

REASONING ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

The resurrection of Christ is central to the faith of every Christian. Without a firm belief that “God has raised Him from the dead” (Romans 10:9), salvation from sin is impossible. Paul wrote: “If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). Without the good news of Jesus’ defeat of death, the Gospel is void of its power to save mankind (cf. Romans 1:16). If Christ was not “raised from the dead by the glory of the Father,” there would be no “newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Rather, every accountable person would lie “dead in trespasses” (Ephesians 2:1,5) without hope of becoming “a new creation” in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Truly, the resurrection of Christ provides the substance for the Christian’s hope and the solid foundation on which to build his faith.

Is it any surprise, then, that first-century evangelists put so much emphasis on Jesus’ resurrection? Peter specifically mentioned how the apostle chosen to take the place of Judas was to become a witness of Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 1:22). A short while later, Peter preached to thousands of Jews in Jerusalem a sermon that hinged on the empty tomb of Christ (Acts 2:24,31-32). He then spoke in the temple about the Lord’s resurrection (Acts 3:15,26), and afterward witnessed to this fact before the highest court of the Jews (4:10; 5:29-32). The apostle similarly witnessed to the Gentiles, beginning with Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:30). Paul repeatedly spoke of the resurrection of Christ in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:30,33,34,37), reasoned from the Scriptures about it in

Thessalonica (Acts 17:3), and then gave testimony of this fact before both Festus and Agrippa (Acts 26:22-25).

First-century Christians frequently discussed the resurrection of Christ and were prepared to defend it using logical arguments comprised of sufficient evidence (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Acts 1:3; 26:22-23). Christ’s resurrection was fundamental to their faith and prominent in their preaching. It should be no less today. Hundreds of millions of people on Earth disbelieve in Jesus’ death-defying power. Skeptics scoff at the idea of Jesus coming back to life. Infidels in classrooms and media outlets throughout the world adamantly argue against it, alleging that “the bodily resurrection of Jesus did not happen on good biblical grounds,” and it certainly “did not happen on good historical grounds” (Barker, 1996).

In the past, we have discussed various irrefutable proofs for the resurrection of Christ (see Butt, 2002). In this issue of *Reason & Revelation*, we respond to four questions that skeptics are fond of asking as they attempt to discredit the Bible’s portrayal of this earth-shaking event (Matthew 28:2).

WHAT’S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT JESUS’ RESURRECTION?

Most anyone who has spent much time reading the Scriptures knows that the Bible writers mentioned several individuals who rose from the dead. After the widow’s son of Zarephath died, Elishah prayed to God, “and the soul of the

child came back to him, and he revived” (1 Kings 17:22). A few years later, the prophet Elisha raised the dead son of a Shunammite (2 Kings 4:32-35). Then, after Elisha’s death, a dead man, in the process of being buried in the tomb of Elisha, was restored to life after touching Elisha’s bones (2 Kings 13:20-21). While on Earth Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mark 8:21-24,35-43), as well as the widow of Nain’s son (Luke 7:11-16), and Lazarus—who had been buried for four days (John 11:1-45). Matthew recorded how after Jesus’ death and resurrection “the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

- Reasoning About the Resurrection of Christ*
Eric Lyons81

DEPARTMENTS

- Speaking Schedules86
Note from the Editor
What We Believe.88

RESOURCES

- What the Lord has been*
Doing Through A.P..41-R
Video Production Studio
Now a Reality.42-R
A.P. Hits a Nerve.44-R

raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many” (27:52-53, emp. added). Then later, during the early years of the church, Peter raised Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:36-43), while Paul raised the young man Eutychus, who had died after falling from a third-story window (Acts 20:7-12).

All of these people died and later rose to live again. Although some of the individuals arose very shortly after death, Lazarus and (most likely) the saints who were raised after the resurrection of Jesus were entombed longer than was Jesus. In view of all of these resurrections, some have asked, “What is so important about **Jesus’** resurrection?” If others in the past have died to live again, what makes **His** resurrection so special? The former editor of *Biblical Errancy*, Dennis McKinsey, once mockingly asked:

Why would it [Jesus’ resurrection—EL] be of any consequence since...many others rose before Jesus? By the time he rose this was a rather common occurrence. I would think it would have been met by a resounding yawn rather than surprise followed by: So what else can you do? Adam’s act of coming into the world as a full grown adult is more spectacular (n.d.).

