

## Resurrection or Myth?

Was Jesus raised from the dead, or is this just a myth?

Is there any evidence of a Resurrected Christ?

How can I know for certain that the resurrection occurred?

Let's see where the evidence leads and find the answer to these great questions. We're going to Matthew 28, so start turning there in your Bibles.

I'm Mark Teske, the host of the Good News Today program, and I'm here to visit with you about this timeless truth.

### INTRO

Jesus predicted that He was going to be raised from the dead on several occasions, such as Matthew 20:19. Jesus' predictions were known to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked Pilate in Matthew 27:62-66 to set a squad of soldiers to guard the tomb so that His body couldn't be stolen.

You see, the chief priests thought that the disciples might try to steal the body and make a false claim that Jesus had risen from the dead. Pilate gave them the soldiers they asked for and told them to make the tomb as secure as they possibly could. They also put a seal around the stone in front of the tomb so that they could tell if it had been tampered with. They were doing everything they could think of to make sure that nothing happened to the body of Jesus.

On the first day of the week, Matthew 28 begins with the guards, who were the first to see the activities of that morning. They saw an angel descend from heaven, roll back the stone from the door, and sit on it (Matthew 28:2).

These soldiers had one job to do – keep the tomb secure – and they had failed at their job. They had seen something marvelous happen before their eyes. No doubt they wanted the angel to go away so they could put the stone back in place. However, having this powerful angel sitting on the stone would keep them from doing any such thing.

When the women arrived at the tomb, the guards were nowhere to be seen – they had already fled the scene. The soldiers had gone to the chief priests and told them everything that had happened (Matthew 28:11).

This presents an interesting dilemma for the soldiers since Roman soldiers faced severe punishment (sometimes even death) if they failed in their duties – yet these soldiers told the chief priests everything that had happened.

They surely believed what they had seen and thought that the chief priests would be swayed by the miraculous appearance of the angel. They put their lives on the line by telling the truth about what they had seen and how they had failed in their job. How they must have been surprised when the chief priests bribed the soldiers to lie about what they had seen.

In I Corinthians 15:5-8, Paul is inspired to mention some of the people who had seen the resurrected Christ. He lists Peter, then the rest of the 12 disciples. He is the only one who mentions Jesus appearing to over 500 brethren at once, then James and all of the apostles. He then mentions his own experience with Jesus.

Matthew, Mark & Luke all talk about the women that went to the empty grave first thing in the morning. Luke tells of two disciples who talked with the resurrected Jesus while traveling on the road to Emmaus. So we've got the record of numerous post-resurrection appearances of Jesus.

In Acts 4, Peter and John are arrested and thrown in jail overnight for telling others about the resurrected Christ. Let's think about that for a moment – if they were just making this up, why would they put themselves in jeopardy in defending a lie? That wouldn't make any sense!

By Acts 5:17, they were thrown into prison again for preaching about the resurrected Christ. After the disciples boldly defended their testimony before the council, we learn that the high priests plotted to kill them (Acts 5:33). They were beaten with rods (Acts 5:40) before they were released from custody. If they were just telling lies, would they be willing to be beaten and possibly killed to defend something that they knew was a lie? That just doesn't make any sense!

In Acts 12 – we hear of the apostle James being killed by Herrod who then had his sights set on killing Peter next. Yet the rest of the apostles kept on preaching and teaching.

Tradition (not Scripture) tells us that all of the apostles (except John) were martyred. Why would they do that if they knew that the resurrection of Jesus was a lie?

Paul follows that train of thought in I Corinthians 15.

1 Corinthians 15:14–19: “And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.”

Would all of them waste their lives for a lie? That doesn't make any sense!

Each resurrection appearance adds further evidence – not just because of what the people said (though that is persuasive), but how they lived their lives afterwards

The soldiers sent to guard the tomb – they went to tell the chief priests and put their lives in jeopardy

The apostles were jailed, beaten, and martyred because they couldn't help but tell others about the resurrected Jesus

Believing in the Resurrected Christ changes your life

We see 3 different reactions to the resurrection:

The soldiers saw and went to tell others despite the possible repercussions – but they were bribed to lie

The chief priests kept hearing about the resurrected Christ from eye witnesses, yet they did everything they could to stop others from hearing

The apostles saw several post-resurrection appearances of Jesus and couldn't help but tell others about what they had seen and what it means

What is your reaction going to be? How will it change your life?