

God Raised Him Up

Did God _____ Jesus from the dead? Today, we're exploring some _____ to believe that God raised up the body of Jesus from the dead. Searching for the Lord's way is a search for the _____. We want to know what God _____ about every matter. We also want to give sufficient reasons for believing what God says in the _____ is true. We're not here to _____ half-truths, legends, or myths. This month we're taking a close look at the historical _____ for the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our faith is not a _____ in the dark but rests on strong evidence. It's only _____ that we provide reasons to believe and to become a Christian. Our Father in heaven _____ all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4), and we think that way too.

Many people reject the idea of a resurrection, because they deny a _____ can happen. Obviously, evidence for a miracle is more demanding than for _____ events like the crucifixion of Jesus. Can miracles happen? Many who _____ miracles are the same people who believe the universe, life, and consciousness of human beings just popped into existence and they don't know how. No amount of science or experimentation can tell us how _____ or _____ it happened. Science cannot _____ how one-celled animals became multi-cellular, how cold-blooded animals became warm-blooded, how spineless creatures developed backbones, how fish developed the ability to breathe underwater, how other animals developed lungs, or how birds developed the ability to fly. It takes _____ faith to believe that everything we know came from nothing than it does to believe God raised Jesus from the dead. Just because we don't know _____ something happened does not mean we must deny that it happened or to deny that a miracle could happen.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Matthew 28:1-7.

Some people say Jesus never existed, but this _____ ignores the historical record both inside and outside the New Testament. Several Romans spoke of Jesus in the first two centuries: Tacitus, Suetonius, Lucian, Pliny the Younger, the Emperor Trajan, and the Emperor Hadrian. Jewish writers Josephus and Mara Bar Serapion also mention Jesus. Historian and scholar Gary Habermas in The Historical Jesus presents a significant _____ for believing Jesus actually existed from resources beyond the twenty-seven documents of the New Testament: "We have examined a total of 45 ancient sources for the life of Jesus, which include 19 early creedal, four archaeological, 17 non-Christian, and five non-New Testament Christian sources. And from this data we have enumerated 129 reported _____ concerning the life, person, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus, plus the disciples' earliest message."

Habermas adds: "Much of ancient history is based on many _____ sources that are much later than the events that they record.... While some believe that we know almost nothing about Jesus from ancient, non-New Testament sources, this is plainly not the case. Not only are there many such sources, but Jesus is one of the persons of ancient _____ concerning whom we have a significant amount of quality data. He is one of the most mentioned and most substantiated lives in ancient times." Suggesting then, that Jesus was a mythical person and invented by people in later centuries ignores the

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evidence of the eyewitnesses of the New Testament and the circumstantial evidence that rests from His life.

The philosopher and apologist William Lane Craig in his excellent book, The Son Rises, said, “If it can be shown that the _____ of Jesus was found empty, that He did appear to His disciples and others after His death, and that the origin of the Christian faith cannot be explained adequately apart from His historical resurrection, then if there is no plausible _____ explanation for these facts, one is amply justified in concluding Jesus really did rise from the dead.” Here are some reasons that we want to suggest to you to believe.

First, the idea that Jesus would rise from the dead was not such a _____ idea to Jews who believed in prophecy. The Old Testament actually _____ the resurrection of Jesus Christ. David, a thousand years before Jesus, said, “For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo _____” (Psalm 16:10). Peter quotes this very verse in Acts 2:27 and Paul does so in Acts 13:35. Even more impressive is the numerous _____ that Jesus predicted His resurrection.

It is said of the Lord Jesus, “From that time on Jesus began to _____ His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be _____ again the third day” (Matthew 16:21). He gets more specific in Matthew 20:18-19, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to _____, will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be _____ up.”

To predict that you will die is not unusual, but to predict that you will rise again from the tomb and predict on which _____ is beyond bold. If Jesus failed to rise again when He said He would, then Jesus would be a _____ prophet. Moses revealed the _____ of a prophet, “When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has _____ spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him” (Deuteronomy 18:22). Jesus _____ to speak about His resurrection. If He didn’t know this truly would happen, we would think of Him as a liar or crazy. His disciples wouldn’t have followed Him, if Jesus had failed to rise again on the third day as He predicted. There would be no Christianity and no church, if Jesus had failed to rise. But Jesus did rise! If He spoke the truth about the resurrection, we can believe everything He says is really true!

The Lord Jesus said that He would rise on the _____ day. He makes this specific, “For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40). If Jesus died on Friday afternoon and rose Sunday morning that’s only _____ hours in the tomb. Three days and three nights would be 72 hours, if you measure time the way that we do today; but first century _____ measured time differently. Their days began at sundown not midnight, and they counted a part of a day as if it were the _____ day. So, Friday up to sunset was day one, Saturday from sunset to sunset was day two, and sunset to sunrise on Sunday was day three. The Jews never questioned this; only in _____ centuries did those who counted time differently question the three days.

