



## DEATH TO LIFE: IS IT ACTUALLY TRUE?

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Libin Abraham 0:01

Today you have heard stories, remarkable stories of addiction, breaking shame, lifting sins, being forgiven, lives being made whole, individuals who have gone from death to life because of Jesus. And you could be here today and you're thinking, Man, those stories are really, really nice, but is it actually true? Like maybe they had all of those changes in their life and inspiring? It is inspiring. It's motivating, but maybe they were on a really good self help plan, and they made some good choices and had good some counseling, read some good books. Maybe that's what did it. And you would be right that if Jesus hadn't risen from the dead, all the stories you've heard this morning would have just been nice, motivating and even inspiring stories. But if Jesus actually did rise from the dead, the stories you heard today are evidences of His resurrection. They are echoes and even aftershocks of the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. The most important question to consider today, and really any day, is, did he rise? Did Jesus rise from the dead? This is not just an important question for you personally, but the entire weight of Christianity hangs on the balance. To the answer to this question, it hangs on the answer to this question, did he physically, bodily rise from the dead? Today, I want to take you on a journey of looking at four reasons why Christians have believed for the last 2000 years that Christ died and that Christ rose from the dead. I want to invite you on our journey to honestly consider this, even putting some emotions aside, but to really look at the evidence and follow where the evidence leads, because ultimately, this is the answer the question that determines it all. So here's the first evidence or reason for Christ rising from the dead. First of all, the death of Jesus. His death was certain. Just about every historian and scholar, they would agree that Jesus, of Nazareth, he was a real human being who lived on earth, and He died a public execution. That's how he died. Now we have this account in the New Testament, accounts, of course, in the Bible, but we also have five ancient sources that tell us about the life and public execution of Jesus. Here's how the Scripture is recorded in John 19. The Bible says in John 19, when they came to Jesus, they did not break his legs, since they saw that he was already dead, but one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once, blood and water came out. The Roman soldiers, the executioners. They were professionals. Rome did not invent the crucifixion, but they perfected it, and by the time we get to Jesus, they've been doing this for two to 300 years over time, refining it as the most brutal and efficient way of execution. So when the Roman soldier comes and concludes he's really dead, guess what? He was really dead, not almost dead, not seems like he was dead, not just passed out. No, he actually died. But we don't have to just look at the biblical accounts for this. So you can look at ancient sources. Here's a few. Tacitus was a well respected Roman historian who is not a Christian, so he has no need to publish this if it was not fact. And here's what Tacitus said about Jesus, Christus, or Christ, suffered the extreme penalty, meaning the crucifixion during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of Pontius Pilate. Again, Josephus a Jewish writer, not a Christian, but a Jewish historian in the first century. This is what he writes as fact, Josephus says Pilate condemned Him, meaning Jesus to be crucified. Jesus really died. Journal of the American Medical Association, they have looked at all the medical, historical and even archeological evidences of Jesus and His resurrection and his crucifixion. And here was their conclusion. They said, clearly, the weight of the historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted. So the debate really hasn't really been around. Did Jesus live and did he even die? We know he died. The debate, though, has been around, what happened after he died? It's concluded he really died, but the question still remains, what happened after he died? But the death of Jesus is significant, because without the

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cross, there is no need for the resurrection. If the crucifixion is invalid, then so is the resurrection. So let's begin with the fact. That Jesus lived and he died at public execution. Here's the second evidence of the resurrection, and it's that the tomb

