

Introduction:

1. For Christians, everything hinges on the empty tomb of Jesus. When the apostle Paul preached, the core of his message was the death, burial, resurrection, and appearance of Jesus, 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. This was the template for preaching in the first century. He would go on and talk about the significance of the resurrection. If Christ had not been raised then our condition would be most pitiable, 1 Corinthians 15:14-19. Do you see why everything hinges on the resurrection of Jesus?
2. Notice what the Bible says in Matthew 28:1-6. How do we know Jesus has been raised? It's not enough for our faith to be based on what our parents think, or what a preacher thinks. It's not enough to have some blind faith, or wishful thinking. How did the apostles prove the resurrection of Jesus? This is what we must set out to do tonight. Let's examine the Historical documents of the New Testament, to see how they set out to prove the resurrection of Jesus.

The Lesson:

**I. Eyewitnesses: "We saw Him."**

- A. Eyewitness testimony of the apostles and others prove Jesus has been raised.
  1. The apostles saw Jesus alive, Acts 1:1-3. Peter appealed to others that Jesus was raised because they saw Him alive, Acts 2:32.
    - a. They ate and drank with Jesus, Acts 10:38-40.
    - b. They saw His wounds and touched them, John 20:24-28.
  2. The apostle Paul appealed to eyewitness testimony too, Acts 13:31. Paul would also point to other eyewitnesses, 1 Corinthians 15:5-9. More than 500 people saw Jesus alive.
  3. But what else did these eyewitnesses see? Women saw the rock rolled away from Jesus' tomb, Mark 16:1-6. They saw the tomb empty. They spoke to an angel. The apostles saw the empty tomb and His burial clothes empty, John 20:4-7.
  4. The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to others are amazing. He appeared to women, Mary Magdalene, two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the apostles, and to more than 500 disciples. Why is this important?
- B. It is this testimony that is the reason for us to believe that Jesus was raised.
  1. Some claim the apostles made the resurrection story up. Yet the New Testament accounts of the apostles were circulated within the lifetime of their contemporaries, which would have given people the opportunity to deny or expose their so called lies. But no one could deny their testimony, Acts 26:24-26. Eyewitness testimony proves Jesus was raised from the dead.
  2. This is why we can believe in His resurrection.

## II. The apostles: “Our changed lives.”

- A. The change that took place in the apostles after Jesus’ resurrection proves He was raised.
  - 1. In Acts 2, when the church of Christ began, we find the twelve apostles bold and courageous, Acts 2:1-11. But 50 days earlier these same men were cowards. They fled when Jesus was taken into custody, Mark 14:49-50. They were hiding after He died, John 20:19. They didn’t initially believe He was risen, Luke 24:11.
  - 2. What caused them to change? It was the convincing evidence of Jesus raised from the grave. After seeing Jesus alive, the apostles were changed forever. They taught on this very fact, even to the point of death, Acts 2:33, 4:10-12, 5:32.
- B. The changed lives of the apostles are reason for us to believe that Jesus was raised to life.
  - 1. Yet skeptics will often say, “These men simply believed a lie. Many have died for a lie.” It is true that many have died for a lie, but why would one knowingly die for one? They would have known it was a lie from the beginning.
  - 2. If that was true, what did the apostles gain? It wasn’t money, Acts 3:6. It wasn’t for physical gain, Acts 5:30-32. It wasn’t for worship, Acts 3:12, 14:11-16. The courage and change in the lives of the apostles, was due to the fact that they saw Jesus alive! This is reason for us to believe in His resurrection.

## III. The enemies of Jesus: “His tomb is empty.”

- A. The enemies of Jesus could not deny that the tomb of Jesus was empty.
  - 1. It’s amazing what occurred in Jerusalem because of the resurrection of Jesus. The church of Christ began in this city. The apostles were empowered. Thousands of Jews were converted to a new religion. And yet the enemies of Jesus, could do nothing to stop this new movement. They knew where His tomb was.
  - 2. They made sure His tomb was heavily guarded, Matthew 27:63-66. But they relied on lies as to what happened, Matthew 28:11-15. But they didn’t deny that His tomb was empty.
- B. The lack of answers, lies, and no rebuttal from His enemies testify to the resurrection of Jesus.
  - 1. Many arguments have been made as to why the tomb was empty. Yet the evidence points to one thing: Jesus was raised never to die again!
  - 2. Therefore, the resurrection has vital significance for you and me, 1 Corinthians 15:14-17. It means that preaching the gospel is not in vain; therefore don’t be ashamed of it, Romans 1:16. It means our faith is not in vain; therefore be faithful until death, Revelation 2:10. It means we have been saved from our sins; therefore be confident in your salvation. It means we have something to look forward to; therefore, don’t act like this world is our home. It means while we will die one day, we will be raised; therefore, don’t fear death.

### Conclusion:

- 1. Paul warned the saints in Corinth to hold on to their faith, 1 Corinthians 15:1-2. Let’s do the same.

2. If you are outside of Jesus, do you believe He was raised from the dead? He wants you to say yes.