

## **The Passion of the Christ # 4: Why Did Jesus Raise From the Dead? Matthew 28:1-10**

HE IS RISEN - HE IS RISEN INDEED!

### **Review:**

- Why Did the Father Forsake Him?
- Why did Jesus Choose to Die?
- Why did people treat him so poorly?

Hopefully, you've done two things:

1. Thought through the answers to these questions.
2. Saw the movie that can make such a big impact.

I really wish the movie had emphasized the resurrection more. The film ended with about a thirty-second scene at the tomb. The audience witnessed the grave clothes deflate and then a surreal Jesus began moving out of the cave. That was it. I wanted the resurrection scene to be longer and more dramatic. We're grateful that Mel Gibson at least included the resurrection in the movie because that's absolutely essential to the Christian faith. The resurrection of Jesus from the grave is not an afterthought: it's the hinge of history. Everything changes when Jesus rose from the dead.

Before the resurrection: people related to God through the Law – follow the Law and you'll get to heaven

After the resurrection: people related to God through grace – follow Jesus and death is defeated for you! You get to go to heaven!

The resurrection turns, "The Passion of the Christ" from a horror story to a love story!

So today, I want to take up where the movie left off. Turn with me to Matthew 28:1-10.

When the movie shows this, it seems almost like a postscript. Like, "Oh yeah, I forgot to add this, but here it is."

Have you ever gotten a letter that in the body was all the details of something, but after the signature was the most important thing? One time, when I was dating, I received a letter from a girl about how she had a great time on our date. She had never dressed up before, blah blah blah. Then after she signed it, I see this "P.S. I think we should just be friends." That was the whole point of her sending the letter! It wasn't to thank me, it was to break it off with me! Even though the movie adds the resurrection on the end like a P.S., that's the whole point: Jesus went through all the pain, injustice, beatings, ridicule, and death, but defeated them all by raising from the dead for you!

You see, the Christian faith stands or falls on the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:14, 20 (NLT) – *If Christ was not raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your trust in God is useless.... But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again.*

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There is a constant barrage of theories out there that attack that the resurrection actually happened:

- **Swoon Theory** - that Jesus fainted on the cross and came back after a brief time. So, in other words, Jesus survived the beatings, the asphyxiation, the torment, the suffocation of the herbs that are used to wrap the dead body, and then woke up.
- **Muslim Theory** – God made someone to take on the likeness of Jesus who was crucified (most likely Judas) and Jesus was taken up to heaven without dying, the ultimate sign He was a prophet. Jesus will thus return to earth someday to kill the Anti-Christ (al-Dajjal), kill all pigs, break the cross, destroy all synagogues and churches, establish the religion of Islam, live for forty years, and then be buried next to Medina beside the prophet Muhammad.
- **Watchtower Theory** – Jesus was sacrificed, but resurrected spiritually, not physically. He returned to His status as an angel. He fooled His disciples by appearing in different bodies and could do so because He was an angel.

“The resurrection of Jesus Christ is either the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted upon the minds of men, OR it is the most fantastic fact of history!” ~Josh McDowell

The resurrection is either the Greatest Feat or Biggest Fraud in history?

1 Corinthians 15:14-20 - *If there's no resurrection for Christ, everything we've told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you've staked your life on is smoke and mirrors. Not only that, but we would be guilty of telling a string of barefaced lies about God, all these affidavits we passed on to you verifying that God raised up Christ—sheer fabrications, if there's no resurrection. If corpses can't be raised, then Christ wasn't, because he was indeed dead. And if Christ wasn't raised, then all you're doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever. It's even worse for those who died hoping in Christ and resurrection, because they're already in their graves. If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot.*

So, how do you know the resurrection is true? Was it the greatest Feat that ever was or the biggest fraud in history?

I believe it was the greatest FEAT!

## **FATAL TORMENT**

The Roman soldiers knew how to kill someone. It was their job to do this. If someone has survived the beatings, the scourging, the pain of the cross, would they be in shape to roll a huge stone away, walk around on nailed feet, and inspire a world-wide movement?

Jesus went through fatal torment, but HE IS RISEN - HE IS RISEN INDEED!

## **EMPTY TOMB**

Thinking there wasn't an empty tomb doesn't make sense. The facts that are presented about the tomb really suggest that the disciples weren't fabricating a story. If I were to make up a lie that dealt with the empty tomb then I wouldn't have:

- Used Joseph of Arimathea. He was one of the enemies, a Pharisee. I would not have used a Pharisee's burial site to bury Jesus in. This site would be venerated (meaning a Pharisee would get a lot of glory). Plus, the enemies could easily make up a lie and Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, the voting body that condemned Jesus, would have went along with it. But they used a Pharisee's tomb to bury Jesus in.
- Used women as the first finders of the empty tomb. In the first century, a woman's testimony could not stand up in court.

If the disciples were trying to fool everyone, they would have come up with better lies. Even the enemies of Christ never doubted that there was an empty tomb, they simply said, "His disciples came in the middle of the night and stole the body."

There was an empty tomb - HE IS RISEN - HE IS RISEN INDEED!

