

## Does it Really Matter if Jesus Rose From the Dead?

Message 3 of 3 in the series: "Investigating Easter"

### A. Jesus really died on a cross.

"...the Jewish leaders didn't want the bodies hanging there the next day, which was the Sabbath (and a very special Sabbath, because it was Passover week). So they asked Pilate to hasten their deaths by ordering that their legs be broken. Then their bodies could be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn't break his legs. One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out. (This report is from an eyewitness giving an accurate account. He speaks the truth so that you also may continue to believe.)" John 19:31-35 (NLT)

### B. Jesus' body was really buried in a tomb from Friday evening until Sunday morning.

"As evening approached, Joseph, a rich man from Arimathea who had become a follower of Jesus, went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body... Joseph took the body and... placed it in his own new tomb, which had been carved out of the rock. Then he rolled a great stone across the entrance and left. Both Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting across from the tomb and watching. The next day, on the Sabbath, the leading priests and Pharisees went to see Pilate. They told him, 'Sir, we remember what that deceiver once said while he was still alive: "After three days I will rise from the dead." So we request that you seal the tomb until the third day. This will prevent his disciples from coming and stealing his body and then telling everyone he was raised from the dead! If that happens, we'll be worse off than we were at first.' Pilate replied, 'Take guards and secure it the best you can.' So they sealed the tomb and posted guards to protect it."

Matthew 27:57-66 (NLT)

### C. On Easter Sunday morning, Jesus really rose from the dead.

1. Some women went to Jesus' tomb, and an angel told them Jesus had risen from the dead.

"Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb. Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint. Then the angel spoke to the women. 'Don't be afraid!' he said. 'I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead...'"

Matthew 28:1-7 (NLT)

*Note:* The Roman soldiers who guarded Jesus' tomb were bribed to say Jesus' body had been stolen.

"As the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the leading priests what had happened. A meeting with the elders was called, and they decided to give the soldiers a large bribe. They told the soldiers, 'You must say, "Jesus' disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body." If the governor hears about it, we'll stand up for you so you won't get in trouble.' So the guards accepted the bribe and said what they were told to say. Their story spread widely among the Jews, and they still tell it today." Matthew 28:11-15 (NLT)

2. Jesus' disciples and more than 500 others interacted with Jesus after He rose from the dead.

"...Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. 'Peace be with you,' he said. But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost! 'Why are you frightened?' he asked. 'Why are your hearts filled with doubt? Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do.' As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet. Still, they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he ate it as they watched." Luke 24:36-43 (NLT)

"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..." 1 Corinthians 15:5-6 (NLT)

### D. Three reasons why it matters that Jesus really rose from the dead:

"...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... 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. **But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead.** He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died." 1 Corinthians 15:14-20 (NLT)

1. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we don't need to be afraid of dying.

"I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave." Revelation 1:18 (NLT)

2. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we can be confident that ALL of our sins have been forgiven.

"...this is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many." Matthew 26:28 (NLT)

"With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—(Christ) entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever... Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand." Hebrews 9:12, 10:11-12 (NLT)

3. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we have the power to live new, abundant lives.

"I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead..." Ephesians 1:19-20 (NLT)

"...I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." John 14:16-17 (NIV)

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." John 10:10b (NIV)

John Schmidt • Easter Weekend 2021 • [john@centeringlives.com](mailto:john@centeringlives.com)

### Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. How did you celebrate Easter this year?
2. Read Matthew 28:1-15 and Luke 24:13-49. With which of the people mentioned in these accounts can you most identify? (Mary, the apostles, Thomas, the guards, the men on the road to Emmaus) Why do you think it was so hard for Jesus' followers and His enemies to believe that Jesus really rose from the dead?
3. The apostle John said he wrote his gospel account of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection so that "you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." John 20:31 (NKJV). How do you think John would respond to someone who says, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere"?
4. Discuss the following reasons why Jesus' resurrection matters.
  - If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, we won't either. (1 Corinthians 15:14-20)
  - Because Jesus rose from the dead, we don't need to be afraid of dying. (John 11:25, Revelation 1:18, Hebrews 2:14-15)
  - Because Jesus rose from the dead, we can be confident ALL of our sins are forgiven. (Matthew 26:28, Hebrews 9:12, 10:11-12)
  - Because Jesus rose from the dead, we have the power to live new, abundant lives. (John 10:10, Romans 8:11, Ephesians 1:19-20)
5. Discuss the following Scripture verses:

"...I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die." John 11:25-26a

"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9

“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” Romans 6:8-11

### **Helpful Resources**

Mere Christianity, by C.S. Lewis, © 2001, Zondervan

The Case for Easter, by Lee Strobel, © 2003, Zondervan