FINDING OUT ABOUT CHRIST · STUDY NOTES

Study 5: Why is Jesus' resurrection so convincing?

For personal study or groups

Your name

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How to use these notes. Watch each part's video on biblehelp.net, or read the text below. Look up each passage in your own Bible and write the answer on the lines. The verses are printed at the back if you need them. At the end there are questions to think about on your own or to discuss in a group.

PART 1

Seen alive

A monument to past events

History really happened, and many ancient monuments, like the Egyptian pyramids, are still standing to prove it. They are witnesses to events that took place thousands of years ago. The resurrection of Jesus also happened, but nothing was left behind, because the tomb was empty! Instead, we have something far more convincing: the written record of people who saw Him alive after His death.

The life, miracles and resurrection of Jesus, say the New Testament writers, are not "cleverly devised stories" (2 Peter 1:16), but eyewitness accounts of what actually happened (Luke 1:1–4). His resurrection was at the centre of the first Christians' preaching (Acts 4:33). Once again, we must listen to the witnesses and give our verdict.

Historic note
Rich people were buried in a cave-like tomb cut out of rock, with a large stone rolled across the entrance. Jesus was laid in a rich man's new tomb (Matthew 27:59–60).

Jesus was seen alive by many

We are told that Jesus came back to life on the third day after His crucifixion, and that He was seen by many people over a span of forty days.

1 **Look up Acts 1:3**

How did Jesus show that He was alive, and for how long?

More witnesses than were needed

Under Jewish law, two or three witnesses were enough to establish the truth (Hebrews 10:28). See how many witnesses there were to the resurrection of Jesus!

2 **Read 1 Corinthians 15:3–9**

Who does Paul say Jesus appeared to in verses 7–8?

A real person, not a ghost

The disciples saw Jesus close up. He was not a distant, shadowy figure, nor a spirit or a ghost. To convince them, Jesus showed them the wounds in His hands and feet, and invited them to touch Him. He even ate a piece of cooked fish in front of them, to prove that His body was real (Luke 24:41–43).

3 **Look up Luke 24:39**

How did Jesus show them that He was not a spirit?

PART 2

Not a lie

They could not produce the body

Jesus had many enemies. The people responsible for His death said He had not come back to life. But they could not produce His body to prove He was still dead. So they paid the guards to spread the story that the disciples had stolen the body and were lying about the resurrection (Matthew 28:12–13). But it is very unlikely that the disciples made up the resurrection, for the following reasons.

Honest people

The New Testament writers urge believers to live up to the high standards Jesus set. Their strong condemnation of lying suggests that they themselves were honest and truthful.

4 **Look up Ephesians 4:25**

What must believers put off, and what must they do instead?

It is wrong to lie, but it is even worse to persuade others to believe your lie. The disciples preached the resurrection of Jesus as a truth that people had to believe (1 Corinthians 15:14–15).

Nothing to gain but death

When people lie, they usually hope to gain something by it. The apostles would gain nothing by lying about the resurrection, because the authorities were bitterly opposed to any mention of it. When the apostles kept preaching that Jesus was alive, they were threatened with prison and death.

5 **Read Acts 5:30–33**

What did the apostles say in verse 30, and how did the council react in verse 33?

PART 3

Not imagined

Imagination?

Some people say the disciples were honest, sincere people who simply imagined they saw Jesus. In other words, they were fooled into thinking He had come back to life. But there are serious reasons why this is very unlikely.

Breakfast with Jesus

Our minds are less likely to imagine things in broad daylight. Jesus appeared in the daytime on several occasions. Once, the disciples even had breakfast with Him on the shore of a lake!

6 **Read John 21:1–14**

What did Jesus say in verse 12?

Five hundred saw Him at once

Think again about the many people who saw Jesus alive. On one occasion, more than five hundred people were there. Were they all deceived?

7 **Look up 1 Corinthians 15:6**

How many saw Jesus at once, and what does Paul say about most of them?

Why suffer for a lie?

Even someone with a wild imagination is quickly brought down to earth by the threat of pain and death. The disciples were not imagining things. They were completely convinced that Jesus had come back to life, and they were ready to die for it. Stephen was the first to do so.

8 **Look up Acts 7:59**

To whom did Stephen pray as he was dying?

Many people in Jerusalem were convinced that Jesus had been raised from the dead. They were very close to these events, and would certainly have checked the facts for themselves before facing opposition and risking their lives. People will suffer for the truth, but not for a lie or for something they only imagined.

PART 4

He had to rise

After punishment comes release

We should expect Jesus to be raised from the dead, if He was punished for the sin of others. As soon as the penalty for sin was paid, death had no more right to hold Him. It would be unjust to keep a prisoner in prison any longer than his crime deserves!

If Jesus died for sin, He had to rise

If Jesus is not risen, there is no reason to believe the punishment He bore was enough. Believers would still be guilty of their sin and shut out of heaven. The resurrection of Jesus is God's proof that the payment was accepted (Romans 4:25).

9 **Look up 1 Corinthians 15:17**

What would be true if Christ had not been raised?

The Creator cannot die!

If Jesus is God (study 1), it is impossible for death to defeat Him. The One who gave life to everything, "the Author of life" (Acts 3:15), cannot be overcome by death.

10 **Look up Acts 2:24**

What does Peter say was impossible?