was empty. Not only was his death certain, but the tomb was empty, the tomb in which they laid Jesus, it was public. It was guarded and sealed with a massive stone that we could not roll away. It was guarded by multiple soldiers just to prevent something like this from happening. But on that first Sunday morning, the first day of the week, the women go to the tomb because they know Jesus is still dead. They're not expecting him not to be there. There's no countdown going, cue the lights. Here's the resurrection. They expect Jesus to be dead, but on Friday, they could not finish the proper Burial Rites for Jesus. And I love the pure devotion of the women. Sometimes people go to Jesus to get stuff from Jesus. But these women, they were going to Jesus just for Jesus. They knew he was already dead, but they wanted to pour out their affection on Jesus. So they go thinking, we want to go see Jesus, but we have no way of rolling the stone away. But they get there, and behold, the stone has already been rolled away. And what they find is an angel who tells them in Matthew 28 the angel told the women, don't be alarmed, don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified, but he is not here, for he has risen. Just as he said, Come and see the place where he lay. Come look at the tomb. And you know what? That found no body. Literally no body was found in the tomb. Jesus was not there. His body was not there. Now you're thinking, yeah, that's nice, but it's the followers of Jesus who are writing this right? But wait a minute, even the very opponents of Jesus do not deny the empty tomb. The opponents of Jesus didn't deny the empty tomb. They just explained it away. They just found a way to explain it. So the women go away after seeing the tomb as empty and notice what happens with the soldiers. Matthew records in 28 chapter 28 as they were on their way, some of the guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. I'm just thinking, what did these guys say? They're saying, Man, we watched the tomb just like you paid us to watch it. We were there on guard, and then a light shows up and the ground shook, and an angel shows up, and boom, the stone was rolled away, and he ain't there. If they're from Texas, they would say, man, he ain't there. They came and told the news of what happened. And after the priests had assembled with the elders and agreed on a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money and told them, say this, his disciples came during the night and stole him while we were sleeping. By the way, the soldiers could not have slept, but that's what they were paid to sell. But notice, even the opponents, even the religious leaders, they didn't say, let's just go tell them the body is there. They knew there was no way around the empty tomb. The tomb was empty and there was no plausible explanation. So they didn't deny the empty tomb. They just found a way to explain it. No, all of you look like really smart people. I know sometimes looks can be deceiving, but not this one. You guys look amazing. Okay, so think logically with me about this. If there was a body of Jesus anywhere to be found, the Roman authorities and the Jewish leaders would have found it that all the motivation, every reason and every resource to find the body of Jesus and to show people that he's still dead, the resurrection undermined The very prized execution of the Roman Empire. Their legal system was undermined by the resurrection. For the Jewish leaders, their religious system was undermined by the resurrection. They felt all the pressure, all the urgency, to destroy and snuff out the early movement of Christians. And all they had to do was find the corpse, roll it out onto the streets of Jerusalem and say, Look, y'all again. If in Texas they would say, look, y'all, he's still dead. The moment

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they did that, no more sermons, no more churches, the whole

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movement would have ended. And yet, the most powerful empire, the most powerful resource motivated people could not find the body of Jesus, not then, not later, not ever. Josh McDowell, in his book, Evidence That Demands a Verdict, he said this about the empty tomb the. Empty tomb stands as a silent witness to the greatest event in history. Jesus' death was certain, and so was the empty tomb. So if you're on a faith journey, the question really isn't, was the tomb empty? The question is for you to consider, what emptied it. How did it get empty? The death was certain. The tomb was empty. And third of all the appearances were costly. The appearances were costly. I want to read to you the early church creed that was formed not decades, not centuries, after the resurrection. Like legends could be formed, but they were written just months, if not years, just a few years after the resurrection. So you could actually read the creed that churches are saying in their local congregations and go fact check it. And here's the creed that Paul records in First Corinthians, chapter 15, for I passed on to you as most important what I also received. And here's the creed that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that He was buried, that he was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the 12, and then Jesus appeared to over 500 brothers and sisters at The at the same time. At one time, most of them are still alive, and some have fallen asleep, some of them have died. So after the resurrection, Jesus meets with different people at different times. But at one time, he met with 500 people at the same time, and they saw him alive, and you could actually go and visit them. You could go write down their interview questions and interview answers. And Dr, Luke did that. It's the Gospel of Luke. He went and investigated, did you see Jesus? Tell me about him. And those who saw him

would say, Yeah, we saw him. Here's when it happened, here's how it happened, and they all told the same story. Now some say, Well, maybe they were hallucinating, but hallucination works like dreams. It happens in individual minds, not in group think tanks. So one psychologist said, for 500 people to have the same hallucination at the same time is actually an even greater miracle than the resurrection itself. Oh, no, no. They weren't hallucinating. They were telling the story of what actually happened. But here's the deal, their claim that Jesus appeared to them risen and alive cost them their life. Their claim of the resurrection was not convenient. It was not for their gains. They gained nothing, but they lost everything on this side of eternity because they claimed that Jesus showed up. You read about Cephas here that we call Peter, he would not deny the resurrection. So what happened to him? He was crucified upside down. The next verse you read about James, the brother of Jesus, he would not deny the resurrection. So he was thrown down from a temple and beaten to death. And most of these 500 who claim that Jesus appeared to them, they were persecuted, hunting down and killed because they would not deny or recant the resurrection. So here's what I'm saying, the disciples of Jesus would never have died for something they made up. They would not have died because think about it again. All it took was one person, if the body was stolen, and if they did make this up, only one person is all it took to break under torture, to break under pressure of the most powerful empire at that time, and all it takes is one person to say, look, we were on a group meet chat, and here's what we said on our chat, here's the story we made up, and here's how we collaborated.

