and death for our trespasses. He died to pay for our sins.

But he was raised "for our justification." He was raised to finalize and confirm our right standing before God. Those who belong to Jesus are not only forgiven but are JUSTIFIED - declared righteous before the throne of God - because of the resurrection. Because Jesus rose from the dead we know that God's plan of salvation worked. The offering was accepted. Justice was satisfied. God can be both just and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus.

The resurrection proves Jesus victory. The sting of death is sin.

The Resurrection proves:

2. ***Jesus' Victory*** → The Plan Worked!

- The Sting of death has been **Removed**

"The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:56-57

Death is not the great enemy; sin is. Death holds no fear for the one whose sins have been paid for. But for those who are still in their sin, death holds a terrible sting. And the power of sin is the law. Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law. You and I have not. **Apart from Jesus, every person will be judged by the law of God they know.** Everyone knows the natural laws of God that are embedded in our hearts and minds. We know there is a right and wrong. And we know that we break these laws.

For those of us who know God's Word, there is a higher standard of accountability and we will be judged by the law of God we know. The power of sin is the law because the law reveals the full extent of our sin and how far we fall short of God's perfect standards. But praise be to God, He "has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do." Because Jesus died and rose again, he conquered sin and removed the sting of death forever! Listen to Romans:

The Resurrection proves:

2. ***Jesus' Victory*** → The Plan Worked!

- The Power of Sin has been **Broken**

"For the law of the Spirit of life has set you **free in Christ Jesus** from the law of sin and death." Romans 8:2

Believers in Jesus have been set free from the penalty AND power of sin. Jesus' death covered our sin and ***his resurrection conquered it.*** The power of sin has been broken over us. We are no longer slaves to the law of sin and death! The resurrection proves His victory. Sin has been paid

for. Death has no sting. The law of sin has been replaced for the believer by the Law of the Spirit. The plan worked! Salvation has been provided for all who will come to Jesus in faith!

I was talking to a new believer one time and going over the two questions we often use to draw out the object of someone's faith. If you died today, do you think you'd go to heaven? Ok. **Why would God let you into heaven?** Lots of people answer that question by saying, "I have been a good person, I have gone to church my whole life, I have done my best to obey and follow God." That's what this person said - basically, "I've done my best."

I probed a little further and asked, "Where does Jesus fit into your salvation?" To this the person responded, "Oh yeah, Jesus died for my sins!" So then I shared **the answer key**. When you ask someone why they think they'll go to heaven, ***listen for the name of Jesus***. And wait to see if they add this little word **AND**.

Are you trusting in Christ ALONE to save you and make your right with God? Are you trusting in yourself and your own efforts? Or maybe you are trusting somewhat in Christ and a little in yourself or something else.

What I told this new believer is that ***the gospel is even better news than you realized!*** Jesus accomplished EVERYTHING. He

finished the work. There is nothing for us to add - no work left for you to do in terms of earning your salvation. It's not 50/50 or even 90/10 where Jesus does some of the work and we do the rest. It was all Jesus - He saved us completely!

So believers are right with God, forgiven and free, JUSTIFIED - entirely because of Jesus. Because of Christ alone. That is how good the good news is!

The resurrection proves Jesus' identity; it proves his victory, and finally, it proves his authority. ***"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."*** Acts 17:30-31

Why would God let you into heaven?

"I've been a pretty good person."

- Me and my work

"Jesus died for me."

- Jesus and His work

ALONE

"Jesus died for me **AND**... I've done my best to obey..."

- Jesus and my work

God has made it clear that judgment is coming and that **Jesus is the coming Judge**. The proof of Jesus' authority to judge is the fact of his resurrection. God has given assurance to the whole world of Jesus' identity, his victory and his authority "by raising him from the dead."

- What proof did **Mohammed** offer as assurance for his authority to purify Jewish and Christian religion? He made lots of claims and wrote a lot of things down but after he died do you know where he stayed? Right where he fell.
- What proof did **Joseph Smith** offer as he founded Mormonism? On what authority did he purify Christianity? Once he was killed, what became of him? He was buried and that was the end of the story.
- **Buddha**? Still dead.
- The unnamed **authors of the Hindu Vedas**? All dead.
- **Mary Baker Eddy**? Dead.
- **Charles Taze Russell**? Dead.

The Resurrection Proves:

3. Jesus' Authority - We are Secure!

- Jesus is the only Founder of a Religion who is **Alive**

"He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all *by raising him from the dead.*" Acts 17:30-31

The founders of every other religion died and stayed dead. There is only one person in all of history who died and raised himself to life again - Jesus Christ the Lord! He is the Only Savior. He is the only One who walked right into death and then walked back out again. And Jesus is the reigning King. He not only rose again but he ascended into heaven where he sits at the Father's right hand. And one day soon Jesus will come back to judge the living and the dead.

The Resurrection Proves:

3. Jesus' Authority - We are Secure!

- So we can Trust Jesus with **our Lives and our Souls**

"For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also *in Christ shall all be made alive.*" 1 Cor. 15:21-22

His resurrection was as the firstborn from among the dead. When he returns all of the dead will be raised and will face their final judgment before Him. What are you counting on for that moment? Are you trusting in yourself, even a little bit? Or is your answer JESUS - only Jesus? He is the only One worthy of our trust - because He LIVES!

But because He is alive, because he rose victorious over sin and death forever, we can trust Him completely with our lives, with our souls, with our past, present and future - we can trust Jesus with our eternity.

Let me close with **a story Jesus told in Luke 16**. Listen to the words of Jesus:

“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. ***The rich man also died*** and was buried, 23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

24 And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ 25 But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’

27 And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to ***send him to my father's house***— 28 for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ 29 But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ 30 And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ 31

“He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, *neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.*” Luke 16:31

- What more proof do you need than someone who **Rose from the Dead?**

This is a sobering story about two people - one rich and one poor. Both died and faced their judgment. Jesus doesn't say precisely how they were judged, so we can reason from elsewhere in Scripture that the poor man was a follower of Jesus and the rich man was not. The poor man stored up his treasure in heaven. The rich man stored all of his treasure on earth.

After the judgment, their situations were dramatically and permanently reversed. The rich man, who had lived in luxury and self-indulgence all of his life, found himself in misery. The poor man, who had suffered his whole life, found himself in the comfort and joy of the presence of God.

Here is the relevance for us today: we don't need to hear testimony from someone like this rich man who is currently being tormented in hell. We have the testimony of the prophets and

apostles - we have the Bible. And we must listen to these prophets and apostles who all exhort us to trust in Christ and Him alone - for He alone can protect us in that final judgment.

Because of His Identity as the God-Man, his sacrifice applies to us. Because of His victory over sin and death we can trust Him for our salvation. And because He has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, we can trust Him with our souls on that judgment day.

Just as they didn't listen to Jesus and the apostles, many people will not listen to us. And just as Jesus foretold in this parable, many people didn't believe even when someone DID rise from the dead. May that not be said for any of us here. We have Moses and the prophets. We have the Gospel of Mark, the other Gospels and the whole New Testament from the apostles.

But above all, we know that someone came back from the dead to prove that everything he said was true, that his sacrifice was sufficient and that his judgment is coming! Fix your trust in Christ alone for He Alone can save you - He who died and Rose again!

Let's pray as we prepare to celebrate the Lord's Supper together.