## **APPEARANCES OF CHRIST**

Mary Magdelene → Other women → 2 travelers on the road → 10 disciples behind closed door (where he ate) → all the disciples (esp. with Thomas) → 7 disciples while fishing → 11 disciples on a mountain → a crowd of 500 → Jesus' brother James → Those who watched Jesus ascend into heaven

Listen to what the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7. Scholars believe this to be an early Hymn or Creed of the faith - *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles...*

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Secular scholars pain a different story: Hallucinations, Hypnosis, or Hypersuggestibility

Knowing that the disciples actually saw Jesus after His death alive is one of the greatest reasons to understand why the disciples had turned from cowards to fearless evangelists who transformed the world.

## TRANSFORMATION

- The Eleven – all died a martyrs death, except for John who was imprisoned. They were faced with world hatred and with extreme inner guilt for the rest of their lives, if it were all a lie.
- Peter – from betrayer to preacher
- Paul – from Christian persecutor to preacher
- Jesus' brothers – Jude and James
- Traditions - people gave up all that they knew as a way of life for the resurrection
  - Sabbath to Sunday
  - Sacrifice to one time deal in Christ
  - Passover to the Lord's Supper
  - Baptism in the Name of the God of Israel to the Name of Jesus Christ

HE IS RISEN - HE IS RISEN INDEED!

If there were no resurrection, we could just all go home.

The Easter edition of Newsweek, which is not known as a necessarily Christian magazine, says, "The risen Christ is the center of the Christian faith. The mystery without which there would be no church, no hope of eternal life, no living Christ to encounter today. No other historical figure has ever made the claim that He was raised from the dead. It was this appearance of the resurrected Christ that lit the flame of the Christian faith. It wasn't the morality of the Sermon on the Mount, which enabled Christianity to conquer Roman paganism, but it was the belief that Jesus was alive. He'd been raised from the dead."

That's why about half the city of Jerusalem became believers. Archeologists and historians tell us that within twenty years of the resurrection, Jerusalem, a city of about quarter million people, had between 100,000 and 125,000 believers. Why? So many people had seen Him. That's the guy we just put on the cross! That's the guy the Romans killed. He claimed He was God, and look! He's back.

How do I know the Resurrection was true? Because the Resurrection was the Biggest FEAT there ever was!!!

- Fatal Torment
- Empty Tomb
- Appearances
- Transformation

If it is a fact, that Jesus rose from the dead, but why? This basic question, “why”, is just as important as understanding how we know the resurrection was true. So, why did Jesus raise from the dead?

### **First, Jesus rose from the dead to give YOU HOPE.**

1. What is the first book of the Bible that was ever written?
  - a. The first book that was written was the book of Job. Even in the book, man has been asking this basic question:
  - b. Job 14:14 - *If a man dies will he live again?*
  - c. Is there something after life?
2. Many have answered that question with the idea that after death, there is nothing! All you have is this life.
3. Jesus ended speculation when He came back from the grave. He showed that there is something after death. He showed that there is something more than just our years here on earth!
4. That has huge implications for every one of us, especially when we come face to face with death
  - a. 2 Corinthians 4:14 (MSG) - *What we believe is that the One who raised up the Master Jesus will just as certainly raise us up with you, alive.*
  - b. 1 Peter 1:3 & 21 (NLT) - *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.*
  - c. Because of the resurrection of Jesus, we have HOPE!!!
5. This means we should try to live out every day with gusto according to: Philippians 3:10 (NIV) – *I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection...*

So, Jesus rose from the dead to give you HOPE!

### **Secondly, Jesus rose from the dead to give YOU POWER!**

1. Power to know Jesus is who He says He is.
  - a. Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh:
    - i. John 14:11 – *Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.*

- b. When Jesus came out of that tomb, after three days, it verified that He is the Son of God, the King of kings and the Lord of lords.
  - i. Romans 1:4 (NLT) – *Jesus Christ our Lord was shown to be the Son of God when God powerfully raised him from the dead by means of the Holy Spirit.*
- c. The resurrection of Jesus from the grave affirms His identity for us! This event verifies His identity and underscores His authority.

2. Power to live for God in every day:

- a. Ephesians 1:18-21 – *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.*
- b. This means that we have power to live for Jesus!

3. Power to stand before God:

- a. Romans 4:25 – *He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised from the dead to make us right with God.*
- b. Romans 8:34 - *Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*

**Jesus rose from the dead to give YOU HOPE AND POWER!**

Today, I hope you see that the resurrection is the greatest event that actually occurred in history. I hope you can answer the question, “How can I know that the resurrection is true?”

I also hope that you see that the resurrection happened for a reason! Jesus rose from the dead to give you HOPE and POWER! Hope to face what ever comes at the end of your life. Hope that there is a tomorrow! Power to face the next temptation, the next pain, the next day. Power to face your God face-to-face.

Are you willing to put your faith in Christ? God wants you to:

- 1. Believe - Believe in the message of the Cross and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Believe that Jesus actually rose from the dead.
- 2. Confess – make a statement daily that Christ is Lord of your life.

3. Repent – Make a U-turn in your life. Turn away from selfish living and turn to God's way of living.
4. Be baptized – take on Christ in the waters and make a pledge of a good conscience to God that you put your trust in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.
5. Keep living for Him – live in the power that Christ provides through the resurrection!

If you will make a decision today for Him, God promises this power and hope. As we sing this next song, Jesus wants to give you a crown of everlasting life. You have to lay down your life before Him. Do you believe in the resurrection? Is it enough for you to know that He did this for you? Will you let Him in your life?

Pray

*The Old Rugged Cross - # 317*