Jesus, the first of many

Jesus was raised as the "firstfruits" – the first of many who will be raised when He returns. Jesus paid the price of sin so that all its consequences might be undone, including physical death. Believers will be victorious over death, just as He was. When He returns, their bodies will be raised to life again (1 Corinthians 15:20–23).

The world's Judge

Jesus had to rise, or He could not be the world's Judge. God has given proof to everyone that Jesus will judge the world, by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

Faced with all this, what is your verdict on the resurrection of Christ? The events are so immense, and the issues so important, that they call for a response.

THINK IT THROUGH

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Which of the reasons in this study do you find most convincing, and why?

2. Why would the disciples be willing to suffer and die for their message?

3. If Jesus really rose from the dead, what difference does that make to your life?

HIDE IT IN YOUR HEART

Memory verse for study 5

Learn this verse by heart this week. Cut out the card and keep it where you will see it.

FINDING OUT ABOUT CHRIST · STUDY 5 · MEMORY VERSE

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

1 Corinthians 15:20

Berean Standard Bible · biblehelp.net

“I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11, BSB)

AT THE BACK

The Bible passages (BSB)

1 **Acts 1:3** *After His suffering, He presented Himself to them with many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a span of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.*

2 **1 Corinthians 15:3–9** *3For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5and that He appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve. 6After that, He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8And last of all He appeared to me also, as to one of untimely birth. 9For I am the least of the apostles and am unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

3 **Luke 24:39** *Look at My hands and My feet. It is I Myself. Touch Me and see—for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."*

4 **Ephesians 4:25** *Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one another.*

5 **Acts 5:30–33** *30The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging Him on a tree. 31God exalted Him to His right hand as Prince and Savior, in order to grant repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. 32We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him." 33When the Council members heard this, they were enraged, and they resolved to put the apostles to death.*

6 **John 21:1–14** *[1]Later, by the Sea of Tiberias, Jesus again revealed Himself to the disciples. He made Himself known in this way: [2]Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. [3]Simon Peter told them, "I am going fishing." "We will go with you," they said. So they went out and got into the boat, but caught nothing that night. [4]Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not recognize that it was Jesus. [5]So He called out to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" "No," they answered. [6]He told them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it there, and they were unable to haul it in because of the great number of fish. [7]Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it) and jumped into the sea. [8]The other disciples came ashore in the boat. They dragged in the net full of fish, for they were not far from land, only about a hundred yards. [9]When they landed, they saw a charcoal fire there with fish on it, and some bread. [10]Jesus told them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." [11]So Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many, the net was not torn. [12]"Come, have breakfast," Jesus said to them. None of the disciples dared to ask Him, "Who are You?" They knew it was the Lord. [13]Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and He did the same with the fish. [14]This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after He was raised from the dead.*

7 **1 Corinthians 15:6** *After that, He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.*

8 **Acts 7:59** *While they were stoning him, Stephen appealed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."*

9 **1 Corinthians 15:17** *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.*

10 **Acts 2:24** *But God raised Him from the dead, releasing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep Him in its grip.*

Scripture: Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain. Quotations keep its American spelling. Like many English Bibles, it often says 'man', 'he' or 'brothers' where it means people in general, men and women alike.

FOR GROUP LEADERS

Study 5: Why is Jesus' resurrection so convincing?

> **Memory verse:** “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Corinthians 15:20). Say it together at the end, and ask who can say it without looking.

Aims

- Weigh the evidence for the resurrection: many eyewitnesses over forty days, a real body, an empty tomb.
- See why the "they lied" and "they imagined it" explanations don't fit the facts.
- Understand why Jesus had to rise, and what His resurrection means for believers and for the world.

Suggested timing (about 85 minutes)

- **5 min** Welcome and short prayer.
- **20 min** Part 1 video (5 min); Acts 1:3, 1 Corinthians 15:3–9 and Luke 24:39.
- **15 min** Part 2 video (4 min); Ephesians 4:25 and Acts 5:30–33.
- **20 min** Part 3 video (5 min); John 21:1–14, 1 Corinthians 15:6 and Acts 7:59.
- **20 min** Part 4 video (5 min); 1 Corinthians 15:17, Acts 2:24 and the discussion questions.
- **5 min** Summary and closing prayer.

Tips

- Treat this like a courtroom: let the group weigh the evidence. Sceptical questions are welcome.
- Parts 2 and 3 answer the two common alternatives (a lie, or a mistake). Ask the group which they find most convincing.
- Part 4 moves from evidence to meaning. Make sure the group sees the link with study 4: the resurrection proves the payment for sin was accepted.
- End with the question of verdict, gently. Some may want to talk further afterwards.

Answers to watch for

- **Acts 1:3:** Jesus gave many convincing proofs that He was alive, appearing over forty days.
- **1 Corinthians 15:7–8:** He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all to Paul.
- **Luke 24:39:** "Touch Me and see—for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."
- **Ephesians 4:25:** put off falsehood and speak truthfully.
- **Acts 5:30, 33:** "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus"; the Council were enraged and resolved to put them to death.
- **John 21:12:** "Come, have breakfast."
- **1 Corinthians 15:6:** more than five hundred saw Him at once, most still living when Paul wrote.
- **Acts 7:59:** Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," as he was stoned.
- **1 Corinthians 15:17:** if Christ has not been raised, our faith is futile and we are still in our sins.
- **Acts 2:24:** it was impossible for death to keep Him in its grip.