

519 Reasons

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Date: 31 March 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Every Bible's turned to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, a man and his wife and his mother-in-law went to the Holy Land.

And while they were there, the man's mother-in-law passed away. An undertaker told him, you can have her shipped home for \$5,000 or you can have her buried right here in the Holy Land for \$150.

The man pondered on it for a few moments and told him he'd just want her shipped home. The undertaker asked, he said, why? Why would you spend \$5,000 to ship your mother-in-law home when wouldn't it be wonderful to have her buried here in the Holy Land for \$150?

And the man said, a man died here 2,000 years ago. He's buried here. And three days later, he arose from the dead. And I just can't take that chance.

Folks, Jesus lives. He lived on this earth and never committed a sin. He died for you. And he died for me, taking on the sins of the world that separate us all from the Father.

[1 : 2 5] He was buried. And three days later, he arose. There's no need to doubt. Jesus lives. And this morning, I want to give you 519 reasons why I know he lives.

Now, I got some good news. The 8 o'clock worship is already over. So, it won't be that bad. It's the only sermon I've ever preached with 519 reasons. So, hold on.

Let's begin by considering that the four Gospels are documentary evidence that was written over 50 years from Palestine to Rome.

Mark's Gospel is the oldest of them. It was written in Rome in the late 50s of the first century. Whereas John is the newest one. It was written in Ephesus at the end of the first century.

And all four of the Gospels say that the tomb was open. All four of the Gospels say that the tomb was empty. All four of the Gospels say that it was discovered empty at dawn.

[2 : 3 6] All say it was witnessed by women first. All say that the angels were guarding it. And all say that angels announced that Christ has resurrected.

All say that the risen Lord afterwards appeared to his own. Seven vital facts that have an amazing consistency to them.

Now, I want you to think about something for a moment. If I were to take four of you out to the corner of this intersection, Lewis and Maine, and I was to stage an accident there to happen and ask you to write down what you saw, the facts of the case, we'd have a hard time, I promise you, finding seven consistent facts in those four eyewitnesses.

Yet, here, it all matched up. Historian Paul L. Meyer of Western Michigan said, The documentary evidence and the eyewitness testimony of the resurrected Christ is more compelling than some of the evidence that we have for world history events over the last 50 years.

Their testimony is enough to prove the truth of the matter. But, of course, I want to go a little bit beyond that this morning. I want to give you 519 reasons why I know that he lives.

[4 : 11] It's found in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, beginning in verse 3, and it says this. The Apostle Paul said, For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scripture, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with Scripture.

And that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

At least four women came together to go to the tomb to finish preparing the body of the Lord because they could not do it adequately on the Sabbath.

And when they arrived to do it, the tomb was empty. Mary Magdalene went to tell Peter, and Peter and John ran to the tomb.

[5 : 24] In John's account of that, John is quick to tell us that he beat Peter to the tomb. He outran him. The tomb was empty with the cloth that they wrapped the Lord in.

They were lying there along with the face cloth of the Lord that was folded neatly as well. The evidence of the empty tomb was enough for John to have no doubt.

However, to Mary Magdalene, as she mourned over the missing body of the Lord, Jesus appeared. Mary went away proclaiming, I have seen the Lord.

One reason I believe Jesus lives is because the tomb is empty. It's empty, folks. It's still empty. I've walked in it. I've seen where he laid.

It's empty. The eyewitnesses are amazing, however, and are enough reason for us to believe that Jesus lives. Matthew tells us two of those were Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who saw the Lord, took hold of his feet, heard him tell them to share it, and then left sure of it.

[6 : 41] Reasons two and three are women that met Jesus. At that, Jesus is walking. After that, Jesus is walking along the road to Emmaus, and he comes across Cleopas and another.

They didn't recognize him at first. However, he talked with them and ate with them, and as he broke bread with them, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.

Reason four and reason five, those on the Emmaus road. Jesus left them, but when the two came upon the disciples, they shared what they had seen with the disciples and told them that Simon Peter had seen him too.

Reason six is Simon Peter saw the risen Lord alive. Then at least five people have seen, that is, at least five people have seen the risen Lord.

Interestingly enough, as the disciples were talking about this, Luke tells us that Jesus appeared to them. Now, John tells us that Thomas was not with them.

[7 : 49] He missed that first meeting and was convinced the Lord was not living. That is, until the Lord appeared to him. Now you have reasons seven through 16, the rest of the disciples.

Our passage today tells us that Jesus appears to James. James is Jesus' half-brother. They have the same mom.

Mark chapter 6, verse 3 mentions that Jesus had James and three other brothers and some sisters.

And John chapter 7, verse 5 tells us not even his brothers believed in him. However, after James saw the risen Lord, he believed.

And his life was completely changed. And he lived boldly for the Lord. And so that's another reason. Number 17, James. So we now are at least at 17 eyewitnesses to the resurrected Lord.