Unknown Speaker 14:00

But not one did. Not one person recanted or denied the resurrection, and here's why, even if it

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meant to save their life, they did not do it, because the resurrection of Jesus was not mere hope. It was their lived experience. It was their experience. It was their reality. They saw Him. They touched him. They saw His wounds. They felt his presence, his physical presence, and they could not deny what they saw. So even at the cost of their life, they claimed that Jesus was alive, the fourth reason to consider the resurrection. So lives were transformed. Lives were transformed before the disciples of Jesus saw him alive. Peter was denying, Thomas was doubting, and everybody was afraid. In fact, when the women come to tell the disciples that they saw Jesus, they. It says they were locked in a room. They locked themselves in out of fear for their lives. They weren't courageous, they weren't preachers, they weren't bold, they were scared. And so the women leave the empty tomb and come to the group of men to tell them what happened, which, by the way, that in itself, is evidence this story is not made up. See, in first century, the testimony of women, the witness of women, did not carry weight. It was considered not credible. So if you were to just say, write this story up, you would not include this part in the story, because it goes against every cultural norm. But the scripture writers are not interested in lining up with culture. They're interested in telling the truth, as it happened, and God chose the woman to see the empty tomb. And now the women go back and tell the guys what happened. And here's what happens when the women go and bear witness, because these words seem like nonsense, but the words of the women, they seem like nonsense to them, and they did not believe the women. So ladies go back and say, Look, we went to the empty tomb, the anointing body of Jesus. He's not there. The angel said he's risen, and we've come to tell you. And what's their response? That's nonsense, amen. But here's the deal, maybe you're in the room, and that's what you think you can get behind the historical data of Jesus being alive, and you can even agree to the fact that he was publicly crucified, but the story of the resurrection seems like nonsense. And here's what I would say to you, you actually have a lot in common with the first group of disciples, who also thought the story and the news of the resurrection was nonsense.

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Then what changed? Let me tell you what changed. They met him. They saw him alive. They felt the wounds. They saw the scars

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and the resurrection. They thought was nonsense after meeting Jesus, that became the foundation of their life. And these disciples, who were timid, afraid, doubting, denying. Once they saw the risen Jesus and were filled with the Holy Spirit, you know what they did? They didn't stay hidden. They didn't stay in private. No, no. They went out to the very streets of Jerusalem, the Jerusalem that crucified Jesus, and they boldly preached that the Jesus they had just crucified is alive, that he is risen from the dead. That's what they preached. They had courage they didn't have before. They had boldness they didn't have before, all because they met the risen Jesus, and when they saw him, here's what Acts four records and the leaders saw him when they observed the boldness of Peter, Peter, by the way, who denied three times Jesus on the on the night of

his death. When they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated, untrained men, they were amazed and recognized that they had been with Jesus. They knew these men were not naturally this strong. They were not built this way, necessarily, and they knew that they could only preach with such courage and boldness because they had been with the risen Jesus, that's what emboldened them. But the reality is, it's not just the insiders who were transformed. The Outsiders who wanted to end the very movement of Jesus were also deeply transformed. What about Paul? Paul was the greatest persecutor of the early church. He wanted to rid the earth of Christianity, considered it his life calling and zeal before God to destroy Christians and to erase the movement. But then one day, Paul met the risen Jesus. He had a vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus, and that appearance of Jesus changed his life forever. Paul would go from being the persecutor of the church to being a missionary and then a martyr, because even

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to the last breath of the apostle Paul, he could not deny the risen Jesus that he met.

