

He Rose Again

2 Corinthians 9:6–8 NLT

Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.

1 Corinthians 15:3–9 NLT

I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him. For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God's church.

What We Believe:

Salvation occurs when a person confesses and accepts Christ as Lord and Savior, resulting in being born again.

1 Corinthians 15:4–6 NLT

He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.

Matthew 28:1–10 NLT

Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb.

Suddenly, there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from

heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint.

Then the angel spoke to the women. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you."

The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message. And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there."

Matthew 28:11–15 NLT

As the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the leading priests what had happened. A meeting with the elders was called, and they decided to give the soldiers a large bribe. They told the soldiers, "You must say, 'Jesus' disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.' If the governor hears about it, we'll stand up for you so you won't get in trouble." So the guards accepted the bribe and said what they were told to say. Their story spread widely among the Jews, and they still tell it today.

The evidence is clear: God is real. Jesus is real. He lived on the earth, died on Friday, and rose again on Sunday morning, proving He is the Son of God.

John 10:10–11 NLT

The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.

John 3:13–17 NLT

No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven. And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

Why It Matters:

Believing Jesus died for my sins and rose again, proving He is the Son of God, causes me to be born again as a son of God and as a citizen in His Kingdom.

Small Group Guide: He Rose Again

Opening Question

Has there ever been a moment when evidence of something you already believed suddenly landed differently – not changing your mind, but deepening your conviction? What was it, and what shifted?

The Evidence Is Clear, and It Was Always Meant to Be

Christianity does not ask for blind faith. It asks for the kind of faith that has always been reasonable — grounded in history, tested by scrutiny, and held by people who had every incentive to abandon it and didn't. On Easter Sunday, that claim comes into sharpest focus: either Jesus of Nazareth rose bodily from the dead, or He did not. Everything else in the Christian faith hangs on the answer.

Before getting to the resurrection, it's worth pausing on two prior questions. The first is **whether God exists at all**. The case for intelligent design is a statistical argument at its core. The conditions required for life on earth are so precise that if we were 10% closer to the sun, we would burn up, 10% further away, and we'd freeze. Without Jupiter in its orbital position, Earth would be bombarded by space debris. And then consider the human genome: there are roughly 6 billion base pairs per person, yet with only a 0.1% variation between any two individuals, the odds of two people sharing the same DNA are 1 in 70 trillion. What requires more faith — that this all happened by accident, or that it was designed?

The second question is whether Jesus was a real historical person. He was. Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian with no interest in promoting Christianity, recorded Jesus as a wise man who performed surprising deeds, was condemned by Pilate, and whose followers reported he appeared to them alive on the third day. Tacitus, a Roman historian writing around AD 116, confirms the crucifixion under Pontius Pilate and notes that the movement, which he viewed with contempt, refused to die. No credible scholar today disputes the existence of Jesus of Nazareth or his death by crucifixion.

Which brings us to the resurrection itself and three pieces of evidence for it. First, the early creed Paul cites in 1 Corinthians 15 — that Jesus appeared to Peter, then the Twelve, then more than 500 followers at once — predates the 1 Corinthians letter by many years and was already circulating as settled belief roughly two decades after the crucifixion. That is far too early for legend to develop and too specific to be fabricated without easy refutation. Second, all four Gospels place women as the first witnesses to the empty tomb. In first-century Jewish culture, women's testimony was routinely discounted and often inadmissible in court. No one inventing a resurrection story would have chosen women as the primary witnesses. Third, the authorities who ordered

Jesus' execution never produced a body. The only response they could manage was a bribe and a cover story, which is itself a tacit acknowledgment that the tomb was empty.

And then the "so what": why does any of this matter personally? God did not go to this trouble to make a theological point. He did it because He wants a relationship with us. The entire arc of Scripture is the story of a God who loves so much that He created humanity to receive that love, watched humanity turn away, and then provided a way back. Jesus said His purpose was to give life that is rich and satisfying (John 10:10). Faith is not a leap over the evidence, it is a choice to trust what the evidence points toward. Making that choice – choosing Jesus – is what it means to be born again.

For Discussion

1. Which of the three pieces of evidence in your notes — the early creed and 500 witnesses, the women as first witnesses, or the empty tomb and the cover story — do you find most compelling? Is there one that had never occurred to you before?
2. The sermon makes the case that people often resist the existence of God not because of the evidence, but because acknowledging God means acknowledging they are not god. Does that ring true in your experience — your own or others'?
3. Faith is described as the element that crosses the divide between understanding and belief — activated by choice, not just intellect. Is there an area of your faith right now where you understand more than you've actually chosen to trust? What would it look like to close that gap?
4. Is there someone in your life who is genuinely wrestling with whether any of this is true? How might the historical case for the resurrection give you a different kind of conversation to have with them?

For Reflection

The resurrection is more than a historical event to believe, but it is a present reality to live from. Is there a place in your life where you are living as though Jesus is still in the tomb — are you carrying something He already defeated? What would it mean to let the resurrection be true in that specific place? Share with the group anything that surfaces.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You that our faith is not built on wishful thinking but on the most well-attested event in the ancient world, the death and resurrection of Your Son Jesus Christ. Thank You that You left us evidence, witnesses, and a story too inconvenient to have been invented. Jesus, You are risen, and because You are risen,

death has lost its hold, sin has lost its verdict, and we have been given a way back to our Father. Holy Spirit, take what we know in our minds and drive it deeper into the way we actually live. Where we have believed without trusting, help us to close the gap. May the resurrection be not just something we celebrate today, but something we live from every day. In Jesus name, amen.