- [8 : 58] That is, if you allow me to call the empty tomb, the evidence, a powerful witness of his rising. The only way you can't say that is to say that somehow we got the wrong tomb.
- That somehow those ladies who dearly loved the Lord, and scripture tells us, followed his body to the tomb.
- Somehow in three days forgot where they laid Jesus. And failed to go back to the right tomb. Well, let me ask you something. Have you ever lost anybody precious in your life?
- Have you ever went back and revisited that grave? I bet you have no trouble finding that grave of those that you love. Especially not in the days afterwards.
- So you'd have to say that they were hallucinating about seeing Jesus, if that be the case. And that would be somehow a simultaneous hallucination. That they all hallucinated and saw the same thing.
- [9 : 59] But if you want to believe that, you'd have to believe a lot more than that. Because you'd also have to believe that the guards are at the wrong tomb. You'd also have to believe that the angels are at the wrong tomb.
- You'd have to believe the disciples went to the wrong tomb. Not only that, but the chief priests and the elders that were behind the crucifixion found out the tomb was empty and paid the soldiers to tell others that the body was stolen.
- Well, did they go to the wrong tomb as well? Think about that. And if you believe that, that takes a lot of faith.
- It takes a lot of faith. But it's not true. Because they all saw him alive. And then, and this will give you a sigh of relief. Reasons number 18 through 517 is that he saw 500 at one time.
- In addition to the empty tomb and the 16 that we have mentioned, our passage tells us that he saw 500, excuse me, that 500 brothers saw him.
- [11 : 09] And what the apostle Paul is saying is, you can go and ask them. They will testify to it. That almost all of them are still alive.
- Now, I want you to understand, when the apostle Paul writes the letter to the Corinthians, he is writing it 20 years after the resurrection of the Lord.
- So what he's saying is, you can go back and ask those witnesses, and they'll tell you what they saw two decades ago.
- The one that described himself as the untimely born, the apostle Paul himself. He saw the Lord on the road to Damascus, on his way to kill Christians, when his name, before it was changed, his name was Saul.
- Now, reason 518 is Saul. Now, it would be one thing if this was just some freak appearance that was forgotten and rumored about in folklore for a generation later.
- [12 : 24] But that's not at all what happened. Because when you look at the lives of these that witnessed the resurrected Lord, their lives were changed.
- When doubting Thomas saw the Lord with his own eyes, he didn't doubt anymore. Immediately, when he saw the Lord, he gave the highest confession anyone's ever given to the Lord.
- He said, my Lord and my God. And that is exactly the kind of confession that the Bible calls for. What about Peter? Peter denied Christ.
- On the very night in which Christ was arrested. And then he cursed about it. But Peter, the denier, became Peter, the preacher of Pentecost.
- And 3,000 were saved in that one setting. And that was just the beginning of him who continued to share the word of God boldly, as boldly as anyone ever has, and wrote two letters of our New Testament that are found in our Bible.

[13 : 25] James, the half-brother that ridiculed the Lord earlier in his ministry, became the pastor of the church of Jerusalem after he saw the risen Lord and gave his life for the cause of Christ.

And what about Saul of Tarsus? Not only did that appearance make a world of change in him, but God used him to change the world. He was Greek by education.

He was Roman by citizenship. He was rabbinical by his teaching. He was circumcised on the eighth day by his heritage. By his brotherhood, he was a Hebrew of Hebrews.

By his neighborhood, he was a Jew of the Jews. By his allegiance, he was a Pharisee. And by his ruthlessness, he was a persecutor of Christians.

He had it all, and he was a who's who among his own. All the potential in the world. If he would not change a thing.

[14 : 34] But after the apostle Paul met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he turned his back on all of that. He actually said that he counted it as a loss compared to knowing Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Nobody has ever really explained what happened to Saul that day. They've tried to understand what happened when Saul saw Jesus.

It's been said that maybe Saul had some type of perpetual, blinding, epileptic episode when he thought he saw the Lord. Well, Dr. Brown of Temple University said, because of the impact of Paul, if Paul had a fit, it's the most significant fit in all of human history.

A 19th century critic said that Paul suffered a sunstroke on the way to Damascus. And in response to that, Charles Haddon Spurgeon stood in his pulpit at Metropolitan Tabernacle in London and said, if Saul had a sunstroke, I hope the whole human race would have such a sunstroke.

We'd have a world of Paul's. My friend, you can see the change in people when they saw the Lord. The Apostle Paul said that most of the 500 were still alive when he wrote Corinthians to tell the story.

[15 : 55] If you were to pull those 500 and put the resurrection on trial and have those 500 speak for just six minutes apiece, you would have 50 hours of testimony about the risen Lord.

Folks, I've come to tell you today, Jesus lives. Now, I really believe that if I was standing at the door when you came in this room, and if I were to ask all of you individually when you arrived today, if you believe that Jesus lives, most of you, almost all of you would tell me that you believe he lives, that in fact you feel like you know he lives, you may say I'm certain of it.

My question is, even if you are certain of it, what difference does it make in your life? May I ask you? Do you believe because you're supposed to believe that?

