

# Reasons for Believing in the Resurrection of Christ

By Gaye Moss

After close examination of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, many agnostics and atheists throughout the world have come to the conclusion that Jesus is truly who He said He was—the Messiah and Savior of the world. Of all the world religions, only Christianity can claim an empty tomb for its founder.

Jesus told His disciples that He was going to die and rise again on the third day. After His resurrection, when He appeared to them in person, they began to fully comprehend the things He told them before He went to the cross. At that time, they personally experienced the reality of His physical presence with them, and no one could convince them to deny what they witnessed with their own eyes.

Jesus' enemies thought they had destroyed Him, but they were only instruments in the hand of God. Jesus willingly died on the cross so that we could be forgiven. He purchased our salvation at Calvary, and He arose victorious on the third day just as He said He would.

## Powerful Reasons for Believing

### 1. Jesus Foretold His Death and Resurrection.

**Matthew 20:18-19:** *“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.”* (See also Matthew 16:21; Matthew 17:22-23; Mark 10:33-34; Luke 9:22; John 2:18-22)

It might not have been all that remarkable that Jesus predicted that He was going to Jerusalem to die. However, He foretold details of His death, betrayal, and resurrection weeks and months before He died. Only a foolish man would make the kind of claims that Jesus made about himself, unless He had foreknowledge of the events that would take place. Only the Son of God, the Christ, could have known in advance the details of His death.

### 2. The Evidence of the Empty Tomb.

**Matthew 28:2-7:** *“And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not*

*here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead...* (See also Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20)

Until the stone was rolled away, revealing an empty tomb, the tomb was sealed and guarded (Matthew 27:62-66). The empty tomb is a historical event that no one has ever been able to disprove. All four Gospel writers give accounts of the empty tomb. The Jewish historian, Josephus, also wrote about the empty tomb.

### **3. The Evidence of the Messianic Prophecies.**

In his book *Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (ch. 9, pages 144-166), Josh McDowell records 61 OT prophecies regarding the Messiah that were fulfilled in the New Testament. He tells us, from the book *Science Speaks* by Peter Stoner, that the probability of eight of these prophecies being fulfilled is 1 in 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power. That amount of silver dollars would cover the state of Texas two feet deep. If one silver dollar was marked, and they were all stirred, the probability of finding the marked coin in one try is the same chance the prophets would have had in accurately prophesying only eight of the Messianic prophecies that were fulfilled in Christ.

(Find Eight of the fulfilled Messianic prophecies at the close of this lesson.)

### **4. The Evidence of the Appearances of Jesus.**

Many people saw Jesus after His resurrection. Paul writes in I Cor. 15:3-8: *“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over 500 hundred brethren at once...After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also...”* (See also Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20-21)

### **5. The Evidence of the Disciples of Christ.**

After Peter’s amazing sermon on the day of Pentecost, three thousand people became believers in Christ (Acts 2:41), and that number increased daily. The apostles in Acts showed great courage in the face of tremendous opposition, and they performed miraculous signs and wonders in the name of Jesus. His church has continued to grow and prosper and experience His miraculous power to this day, often in the midst of tremendous opposition.

### **6. The Evidence of Saul (Paul) From Tarsus**

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who later was called Paul, is a powerful witness to the reality of Christ. In Acts chapter 9, Saul made murderous threats against the followers of Jesus. He received letters from the high priest to take Jesus’ followers prisoner. After Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, his life was radically changed. He began

preaching the message that Jesus was Messiah and Savior, and that message is still preached today through his powerful writing.

**Conclusion:** In Josh McDowell's book *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, he writes:

Jesus claimed to be God. He did not leave any other options... Who you decide Jesus Christ is must not be an idle intellectual exercise. You cannot put Him on the shelf as a great moral teacher...He is either a liar, a lunatic or the Lord (pp. 104, 106).

Josh McDowell quotes C. S. Lewis, who was a professor at Cambridge University and once an agnostic, as saying:

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher...You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse...You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to (p. 103).

**Questions:** What does the evidence we have examined in today's lesson say to you? How has Jesus changed your life? Have you committed your life fully and completely to Him? Is there anything that you are holding back that you need to release to Him?

**Prayer for salvation:** *"Lord, I come to You recognizing that I am a sinner and that I need a Savior. Please forgive and cleanse me of all my sins. Come into my life and make me a new creation. Be my Savior and Lord. I commit myself completely to You, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."*

### **Eight of the Many Fulfilled Messianic Prophecies**

**1. He was Born of a Virgin—Isaiah 7:14:** *"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign; Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel ["God-With-Us"]."*

**Fulfilled—Matthew 1:18, 24, 25:** *"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit... 24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS."*

**2. He was the Son of God—Psalms 2:7:** *"I will declare the decree; The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'"*

**Fulfilled—Matthew 3:17:** *"And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"*

**3. He was Born in Bethlehem—Micah 5:3:** “*But you, Bethlehem...out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel...*”

**Fulfilled—Matthew 2:1:** “*... Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea...*”

**4. He Bore our Sin and Sickness—Isaiah 53:4-5:** “*Surely He has borne our griefs (sicknesses, weaknesses, and distresses) and carried our sorrows and pains... yet we [ignorantly] considered Him stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God [as if with leprosy].*

*5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our guilt and iniquities; the chastisement [needful to obtain] peace and well-being for us was upon Him, and with the stripes [that wounded] Him we are healed and made whole” (AMP).*

**Fulfilled—Matthew 8:16-17:** “*When evening came, they brought to Him many who were under the power of demons, and He drove out the spirits with a word and restored to health all who were sick. 17 And thus He fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, He Himself took... our weaknesses and infirmities and bore away our diseases” (AMP).*

**Fulfilled—Matthew 27:26:** “*...when he [Pilate] had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.*”

**5. He was Crucified with Thieves—Isaiah 53:12:** “*..And he was numbered with the transgressors...*”

**Fulfilled—Matthew 27:38:** “*Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left.*”

**6. He Interceded for His Persecutors—Isaiah 53:12** “*..He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors”.*

**Fulfilled—Luke 23:34:** “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*”

**7. There was Darkness over the Land—Amos 8:9:** “*And it shall come to pass in that day,” says the LORD GOD, “That I will make the sun go down at noon. And I will darken the earth in broad daylight.*”

**Fulfilled—Matthew 27:45:** “*Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.*” (12 hours from sunrise to sunset: 6<sup>th</sup> – noon, 9<sup>th</sup> – 3:00 pm)

**8. He was Buried in a Rich Man’s Tomb—Isaiah 53:9:** “*And they made His grave with the wicked—But with the rich at His death...*”

**Fulfilled—Matthew 27:57-60:** “*...there came a rich man...from Arimathea, named Joseph...[he] went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus...and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock...*”

(Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture in this lesson is taken from the NKJV of the Bible.)

