

**RISEN: THE CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION - DID JESUS RISE? (Video 6:56)****DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What beliefs of Christianity would be affected if Jesus did not rise from the dead?  
How would these beliefs be affected?
2. Read Matthew 12:38–40, Matthew 16:1–4, Luke 11:29–30, and John 2:18–19. According to these passages, what did Jesus claim would be validation of his ministry, message, and identity?
3. Read Acts 2:22–24, Acts 17:30–31, and Romans 1:3–4. According to these passages, what did the early Christians base the validity of their message on?
4. Why is it important that Christianity has an External Test (Jesus' resurrection) for the validity of its claims?
5. What External Tests (external evidence) do other religions have to validate their truth claims?
6. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14. According to this passage, what is the basis of our hope and comfort about Christian friends and relatives who have died?
7. How are the ordinances of Communion and baptism related to the resurrection of Jesus?
8. Read John 14:19, 1 Corinthians 6:14, 2 Corinthians 4:14, Philippians 3:20–21, and 1 John 3:2. According to these passages, how does the future of Christians relate to the resurrection of Jesus?
9. How would you respond to this objection: "People do not rise from the dead, so your belief that Jesus was resurrected is untrue."

**ACTION POINTS:**

1. This week read "The Resurrection Is the Tiebreaker" by Tim Barnett:  
<https://www.str.org/w/the-resurrection-is-the-tiebreaker-1>

**RISEN: THE CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION - THE CROSS PRODUCED A DEAD BODY**  
(Video 7:24)**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Some passages of Scripture share the physical details of Jesus' death.
  - *Digging Deeper*: Historians use certain criteria to establish if events from the past are authentic. One of these criteria is embarrassment:
    - Because people do not usually make up details that would weaken their position, embarrassing portions of historical documents are viewed as marks of truth-telling. The sharing of embarrassing details that cast the hero or the author in a bad light are taken to be historically accurate.
2. 2 Maccabees 7 (an intertestamental historical account) depicts the story of seven Jewish brothers who are tortured and killed because they won't disobey God's Law and eat pork. Read 2 Maccabees chapter 7 as a group and make note of the heroic statements and actions of these seven brothers. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Maccabees%207&version=GNT>
3. With 2 Maccabees 7 in mind, read these passages about the torture and killing of Jesus: Mark 14:32–41, Mark 14:66–72, Matthew 26:39, Matthew 26:56, Matthew 27:46, and Luke 23:34.
  - How do the stories about Jesus' arrest, torture, and death compare with the heroic stories of the seven brothers in 2 Maccabees 7?
  - The Gospel writers would have grown up hearing the stories of the Jewish heroes in 2 Maccabees 7. With that in mind, why would they record details about Jesus that make him look worried, scared, and weak? Why would they record details about themselves being scared, abandoning Jesus, and denying their association with him?
  - How do these details help us to establish the credibility of the Gospel accounts?
4. Why is it important to establish Jesus' death as evidence for the resurrection?
5. How would you respond to this objection: "There were many people who survived Roman crucifixion. Jesus merely survived and then convinced his disciples that he rose from the dead."
6. There is one historical account of someone surviving Roman crucifixion. It's recorded by the first century Jewish historian Josephus. Read "The Life of Flavius Josephus" section 75: [https://biblehub.com/library/josephus/the\\_life\\_of\\_flavius\\_josephus/section\\_75\\_for\\_when\\_the.htm](https://biblehub.com/library/josephus/the_life_of_flavius_josephus/section_75_for_when_the.htm)
  - What differences are there between Jesus' torture and crucifixion and the crucifixion of the man who survived in Josephus's writings?

