

YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD MAN DOWN

1 Corinthians 15:14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of Christianity. Without it, our message is not only false, but completely powerless! But the resurrection DID happen, even though skeptics have tried to disprove it for centuries.

- Professor Thomas Arnold, Chairman of Modern History at Oxford University: "I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort ... than the great sign which God has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead."
- Brooke Foss Wescott, English Scholar and Textual Critic: "It is not too much to say that there is no historic incident better supported than the resurrection of Christ."
- Paul L. Maier, Professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University: "No shred of evidence has yet been discovered in literary sources or archaeology that would disprove [the resurrection of Jesus Christ]."
- Lord Caldecote, Chief Justice of England: "As a matter of strict evidence ... the resurrection [is] a fact beyond dispute."
- Dr. Simon Greenleaf, Royall Professor of Law at Harvard University: "There is more evidence for the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ than for just about any other event in history."

But in spite of the evidence, skeptics still exist. We shouldn't be puzzled by that, because the skepticism started at the beginning with the Jewish Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilate:

Matthew 27:65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.

Here are some of the precautions they took to make sure they would never be troubled by Jesus again:

PRECAUTION # 1 – TRIAL

Jesus Christ went through six distinct trials, three Jewish and three Roman:

- Before Annas the high priest (John 18:13)
- Before Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57)
- Before the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:59)
- Before Pilate (Matthew 27:2)
- Before Herod (Luke 23:7)
- Before Pilate (Luke 23:11-25)

PRECAUTION # 2 – CRUCIFIXION

Alexander the Great introduced crucifixion to Egypt and Carthage, and the Romans subsequently learned and perfected it. Cicero called it "the most cruel and hideous of tortures." Will Durant wrote that "even the Romans pitied the victims. Josephus the Jewish historian had observed many crucifixions during the siege of Jerusalem that he called them "the most wretched deaths."

The Romans were grimly efficient about crucifixions. Victims did NOT escape with their lives. Remember how frightened the Philippian jailer was when he thought his prisoners had escaped? He wanted to kill himself rather than be found negligent in his duty and incur the wrath of his superiors! (Acts 16:27).

And Jesus was not only crucified! He was scourged, tortured to exhaustion, and his rib cage was pierced with a spear that ruptured His pericardium so that blood and water flowed out. JESUS WAS DEAD!

PRECAUTION # 3 – BURIAL

Jesus' body was placed in a tomb hewn out of solid rock and a very large stone (Mark 16:1-4) was rolled against the front of the tomb (Matthew 27:60). In one of the copies of Mark's gospel preserved in the Cambridge library in England, a parenthetical statement is added at this point in the narrative that says, "And when [Jesus] was laid there, [Joseph of Arimathea] put against the tomb a stone which 20 men could not roll away." Engineers have examined the evidence and said that the type of stone in that area would weigh 1½ to 2 tons to be large enough to cover a 4½ to 5 foot door.

PRECAUTION # 4 – GUARD

The Roman Guard referred to in the gospels was a 16-man security force. Normally 4 men were placed immediately in front of what they were to protect; the other 12 would sleep in a semi-circle in front of them with their heads pointing in. They rotated in shifts of four around the clock. Historian Paul Maier says "it would have been virtually impossible" for thieves to get to the tomb.

PRECAUTION # 5 – SEAL

After the guards inspected the tomb and rolled the stone in place, a cord was stretched across the rock and fastened at either end with sealing clay. Then the clay packs were stamped with the official signet of the Roman governor. This seal was a public testimony that Jesus' body was actually there, and that it was protected from vandals by nothing less than the power and authority of the Roman Empire. Anyone trying to remove it would incur the wrath of Rome!

IN SPITE OF ALL THE PRECAUTIONS, THE TOMB OF JESUS CHRIST WAS EMPTY ON EASTER MORNING!

If you wish to rationalize away the resurrection, you must deal with certain insurmountable facts. You might say that the Jews and the Romans actually outwitted themselves when they took so many precautions to make sure Jesus was dead and remained in the grave. Their precautions make it very difficult for critics to defend their position that Christ did not rise from the dead!

- The Roman seal was broken!
- The tomb was empty!
- The large stone was moved!
- The Roman guard fled!
- The graveclothes were empty – and undisturbed!
- There were hundreds of eyewitnesses of Jesus AFTER He rose from the dead! (1 Corinthians 15:6 – over 500 at once!)
- Most of all, the lives of the disciples were changed forever!

THE CITY OF JERUSALEM WAS THE VERY LAST PLACE ON EARTH CHRISTIANITY COULD HAVE STARTED IF JESUS' TOMB REMAINED OCCUPIED!