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But it's not just Paul. Consider James the brother of Jesus. Let me just ask you, what would it take to convince you that your sibling was the Messiah? A whole lot. James grew up with Jesus. They probably did some really dumb things that brothers just do normally. James did not think I'm sharing the room. The Messiah? No, no, he thought his brother was crazy. And in fact, we don't have to guess what James said. The Bible tells us. I love how the Bible is so honest. John seven, verse five, it says about the family of Jesus that included James, for not even his brothers believed in him. Not even James believed in Jesus. But they didn't just not believe in Jesus. They tried to stop Jesus. And here's what we find in Mark three, verse 21 mark three says, when his family heard this, they set out to restrain him, to restrain Jesus, to stop Jesus, because they said he's out of his mind. That was the testimony of Jesus' own family, and James is one of those.

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But then what happened? And we say, what happened? First, Corinthians, 15, verse seven says, Then Jesus appeared to James.

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After Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared to James. So James has done everything he can to dismiss his older brother as being crazy out of his mind. And then he watches his brother die on a cross, a death he know he cannot escape from. And then three days later,

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Jesus appears, and now James needs no further explanation. The brother who would not believe in Jesus now cannot deny Jesus.

Libin Abraham 21:30

The brother who could not believe in Jesus now cannot deny Jesus. Why? Because Jesus showed up and

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James two would become a leader in the early church, and they'd be martyred, because he would never deny that his brother was dead, but now

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is alive. But the stories of transformation are not just limited to individuals. What about the Roman Empire? The most powerful empire the world had ever seen until that moment? The Roman Empire is who? Jesus died under the cross. Happened under the watch of this empire, and what began as a small group of people with a bold claim that their crucified Savior had risen over the next few centuries, it would spread like wildfire across the Roman Empire, and pagan temples would close down as the worship of Jesus filled the Empire, and this empire was turned upside down because of the news of the resurrection. Just think about this. The Cross, which in Rome, was the very instrument of execution, soon became the symbol of hope. The cross was the instrument of execution, but now it was a symbol of hope. Why? Because there was one who was nailed to the cross that got up out of the grave, and they could not deny that the cross was not the end of a story, but there was an empty tomb. I

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So historians and scholars said there's no plausible explanation for the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire, except if Jesus really did rise from the dead. So here's what we know to be certain, Christian and non Christian scholars alike agree Jesus really did die. We know he died because the Roman executioners were really good at their job, and history proves that he was crucified. We know that the tomb is empty. Even his opponents didn't deny the empty tomb, and they could not produce a dead body, not then, not ever. We know that those who claim to see him, they gained nothing, but they lost everything,

Speaker 1 23:45

and still, not one would deny the resurrection of Jesus, because it was more than just hope. It was their experienced reality.

Libin Abraham 23:52

And we know lives were transformed. Lives are the very people who wanted to end the movement.

Speaker 1 24:00

They became the most powerful messengers and preachers of the resurrection. The only explanation to all of this is that Jesus really did rise from the dead. It really happened that it's true, he was crucified and then God rose him from the dead.

Libin Abraham 24:23

Lee Strobel is a he was an atheist investigative journalist who worked for the Chicago Tribune as a journalist, the core conviction of his heart was not follow faith, but to follow facts. And that's what he had committed his whole life to doing, to follow facts. And then, lo and behold, one day, his wife comes up

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to him and says, Honey, I became a Christian. He thinks, oh, no, what has just happened to you? How could you believe such a thing? So he

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panicked that his wife was giving into this belief. So he decided, You know what I'm going to do, what I always do, I'm going to go investigate. I'm going to go turn every. Still went upside down to investigate the resurrection, and it'll just take me a weekend to disprove the resurrection. Well, the weekend turned into a few weeks turned into a few months and a few years. And Lee Strobel, he investigated, every historian, scholar, medical expert, all of the archeological evidences of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. And the more he researched, the more he dove in. The evidences were not collapsing, the evidences were converging. And the more he researched, the stronger the case became for the resurrection of Jesus. And so he wrote a book called The Case for Easter. You ought to check it out. And in the case for Easter, Lee Strobel writes this about the conclusion he came up with. When you weigh the evidence, the resurrection emerges as the most reasonable explanation. And then he says, I didn't become a Christian because I wanted to. I became a Christian because I was convinced that it was true. This is not the road I imagined taking. This is not what I wanted it to be true, but I followed the facts, I looked at the evidence, and I am absolutely convinced that the resurrection is true. It is true.

