

Why Should We Believe That The Apostles Saw The Resurrected Christ?

Knowing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, who loved Us and gave up His life for us at the cross in order that we might be saved and enter into a personal relationship with God both now and forever, is what makes life worth living.

Isn't this true? Isn't this exactly what we have come to know through our own experience? If we truly are the disciples of Christ and know Him in a personal way, when we wake up in the morning we are not alone, when we go through the day we are not alone, and when we go to bed at night we are not alone. He is always with us reassuring us, comforting us, strengthening us, directing us, convicting us, and empowering us so we might be able to do His will and perform His work, as an extension of His life. This is what gives our life meaning. This is what in fact defines our life.

In light of this, if we truly believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who loved us and gave up His life for us, our lives should always be rich, full and abundant.

But is all that we believe about Jesus true or is it just wishful thinking? Is Jesus truly the Christ, the Son of the living God, or have we simply followed cunningly devised fables? Did Jesus' death truly make it possible for us to be saved and enter into a personal relationship with Him or is it just a whole lot of to do about nothing? These questions bring us to the resurrection. And why is this?

The resurrection is God's gift to us, not only to confirm that Jesus was the Son of God, but also to confirm that His death atoned for sin making it possible for us to be saved (Romans 1:4; 1 Peter 1:3). Is this actually true? Did God actually give us the gift of the resurrection in order to confirm for us these very important truths? I believe so.

Let us, first of all, establish the fact that the resurrection was given to us by God in order to confirm for us that Jesus was in truth the Son of God? Let

me read for you **Romans 1:4**. “**Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.**”

Why should we believe that Jesus was in fact the Christ, the Son of God? We should believe this because the resurrection of Christ confirms it. This is what the Bible teaches. Isn't this what **Romans 1:4** tells us? What did it say? He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.

In other words, if Christ was not truly the Son of God there would have been no possible way for Him, after having been crucified and entombed for three days, to have risen from the dead as He said He would, if He was not in fact the Son of God. Doesn't this make sense? It should. And this is what the Bible teaches.

But this is not the only thing that the Bible teaches us that the resurrection confirmed. It also teaches us that the resurrection confirmed that Jesus death atoned for sin. Let me read for you **1 Peter 1:3**. And what does it say? It says this, “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.**” So how does this verse teach us that the resurrection confirmed that the death of Jesus atoned for sin?

Peter, in this verse, is addressing Christians and is calling them to join with him in praising God for His great mercy. And how would Christians understand this reference to God's great mercy? There is only one possible way for Christians to understand it and that is as a reference to Christ's atoning work on their behalf on the cross of Calvary that made it possible for to be born again. But born again to what? Born again to an uncertain hope? No, but to a living hope, or in other words to a certain confident assurance. And what is this living hope or this certain confident assurance based on? The resurrection! Isn't this exactly what **1 Peter 1:3** says? “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.**”

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is God's gift to us, not only to confirm that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, but also to

confirm for us that His death on the cross of Calvary did in fact atone for our sin thus providing us not only spiritual life but also a living hope.

But why should we believe in the resurrection of Christ? There are many different reasons why we should believe in the resurrection but first and foremost is the testimony of the apostles who proclaimed they had seen the resurrected Christ. This brings us to the primary question that we will be seeking to answer this morning:

What makes the apostles' testimony of having seen the resurrected Christ so compelling? I am going to begin with what I believe is the most obvious reason.

The testimony of the apostles, that they had seen the resurrected Christ, was compelling because in proclaiming it they had nothing to gain and everything to lose (1 Corinthians 4:9; 15:19).

Is this true? Let me ask you this question. Did the apostles, in declaring that they had seen the resurrected Christ, become wealthy? No! Did the apostles, in declaring that they had seen the resurrected Christ, become popular? No! Did the apostles, in declaring that they had seen the resurrected Christ, end up living a comfortable life? No!

The only thing that came to the apostles as a result of them proclaiming the gospel, which included their declaration that they had seen the resurrected Christ, was suffering. And how great was their suffering?

Their suffering was so great that they, in the eyes of the world, had become a spectacle according to Paul in **1 Corinthians 4:9**; or in other words, their suffering had become so great that anyone who was in a position to observe their lives could not possibly have helped but see their suffering and would have marveled because of it.

In fact, their suffering was so great that Paul declared in **1 Corinthians 15:19** that if their testimony concerning the resurrection of Christ proved to be false that they above all other men should be most pitied in light of all that they had suffered in proclaiming it, which even included, at God's appointed time, their violent deaths.

So now let me ask you a question. Do we, in light of all that the apostles suffered in bearing witness to the person and work of Christ, have good reason to believe the testimony of the apostles that they saw Christ resurrected? And I believe that the answer would have to be yes!

Why in the world would they have lied about it if they, in terms of the things of this world, had everything to lose and nothing to gain? It doesn't make sense. Would we do such a thing? Absolutely not! It would be an insane thing to do.

The point is they wouldn't have lied about it in light of all that they suffered. Therefore the only conclusion that we can possibly come to is this: they actually believed that they had seen the resurrected Christ. This is what they believed. And if they did not truly believe it they would not have proclaimed it.

