

**Easter 2023**  
***The Resurrection of Jesus, the Christ***  
John 20:1-18

**INTRODUCTION:**

**N.T. Wright**

The message of Easter is that God's new world has been unveiled in Jesus Christ and that you're now invited to belong to it.

Today, of all days, is the day that determines how we live every other day of the year. Either we follow the risen Jesus or we do not. Today is a day of hope, celebration, and singing because the great enemy of death has been defeated and no longer has an eternal grip on us.

Now one may say, but we still die? How can death be defeated? The answer is that there are many stages of death. There is a physical death and also a spiritual death. The spiritual death ends when we come to know Christ as Savior and Lord. The physical death is conquered when we are raised to new life at the end just like Jesus was on that first Easter.

Now let's read about that first Easter morning...

**John 20:1-18**

On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark. She saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!"

At that, Peter and the other disciple went out, heading for the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and got to the tomb first. Stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying there, yet he did not go in. Then, following him, Simon Peter came also. He entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. The wrapping that had been on His head was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a separate place by itself. The other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, then entered the tomb, saw, and believed. For they still did not understand the Scripture that He must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went home again.

But Mary stood outside facing the tomb, crying. As she was crying, she stooped to look into the tomb. She saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and

one at the feet, where Jesus' body had been lying. They said to her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"Because they've taken away my Lord," she told them, "and I don't know where they've put Him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not know it was Jesus.

"Woman," Jesus said to her, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Supposing He was the gardener, she replied, "Sir, if you've removed Him, tell me where you've put Him, and I will take Him away."

Jesus said, "Mary."

Turning around, she said to Him in Hebrew, "*Rabbouni!*" —which means "Teacher."

"Don't cling to Me," Jesus told her, "for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brothers and tell them that I am ascending to My Father and your Father—to My God and your God."

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them what He had said to her.

## **I. The Friction of the Resurrection of Jesus**

- A. What causes a lot of friction regarding the resurrection of Jesus is that people are often bought into a worldview that can't support a resurrection event. If I have restricted myself to the state of Texas, it doesn't mean a volcanic eruption in Hawaii hasn't taken place, but it does mean that it is beyond what I can give an account of given the fact of my limitations of being restricted to Texas.
- B. For example, "Scientism" is basically making science a religion, but one must remember that science is not opposed to the resurrection if the evidence would support such an event. Also, science is not the "be all end all" of life. Science can't tell you whether putting strychnine in your grandmother's coffee is a good thing or bad thing. It can say that it's going to give her a bad day. Science has no voice regarding morality.
- C. The bigger question we must ask ourselves is why is there something versus nothing. If something can't come from nothing, then it must have come from something or Someone who was prior to creation. That would mean there is a supernatural realm, and the resurrection simply means the Supernatural got involved with nature.

### **Richard Dawkins**

Presumably what happened to Jesus was what happens to all of us when we die. We decompose. Accounts of Jesus's resurrection and ascension are about as well-documented as Jack and the Beanstalk.

### **F.F. Bruce, New Testament Theologian**

“The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors, the authenticity of which no-one dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings, their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt. It is a curious fact that historians have often been much readier to trust the New Testament than have many theologians.”

## **II. The Fact of the Resurrection of Jesus**

- A. What is a miracle? A miracle is when there is an exception or extension to a law of regularity also known as a law of nature.
- B. If there is a God, then supernatural events are possible even though they may be rare occasions. And by definition they would be rare occasions because if they were regular when would say they are a part of the regulatory laws of nature.

### *C. Evidences of a Resurrection:*

- 1. Empty Tomb

### **William Lane Craig**

“These three great facts—the resurrection appearances, the empty tomb, and the origin of the Christian faith—all point unavoidably to one conclusion: The resurrection of Jesus. Today the rational man can hardly be blamed if he believes that on that first Easter morning, a divine miracle occurred.”

- 2. The reaction of the disciples were normal. They wanted evidence themselves because they didn't believe in resurrections.

### **Timothy Paul Jones**

The central claim of the NT is that Jesus was physically resurrected after being crucified. If this claim arose from decades of embellishment instead of historical truth, then Jesus is dead, the apostles were liars, and our faith is worthless (1 Cor.

15:14–17). But evidences from the first and second centuries reveal that eyewitness testimony about Jesus emerged rapidly and circulated reliably. The NT texts relied on testimonies from apostolic eyewitnesses, and all of these texts were completed while the eyewitnesses were still alive. That’s why we can declare with confidence: **Don’t worry; I read the book. He didn’t stay dead.** —

3. Antagonists willing to pay to hide the secret they can’t find the body.

### **Matthew 28:11-15**

<sup>11</sup> As the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the leading priests what had happened. <sup>12</sup> A meeting with the elders was called, and they decided to give the soldiers a large bribe. <sup>13</sup> They told the soldiers, “You must say, ‘Jesus’ disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.’ <sup>14</sup> If the governor hears about it, we’ll stand up for you so you won’t get in trouble.” <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>1</sup>

4. Women were the first eyewitnesses.

### **Craig Keener**

Part of the reason for the apostles’ unbelief is that a resurrection of this nature contradicted their messianic expectations; another reason may have been that many men considered the witness of women nearly worthless, because they regarded women as unstable and undependable. (These opinions appear, eg in Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 4.219 and Justinian, Institutes 2.10.6.)