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So we began our time with asking the question, Did Jesus really rise? Is it true? But here's a question I want to end you with, what will you do with it? What will you do with it? See this room. Many online, we're convinced that Jesus, because He rose from the dead, he was more than a good teacher, more than a good man, more than just a historical figure, though he was, all of those things, we are convinced that Jesus was God, who in the flesh came to us. He took on skin, he walked in our shoes, he lived the perfect life that we could not live a life of perfect obedience and perfect love. And on Good Friday, Jesus went to the cross, because there on that old rugged Roman Cross, God's love and God's justice would meet. God's holiness demanded a payment for our sins, but God's love decided that God Himself would make the payment, that God would offer his life as he only sacrificed for our sins, and so he did. Jesus for six hours would hang on a cross, beaten, humiliated, unrecognizable, because this was the weight of our sin. And then he took it all on himself. And then Jesus died. He was crucified. He died. He was buried in the tomb for three days, but on that third day, the power of God raised Jesus to life, showing us that he is who he said he is. And that is why the bold declaration of Israel is He is risen. He is risen indeed. He is

risen. He is risen indeed. One more time with everything you got. He is risen. He is risen indeed. But friends. The story of Jesus does not end at the resurrection. Jesus appeared for 40 days, visiting with people. Then he ascended to heaven. He sent the Holy Spirit to be with us, and one day this risen Jesus will return on Earth, and we will see the King of kings and the Lord of Lord. And everyone will say, this is indeed true. He is Lord of life. He is Lord of Death. There is none but Him.

Speaker 1 28:53

This is the story of Easter. But the question is, what will you do today?

Libin Abraham 29:03

Easter is not just something we celebrate, it's something we experience. You want to just remember the resurrection. We can actually experience it. And some of you walked into this room and it feels like all hope has been lost. It feels like you can never change, and you just settled into your sin, your brokenness, your addiction, and you've just concluded this is who I'll always be. But friends, here's what we know to be true. Romans six, verse four says, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we so you too may walk in the newness of life, which means, if he's alive, your story isn't over. There's a new life available for you. There's a forgiven life available for you. There is an eternal life available for you. The stories you heard this morning were not just effects of self improvement. There are people who experience the newness of life, and we are convinced today that your story isn't final, because if anything felt final, it was a tomb, but God, on resurrection, Sunday robbed the tomb of its finality, and if Jesus walked out of the grave, can't you walk out of the grave by the power of the resurrection too? Because my Bible says the same power that raised Christ from the dead is alive in us today. So which means God is still saving the lost. He is still forgiving the sinner. He is so breaking the chains of addiction. He is so freeing people from the prisons of their past. He is removing fear and giving you faith. So today, will you believe that Jesus' risen life is an invitation to your risen life, because it could be your day that you come from death to life. You buy your heads with

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me a moment, we're going to sing and we're going to dismiss but there are some of you who need to take a step of faith right now

Unknown Speaker 31:15

that you're crossing from death to life. Today is the day of your new beginning, your new birth, the

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resurrection, won't be just something you talk about. It'll be something you experience. Won't be just something you heard about. It'll be your lived experience. Is that you the door of grace is open for you to come home, if that's you, would you just in your heart of hearts, just pray this, Jesus,

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I need to come alive. I stopped pretending, striving. I stopped trying to save myself. Jesus be my Savior. Jesus be my Lord.

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I believe with my heart and I confess with my mouth that Jesus died for me and that God raised Him from the dead on the third day,

Speaker 1 32:08

Jesus be the Lord of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit. Thank you that my sins are forgiven. My eternity is rewritten. My life is new. I'm coming from death to life,

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man, even as our heads are bowed, if that's you, would you just raise your hand the Lord as just something. Sometimes you got to do something physically, to cement something that's happened to you spiritually. If that's you, just lift your hands to the Lord. And so that's me, God, yeah, there's hands all over this room. Come on, let's give Jesus a praise for what he's doing. Amen, now at some point, if you've come, whether now, today, or sometime, if you come from death to life, would you stand as a powerful, bold declaration of Christ's risen life in you? Would you stand if you've gone from death to life in

your life, in your journey? Come on all over this and look at the, look at the amount of people that the resurrection of Jesus has impacted. This is our story. It's our collective song of worship. Jesus, you brought us from death to life. So we believe today that you are who you said you are. You are risen from the dead, that we are your church, and we are alive in you. Let's sing. Let's celebrate the news of the resurrection. See.