Given the fact that Jesus is not the only person ever to come back to life, what is it that makes His resurrection unique? Why

is the resurrection of **Jesus** more significant than any other?

First, the resurrection of Jesus is more significant than any other resurrection simply because the inspired apostles and prophets said that it was. Critics may sneer at this response, but it is a valid point. Jesus did certain things that others did, including being raised from the dead, but His actions were more significant because of the statements attached to them. Consider the miracles Jesus performed in order to set Himself apart as the Son of God and promised Messiah. Many people throughout the Bible worked miracles in order to confirm their divine message (cf. Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:1-4), but only Jesus did them as proof of His divine **nature**. Once, during the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, a group of Jews surrounded Jesus and asked, “How long do you keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly” (John 10:24)? Jesus responded to them saying, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me.... I and My Father are one” (John 10:25,30). These Jews understood that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God in the flesh (cf. 10:33,36), and Jesus wanted them to understand that this truth could be confirmed by the miracles that He worked.

The miracles testified to His deity (John 20:30-31). Why? **Because He said they did** (10:25,35-38; cf. John 5:36). The mir-

acles that Jesus performed bore witness to the fact that He was from the Father (John 5:36), **because He said He was from the Father**. A miracle in and of itself did not mean the person who worked it was deity. Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Peter, Paul, and a host of others worked miracles, with some even raising people from the dead. But none did so for the purpose of proving they were God in the flesh. The apostles and prophets of the New Testament worked miracles to confirm their message that **Jesus** was the Son of God, not to prove that **they** were God (cf. Acts 14:8-18). Jesus, on the other hand, performed miracles to bear witness that **He** was the Son of God, just as He claimed to be (cf. John 9:35-38).

Similarly, one fundamental reason that Jesus’ miraculous resurrection is more important to a Christian than the resurrections of Lazarus, Tabitha, Eutychus, or anyone else who was raised from the dead, is simply because the Bible writers explained that it was more important. There is no record of anyone alleging that Lazarus was God’s Son based on his resurrection, nor did the early church claim divinity for Eutychus or Tabitha because they died and came back to life. None of the aforementioned individuals who was resurrected ever claimed that the resurrection was proof of deity, nor did any inspired prophet or apostle. On the other hand, Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). His resurrection was different because of Who He was—the Son of God. Thus, just as the miracles He worked during His earthly ministry testified of His divine message, and hence His divine nature, so did His resurrection.

A second reason why Jesus’ resurrection stands out above all others is because it alone was specifically foretold in the Old Testament. In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter affirmed that God had raised Jesus from the dead because it was not possible for the grave to hold Him. As proof, he quoted Psalm 16:8-11 in the following words:

I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

Reason & Revelation is published monthly by Apologetics Press, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Montgomery, AL. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to **Reason & Revelation, 230 Landmark Dr., Montgomery, AL 36117; ISSN:[1542-0922] USPS# 023415.**

Reason & Revelation is a non-profit, tax-exempt work dedicated to the defense of New Testament Christianity. Copyright © 2006. All rights reserved.

Editor:

Dave Miller, Ph.D.*
(*Communication, Southern Illinois University)

Orders:

Phone: (800) 234-8558
Fax: (800) 234-2882

Annual Subscription Rates:

\$10.00 Domestic
\$ 8.00 Domestic Bulk
(5+ to same address)
\$16.00 Canada & Overseas Airmail

On-line Web store/catalog, subscription order/renewal form, current issues, archives, and other information (all orders processed on a secure server):

URL: www.ApologeticsPress.org
E-mail: mail@ApologeticsPress.org

General inquiries, changes of address, or international callers:

Phone: (334) 272-8558
Fax: (334) 270-2002

Discovery—Scripture & Science for Kids is a sister publication for children. For more information, please contact our offices or visit the *Discovery* Web site at:

URL: www.DiscoveryMagazine.com

You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence (Acts 2:25-28).

Peter then explained this quote from the book of Psalms by saying:

Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses (Acts 2:29-32).

