

The week the changed to World

Evidence of the resurrection

4/24/2011

Christians have often been accused of being mindless, weak individuals in need of a “crutch” called faith to help them get through life.

Today, I would like for you to serve on a jury. I will be the lawyer who will present a case to you and you must render a verdict based only on the evidence presented. I am not asking you to render a judgment based on faith or hope or your personal feelings. I am asking you to consider just the evidence that I will present to you now.

Opening Statement:

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, the Christian faith is a foolish fantasy. However, if the resurrection of Christ did occur, it confirms His life, message, and atoning work. It is the basis of our hope of life beyond the grave. Christ is alive, and the evidence is overwhelming. Here are some of the reasons we can be so sure.

The issue before the court this morning is not that of a crime, but a claim -- a claim so spectacular and so crucial that it is either the cornerstone of Christianity or its fatal flaw. Members of the jury, the claim is that Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead. The Resurrection is the supreme miracle of Christianity -- it's at the very heart of the faith. If it never happened, Christianity collapses into mythology and billions of people have been deceived. If it did happen, it authenticates everything Jesus did and said -- and believers have the guarantee of eternal life and forgiveness of sins.

Exhibit A. Jesus said he would rise from the dead.

“Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”
John 2:19

If I told you that in 3 days, I was going to rob the ABC bank, located at 80th and Kipling, and then that bank was rob on that date, would you think that I did it?

“From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” Mt 16:21

“As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant.” Mark 9:9-10

Exhibit B. The empty tomb

Professional executioners crucified Jesus.

A friend of Jesus covered his body with about 100 lbs of spices
And then wrapped him, like a mummy in stripes of cloth.
The placed the dead body in a borrowed solid rock tomb and
roll a very large stone estimated to weight about 2 tons in front
of the tomb.

The officials who killed Jesus then put a tamper proof seal on the stone.

“So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.” Matthew 27:66

The Romans then posted guards around the grave.

A contingent of up to 16 Roman soldiers was assigned to secure the tomb and guard what was inside – a dead man. Some pictures you may have seen show men standing around in mini-skirts, holding a spear in their hands. That's simply not the case. These men were human fighting machines. These

gladiators were trained to protect the area around the tomb against an entire battalion. The Romans understand warfare. After all, they had conquered the known world at this time.

Christ wished to silence His disciples, all they had to do was produce a body, but they could not (John 20:3-9).

If the body of Jesus was stole from the grave, who did it?

The disciples

This seems utterly impossible.

This is the same group of men who ran from Jesus when things went bad at the garden. Peter didn't even have the courage to confess he knew Jesus in a casual conversation with a servant girl.

Are we supposed to believe that these 11 cowards, overpower 16 profession soldiers, rendered them unconscious, with no memory of being attacked and the took on the entire Roman government by breaking the seal on the tomb?

The Jewish religious leaders

Impossible. If the Jews had stolen his body, they could have killed Christianity in its infancy by simply producing the body of Jesus.

The Romans

No way. They wanted Jesus dead and for peace to return to the Jewish leadership, making the jobs easier. Again, all the Romans would have had to do was produce a body.

Exhibit C. The folded grave clothes.

Exhibit D. Eye witness accounts of people who personally Saw him, touched him, spoke with him and ate with him.

Men and women of the jury, I'd now like to enter into evidence Exhibit D: Multiple Witnesses.

The early Christians did not believe Jesus had risen just because of the empty tomb -- they believed because they saw Him with their own eyes. When they talked to others about Jesus, they did not say, "We found an empty tomb," instead, they said, "We saw Jesus alive!"

"After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them..." Acts 1:3

Jesus appeared to:

Mary Magdalene, just outside of the tomb John 20:11-29

The 10 disciples Matt. 20:19

(Judas was dead and Thomas was not present)

The 2 men on the road to Emmaus Luke 24:13-3

A week later Thomas

"Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." John 20:27

Breakfast on the beach John 21:1-9

500 people at the same time

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me (Paul) also..." 1 Cor.

15:3-8

Exhibit E. The lives of the disciples were revolutionized.

Though they fled and even denied Christ at the time of His arrest, they later feared no one in their proclamation of the risen Christ (Matt 26:56, 69-75).

Everyone of the disciples had come from doubt to determination, from confusion to conviction, from fear to faith. Listen to how they died and decided for yourself if these men would be willing to die for a lie:

- Matthew was killed in Ethiopia
- Mark was dragged through the streets until he was dead
- Peter, Simeon, Andrew, and Philip were crucified
- James was beheaded
- Bartholomew was flayed alive
- Thomas was pierced with lances
- James, the less, was thrown from the temple and stoned to death
- Jude was shot to death with arrows
- Paul was boiled in hot oil and beheaded

Members of the jury, may I suggest that the only thing that could have possibly changed their lives so dramatically was the Resurrection of Jesus Christ? Every one of these guys could have lived if they had said just one thing: "Jesus is dead and I know where the body is."

But they refused because they knew He was alive!

Exhibit F. The testimony of people today who say that Christ is alive and has changed their lives

Men and women today testify that the power of the risen Christ has transformed their lives. We know that Jesus is alive not

only because of the historical and biblical evidence but also because He has miraculously touched our lives.

I would like to conclude with this fact:

By rising from the dead, Jesus killed death.
"**Death** has been swallowed up in **victory**."

Jesus had the:

Motive:

"The Lord is not... wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9

Means:

"Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Eph 5:2

Opportunity:

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly." Roman 5:6

Based on the evidence presented here today, on the claim of rising from the dead, how do you find?

If you find that he has risen from the dead, are you willing to acknowledge Him as your Savior? And as your Lord and master? Are you willing to live for Him and serve Him everyday?