Because you've been told to believe that? Or do you believe that because your life's been changed because of the resurrected Lord? And if so, what difference has that made?

Now, I've told you that I have 519 reasons that I know he lives, and I've given you 518. But I'll just tell you today, friend, the greatest reason that I know that Jesus lives is because he's forgiven me, because he saved me, because he's changed me, and because he empowered me by his spirit, and he put a song in my heart.

[17 : 36] Reason 519 is he saved me. You ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart. And my question today is, does he live in yours?

Well, almost 50 years ago, a man named S.M. Lockridge preached a sermon called That's My King. S.M. is an abbreviation for his name.

Shadrach Meshach Lockridge. Don't you love that? If I'd have had a boy, I'd have named him S.M. I love it. I want you to listen to what Lockridge shared on that day in 1976.

He said, the Bible says, my king is the king of the Jews. He's the king of Israel. He's the king of righteousness. He's the king of the ages.

He's the king of heaven. He's the king of glory. He's the king of kings. And he's the Lord of lords. That's my king. I wonder, do you know him?

[18 : 38] My king is a sovereign king. No means of measure can define his limitless love. He's enduringly strong. He's entirely sincere.

He's eternally steadfast. He's immortally grateful. He's imperially powerful. He's impartially merciful. Do you know him?

He's the greatest phenomenon that ever crossed the horizon of this world. He's God's son. He's the center savior. He's the centerpiece of civilization.

He's unparalleled. He's unprecedented. He's the loftiest idea in literature. He's the highest personality in philosophy. He's the fundamental doctrine of true theology.

He's the only one qualified to be an all-sufficient savior. I wonder today if you know him. He supplies strength for the weak. He's available for the tempted and the tried.

[19 : 36] He sympathizes and he saves. He strengthens and sustains. He guards and he guides. He heals the sick. He cleanses the lepers. He forgives sinners.

He discharges debtors. He delivers the captive. He defends the feeble. He blesses the young. He serves the unfortunate. He regards the aged.

And he rewards the diligent. And he beautifies the meek. I wonder if you know him. He's the key to knowledge. He's the wellspring of wisdom.

He's the doorway of deliverance. He's the pathway of peace. He's the roadway of righteousness. He's the highway of holiness. He's the gateway of glory. Oh, my friend, do you know him?

Well, his life is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His word is enough. His grace is sufficient.

[20 : 35] His reign is righteous. And his yoke is easy. And his burden is light. Oh, I wish, I wish I could describe him to you. Yes, he's indescribable.

He's incomprehensible. He's invincible. He's irresistible. You can't get him out of your mind. You can't get him off your hand. You can't outlive him. And you can't live without him.

Well, the Pharisees couldn't stand him. But they found out they couldn't stop him. Pilate couldn't find any fault in him. Herod couldn't kill him. Death couldn't handle him.

And the grave couldn't hold him. Yeah, that's my king. That's my king. Amen. My question is, my friend, is he your king?

Have you ever surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ? No greater way to celebrate Easter Sunday than to surrender your life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[21 : 33] With every head bowed and every eye closed, we're going to stand in just a few moments and we're going to sing. But more important than that, I want to encourage you to just do exactly what God would have you to do.

There's never been a time in your life when you've surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to know he'll save you today. If you'll confess your sins to him and tell him how much you need him, that you want him to save you and change your life, not only will he cleanse you of your sin, but he'll empower you with the Holy Spirit of God.

He'll change you forever. That invitation's open today. We're going to stand and we're going to sing in just a moment. I'm going to stand here at the front. And if there's any way that I can help you give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, I'd love to help in that process.

Maybe you're here and you have done that privately, but you've never made that public. You've never followed that up with baptism, which is the way that Jesus shows us to do it by his example, the way he tells us to do it by his commission.

If you've never been baptized, you come today. I'd love to help start that plan with you. Maybe God's drawing you to this church. You feel led to be a part of that.

[22 : 49] What a great day to join a church, Easter Sunday, my soul. You already got your best on. Great day to do it. We'd love to help you in that process. Or maybe you're here and none of that applies to you, but you need to do business with God.

Because in reality, he's not the king of your life. You're the king of your life. You need to give him control of your life. And you can do that where you sit today. Or you can do that at this altar.

Or if you want a preacher to pray with you, I'll be happy to do that. I just want you to walk out of here this Easter Sunday as clean and pretty on the inside as you are on the outside today.

May God do a work in your life. And you do nothing less than completely obey him as he speaks to your heart and life. Lord Jesus, I love you. And I thank you, dear God, for every person in this place.

Everybody that watches us online and has the opportunity to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. And I ask today, dear God, that you'll bless these dear folks to simply be obedient to follow what you would have them to do.

[23 : 55] God, I pray that your sweet spirit will lead us to just follow you in any way that you would lead us. Give us the boldness. God, give us the fortitude. Give us the direction, Father.

Give us the will to obey as only you can. We love you and thank you for the opportunity of worship today. And it's only in Christ's name that we pray.

Amen. If you would stand.