The apostle Paul also believed that the psalmist bore witness to Christ, and spoke of His resurrection. In his address at Antioch of Pisidia, he said:

And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You.” And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: “I will give you the sure mercies of David.” Therefore He also says in another Psalm: “You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:32-39).

Where is the prophecy for the resurrection of Jairus’ daughter? When did the prophets ever foretell of Eutychus or Tabitha’s resurrection? They did not. No resurrected person other than Jesus had his or her resurrection foretold by an Old Testament prophet, nor did any inspired apostle or prophet in the first century apply Old Testament prophecies to them. This certainly makes Jesus’ resurrection unique.

Third, Jesus’ resurrection is more significant than any other because He prophesied numerous times that He would rise from the dead, even foretelling the exact day on which it would occur. Jesus told



Christians do not serve a lifeless lord, but a Risen Redeemer Whose tomb was found empty nearly 2,000 years ago.

some scribes and Pharisees on one occasion, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, **so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth**” (Matthew 12:40, emp. added). Matthew, Mark, and Luke all recorded how Jesus “began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and **be raised the third day** (Matthew 16:21, emp. added; cf. Mark 8:31-32; Luke 9:22). While Jesus and His disciples were in Galilee, Jesus reminded them, saying, “The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and **the third day He will be raised up**” (Matthew 17:22-23, emp. added).

Just before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus again reminded His disciples, saying, “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**” (Matthew 20:18-19, emp. added). Jesus’ prophecies concerning His resurrection and the specific day on which it would occur were so widely known that, after Jesus’ death, His enemies requested that Pilate place a guard at the tomb, saying, “Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise.’ Therefore command that the tomb be made secure **until the third day...**” (Matthew 27:63-64, emp. added). They knew exactly what Jesus had said He would do, and they did everything in their power to stop it.

Where are the prophecies from the widow’s son of Zarephath? Did he prophesy of his resurrection prior to his death? Or what about the son of the Shunammite woman that Elisha raised from the dead? Where are his personal prophecies? Truly, no one who rose from the dead except Jesus prophesied about his or her own resurrection. And certainly no one ever

prophesied about the exact day on which he or she would rise from the dead, save Jesus. This prior knowledge and prophecy makes His resurrection a significant event. He overcame death, just as He predicted. He did **exactly** what he said He was going to do, on the **exact** day He said He would do it.

Fourth, the uniqueness of Jesus' resurrection is seen in the fact that He is the only resurrected person ever to have lived and died without having committed one sin during His lifetime. He was "pure" and "righteous" (1 John 3:3; 2:1), "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). He was "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19), "Who knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21). No one else who has risen from the dead ever lived a perfect life, and then died prior to his or her resurrection for the purpose of taking away the sins of the world (cf. John 1:29). Because Jesus lived a sinless life, died, and then overcame death in His resurrection, He alone has the honor of being called "the Lamb of God" and the "great High Priest" (Hebrews 4:14). "Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many," and because of His resurrection, "those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

Finally, and perhaps most important, the significance of Jesus' resurrection is seen in the fact that He was the first to rise from the dead **never to die again**. Since no one who has risen from the dead is still living on Earth, and since there is no evidence in the Bible that God ever took someone who had risen from the dead into heaven without his dying again, it is reasonable to conclude that all who ever rose from the dead, died in later years. Jesus, however, never died again. He rose from the grave to live forevermore. All others who previously were raised from the dead, died again, and are among those who "sleep" and continue to wait for the bodily resurrection. Only Jesus truly has conquered death. Only His bodily resurrection was followed by eternal life, rather than another physical death.

Skeptics have argued that "it's the Resurrection, per se, that matters, **not the fact that Jesus never died again**" (see McKinsey, 1983, p. 1, emp. added). However, the inspired apostles said otherwise. Paul

