

**Why We Choose to Believe Christ Rose From the Dead  
Romans 1:4**

There is little dispute among Christians concerning the importance of the resurrection!

First of all, the resurrection is important because it is through the resurrection that Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power. Let me read for you **Romans 1:4**. **“Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Secondly, the resurrection is important because it is through the resurrection that we, those who have placed our faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation, can know we have been saved. Let me read for you **1 Peter 1:3**. **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us [those who have placed our faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation] to be born again to a living hope [And how did it come about that we came into possession of this living hope? The verse goes on to say] through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”**

And thirdly, the resurrection is important because it is through the resurrection that God has confirmed that a time of judgment has been fixed and that all people everywhere in light of the certainty of this future judgment should repent. Let me read for you **Acts 17:30-31**. **“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, (31) because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed [And how do we know that?], having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”**

So is the resurrection important? Absolutely! It is through the resurrection that Christ has been declared to be the Son of God with power. It was through the resurrection that Christians can know that they have been born again to a living hope. It is through the resurrection that God has confirmed that a time of judgment has been fixed and that all people everywhere, in light of the certainty of this future judgment, should repent. So yes, of course the resurrection is important.

So now we come to a very important question. Why do Christians believe in the resurrection? A number of answers could be given. Christians believe in the resurrection of Christ because the Old Testament prophesied it. Christians believe in the resurrection of Christ because Christ Himself prophesied it. Christians believe in the resurrection because there is no good explanation for the empty tomb other than the resurrection.

There are numerous reasons to believe in the resurrection of Christ but clearly there is one reason that stands head and shoulders above all other reasons. And what is that that reason? It is the eyewitness testimony of the disciples of Christ. It is their testimony that is by far and away the most compelling reason for believing in the resurrection Christ, and all other reasons, though valid, are secondary to this primary reason.

In other words, if Christ's disciples had not born witness to the resurrection of Christ, and their testimony concerning the resurrection of Christ had not been considered credible by those who heard them, there would be no church today. There would be no Valley Bible Church nor would there be any other church. But we are here! And why are we here? Because of the credible eyewitness testimony of the disciples. And this leads us to the question that we will be asking this morning.

Why should we consider the disciples of Christ to be credible witnesses of the resurrection? Or in other words, why should we, when reading their so-called eyewitness accounts, pay any attention to what they have to say?

First of all, we should consider the disciples to be credible witnesses because they, not anticipating the resurrection, were not inclined to believe in the resurrection when it occurred.

So why would this lack of anticipation of Christ's resurrection make His disciples more credible witnesses than if they were anticipating His resurrection? If the disciples were not anticipating the resurrection, they would not have been inclined to interpret what they saw and heard as evidence of the resurrection. In other words, if they were not anticipating the resurrection, they would not have been inclined to interpret whatever they may have seen or heard, subsequent to His death, as evidence of the resurrection. And hopefully this makes sense to you. But now we come to

the most important question in light of this particular point that I am trying to make.

How can we explain their lack of anticipation in light of the fact that we know that Jesus on a number of occasions when speaking to His disciples about His impending death would immediately follow-up that very dire declaration with a promise of resurrection? I believe that answer can be found in **Mark 9:30-32**.

**“From there (the area of Caesarea Philippi) they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know about it [To know about what? To know that He and His disciples were going through Galilee. And why would He not have wanted people to know that? He wanted seclusion. And why would He have wanted seclusion? He wanted to tell His disciples something that He only wanted them to hear, and what was that?]. (31) For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, ‘The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.’”**

So there we have it. This is what Christ wanted His disciples to hear and only them to hear. So were His disciples able to grasp what He was saying? No! They were not only unable to grasp what he was saying but they, out of fear, had no interest in grasping what He was saying.

So how do we know this? Let us now read **verse 32**. **“But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.”** So, what is clear from **Mark 9:30-32**?

It is clear from Mark 9:30-32 that the disciples not only failed to understand what Christ meant when He prophesied His death and resurrection, but it is also clear they did not want to understand. And it is for these reasons that the disciples, though having been told about the resurrection, were not anticipating the resurrection.

And this lack of anticipation now leads us to a second reason why we should consider the disciples credible witnesses of the resurrection. And what is that second reason?

We should consider the disciples to be credible witnesses because they, in not anticipating the resurrection, had to be persuaded of the resurrection (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:19-21, 26-28). So where do we see this?

Let us first of all consider **John 20:1-10**. In this particular passage we see Mary Magdalene on the first day of the week, or in other words three days after Christ's crucifixion, coming to the tomb, not to be a witness of the resurrection but rather to anoint Christ's body for burial. And it was there to Mary Magdalene that Christ made His first post-resurrection appearance.

