



Consider What the Witnesses Say
1 Corinthians 15:3-5

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Why do we believe Jesus rose from the dead? Consider what the witnesses say:

- **The _____ and Roman soldiers**
Mark 15:39; John 19:31-35
Jesus was dead by crucifixion.
- _____ **of Arimathea and _____**
John 19:38-40
Jesus was buried (John 19:41-42).
- _____ **Magdalene** (John 20:1)
The stone was rolled away.
- _____ **and _____** (John 20:2-9)
The tomb was empty.
The grave clothes were present.
- _____ **who saw Jesus alive after resurrection**
1 Corinthians 15:3-8

What is your verdict: True or False?
The evidence points to a resurrected Lord.

The Disciples Died For Their Beliefs

In his book The Case for Christ (1998), Lee Strobel interviews philosopher, theologian, chemist, and historian J.P. Moreland regarding how the disciples transformed from being cowardly to courageous. The following is an adaptation from Strobel's book, and is significant in showing why the New Testament's testimony about the resurrection cannot be simply a made-up story containing later embellishments written 200-300 years after Jesus lived in order to prop up the church's authority and power.

When Jesus was crucified, his followers were discouraged and depressed. They no longer had confidence that Jesus had been sent by God, because they believed anyone crucified was accursed by God. They also had been taught that God would not let his Messiah suffer death. So they dispersed. The Jesus movement was all but stopped in its tracks.

Then, after a short period of time, we see them abandoning their occupations, regathering, and committing themselves to spreading a very specific message—that Jesus Christ was the Messiah of God who died on a cross, returned to life, and was seen alive by them. And they were willing to spend the rest of their lives proclaiming this, without any payoff from a human point of view. It's not as though there were a mansion awaiting them on the Mediterranean. They faced a life of hardship. They often went without food, slept exposed to the elements, were ridiculed, beaten, imprisoned. And finally, most of them were executed in torturous ways.

For what? For good intentions? No, because they were convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that they had seen Jesus Christ alive from the dead. What you can't explain is how this particular group of men came up with this particular belief without having had an experience of the resurrected Christ. There's no other adequate explanation.

One might object to this line of reasoning, thinking, yes, they were willing to die for their beliefs, but so have Muslims and Mormons and followers of Jim Jones and David Koresh and other cults. One might argue that this shows the disciples were fanatical, but it does

not prove that what they believed is true.

But there is an important difference between the disciples and a group of Muslims, for instance. Muslims might be willing to die for their belief that Allah revealed himself to Muhammad, but this revelation was not done in a publicly observable way. So they could be wrong about it. They may sincerely think it's true, but they can't know for a fact, because they didn't witness it themselves.

However, the apostles were willing to die for something they had seen with their own eyes and touched with their own hands. They were in a unique position not to just believe Jesus rose from the dead but to know for sure. And when you've got eleven credible people with no ulterior motives, with nothing to gain and a lot to lose, who all agree they observed something with their own eyes—now you've got some difficulty explaining that away. This critical distinction is pivotal to our understanding of what is going on with the disciples, because no one is going to die for what they know is a lie. They might die for what they think is true, but they will not die for what they know is false. That would make no sense whatsoever.

People will die for their religious beliefs if they sincerely believe they're true, but people won't die for their religious beliefs if they know their beliefs are false.

While most people can only have faith that their beliefs are true, the disciples were in a position to know without a doubt whether or not Jesus had risen from the dead. They claimed that they saw him, talked with him, and ate with him after his crucifixion. If they weren't absolutely certain that Jesus came back to life, they wouldn't have allowed themselves to be tortured to death for proclaiming that the resurrection had happened. The disciples' transformation shows us that Jesus in fact rose from the dead. This proclamation was not merely made up to make them look good or to assist the church in gaining power.