actually linked the two together while preaching in Antioch of Pisidia, saying, God "raised Him from the dead, **no more to return to corruption.... He whom God raised saw no corruption**" (Acts 13:34,37, emp. added). Paul also impressed upon the minds of the Christians in Rome how Jesus, "having been raised from the dead, **dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him**" (Romans 6:9, emp. added). [Is it any wonder Paul testified before Agrippa and Festus how Jesus was "the first to rise from the dead" (Acts 26:23)? "[H]e was the first who rose again from the dead to return no more into the empire of death" (Clarke, 1996).] Jesus said of Himself: "I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive **forevermore**" (Revelation 1:17-18, emp. added). Furthermore, the writer of Hebrews argued for a better life through Jesus on the basis of His termination of death. One reason for the inadequacy of the old priesthood was because "they were prevented by death." Jesus, however, because He rose never to die again, "continues forever" in "an unchangeable priesthood," and lives to make intercession for His people (Hebrews 7:23-25). As so often is the case, skeptics comment on the Bible without really knowing what the Bible says. To say, that "it's the Resurrection, per se, that matters, not the fact that Jesus never died again" (McKinsey, 1983, p. 1), is to deny (or ignore) what the apostles and prophets actually stated.

Whether or not Eutychus, Tabitha, Lazarus, etc., rose from the grave, our relationship with God is not affected. Without Jesus' resurrection, however, there would be no "Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). Without Jesus' resurrection, no suitable High Priest would be able to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). Without Jesus' resurrection, we would have no assurance of His coming and subsequent judgment (Acts 17:31). Without Jesus' resurrection, "we are of all men the most pitiable" (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Jesus' resurrection is significant—more so than any other resurrection. Only Jesus' resurrection was verbalized by inspired men as proof of His deity. Only Jesus' resurrection was prophesied in the Old Testament. Only Jesus foretold of the precise day on which He would rise from the grave—and then fulfilled that predic-

tion. Only Jesus' resurrection was preceded by a perfect life—a life lived, given up, and restored in the resurrection for the purpose of becoming man's Prince, Savior, and Mediator. And, only Jesus rose never to die again.

WHY IS CHRIST CALLED THE "FIRSTFRUITS"?

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul wrote at length concerning the resurrection of the dead because some of the Christians in Corinth taught "that there is no resurrection of the dead" (vs. 12). As one of his proofs for the Christian's eventual resurrection, Paul pointed to the fact that Christ rose, and showed that the general resurrection stands or falls with Christ's resurrection, saying, "if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile" (vss. 16-17)! After hypothetically arguing from the absurd in an attempt to help the Corinthian Christians to see that their stance on the final resurrection completely undermined Christianity, Paul proceeded to demonstrate that Christ **had** risen, making the resurrection of the dead inevitable. It is in this section of Scripture that some find a difficulty. Beginning with verse 20, Paul wrote:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become **the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep**. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But **each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits**, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:20-23, emp. added).

In view of the fact that Jesus was not the first person ever to rise from the dead (as previously discussed), some have questioned why Paul twice described Jesus as "the firstfruits" from the dead. Did Paul err? Was he ignorant of all of the previous resurrections? In what sense did Paul speak of Christ as "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep"?

One could respond reasonably to these questions by pointing out the aforementioned fact that Jesus was the first to rise from the dead—**never to die again**. In this sense, Christ is "the firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5). Another (and perhaps better) explanation to the question surrounding 1 Corinthians 15:20,23 and Paul's use of the word "first-

fruits” (Greek *aparche*) is to recognize the metaphor Paul employed. Under the old law, the firstfruits were the earliest gathered grains, fruits, and vegetables that the people dedicated to God in recognition of His faithfulness for providing the necessities of life. The Israelites were to offer to God a sheaf of the first grain that was harvested on the day after the Sabbath following the Passover feast (Leviticus 23:9-14). Paul used the term “firstfruits” in this letter to the Corinthian church to reinforce the certainty of the resurrection. Just as the term “firstfruits” indicates that “the first sheaf of the forthcoming grain harvest will be followed by the rest of the sheaves, Christ, the firstfruits raised from the dead, is the guarantee for all those who belong to him that they also will share in his resurrection” (Kistemaker, 1993, p. 548). Jesus is God’s “firstfruits” of the resurrection. And, like the Israelites, God will gather the rest of the harvest at the final resurrection. Paul seemingly wanted the Corinthians to understand (by way of metaphor) that Christ’s resurrection is a **pledge** of our resurrection. It is inevitable—a full harvest guaranteed by God Himself.

ON WHAT DAY DID JESUS RISE FROM THE DEAD?

