



Session 12

Did Jesus really rise from the dead?

How do we know? Is there evidence?

- **Introduction**

1. What if he didn't rise from the dead? How important is this to Christianity?

- The emphasis and importance in the four gospels.
- The content of the preaching by the first Christians in the Book of Acts.
- The statement of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and 14-19. (ca. 51 A.D.)

"...I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him

...And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world."

2. Of course, doubt about a resurrection from the dead should be expected.

Are miracles possible? If there is a God who can act, then acts of God are possible.

3. If the resurrection occurred in history, then it can be investigated historically.

1. **More than adequate manuscript evidence:** 5,700+ Greek NT manuscripts dating back to the early 2nd century.
 2. **Internal evidence:** Candid accounts including failures of leaders and unresolved tensions in the story.
 3. **External evidence:** Victim of crucifixion (found in 1968); Pilate stone; Church of Holy Sepulchre tomb dated to the Roman era, in 2016 by *National Geographic* project.
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4. The set of "Minimal Facts" is accepted by the vast majority of scholars.

1. Jesus of Nazareth existed and died by crucifixion.
 2. The tomb was found empty.
 3. Followers claimed that Jesus appeared to them alive.
 4. James, the brother of Jesus, became the leader of the band of Christ-followers
 5. Paul claimed that they saw him alive.
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5. Possible naturalistic explanations proposed for the "appearances of Jesus."

The disciples stole the body.

- Jews or Romans stole the body.
 - Jesus didn't die. He only fainted.
 - Everybody hallucinated.
 - It was only a spiritual "resurrection."
 - It was only a legend.
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6. There are other story elements that can be best explained by the resurrection.

- **The reaction of Jerusalem and beyond**
 - Church growth against opposition where the resurrection could be denied

- Sunday worship
- The sacraments of baptism and communion

- **The reaction of the enemies of Christianity**
 - No known counter-testimony or counter-evidence
 - That ordinary people convinced even enemies of the movement at all social levels

- **The reaction of the followers of Jesus**
 - Multiple eye-witness testimonies, and testimony of those who knew eyewitnesses
 - Why would the disciples make up a resurrection story, a foreign and objectionable notion?
 - The changed lives of the followers. From fleeing to boldly preaching?

Conclusion and Encouragement