But someone might say that perhaps they had not seen a resurrected Christ but only a resuscitated Christ. In fact, this is not something that people might say. This is actually something that they have said.

The idea that Jesus never really died on the cross can be found in the Koran, which was written in the seventh century. In fact, Ahmadiya Muslims contend that Jesus actually fled to India. To this day there's a shrine that supposedly marks his real burial place in Kashmir. And what should we think of such a thought? Not much! It's ridiculous.

This leads us to a second reason why the testimony of the apostles, that they had seen the resurrected Christ, is so compelling. And what is that reason?

The testimony of the apostles, that they had seen the resurrected Christ, is compelling because they would have known with absolute certainty that He had in fact been resurrected rather than resuscitated.

And why is this? They would have known with absolute certainty that Christ had been resurrected rather than resuscitated because they knew that He had in fact died (John 19:31-34).

Listen to the words of the Apostle John in **John 19:31-34** as he describes the events after Jesus bowed His head while on the cross and gave up His Spirit.

“Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was the high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. (32) So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; (33) but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. (34) But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.” And what was the significance of this? The significance of the blood and water immediately coming from Christ’s side when pierced with the spear was that it proved that what the soldiers had deduced was correct. Christ was dead.

And who recorded these facts for us? The Apostle John recorded these facts for us and not by way of hearsay but as an eyewitness. Let me now read for you **John 19:35. “And he who has seen has testified [And who as that? It was John who in fact wrote this Gospel and then what does he say? He says this.] and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.”**

Did the apostles know with certainty that Christ had in fact died? Absolutely! Therefore there was no way that the apostles of Christ could have possibly been deceived about Christ being resurrected when He had only been resuscitated because they knew for a fact that He had died.

But could they have been mistaken? Certainly there have been times when certain very well-meaning eyewitnesses have witnessed certain events and have been mistaken about what they may have seen.

Just recently I was watching 60 Minutes and there was a segment that was exploring how eyewitnesses to a crime are very often mistaken about what they think they saw.

On this particular segment they were highlighting a rape victim’s mistaken identification of her attacker. In her particular case she thought she had gotten a good look at her attacker and when she was given a set of photographs of certain possible suspects she felt that she had identified the person who had committed the crime against her.

The law enforcement officers then arranged to for a police line-up that included the particular person that she had identified as her attacker in the photo line-up. She once again picked him as her accuser. They asked her if she was certain, and she said she was. And based on her testimony he was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison. The only problem was that he later, based on DNA evidenced, was found to be innocent.

So could the apostles of Christ perhaps, though not deceived, could have been mistaken. This leads us to a third reason why the testimony of the apostles, that they had seen the resurrected Christ, was so compelling. And what is that third reason?

The testimony of the apostles, that they had seen the resurrected Christ, is compelling because there was no way that they could have been mistaken about it (John 20:19-29).

Let us for a moment look to the Gospel of John and to Christ's first appearance to the eleven apostles minus Thomas in **John 20:19-23**. **“(19) So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ (20) And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.”** Why did they rejoice? They rejoiced because they knew that Christ had been resurrected.

Could they have been mistaken? How could they have been mistaken? It wasn't as if they did not know Him in contrast to the woman who had mistaken her attacker. They knew Him very well and were able to observe Him very closely. But even though there was no way they could have been mistaken, the one apostle who was not there with them when He appeared was not in any mood to accept what they were saying.

And he issued this challenge in **John 20:25**. **“Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand in His side, I will not believe.”**

And did Christ actually give Thomas the opportunity to do that very thing? Absolutely! Let me now read for you **John 20:26-28**. **“And after eight**

days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you.' (27) Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving but believing' (28) Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and My God.'"

Knowing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, who loved us and gave up His life for us at the cross in order that we might be saved and enter into a personal relationship with Him both now and forever, is what makes life worth living.

But is all that we believe about Jesus true? Is He truly the Christ, the Son of the living God? Did His death truly make it possible for us to be saved and enter into a personal relationship with Him? And what is the answer?

Based on the resurrection of Christ, which is God's gift to us and the very compelling testimony of the apostles, there is only one conclusion: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, who did in fact give up His life on the cross on Calvary to atone for our sin.

The only question that is left this morning is this: Have we taken advantage of what He has done. And that is the question that I would like to ask you this morning. Have you by the grace of God taken advantage of what Christ has done for you at the cross and confirmed for you by His resurrection?

If you have taken advantage of this you should be seeing the fruit of it in your life. Or in other words, your life should no longer be about yourself but rather it should be about Christ. Your life should be defined by Christ, not only in terms of what He would want you to be, but also in terms of what He would want you to do.

But if you have not taken advantage of who you know Christ to be, and what Christ has done for you at the cross of Calvary, I would encourage you to pray the following prayer.

Father, I know that I am a sinner and cannot save myself, but what I cannot do I know that You have done for me by sending Your Son to die on the cross of Calvary in order to atone for my sins. I am now therefore by Your

grace and through faith that You provide reaching out and taking from Your hand the gift of eternal life, a gift that I do not deserve but which has been purchased for me through the precious blood of Your Son. Thank you, Jesus!