The most frequent reference to Jesus’ resurrection reveals that He rose from the grave **on** the third day of His entombment. Matthew and Luke both record Jesus as prophesying that He would rise from the grave on this day (Matthew 17:23; Luke 9:22). The apostle Paul wrote in his first epistle to the Corinthians that Jesus arose from the grave “**the third day** according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:4, emp. added). And while preaching to Cornelius and his household, Peter taught that God raised Jesus up “**on** the third day” (Acts 10:40, emp. added). Skeptics are quick to contend, however, that these scriptures contradict various other passages. For example, Jesus predicted that He would “be killed, and **after** three days rise again” (Mark 8:31, emp. added). On another occasion, Jesus told His apostles how His enemies would “mock Him and spit upon Him, and scourge Him, and kill Him, and three days **later** He will rise again” (Mark 10:34, emp. added, NASB). In addition, He informed the

Pharisees that He would be in the heart of the Earth for as long as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish—for “three days and three nights” (Matthew 12:40). How can a person be expected to believe that Jesus rose from the grave if Jesus and the Bible writers could not even decide whether He rose from the grave on the third day or the fourth day?

In an attempt to solve this difficulty, some seemingly well-meaning individuals have espoused the idea that Jesus must have been crucified on Wednesday or Thursday, rather than on Friday (eg., Scroggie, 1948, pp. 569-577; Rusk, 1974, pp. 4-6). Because Jesus could not possibly have been in the grave for three nights if He died on Friday and rose on Sunday, some believe He must have died a day or two earlier. However, this is highly improbable. First, Mark 15:42 states that the evening of Christ’s crucifixion “was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath,” and “[b]oth the Scriptures (Matt 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14,31,42) and Josephus indicate the day of preparation is the day before the weekly Sabbaths, namely, Friday” (Hoehner, 1974, 131:245; cf. Josephus, 16:6:2). Second, if Jesus died on Wednesday and rose on Sunday then He must have risen from the grave **on** the fourth day rather than “the third day.” What’s more, all attempts to place Jesus’ crucifixion and burial on Wednesday or Thursday instead of Friday are based more on a misunderstanding of a Hebrew idiom concerning time than actual evidence.

While statements such as “on the third day,” “after three days,” and “three days and three nights” may appear contradictory at first glance, in reality they harmonize perfectly if one understands the more liberal methods ancients used to reckon time. In the first century, any part of a day could be computed for the whole day and the night following it (cf. Lightfoot, 1979, pp. 210-211). The *Jerusalem Talmud* quotes rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah, who lived around A.D. 100, as saying: “A day and night are an Onah [‘a portion of time’] and the portion of an Onah is as the whole of it” (Shabbath ix. 3, as quoted in Hoehner, 1974, 131:248-249, bracketed comment in orig.). Azariah indicated that a portion of a twenty-four hour period could be considered the same “as the whole of it.” Thus, in Jesus’ time one

would have been correct in teaching that Jesus’ burial would last “three days and three nights,” even though it was not three complete 24-hour days.

Scripture is peppered with references which demonstrate that a part of a day was oftentimes equivalent to a whole day.

- According to Genesis 7:12, the rain of the Noahic Flood was upon the Earth “forty days and forty nights.” Verse seventeen of that same chapter says it was on the Earth for just “forty days.” Obviously, “forty days” and “forty days and forty nights” refer to the same time period in this context.
- During the reign of King Ahab, Israel and Syria “encamped opposite each other **for seven days**” (1 Kings 29:20, emp. added). Yet, “**on** the seventh day the battle was joined” and Israel killed 100,000 Syrian foot soldiers (29:20). Clearly, the two armies did not occupy their camps for a full seven days, but for six days and a part of the seventh. The remainder of day seven was spent in battle.
- When Joseph’s brothers came to visit him for the first time since selling him into Egyptian bondage more than a decade earlier (Genesis 37:12-36), Joseph incarcerated them for “three days” (Genesis 42:17). The text then reveals that he spoke to them “**the third day**,” and 42:18-24 represents them as being released that day—i.e., the third day. If Joseph’s brothers (with the exception of Simeon, 42:24) were released on day three of their imprisonment, then the “three days” they spent in the prison (42:17) are not equivalent to three 24-hour periods, but rather parts of three days.
- When the Israelites visited King Rehoboam and asked him to lighten their burdens (2 Chronicles 10:3-4), he wanted time to contemplate their request, so he instructed Jeroboam and the people of Israel to return “**after three days**” (10:5, emp. added). Verse twelve of that chapter indicates that Jeroboam and the people of Israel came to Rehoboam “**on** the third day, **as the king had directed**, saying, ‘Come back to me **the third day**’” (emp. added). Fascinating, is it not, that even though Rehoboam instructed his people to

return “**after** three days,” they understood him to mean “**on** the third day” (cf. 1 Kings 12:5,12).

