

SURPRISE! HE'S ALIVE!

Luke 24:1-12

A Muslim wanted to impress a Christian with the superiority of Islam. So he said, "When we go to Mecca, we at least find a coffin, but when you Christians go to Jerusalem, you find nothing but an empty tomb." The believer replied, "That is just the difference. Mohammed is dead and in his coffin. And the founders of all other systems of religion are in their coffins. But Christ is risen, all power in heaven and on earth is given to Him! He is alive!

Stott: *"Christianity is in its very essence a resurrection religion. The concept of resurrection lies at its heart. If you remove it, Christianity is destroyed."*

The resurrection affirms that Jesus is the Son of God as He claimed (Rom. 1:4). It demonstrates that His sacrifice for sin has been accepted and that the work of salvation is complete (Rom. 4:24-25).

ATTACKS AGAINST THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

It should be no surprise that Satan launched an attack against the resurrection.

The first attack—reported in Scripture (Matt. 28): disciples stole His body. *Not a likely explanation!*

The tomb was carefully guarded (to the satisfaction of religious leaders who knew the prophecy and suspected they might try (Matt. 27:62-66).

The scared disciples, the ones who fled from the garden, weren't likely to take on the guards to steal the body.

The biggest obstacle: they didn't believe it. In spite of His prophecy.

Why would they perpetrate a hoax, and some even die, for a lie?

A second attack on the resurrection: the "swoon theory." Jesus didn't really die on the cross but only swooned. The cool tomb revived Him.

This view ignores the fact that Pilate checked personally with the centurion, an expert in these kinds of death. He had no doubts.

When the soldiers went to break the legs of the three, they determined that they didn't need to bother with Jesus. He was dead. These soldiers knew the symptoms. They wouldn't have been easily fooled.

Furthermore, how could a cool tomb revive Him so that He could appear and disappear, and enter rooms where the doors were locked?

Jesus promised death and resurrection. Afterwards He led them to believe that what He had promised had occurred.

If the resurrection didn't happen, then someone is lying.
Either Jesus or the disciples perpetrated a hoax.

This is inconsistent with the character of Jesus and of His followers — they were not prone to take such a risk — especially for a lie!

Other attacks have been launched down through the centuries.

Yet it is interesting how many of those who have come to faith in our Savior have been attracted by the evidence for the resurrection.

Like Frank Morison, author of *Who Moved the Stone?*, and Josh McDowell, many have set out to disprove the resurrection, been convinced by the evidence, and trusted in the Living One.

IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

The message of the gospel stands or falls on the basis of the resurrection.

HISTORICALLY If not true, then the whole thing is a hoax.

THEOLOGICALLY If not true, our message is worthless. (1 Cor. 15)

That's why Luke concludes with a series of witnesses to the resurrection.

If at first glance, you are a skeptic concerning the resurrection, you have good reason to be. You have understood the issues.

In fact, you are in company with Jesus' followers. They didn't expect it and couldn't believe it! It was too good to be true! The obstacles were too great.

That's the point! The evidence was strong enough to convince even these depressed skeptics! Maybe we need to consider their testimony objectively.

When believers discovered Jesus was alive, it made a difference in lives.

JESUS' TRIUMPH AT THE RESURRECTION THE CLIMAX OF THE STORY (24:1-53).

THE COMMISSION JESUS GIVES HIS FOLLOWERS IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF HIS VICTORY OVER HIS ENEMIES AND DEATH.

V. Authentication of the Son of Man 24:1-53

The story doesn't end with Jesus' death.

That's the beginning of the larger story — the story of the church.

A. Confirmation of the reality of the message 24:1-12

Scripture never indicates that the earthquake and the angel appeared to let Jesus out of the tomb.

They were part of the evidence, designed to let witnesses in, to proclaim to those outside that Christ had risen.

1. WITNESS OF THE EMPTY TOMB 24:1-3

Even those who followed Jesus were surprised by His resurrection and found it hard to believe, in spite of His repeated promise beforehand.

None of His followers expected the resurrection.

In each of the accounts, the witnesses began depressed because of His death and couldn't believe that it happened.

The first to learn of the resurrection were the women who followed Him.