Harvard law professor Simon Greenleaf, who lectured for years on how to break down testimony and determine whether or not a witness is lying, said: "The annals of military warfare afford scarcely an example of [such] heroic constancy ... and unflinching courage. It is therefore impossible that [the disciples] could have persisted in affirming [these] truths ... had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact."

The crucifixion of Jesus wasn't only a stupid move on the part of the Sanhedrin, but on the part of the devil! He couldn't see what was coming!

1 Corinthians 2:7 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known [the hidden wisdom of God] they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD MAN DOWN (NEWSONG)

1. He said goodbye to the angels of heaven
And He came to earth as a common man
He taught us how we could love one another
There was healing in His hands
There were those who believed and followed Him
And there were those who wanted Him dead
They thought the grave would silence Him forever
But they found out instead.
- C. You can close your eyes, you can say it's a lie
You can stick your head in the sand
You can turn away and try to explain He was just another man
When they nailed Him to the cross by His hands and His feet
And they put Him in the ground
Three days later everybody found out that you can't
No, you can't keep a good man down
No, you can't keep a good man down.
2. I hear you say that it all sounds crazy
It's a good story but it can't be true
How could a man who was dead and buried
Mean a thing to me and you
Here we are two thousand years later
And still the choice is just the same
You can say you don't believe it
But it doesn't change a thing.
- B. I can take you to the hill where they hung Him on a cross
I can take you to the empty tomb
I can tell you He's alive 'cause He lives in me
But the rest is up to you.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION: WHO ARE YOU GOING TO ENTRUST WITH YOUR DEATH?

The statistics on death run at 100% - one out of one dies! But what is less known is that one out of one will face judgment after death. Only those who have experienced salvation through Jesus Christ will be able to stand! The altar call given on the day the church began (Acts 2:38) is the only experience that will matter on the day eternity begins!

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

HERE'S ANOTHER IMPORTANT QUESTION: WHO ARE YOU GOING TO ENTRUST WITH YOUR LIFE?

There are many more benefits to being a Christian than just being saved after death (although that is the most important benefit!).

John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Christians live a good life, not because their circumstances are perfect, but because their Saviour is perfect! Sinners receive no eternal benefit when they go through problems, but Christians do!

2 Corinthians 4:16-17 ¹⁶For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD MAN DOWN!

Psalm 37:23-25 ²³The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. ²⁴Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. ²⁵I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

2 Corinthians 4:7-9 ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. ⁸ We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

J.B. Phillips translates that last phrase like this: "we are knocked down but not knocked out!" For the Roman gladiator who was knocked down in battle, the final "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" came only from the emperor. God has the final say over the life of a Christian!

A SOLDIER IN THE ARMY OF GOD

I am a soldier in the army of my God! The Lord Jesus Christ is my Commanding Officer! The Holy Bible is my code of conduct! Faith, prayer and the word are my weapons of warfare! I have been taught by the Holy Spirit, trained by experience, tried by adversity and tested by fire! I am a volunteer in this army, and I am enlisted for eternity! I will either retire in this army at the rapture or die in this Army; but I will not get out, sell out, be talked out or pushed out! I am faithful, reliable, capable and dependable!

If my God needs me, I am there! If He needs me in Sunday School, to teach children, work with youth, help adults or just sit and learn, He can use me, because I am there! I am a soldier! I am not a baby! I do not need to be pampered, petted, primed up, pumped up, picked up or pepped up!

I am a soldier! No one has to call me, remind me, write me, visit me, entice me or lure me! I am a soldier! I am not a wimp! I am in place, saluting my King, obeying His orders, praising His name and building His kingdom!

No one has to send me flowers, gifts, food, cards, candy or give me handouts! I do not need to be cuddled, cradled, cared for or catered to! I am committed! I cannot have my feelings hurt bad enough to turn me around! I cannot be discouraged enough to turn me aside! I cannot lose enough to cause me to quit! When Jesus called me into this army, I had nothing! If I end up with nothing, I will still come out even! I will win! My God will supply all my needs!

I am more than a conqueror! I will always triumph! I can do all things through Christ! Devils cannot defeat me! People cannot disillusion me! Weather cannot weary me! Sickness cannot stop me! Battles cannot beat me! Money cannot buy me! Governments cannot silence me and HELL CANNOT HANDLE ME!

I am a soldier! Even death cannot destroy me! For when my commander calls me from this battlefield, He will promote me to a captain and then bring me back to rule this world with Him!

You see, I'm a good man – not because of MY goodness, but because of HIS goodness! AND YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD MAN DOWN!

Micah 7:8 Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.

ONE FINAL WORD OF ADVICE:

Luke 24:5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, [the angels] said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

Don't seek Jesus among the deadness of religion! He lives in the real church by His Spirit! And YOU can experience a relationship with Him by the power of the Holy Ghost!