- When Queen Esther was about to risk her life by going before King Ahasuerus uninvited, she instructed her fellow Jews to follow her example by not eating or drinking “**for three days, night or day**” (Esther 4:16, emp. added). Yet, the text then tells us that Esther went in to the king “**on** the third day” (5:1, emp. added).

By studying these and other passages, one can see clearly that the Bible uses expressions like “three days,” “the third day,” “on the third day,” “after three days,” and “three days and three nights” to signify the **same** period of time. Again, “[a]ccording to the Oriental mode of reckoning, three consecutive **parts** of days were counted three days” (Jamieson, et. al., 1997, emp. added).

From Acts 10, we can glean further insight into the ancient practice of counting consecutive days (in part or in whole) as complete days. Luke recorded how an angel appeared to Cornelius at “about the ninth hour of the day” (approximately 3:00 p.m.; 10:3). “**The next day**” (10:9) Peter received a vision from God and welcomed visitors sent by Cornelius. “**On the next day**” (10:23) Peter and the servants of Cornelius departed for Caesarea. “**And the following day** they entered Caesarea” where Peter taught Cornelius and his household the Gospel (10:24). At one point

during Peter’s visit, Cornelius spoke about his encounter with the angel of God. Notice carefully how he began the rehearsal of the event. He stated: “**Four days ago to this hour**, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour...” (10:30, NASB, emp. added). Although the event really had occurred only 72 hours (or three literal days) earlier, Cornelius spoke of it as taking place “four days ago to this hour.” Why four days instead of three? Because according to the first-century method of reckoning time, a part of the first day and a part of the fourth day were counted as whole days. Surely one can see how this information aligns itself perfectly with Jesus’ burial taking place on Friday and His resurrection occurring on Sunday. A part of Friday, all day Saturday, and a part of Sunday would be considered **three** days in ancient times, not one or two.

Even though in 21st-century America some may find this reasoning somewhat confusing, similar idiomatic expressions are used frequently today. For example, we consider a baseball game that ends after only completing 8½ innings a “9-inning game.” And even though the losing pitcher on the visiting team only pitched 8 innings (and not 9 innings like the winning pitcher from the home team), he is said to have pitched a **complete** game. Think about the college student who explains to his professor that he worked on a research project “day and night for four weeks.” He obviously does not mean that

he worked for a solid 672 hours (24 hours x 7 days x 4 weeks) without sleeping. It may be that he worked from 6:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. for four weeks on the project, but not 672 sleepless hours. If he only slept five or six hours a night, and worked on the project nearly every hour he was awake, we would consider this person as one who truly did work “day and night for four weeks.” Finally, consider the guest at a hotel who checks in at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, and checks out at 3:30 p.m. Thursday—less than 24 hours later. Did the man stay one day or two days at the hotel? Technically, the guest was there for less than one full day (24-hour period), yet the hotel legally can charge him for two days since he did not leave before the mandatory 11:00 a.m. checkout time. Considering how flexible we are in measuring time, perhaps we should not be surprised at how liberal the ancients were in calculating time.

Further evidence proving that Jesus’ statements regarding His burial were not contradictory center around the fact that even His enemies did not accuse Him of contradicting Himself. No doubt this was due to their familiarity with and use of the flexible, customary method of stating time. In fact, the chief priests and Pharisees even said to Pilate the day after Jesus was crucified: “Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘**After** three days I will rise.’ Therefore command that the tomb be made secure **until** the third day” (Matthew 27:63-64, emp. added). The phrase “after three days” must have been equivalent to “the third day,” else surely the Pharisees would have asked for a guard of soldiers until the fourth day. Interesting, is it not, that modern skeptics charge Jesus with contradicting Himself, but not the hypercritical Pharisees of His own day.

