

Literally Unbelievable (Luke 24:1-12)
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I have been teaching my son that some churches, those who reject the truth of the gospel, believe in a fake god. But recently he has become old enough to ask me how we know that our God is the real God. The truth about God, which is the gospel we hold to, hinges on the truth of the resurrection. We believe that Jesus was executed based on trumped up charges, and that on the third day, which is Easter, He came back to life. But how do we know that Jesus rose from the dead? We must admit that this sounds unbelievable. Dead people don't just come back to life.

We see in Luke 24:1-12 that even at the time of the resurrection, people couldn't believe it. When the women came to Jesus' tomb, bringing spices to prepare His body, they were told that He is alive. But after they went to the disciples and told them what happened, the disciples couldn't believe it (v. 11). Even after Peter saw the empty tomb, he left perplexed. He had no certainty that Jesus was alive. These disciples saw Jesus perform miraculous signs, healing infirmities, re-growing body parts, and bringing others back to life. But even they couldn't believe that Jesus came back from the dead, despite being told by Jesus beforehand that He would rise. Just like Peter, we can gain no assurance from an empty tomb. It doesn't prove Jesus is alive. There are many other reasons why His tomb could have been empty. We must accept that the claim of the resurrection is hard to believe. And we shouldn't expect people to accept it right away. But we must stand by the truth of the resurrection nonetheless, because without the resurrection, Jesus' death has no power to save us. Anyone can claim to die for someone else, but how can we know that the death had any effect? How do we know our sins are forgiven? The resurrection is verification that Jesus' death was effective, and that God has forgiven our sins through Him.

So how do we know the resurrection really happened? We know because hundreds of eyewitnesses saw Him alive again after His execution. Those who followed Jesus were hiding in fear after Jesus' death, but after they saw Him alive they were emboldened. They went from cowards to being able to face death for Jesus. All the disciples except one ended up being martyred for their faith. And hundreds of the eyewitnesses were willing to be persecuted and die for Jesus. Why would they stake their faith on the resurrection, even to the point of death, if it

didn't happen? If the resurrection were made up, it could have easily been debunked. Christianity is not like Mormonism, Islam, or Buddhism, where the revelation comes from the solitary experience of one man. There is no way to disprove such claims because it would be one man's word against another. But Jesus' resurrection could have been much more easily disproved. Under the face of torture or perhaps persuaded by bribery, if just one witness admitted that it was all made up, then the faith would have died. We see many cults that only last for a few decades and die off because they are not based in objective truth. This didn't happen to Christianity. All the witnesses stood by the truth of the resurrection, even though it was outrageous and even though they would die for it, because it was true. They could not deny what they saw with their own eyes. And because the resurrection is true, we know that our sins are truly forgiven. All of the claims made about Jesus in the gospels hinge on the truth of the resurrection. And because of the willingness of these witnesses to stand by the truth, a billion people celebrate Jesus' resurrection today, after two millennia.