Second, Jesus’ _____ reveals that He actually died. Jesus endured more than one _____ in addition to enduring a scourging. Scourging was often enough to _____ a person. Scourging left the victim so badly beaten that he wouldn’t have enough _____ to fight back at the crucifixion. Scourging was a severe beating that left the shoulders, back, and legs _____ profusely. Some of

the cuts and wounds were deep enough to _____ a bone. Scourging left Jesus so _____ the Romans had to press a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, to carry His cross up to Golgotha.

Crucifixion involved nailing the hands of Jesus to a cross, lifting the cross so that he was _____ by the nails and perhaps by a large peg on the cross for him to sit upon to help bear the weight. The crucified person was _____ there to die of exhaustion. Breathing in and out was difficult because one had to _____ himself up on the nails to catch a breath. Pressure on the _____ after all the bleeding created tremendous stress and a buildup of fluid around the heart. The heart of Jesus gave out.

When the soldiers came around to break the legs of the three crucified men to _____ up their deaths, they found Jesus was already dead. Roman soldiers were _____ when it came to executions. John 19:33-34 says, “but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they didn’t break His _____. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.”

The eyewitness testimony of blood and water coming out is conclusive post-mortem evidence that Jesus died by _____ failure due to shock and constriction of the heart by fluid. The wrapping of the body by Joseph of Arimathea in linen cloths with a lot of myrrh and aloe would _____ the body up from the air. Beatings, scourging, crucifixion, the heart pierced with a spear, and the linen wrappings _____ one that Jesus truly died. The fact that the priests and scribes asked Pilate for a _____ (in Matthew 27:62-66) meant the enemies of Jesus knew that He was dead.

Third, the women who came to the tomb found it _____. That the tomb was empty three days after the death of Jesus is unquestioned by most critical scholars. A very large _____ covered the entrance to the tomb, and a group of soldiers were guarding the tomb, and the governor’s seal was fixed to the stone. How the tomb became empty is no small matter. The New Testament says that angels came and rolled away the stone, frightened the guards, and spoke to the women who came to anoint His body.

The Jews who asked Pilate for a guard knew that Jesus could _____ miracles. They knew that He had _____ Lazarus from the dead just days before according to John 11:47-48. They thought that sealing the tomb and placing guards would demoralize the disciples and end any _____ for Jesus Christ, but the tomb was empty, and on the third day He was raised, just as He prophesied.

Fourth, when the women arrived at the tomb they were surprised to find the stone away from the entrance, and the _____ sitting on top of it. “His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for _____ of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you _____ Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell the disciples that he has risen from the dead.’” The women heard the angel and looked into the tomb for themselves. Jesus wasn’t there.

We must wonder if the guards _____ what the angel said to the women. The guards saw the angel move the stone and later _____ to the Jews “all that had happened” up to that point (Matthew 28:11). This is why the Jews began a _____ that the disciples came and stole the body, while the soldiers were sleeping, which is a _____ idea from the beginning. The Jews had to _____ the soldiers to keep them from telling the _____ about what they saw and heard. Of course, the penalty for soldiers sleeping on watch was very, very severe.

Fifth, when Simon Peter and John heard Mary Magdalene's _____, they wanted to see the tomb for themselves. John 20:4-8 says, "The two (Peter and John) were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead _____ than Peter and came to the tomb first; and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he didn't go in. And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed."

If the disciples had _____ the body of Jesus, why would they unwrap Him in the presence of the guards? Why would they _____ the linen wrappings and fold up the face-cloth? Because the guards were soldiers charged with making _____ no one tampered with the tomb, time would be precious! They couldn't afford to _____ time moving the stone, unwrapping the body, folding the face cloth and getting away undetected. Pilate would severely punish the guards if they failed in their _____ to guard the tomb from the disciples. Sleeping on duty could mean _____! Do you really think the disciples would have frightened the guards? The angel in dazzling apparel moving the very large stone out of the way of the tomb caused them to tremble and become like dead men!

You ask, why are we discussing this? The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the most important events in _____. They affect every aspect of your _____. They touch on your heart, your attitudes, your morals, and your destiny. Nothing, nothing, is more valuable than examining the evidence for these _____. Jesus is the risen Lord of all creation, and the evidences for His resurrection _____ these things are not some leap in the dark. John 20:30-31 says, "Therefore many other _____ Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may _____ that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have _____ in His name."

The apostle Thomas wasn't present the first time that Jesus appeared to the disciples, and he said he wouldn't believe until he _____ for himself. He said, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will _____ believe" (John 20:25). Eight days later Jesus responded to Thomas' request. He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have _____ me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have _____."

Jesus didn't avoid Thomas' challenges. He wanted the disciples to be _____ convinced of His resurrection and of His deity. If Jesus had not presented a living, active body to the disciples, He couldn't have convinced them that He was raised from the dead. Jesus "presented himself _____ to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the _____ of God" (Acts 1:3).

If Jesus rose from the dead as He said, He is a true prophet; and we should listen to Him. Since He arose, His words carry God's authority! We should believe in Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. We should turn from sin to righteousness in repentance, just as He demands. We should confess His name and be baptized into His death, to be buried, and be raised with Him to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4) and we need to enjoy it by being baptized, our sins being washed away (Acts 22:16). If you're not yet a Christian, I hope you'll become one today!