The idiomatic expressions that Jesus and the Bible writers employed to denote how long Jesus would remain in the grave does not mean that He literally was buried for 72 hours. If we interpret the account of Jesus’ crucifixion, burial, and resurrection in light of the cultural setting of the first century, and not according to the present-day (mis)understanding of skeptics, we find no errors in any of the expressions that Jesus and the gospel writers used.

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Kyle Butt

November 10-12	Manchester, TN	(931) 728-2679
December 1-3	Gainesville, GA	(770) 536-4284

Eric Lyons

November 5	Center Hill, AL	(256) 757-3817
November 19	Sheffield, AL	(256) 383-1618
December 1-3	Steele, MO	(573) 695-2470

Dave Miller

November 3-5	Bolivar, MO	(417) 326-4727
November 10-11	Somerville, TN	(901) 465-2632
November 17-19	Tullahoma, TN	(931) 455-3264
November 26	Columbiana, AL	(205) 669-0244

DID JESUS HAVE THE SAME PHYSICAL BODY AFTER HIS RESURRECTION AS BEFORE?

A gentleman once e-mailed our offices at Apologetics Press, questioning whether Jesus had the same body after His resurrection as He did before being raised from the grave. According to this man, Jesus “appeared to people He knew but nobody recognized Him.... It’s as though He had a different body”—and possibly one that was not physical.

At the outset, it is incorrect to assert that “nobody recognized Him,” because Matthew 28:9,17 clearly implies that at least some of Jesus’ disciples knew Who He was and worshiped Him. Moreover, that Jesus had essentially the same body after His resurrection that He had when He died on the cross is evident from at least three different passages. In Luke 24:39, Jesus stated: “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.” Jesus expected His disciples to observe **His physical** body. Later in the same chapter, we read that Jesus ate a meal with His disciples (24:42-43; cf. Acts 10:41). And then in John 20:25-29, which is the most frequently cited passage in defense of Christ having a physical body, Jesus asked Thomas to touch His nail-scarred hands and reach into His side that had been pierced with the Roman spear.

But what about those occasions when some of His disciples did not recognize Him? Do such verses as Luke 24:31,37 and John 20:10-16 represent a contradictory element in the resurrection story? First, just because the text says that the disciples thought they had seen a spirit when they actually saw Jesus (Luke 24:37), does not indicate that He looked different. Since they knew He had been killed, seeing His resurrected body caused them to think that He was in spirit form rather than physical. On one occasion, before Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, His disciples were startled at His appearance, supposing He was a ghost (Mark 6:49). A similar thing happened to Peter when some thought his unexpected presence must have been an indication that it was “his angel” (Acts 12:15).

Second, the reason the two disciples who were traveling on the road to Emmaus failed to recognize Jesus initial-

ly was not because Jesus had a different body, but because God miraculously prevented them from recognizing Him. Luke 24:16 indicates that at the beginning of their conversation with Jesus “their eyes were restrained,” but then just before Jesus vanished from their sight, “their eyes were opened and they knew Him” (24:31). Thus, the disciples’ recognition ability failed, not because Jesus possessed a different body, but because their eyes were miraculously restrained.

A final person often mentioned as not having recognized the Savior (allegedly because Jesus had a different body) is Mary Magdalene. John 20:11-18 certainly testifies of her initial inability to identify Jesus. The question is: Was Mary’s failure to recognize Jesus **her** fault, or the result of Jesus having a different body? As with the above cases, there is no indication in John 20:11-18 that Jesus had anything other than His risen crucified body (cf. 20:25-29). There are at least four possibilities, however, as to why Mary failed to recognize Jesus right at first.

1. The Sun may not have risen all the way yet, thus making it difficult to see (cf. 20:1).
2. Mary was engaged in deep weeping that likely obscured her vision (20:11,13). In fact, the first words Jesus said to Mary were, “Woman, why are you weeping?” (vs. 15).
3. Considering Jesus’ clothes were taken from Him when He was crucified (John 19:23-24), and that the linen cloths which were used in His burial were lying in the tomb (John 20:6-7), Jesus likely was wearing clothes that made His exact identity less conspicuous at first glance. Perhaps His post-resurrection attire was similar to what a gardener or watchman would wear (cf. John 20:15).
4. It also is possible that Mary’s eyes were restrained miraculously, as were the eyes of the disciples with whom Jesus conversed on the road to Emmaus.

