Why I Believe Jesus Really Rose from the Dead

"If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied." (1 Corinthians 15:19)

Some folks are content to embrace what one of my mentors called a "toothless Christianity". For these it doesn't really matter whether Jesus was literally raised from the dead. What matters, some will say, is that the resurrection story is a symbol of renewal and hope. Excuse me? The apostle Paul said that if you subtract the resurrection of Christ from the gospel, you've got a religion not worth having (1 Corinthians 15:12-19).

So why believe that the resurrection of Jesus is a matter of history, a matter of fact? Briefly stated are some reasons that should at least get one to thinking. For a fuller treatment see Ed Wharton's "Christianity, A Clear Case of History" and Lee Strobel's "The Case for Christ".

1. The tomb was empty (John 20). Either Jesus' friends stole the body, his enemies stole the body or He was raised. His friends wouldn't—sane people don't die for what they know is a lie. His enemies wouldn't—produce the rotting corpse on Pentecost and Jesus doesn't amount to a footnote.

2. The testimony of witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Matthew 28:8-10, 16-20; John 20:10-18, 26-30). The physician Luke produced his gospel account from extensive research (Luke 1:1-4). Any normally competent first century skeptic could have brought the whole thing down by simply checking out Luke's sources. They did not.

3. The radical change of the apostles (Mark 14:43-50; John 20:19; Acts 1,2). What compels men who earlier ran for cover when their leader was arrested to boldly preach His message just a few weeks later at the risk of a martyr's death, a risk that became a reality to all except for John?

Are you a believer? Stand firm in your faith. Are you a skeptic? Check out the books listed above. You've got nothing to lose. You've got everything to gain.

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