

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ **Acts 4:1-12**

The resurrection is the pivotal issue in defending Christianity. It either happened or it did not. If it did not happen, we really need to close our doors and stop playing church. If Jesus really did rise from the dead, everything changes. Our past can be forgiven. Our future can be secure. And we have power for life's challenges today. The resurrection of Jesus Christ answers the question: *Is Christianity valid?*

Acts 4 takes place approximately two months after Jesus rose from the dead. The entire book of Acts gives us a record of the life and times of those who first heard about the resurrection of Jesus.

For a brief period of time, it appeared as if the Jewish religious establishment and the Roman political establishment had won. Jesus had been defeated and crucified publicly as a deterrent to anyone who opposed either power. The boldness of the early Christians puts the religious and political powers on notice – this isn't over yet.

This is important to notice: Not only do the early Christians proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they do this in the presence of a hostile audience. They are boldly declaring life in the person of Jesus to the very same people who had sentenced Jesus to death.

There is only one reality that can explain the bold declaration of the followers of Jesus.
There is only one reality that could prove that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
There is only one reality that is consistent with the predictions of Jesus concerning His fate.

That one reality is the resurrection of Jesus.

The resurrection of Jesus changes everything.

Because of the resurrection of Jesus, death is defeated. Because of the resurrection, the enemies of Jesus are routed. Because of the resurrection, the followers of Jesus are empowered with a life-changing message. Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and His resurrection changes everything.

As a group, they were young – some were teenagers. They were intimidated by the Jewish religious leadership. They were uneducated and not trained to be professional religious leaders. After the resurrection, we see a completely different group of people.

One of the clearest evidences of the resurrection of Jesus is the transformed lives of the apostles. As you read through this passage, notice their courage.

These men who once ran for their lives would all give their lives for the gospel. This type of courage is not a one-time show. These men would demonstrate a lifetime of courage. A lifetime of proclaiming that Jesus had risen from the dead. A lifetime of conflict from religious and political authority.

Stealing a body from a grave and hiding it does not produce that type of transformation.

If the Jews stole the body and hid it in order to prevent the disciples from faking a resurrection, then all they have to do is produce the body, disprove the resurrection and it all goes away. If the Jews or Romans or somebody not Christian had the body, they have evidence that can permanently shut this thing down. Either way, the empty tomb is a strong witness for the resurrection.

Home Group Discussion Questions:

From Last Week's Message:

Are you comfortable praying out loud with other people? What are some things you can do to move you toward the privilege of enjoying prayer with your brothers and sisters in Christ?

(Example: pray out loud in private. Some people never pray out loud even in private so the idea of praying out loud with others is intimidating.)

From This Week's Message:

1. Do you remember when you first connected Easter with the resurrection of Jesus? What other ideas about Easter did you have?
2. In what ways do you think empty tomb still speaks today?
3. Why is the resurrection of Jesus important?
4. How has Jesus changed your life?

*Christianity if false is of no importance
And if true is of infinite importance.
The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.*