

Jesus Risen, Christianity Unique!

by Alex McFarland

Scholar and apologist R.C. Sproul was asked, "What is the difference between the Christian God and the gods of the other religions?" In his simple yet profound answer, Sproul pointed out, "The main difference is this: The God of Christianity exists." Other faiths might make the same impassioned claim, but where's their proof? As Easter season approaches, we're reminded that *we* have strong evidence. What makes Christianity a unique belief system? The fact that our founder, leader and Lord had the power to bring himself back to life. Jesus Christ beat death and did so for us as well.

People understand the concept of *restoration*. We restore antique furniture, vintage cars and Victorian houses. In a restoration, broken things get fixed and obsolete parts get updated. It entails bringing something back to its original condition. The Christian concept of *resurrection* goes further. The New Testament resurrection of Christ depicts Jesus as not only alive, but glorified. It was more than the mere re-animation of a corpse.

Resurrection is a crucial component of our faith. And while mystery cults and world religions allude to it, only Christianity has history on its side. The biblical worldview is unparalleled in its promise of a resurrected body for the believer, and Christianity is certainly distinct in that its founder alone—Jesus Christ—could and did enact His own resurrection. Jesus' return after three days in the tomb is a vital, non-negotiable point of doctrine, because Jesus said before going to the cross that His resurrection would prove He was the Savior (Matt. 12:39-40; Rom. 1:4).

Both Christians and non-Christians may wonder how we can know for certain that Jesus rose from the dead. As with all of our questions, the Bible holds the answer. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, Paul said, "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than 500 of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living. ... Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also."

Paul points out in those verses that the most



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convincing argument for the veracity of Christ's resurrection is that He was seen by hundreds of witnesses. Paul then goes on to pin the credibility of his ministry—and of Christianity—on that fact. He explains that, if Jesus Christ hadn't been raised, Christian preaching, faith, testimony and eternal hope are all vain (literally, "empty"). With seamless logic, he reasons that, if Jesus is still dead, then Christians are to be pitied above any other group (1 Cor. 15:14-20).

Despite arguments and alternate theories from skeptics and doubters, one of the most compelling cases for the resurrection lies in the transformed lives of the disciples. Immediately after reporting seeing Jesus alive, these previously heartbroken, cowardly disciples turned into passionate messengers of the gospel. Nothing they experienced—persecution, prison, imminent death—got them to change their story or deny they had seen Jesus. Within a very short time, their consistent preaching that Jesus had conquered death would transform the world. Two initial doubters, James and Paul, became Christians sometime after Jesus' resurrection. What happened to change their minds? They each had encountered the living Christ.

Atheists, skeptics and determined unbelievers have spent centuries trying to explain away Jesus' resurrection. But attempts to refute all of the historical evidence have only made their theories increasingly complex and unbelievable. How much simpler it would be to accept the obvious conclusion: God, the One who created the universe and all of life, worked a miracle. Jesus came back to life under the power of God, just as He had promised.

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the ask editor

Your staff spends hours immersed in indecent entertainment. How do you avoid being corrupted?

Plenty of prayer, God's protection and the support of our spouses. None of us plans to do this forever. It's a calling for a season, during which we look out for each other, making sure no one absorbs unnecessary garbage. It helps

to have short memories, too; we're exposed, we write, we move on.

Also, there's a big difference between watching a film or listening to a rap CD passively (as an entertaining escape) and studying one critically (with a legal pad on one knee and our Christian filters engaged). When we go to the theater, for example, we study *everything*. Subtext.

Context. Pretext. We scribble pages of notes and jot down dialogue. It becomes a clinical exercise—one that actually makes good films even more enjoyable. Is critiquing media always fun? No. But it's worth it knowing that a single cautionary review keeps thousands of teens from being exposed to trash. Please keep us in your prayers.