

RESURRECTION OF JESUS

What can we learn about the resurrection by observing its effects on the people and society of the time? Now it is true that some were skeptics about Jesus during His life. But something wonderful happened to these same people after His resurrection.

For example, the half-brother of Jesus, James. James didn't buy Jesus' claim to deity; in fact, James must have thought his older brother was beside himself. But after the resurrection, he became the leader of the Jerusalem church, and according to the historian Josephus was stoned to death for his belief that Jesus was God. Something extraordinary had happened to James.

In His post-resurrection appearances, Paul thought it important to note: "After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles" (1 Corinthians 15:7). Something had changed James, and that change was the resurrection of Jesus his half-brother.

Consider Paul himself, who at one point in his life hated Christians and everything they stood for. He saw them as a threat to his Judaism, so he did all he could to have them arrested and executed (Acts 9:1-2).

Then, out of nowhere, he converts to Christianity. Why? He had an encounter with the risen Christ that turned his whole life around (Acts 9:3-5).

Something also transformed Jesus' disciples. After His arrest and crucifixion they scattered, cowardly hiding from the authorities. They did this because they feared the same fate as their leader, Jesus. But now, Jesus was dead and so were their dreams.

But after the resurrection of Jesus they were compelled to boldly and publicly preach Jesus Christ as God, returned from the dead. Now this within itself was shocking heresy among Jews who believed no one would be resurrected until the end of the world. But here were the disciple of Christ preaching the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ as a sovereign act of God the Father.

As a result of such preaching, the disciples faced arrest, torture, and execution for believing in Jesus. And the wonder of it all, was the fact that not one of them recanted.

One writer said, "Some people are willing to endure torture and death for a lie if they believe it's true.

But no one willingly accepts pain and suffering and death for what they know is a lie, and the disciples were in a position to know if the Resurrection was false. They knew it was true, and it changed them forever.

Now I would like to bring up one more point that has always fascinated me: Why were Jesus' enemies never able to produce His body? The Jewish religious leaders and the Roman authorities knew where the tomb was. And certainly they had the manpower to find the body; but no search was ever made. They could have ended the resurrection rumors by simply displaying the body.

But all they could come up with was a scheme to bribe the guards at the tomb to say the disciples stole the body (Matthew 28:12-15).

This movement of Christianity spread so fast and far that within a few years it covered the Roman Empire including Caesar's household (Philippians 1:13; 4:22). What accounts for this Empire-conquering growth if Jesus were still dead? Well, the truth is, Jesus was not dead – He did rise from the grave. And He is alive today seated at the right hand of God the Father waiting His Second Coming.

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