



ANSWERING THE **TOUGH QUESTIONS** ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

ISN'T THE RESURRECTION
OF JESUS A MYTH?

LESSON #
8

THE LESSON AT A GLANCE

Many people reject the resurrection of Jesus. They see it as a misinterpretation of the facts by the early disciples, a lie they perpetuated, or like other Middle Eastern myths. However, the facts of the resurrection give us assurance that we can rely on the biblical accounts of this glorious event.

THINK ABOUT THIS

How do we know that Jesus rose from the grave?

TODAY'S SCRIPTURES

1 CORINTHIANS 15:17-19 (*All Scripture CSB unless otherwise noted*)

THE MAIN IDEA

The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of the Christian faith because it validates the claims of Jesus about Himself. There is ample evidence this historical event occurred as described in the Gospels.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

Why is belief in the resurrection of Jesus essential to the Christian faith?

SCRIPTURE IN CONTEXT

1 Corinthians 15:17-19. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul encourages the Corinthian church to reject the false teachers in their midst who claimed there was no resurrection from the dead. He correctly summarizes that without the resurrection, Jesus is a false prophet, there is no "redemption through his blood" (Ephesians 1:7), and we are without hope.

¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Those, then, who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. ¹⁹ If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone. (1 Corinthians 15:17-19)



START HERE

There are various views denying the resurrection of Jesus.

- Some claim that Jesus wasn't really a man but only spirit, and thus His resurrection was an illusion.
- Others suppose that He didn't die on the cross but fainted or lapsed into a coma and revived later (i.e., the "swoon theory").
- The "substitution theory" is another claim that proposes it wasn't Jesus, but another person placed on the cross (e.g., Simon of Cyrene, Judas, or one of the disciples, etc.). God bewildered the crowd into believing it was Jesus.

CONVERSATION EXAMPLE

A Muslim co-worker challenges your claim that Christ rose from the grave. She says that either Christ fainted or went into a coma and the disciples only thought He was dead, or someone else died on the cross in His place. This lesson will help you explain to her that Christ was really a man, that He really died, and that He really rose from the grave.

ADDING CLARITY

Mobberly's website states the following about our belief in Jesus Christ:

Jesus is the eternal son of God. **In His incarnation, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.** Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, **taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying completely with mankind** yet was without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience and His **substitutionary death on the cross**. He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. **He was raised from the dead** with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into Heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever-present Lord (emphasis added).



Matthew 1:22-23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5, 14:10-30; Hebrews 4:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 1:3-4; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:14-15; Titus 2:13¹

Key elements of this belief:

- Jesus lived as 100% God and 100% man (i.e., "incarnation")
- Jesus died (i.e., "substitutionary death")
- Jesus was "raised from the dead"

REVIEW AND DISCUSS

1. JESUS WAS MAN AND GOD.

- **As a man, Jesus experienced:**
 - Normal human development
 - Mary's pregnancy (Lk 1:34-35, 2:6-7)
 - His early years (Lk 2:40-52)
 - He aged (Jn 8:57)
 - Physical needs
 - Hungered (Matt 4:2)
 - Thirsted (Jn 19:28)
 - Became tired (Mk 4:38)
 - Breathed (Lk 23:46)
 - Emotions
 - Sorrow (Matt 26:38)
 - Wonder (Mk 6:6)
 - Anger and grief (Mk 3:5)
 - Compassion (Mk 1:41)
- **The Bible declares Jesus was a man:**
 - (Phil 2:7-8) *"Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death — even to death on a cross."*

¹ Who We Are | Mobberly Baptist Church. (2024). Mobberly Baptist Church. Retrieved November 26, 2024, from <https://mobberly.org/about/who/#beliefs>.



- (1 Pet 4:1) *"Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same understanding — because the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin..."*

- **Evidence Jesus is God:**

- Others declared He was God
 - (Jn 1:1-3) *"...and the Word was God"*
 - (Phil 2:5-6) *"Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited."*
 - By demons - *"What do you have to do with us, Son of God?"* (Matt 8:29)
 - By the disciples - *"Truly you are the Son of God."* (Matt 14:33)
 - By Peter - *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."* (Matt 16:16)
 - By an angel - *"Therefore, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."* (Lk 1:35)
 - By the centurion - *"Truly this man was the Son of God!"* (Matt 27:54)
- Jesus claimed to be God
 - (Jn 8:58) *"...before Abraham was, I am."*
 - (Jn 10:30-33) *"I and the Father are one."*
 - (Mk 2:5-11) *"Son, your sins are forgiven."*
- Jesus' deity was confirmed
 - Eyewitnesses of sinless life (1 Pet 1:19, 1 Jn 2:1-2)
 - Fulfilled prophecy (over 100 Old Testament prophecies)
 - Exercised control over:
 - Sickness and disability (Matt 11:4-5)
 - Nature (Mk 4:39)
 - Death (Jn 12:1; Mk 5:41-42)
 - Demons (Matt 8:31-33)
 - Resurrection (see below)