Once all of the Scriptures are taken into account, one can see that Jesus physically rose from the grave in the same body that was crucified on the cross. The fact that some of Jesus’ disciples did not immediately recognize Him in no way contradicts His physical resurrection.

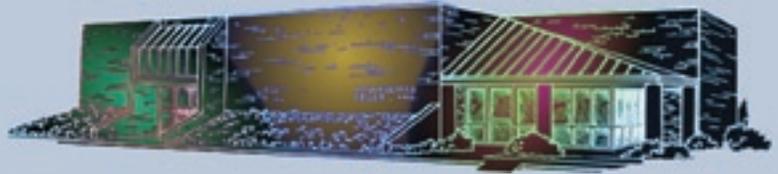
CONCLUSION

The inspired accounts of the risen Redeemer have been the focus of much criticism through the years (cf. Barker, 1992, pp. 178-184; McKinsey, 2000, pp. 447-454). However, when the honest, open-hearted student of the Bible looks carefully at the evidence, he will come to realize that these criticisms are actually the result either of insufficient knowledge or hardened hearts. Truly, the more one studies the passages of Scripture in which Jesus’ resurrection is discussed, as well as the historical context in which this momentous event occurred, the more he will see how incredibly accurate and trustworthy the Bible writers were.

REFERENCES

- Barker, Dan (1992), *Losing Faith in Faith* (Madison, WI: Freedom from Religion Foundation).
- Barker, Dan (1996), “Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?,” Debate with Michael Horner at the University of Northern Iowa, April 2, [On-line], URL: http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/dan_barker/barker_horner.html.
- Butt, Kyle (2002), “Jesus Christ—Dead or Alive?,” *Reason & Revelation*, 22[2]:9-15, February.
- Clarke, Adam (1996), *Adam Clarke’s Commentary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).
- Hoehner, Harold W. (1974), “Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ—Part IV: The Day of Christ’s Crucifixion,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 131:241-264, July.
- Jamieson, Robert, et al. (1997), *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Bible Commentary* (Electronic Database: Biblesoft).
- Josephus, Flavius (1987 edition), “Antiquities of the Jews,” *The Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson).
- Kistemaker, Simon J. (1993), *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- Lightfoot, John (1979 reprint), *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).
- McKinsey, C. Dennis (no date), “The Bible is God’s Word?,” [On-line], URL: <http://members.aol.com/ckbloomfld/pamphlets.html>.
- McKinsey, C. Dennis (1983), “Commentary,” *Biblical Errancy*, February.
- McKinsey, C. Dennis (2000), *Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus).
- Rusk, Roger (1974), “The Day He Died,” *Christianity Today*, March 29.
- Scroggie, W. Graham (1948), *A Guide to the Gospels* (London: Pinkering & Inglis).

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



WHAT WE BELIEVE

1. God exists, and man can know that God exists, by means of His manifold revelations, both in nature and through the inspired Word of God, the Holy Bible.
2. The entire material Universe was specially created by this almighty God in 6 days of approximately 24-hours each, as revealed in Genesis 1 and Exodus 20:11.
3. Both biblical and scientific evidence indicate a relatively young Earth, in contrast to evolutionary views of a multi-billion-year age for the Earth.
4. Both biblical and scientific evidence indicate that many of the Earth's features must be viewed in light of a universal, catastrophic flood (i.e., the Noachic Flood as described in Genesis 6-8).
5. All compromising theories such as theistic evolution, progressive creationism, threshold evolution, the gap theory, the modified gap theory, the day-age theory, the non-world view, etc., are denied and opposed as patently false.
6. Christianity is the one true religion; Jesus Christ is the only divine Son of God, resurrected Lord, and Savior of all who lovingly obey Him.
7. The 66 books of the Bible are fully and verbally inspired of God; hence, they are inerrant and authoritative, and a complete guide for moral and religious conduct.
8. Salvation is by means of obedience to the Gospel system, involving faith in God and Christ, repentance from sin, confession of faith, and immersion in water for remission of past sins, coupled with a life of growing consecration and dedication.
9. Those enjoying salvation are members of the one true, undenominational church, which is the body of Christ.