In a society where women were looked down on — second class citizens, who were the first to know — first to believe the evidence?
WOMEN!

They came mourning His death — to prepare His body for the process of decay they expected to decompose His body.
They came expecting nothing!

Larson: town suffering from drought. It was farm country; crops were being ruined. A pastor called people to pray. He asked all who believed God to join him to pray at 4:00. When the hour came, the church was full. The pastor stood up, looked around and dismissed them. "We don't have the faith to pray. I don't see a single umbrella!"

That's the way the women came to the tomb. They brought the spices to embalm Jesus' cadaver. *They expected nothing!*

Mary Magdalene had been helped by Jesus and was devoted to Him. Other devout women, hoping to prepare His body for burial. Their sadness was transformed to joy; they discovered He was alive.

Their love for Him brought them to tomb; they discovered His resurrection.

They brought spices to finish preparing His body for burial.

Entering with no faith and no expectations, they did not find the body!

2. WITNESS OF THE ANGELS 24:4-8

Instead of Him, they found two who gleamed like lightning — angels. Other gospels only mention the one who did the talking.

THE KEY QUESTION: He reminded them of the words Jesus Himself had spoken about His death and resurrection.

His question is kind, but penetrating, "*Why do you seek the One who is alive among those who are dead?*" (24:5)

THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE: Gentle rebuke, reminding them Jesus had said more than once He would die and rise again.

Isn't it sad how often we forget God's Word, live in depression and defeat, because we don't remember what He has told us over and over!

3. WITNESS TO THE UNBELIEVING DISCIPLES 24:9-12

WHAT THEY THOUGHT ABOUT IT:

Though the event was confirmed by angelic appearance, the disciples dismissed their testimony as female nonsense.

The women were faithful to share the good news, but the disciples refused to believe it. It was nonsense to them.

These are our heroes!

The chosen who walked the earth with Him, leaving everything to follow Him.

They are the great leaders, the founding fathers of the Christian church! They couldn't believe it.

Why wouldn't the eleven believe them?

It seemed like nonsense, foolishness, just silly talk!

WHAT PETER DID ABOUT IT?

Peter wasn't so sure. He had to go check it out for himself.

When he saw the empty tomb, he wasn't at all sure what it meant.

It appears that even then he didn't suspect resurrection.

He just took it all in and went back home silently, perplexed.

None of these witnesses expected to see Jesus alive again.

Why would these hardened, skeptical fishermen hallucinate or risk their lives for a deception?

What they saw turned their lives around, and turned the world upside down.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR LIVES

What does Jesus' resurrection teach us about our faith?

Some people think faith is believing something you know couldn't be true.

Faith isn't believing the unbelievable. It is staking your life on the faithfulness of God. Trusting the One Who never fails; Who always keeps His promises.

How should Jesus' resurrection impact our lives today?

Few of us here question the reality of the resurrection of our Lord.
The evidence is pretty clear and the witnesses many.

Most of us have experienced the reality of the resurrection in our own lives.
As the songwriter says: "I serve a LIVING Savior. He's in the world today.
I know that He is living, whatever men may say. . .

You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart!"

We know that don't we?

You know what's hard for us to believe? The effects of the resurrection!

Luke uses His resurrection as basis for our commission, to go into all the
world and preach the gospel, to be His witnesses, to make disciples.

Paul uses the resurrection as the basis for our new life.
As Christ died, we have been crucified with Christ. God sees us in Him.
But, it's also true that as He rose to new life, so WE HAVE NEW LIFE.

The power that raised Jesus from the dead, energizes us for a new life!
That's too good to be true! We can't believe we have that much power.
We can't believe He can enable us to live above power of sin and
Satan!

A cartoon in *The New Yorker* magazine showed a middle-aged couple in a new car
showroom. The husband is looking greedily at a flashy new model. His wife, with arms
folded, says to him, "Well, Henry, if buying a front-wheel drive didn't make you a better
person, what makes you think that a four-wheel drive will make you a better person?"

We're all wishing for someday to become a better person – to be free of
our past, to live better in the present, to be different in the future.

The resurrection is our hope. The same Spirit who gave Christ the power to
rise from the grave, is in us to give us the power to live a new life in Him.

Is that too good to be true?