

The Resurrection of Jesus

Prerequisites to the Resurrection (4 of 12)

Before one can prove the resurrection of Jesus, there are a few prerequisites. For example, if someone is going to be raised from the dead, he must first be verifiably dead!

Various theories abound about the death of Jesus aiming to discount the resurrection. These theories are ardently proposed by false teachers and skeptics. After all, if unbelievers can cast doubt upon the factitious nature of His death they no longer must explain the resurrection. Therefore, Christians must arm themselves with the evidence proving the reality of the death of Jesus. Such evidence will only deepen our faith in the resurrection. So, consider...

...the Biblical evidence.

The events surrounding the death of the Messiah were extensively prophesied and portrayed in the Scriptures. Over fifteen prophecies are all connected to the scene of Jesus' death and verified in the gospel accounts (see Isaiah 50:6; 53:3,5,9,12; Psalm 22:1,7-8,14,18; 34:20; 38:11; 69:21; Zechariah 12:10).

To confirm these Messianic prophecies, there are detailed eyewitness accounts often citing their fulfillment in the death of Jesus Christ (Matthew 27:22-50, 55-56; Mark 15:12-47; Luke 23:13-55; John 19:1-42). Such eyewitness testimony led Paul to succinctly write, "...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried..." (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

The many passages about the death of Jesus offer substantial evidence. First, his sentence of death by Pontius Pilate and the angry Jews indicate this frenzied mob would have allowed no less than death. Second, his extreme physical, psychological and emotional abuse prior to the cross made a quick death more likely. Third, the evidence of being nailed to the cross refutes the possibility of an ascension. Fourth, the customary plaque above Jesus documenting his person and crime indicates the government believed this was Jesus. Fifth, his death was witnessed by both Romans and Jews, friends and foes and destroys the possibility of a Jesus "look-alike." Sixth, his death was verified by a Roman soldier who regularly practiced capital punishment and reported to Pilate. Finally, the body and head of Jesus was wrapped in linen clothes and buried in Joseph's new tomb. No eyewitness believed this was anyone but Jesus. No eyewitness believed he was anything but dead.

...the extra-Biblical evidence. In *The Historical Jesus*, Gary Habermas aims to prove the death of Jesus can be established even by sources outside of the Bible. He summarizes his findings from these sources saying, "Of all the events in Jesus' life, more ancient sources specifically mention his death than any other single occurrence. Of the 45 ancient sources, 28 relate to this

fact, often with details. Twelve of these sources are non-Christian, which exhibits an incredible amount of interest in this event. Not only is Jesus' death by crucifixion of major concern to these authors, but 14 of the 28 sources give various details about the crucifixion, from medical observations to political information concerning the current rulers, to historical specifications of the times in which Jesus died, to religious details about the reason for his death. These data witness to the facticity of Jesus' death by crucifixion, regarding both the reality of the event itself, as well as numerous details surrounding it. It is fair to assert that this is one of the best-attested facts in ancient history."

...the medical evidence.

Based on the evidence, a doctor would conclude Jesus was indeed dead after His crucifixion. In fact, an article from the *Journal of the American Medical Association* stated, "Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to His side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between His right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured His death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge." *Joshua R. Welch*