**ACTION POINTS:**

1. This week read "Did Jesus Merely Faint on the Cross" by Robby Lashua: <https://www.str.org/w/did-jesus-merely-faint-on-the-cross->
2. This week read "Was Jesus Still Alive When He Was Taken off the Cross?" by Robby Lashua: <https://www.str.org/w/was-jesus-still-alive-when-he-was-taken-off-the-cross->

**RISEN: THE CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION - THE TOMB CONTAINED NO BODY (Video 6:43)****DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. The Jerusalem Factor is an important argument for the resurrection. Would people have become Christians if the tomb still contained the body of Jesus? Why or why not?
  - How could you explain this argument using well-known landmarks or buildings in your city or town?
2. Who would have the means and the motive to exhume Jesus' dead body and show that he had not risen from the dead? (Think Jewish and Roman leaders.)
  - Would these people/groups want to squash the claim that Jesus had risen from the dead? Why didn't they?
3. In our last session we talked about the criterion of embarrassment. If women discovering the empty tomb would have been an embarrassment, why did all four Gospel writers record that women were the first to witness the empty tomb?
4. Read Luke 24:1–12. How does this passage show the disciples had a low view of the testimony of women, just like their culture?
5. How would you respond to this objection: "The reason the Jewish and Roman authorities didn't exhume Jesus' body is because it had been thrown into a mass grave and they didn't know where it was."
  - *Digging Deeper:* The claim that the Romans threw Jewish crucifixion victims into mass graves is a popular argument, but it is not substantiated by historical records.
    - Read Deuteronomy 21:22–23. How would this law relate to crucifixion in Israel?
    - Read John 19:31. What evidence in this passage shows that the Romans accommodated the law of Deuteronomy 21:22–23?
    - In Josephus's *The Wars of the Jews* (book 4, chapter 5, section 2), there is evidence that the Romans allowed the Jews to obey the Mosaic Law and bury crucified victims. This account is about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 (the Jesus mentioned in this account is not Jesus Christ). Read the first two sentences in section 2 of chapter 5 here: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2850/2850-h/2850-h.htm#link42HCH0005>
6. How would you respond to this objection: "An empty tomb does not prove the resurrection of Jesus happened. Grave robbery was common in the 1st century, so it's possible that someone stole or moved Jesus' body."
  - *Digging Deeper:* The Nazareth Inscription is a stone tablet with a 22-line Greek inscription on it. It has been tested and declared an authentic artifact coming from Israel (most probably Judea or Galilee) The dating of the tablet is said to be around AD 41 when Emperor Claudius began his reign. This is what the tablet says:

EDICT OF CAESAR

It is my decision [concerning] graves and tombs --whoever has made them for the religious observances of parents, or children, or household members --that these remain undisturbed forever. But if anyone legally charges that another person has destroyed, or has in any manner extracted those who have been buried, or has moved with wicked intent those who have been buried to other places, committing a crime against them, or has moved sepulcher-sealing stones, against such a person I order that a judicial tribunal be created, just as [is done] concerning the gods in human religious observances, even more so will it be obligatory to treat with honor those who have been entombed. You are absolutely not to allow anyone to move [those who have been entombed]. But if [someone does], I wish that [violator] to suffer capital punishment under the title of tomb-breaker.'

**RISEN: THE CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION - THE TOMB CONTAINED NO BODY**  
CONTINUED (Video 6:43)

- What relevance does this artifact have in relation to the resurrection of Jesus?
  - Why would Claudius send this edict to Israel?
  - Read Leviticus 21:1–4, Numbers 19:11, Numbers 5:1–4, and Numbers 9:6–10.
    - With these verses in mind, do you think grave robbery was a common Jewish practice in the 1st century? Why or why not?
7. If you encountered an empty tomb, would you automatically believe a resurrection took place?  
If not, what other evidences would you need in order to believe a resurrection took place?

**ACTION POINTS:**

1. This week read “The Nazareth Inscription” by Amy Hall:  
<https://www.str.org/w/the-nazareth-inscription>
2. This week, talk with a non-Christian friend or neighbor about the evidence for the empty tomb.  
Ask them what they think happened to Jesus’ body.

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[1] Clyde E. Billington, “The Nazareth Inscription: Proof of the Resurrection of Christ?” Associates for Biblical Research, 2020, accessed January 22, 2024, <https://biblearchaeology.org/research/chronological-categories/new-testament-era/4658-the-nazareth-inscription-proof-of-the-resurrection-of-christ>.