DISCUSS



*Why is the belief that Jesus was the God/man (theánthropos) essential to the Christian faith?
(Possible answers: Various personal responses)*

2. JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS.

- **There was medical evidence for Jesus' death:**
 - Torture before the cross
 - Loss of blood from scourging
 - Loss of blood from crown of thorns
 - Symptoms of hypovolemic shock due to blood loss
 - Weakness on road to Calvary
 - Thirst on the cross
 - Peaceful passing (Jn 19:30)
 - Symptoms of respiratory acidosis
 - Pierced side
 - Blood and water evidence of cardiac arrest
 - Evidence of pericardial and pleural effusion
- **External evidence of Jesus' death:**
 - Roman guards
 - Didn't break legs but tested body with spear (Jn 19:33-35)
 - Recognized signs of death
 - Significant penalty for the guards for being wrong about Jesus' death
 - Pilate's reaction and confirmation (Mk 15:44-45)
 - Followers' reactions
 - Took down Jesus' body and buried it (Mk 15:42-46)
 - Women came to the tomb with burial spices (Lk 24:1)
 - Disciples' testimony on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-20)

DISCUSS

Is there other convincing evidence that Jesus really died for you? (Possible answers: Various personal responses)



3. JESUS ROSE FROM THE GRAVE!

- **Empty tomb:**
 - Eyewitnesses
 - Women (Mk 16:1-6)
 - Peter and John (Jn 20:3-9)
 - Guards (Matt 28:11)
 - Religious leaders' reactions
 - Did not doubt guards' report (Matt 28:12-14)
 - Immediately started "cover-up"
- **Eyewitness accounts of Christ's appearances:**
 - 10 distinct occurrences
 - Different individuals
 - Groups
 - Different places/settings
- **Other Evidence:**
 - Emergence of Christian church
 - Power of the Holy Spirit through the Resurrection story
 - Risks required to preach and accept teachings of Jesus
 - Apostles wouldn't die for something they knew to be a lie
 - Early conversion of skeptics and enemies
 - James the brother of Jesus: from skeptic to leader of the Jerusalem church
 - Saul/Paul from persecutor of the church to its greatest missionary
 - Sunday becomes the Christian day of worship
 - Early account of change in day of worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2)
 - Cultural resistance to switch from Sabbath worship
 - Radical changes in people's lives today

DISCUSS

How does the resurrection of Christ impact your life today? (Possible answers: Various personal responses)



REFLECT ON THE LESSON

Romans 10:9 states, "If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that **God raised him from the dead**, you will be saved" (emphasis added). Thus, believing that the resurrection is a historical fact is essential to salvation because it validates Jesus' claims about Himself and shows us that an eternal relationship and fellowship with God is possible. Paul writes in Romans 5:8-10,

⁸ But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. ¹⁰ For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.

Jesus' resurrection also conquered death. In 1 Corinthians 15:54-55, Paul teaches about our own resurrection:

⁵⁴ When this corruptible body is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place: Death has been swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting?

A thankful heart and love for both God and our fellow man should result in our sharing the good news joyously with the people around us who find themselves "enemies" of God.

DISCUSS

Share a time when the recognition of all that God has done for you overcame your inhibitions and resulted in you sharing His love with a lost friend or family member. (Possible answers: Various personal responses)

REFLECT ON THE LESSON



The old hymn "He Lives!" ends with the lines, "You ask me how I know He lives. He lives within my heart!"²

DISCUSS

How does Christ "in you" become your "hope of glory" [Col 1:27] each day? (Possible answers: Various personal examples)

RESPOND

Have you ever shared exciting news you just learned about, such as a new restaurant, new movie, or new "hack" you learned from YouTube? Reflect this week on your level of excitement for sharing the good news that Christ died for us and was raised to prove He is who he said He is.

APPLY

Who is the Holy Spirit bringing to your mind right now who needs to hear the "good news" from you?

Decide on a plan to share the "good news" with this person.

LOOKING TO NEXT WEEK...

HOW CAN YOU BELIEVE IN THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT?

² Ackley, A. (1933). *He Lives!* Word Music, Inc.