5. All the disciples but John died a martyr’s death for their conviction that Jesus rose again, and they did this separately.

### **Gary Habermas**

There is an important difference between the apostle martyrs and those who die for their beliefs today. Modern martyrs act solely out of their trust in beliefs that others have taught them. The apostles died for holding to their own testimony that they had personally seen the risen Jesus. Contemporary martyrs die for what they

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<sup>1</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Mt 28:11–15). Tyndale House Publishers.

believe to be true. The disciples of Jesus died for what they knew to be either true or false. —

## 6. The explosion of the Church.

### **Acts 2:14, 36-41**

<sup>14</sup> Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, “Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! ...

<sup>36</sup> “So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!”

<sup>37</sup> Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

<sup>38</sup> Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God.” <sup>40</sup> Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!”

<sup>41</sup> Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

## 7. Christ lives within each heart of a believer.

### **Alfred Ackley**

“He Lives”

You ask me how I know He lives?

He lives within my heart.

### **Nabeel Qureshi**

After studying the historical origins of the Christian faith, I came to these conclusions: that Jesus died on the cross is as certain as anything historical can be; that he rose from the dead is by far the best explanation of the events surrounding his death; and that Jesus claimed to be God is the best explanation for the immediate Christian proclamation of Jesus’ deity. Putting it all together: Jesus claimed to be God, and he proved it by rising from the dead. The case for Christianity is powerful. Despite my ardent desire to believe in Islam, I had to admit that history was in favor of Christian claims, and even more reluctantly, that it challenged Islamic teachings.

## **Chuck Colson**

The real cover-up [of Watergate], the lie, could only be held together for two weeks, and then everybody else jumped ship in order to save themselves. Now, the fact is that all that those around the President were facing was embarrassment, maybe prison. Nobody's life was at stake. But what about the disciples? Twelve powerless men, peasants really, were facing not just embarrassment or political disgrace, but beatings, stonings, execution. Every single one of the disciples insisted, to their dying breaths, that they had physically seen Jesus bodily raised from the dead. Don't you think that one of those apostles would have cracked before being beheaded or stoned? That one of them would have made a deal with the authorities? None did. Jesus is Lord: That's the thrilling message of Easter. And it's a historic fact, one convincingly established by the evidence—and one you can bet your life upon. Go ahead researchers—dig up all the old graves you want. You won't change a thing. He has risen.

### **III. The Future in light of the Resurrection of Jesus**

- A. We follow a leader that has conquered our greatest fears.
- B. We follow a leader who can take away our sorrowful tears.
- C. We follow a leader who gives us meaning and hope for today.
- D. We follow a leader who has sympathized with our sufferings and sorrows.
- E. We follow a leader who did for us what we could never have done ourselves.
- F. We follow a leader who is preparing a place for us beyond death called New Creation.
- G. We follow a leader who will, when the time is right, do away with death forever because He first did away with within Himself in His Resurrection.

## **Romans 8:11**

And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then He who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through His Spirit who lives in you.

## **Revelation 1:17-18**

“Don’t be afraid! I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I was dead, but look—I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hades.

## **N.T. Wright**

Easter was when Hope in person surprised the whole world by coming forward from the future into the present....All our language about the future ... is like a set of signposts pointing into a bright mist ... the New Testament image of the future hope of the whole cosmos, grounded in the resurrection of Jesus, gives as coherent a picture as we need or could have of the future that is promised to the whole world, a future in which, under the sovereign and wise rule of the creator God, decay and death will be done away with and a new creation born, to which the present one will stand as mother to child.

## **CONCLUSION:**

### **1 Corinthians 15:12-19**

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say, “There is no resurrection of the dead”? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is without foundation, and so is your faith. In addition, we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we have testified about God that He raised up Christ—whom He did not raise up if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Therefore, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone.

Many people will say they believe in the resurrection, but the way they live their life reveals their true beliefs. If Christ was raised from the dead, then it means everything. If not, then it means nothing! Which side of the line do you fall on?

### **C.S. Lewis in *Miracles***

The New Testament writers speak as if Christ’s achievement in rising from the dead was the first event of its kind in the whole history of the universe. He is the ‘first fruits,’ the pioneer of life,’ He has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so. (*Miracles*, ch. 16)