**RISEN: THE CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION - THE PEOPLE SAW SOMEBODY (Video 6:28)****DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Read 1 Corinthians 15:3–8. What does this early Christian creed claim about Jesus?
2. Appearances to the Twelve
  - Read Mark 14:66–72 and Matthew 26:47–56. How would you describe the disciples' response to Jesus' arrest?
  - Read Acts 4:1–22 and Acts 12:1–3. Why were the disciples suddenly so brave and unafraid of the Jewish authorities, even to the point of death?
  - Why is it important that Jesus appeared to the disciples multiple times while they were together?
  - What is a major difference between the disciples' willingness to be martyred for their beliefs and modern day Christians, Muslims, or Hindus being willing to be martyred for their beliefs?
3. How would you respond to this objection: "The disciples were grieving after the death of Jesus and people in grief have been known to hallucinate. Hallucination is the cause of the resurrection appearances. Jesus didn't actually rise from the dead."
  - How does the claim in 1 Corinthians 15:6 that "He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time" help to debunk the hallucination hypothesis?
4. Appearance to James, the brother of Jesus
  - Read John 7:1–5. How did Jesus' brothers view him before his death?
  - Read Mark 6:1–4. What was Jesus' opinion about how his family viewed him?
  - Read Acts 1:13–14. What happened to Jesus' brothers that now had them praying/worshipping with his disciples?
5. Appearance to Paul
  - Read Acts 8:1–3. How would you describe Saul/Paul prior to his encounter with the resurrected Jesus?
  - Read Philippians 3:4–6, Acts 22:3–5, and Acts 26:4–5. How does Paul describe himself prior to his encounter with the resurrected Jesus?
  - Read 2 Corinthians 11:23–28. What did Paul gain from converting to Christianity, and what do you think he lost by converting?
  - Read Galatians 1:13–17, 1 Corinthians 9:1, Acts 22:6–11, and Acts 26:12–18. According to Paul, what caused him to convert to Christianity?

**ACTION POINTS:**

1. This week read "What Convinced James His Brother Was God?" by Robby Lashua:  
<https://www.str.org/w/what-convinced-james-his-brother-was-god->

**RISEN: THE CASE FOR THE RESURRECTION - THE BEST EXPLANATION (Video 10:17)****DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Why is it highly unlikely that the disciples lied about the resurrection?
2. What motivates people to create new religions or cults? What did Muhammad, Joseph Smith, and the leaders of scientology gain through leading/creating their new religions?
  - Did the disciples gain similar things? Why or why not?
3. How would you respond to this objection: “The disciples and the women went to the wrong tomb. When they found it empty, they concluded that Jesus had risen from the dead.”
4. How are Paul’s and James’s conversions evidence that the hallucination theory is unlikely?
5. How would you respond to this objection: “Jesus didn’t die on the cross or rise from the dead. Jesus had an identical twin who died on the cross, and afterward the real Jesus claimed to have risen.”
6. Thought experiment: As a group try to think up a naturalistic/non-resurrection scenario that accounts for all the facts established around Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection.
  - The facts that need to be accounted for:
    1. Jesus died on the cross.
    2. Jesus was buried.
    3. Jesus’ tomb was empty three days after his death.
    4. Women were the first to witness the empty tomb.
    5. Jesus appeared to his disciples multiple times after his death.
    6. Jesus appeared to his brother James after his death.
    7. Jesus appeared to 500 brethren at one time after his death.
    8. Jesus appeared to Paul after his death.
7. How would you respond to this objection: “The stories of Jesus rising from the dead are legendary doctrines that developed much later than the actual events surrounding his life.”
8. What has been your favorite part of this study on the resurrection of Jesus?
9. Has your confidence in the resurrection of Jesus grown because of this study? Why or why not?
10. How will you use what you have learned in this course?

**ACTION POINTS:**

1. This week read “Why Did the Early Christians Switch from Sabbath to the Lord’s Day?” by Robby Lashua:  
<https://www.str.org/w/why-did-the-early-christians-switch-from-sabbath-to-the-lord-s-day->
2. This week read “Less Is More: A Case for the Resurrection” by Alan Shlemon:  
<https://www.str.org/w/less-is-more-a-case-for-the-resurrection>