And who did she think Christ was? She initially thought He was the gardener. And why did she think this? First of all, it was still rather dark according to the text and besides this we also have to remember according to **John 19:25** that she just three days earlier was one of those standing by the cross when Jesus was so brutally crucified. So in light of these two things it should be very understandable why she did not initially recognize Him and mistook Him for the gardener.

But eventually, through seeing Him, through talking with Him, and even through touching Him she what? She believed. She believed that He had been resurrected. So was she persuaded by flimsy circumstantial evidence? No! She was persuaded by irrefutable evidence.

So then what did she do? She did exactly what Jesus told her to do. And what was that. She went to the disciples and told them, **“I have seen the Lord”** and He has told me to tell you, **“I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.”**

And did the disciples believe the testimony of Mary Magdalene? No, they did not! Let me read for you **Mark 16:11** and see if this is not so. **“When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it.”**

Because the disciples were not anticipating the resurrection of Christ, the initial eyewitness report made to them by Mary Magdalene failed to persuade them and was therefore rejected (Mark 16:11).

The disciples obviously needed something more than the testimony of one solitary woman. And they did not have to wait long for that “something more.”

So now let me read for you **John 20:19-20**. **“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.”**

So, what was their response to having seen Him, to having heard Him, and to having been being invited by Him to inspect His hands and His side? The latter part of **John 20:20** tells us that the disciples **“rejoiced when they saw the Lord.”** And why were able to do this? They were able to do this or in other words to rejoice because they had been persuaded, not by some flimsy circumstantial evidence but rather by irrefutable evidence.

Unfortunately however, according to **John 20:24**, Thomas, one of the twelve disciples, was not with them when Christ made this initial appearance and so what happened when the disciples told him about what they had experienced? He said to them, **“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 into His side, I will not believe.”** Obviously Thomas, very much like his fellow disciples earlier, wanted **“something more”** than simply being told by someone that they had seen the risen Christ, even if those people telling him were his fellow disciples. And did he get that something more? Absolutely!

So now let us read **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 your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.’ Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and My God.’”**

The disciples, not anticipating the resurrection, were not persuaded until they saw Him, heard Him, and were invited to inspect His wounds (John 20:20, 28).

So how long did Christ continue to make appearances to His disciples? **Acts 1:1-3** tells us. **“The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, (2) until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. (3) To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.”**

So how long did Christ continue to make appearances to His disciples, proving Himself alive by many convincing proofs? He continued to make appearances to them for forty days!

So how persuaded do you believe that these disciples were that Jesus had in fact risen from the dead? Extremely persuaded! And this leads us to the third reason why we should consider the disciples of Christ to be credible witnesses of the resurrection.

We should consider the disciples to be credible witnesses of the resurrection because they would never have been willing to suffer what they suffered in proclaiming the gospel unless they had been fully persuaded that the resurrection was a fact (1 Corinthians 15:17-20).

And why would I say such a thing? This is what Paul, another credible eyewitness of the resurrection, in essence told the Corinthians in **1 Corinthians 15:17-20**. He told them that the only reason why he and others apostles were willing to suffer as greatly as they were suffering was because of their belief in the resurrection of Christ, which provided them the necessary hope to carry on in the midst of all their difficulties, knowing that if they were to die they would live again.

So should we consider the disciples to be credible witnesses of the resurrection because they would never have been willing to suffer what they suffered in proclaiming the gospel unless they had been fully persuaded that the resurrection was indeed a fact? I believe we have to.

And doesn't this make total sense. If they were making believe all this, if somewhere they had the body of Jesus hidden away, or if they had been involved in some kind of plot, or if they were not really sure whether they

had seen Him or some vision, is it conceivable that all of them would have continued this make believe right up to and even including death? And what would the answer be? The answer would have to be that they certainly would not have.

There are numerous reasons to believe in the resurrection of Christ, but clearly there is one reason that stands head and shoulders above all other reasons. And what is that that reason? It is the eyewitness testimony of the disciples of Christ.

And why would their testimony stand head and shoulders above all other reasons? They were credible witnesses. And I would hope that you would agree with me.

So let me ask you this question. Has Christ risen? And what is the answer to that question? Yes, Christ has risen.

And because He has risen, we can know some things. First of all, we can know that Christ is the Son of God according to **Romans 1:4**. Secondly, we can know that if we have placed our faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation, we have been saved according to **1 Peter 1:3**. And lastly, we can know that God through the resurrection has confirmed for the world that a day of judgment has been fixed for all those who do not turn from their self-serving and self-seeking ways to embrace Christ as their Lord and Savior according to **Acts 17:30-31**.

So if you happen to be one of those individuals who have not yet placed their faith in Christ, I would appeal to you that you would do so while there is still time to repent.

May we by God's grace, being convinced that Christ did in fact rise from the dead, know that if we place our faith in Christ and in Christ alone for our salvation, that we will also conquer death in Him.