

# IS JESUS DEAD?

*Is Christ REALLY ALIVE today? DID Jesus of Nazareth really walk out of His tomb? COULD it be possible? Today, vast percentages of professing "Christians" REJECT the resurrection and second coming of Christ! What about it? Can it be PROVED Christ is risen?*

by Garner Ted Armstrong

**I**S IT INCREDIBLE that Christ was raised from the dead? Is the resurrection a FACT, or merely a kind of "divinized MYTH" used to "convey a profound truth" as some modernists claim? Is the resurrection merely a "fundamental belief" or an actual historical FACT? *What about it?* Have you ever really PROVED it one way or the other?

## If Christ Is NOT RISEN...

The Apostle Paul was inspired to write, "... if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching VAIN, and *your faith* is also VAIN" (I Cor. 15:14).

Notice further: Paul, inspired of the Spirit of God, said, "And if Christ be not raised, *your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins!*" (Verse 17.)

Can you see clearly *what this means?*

It means — UNLESS YOU ACCEPT THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, and the resurrection of the dead *at His coming* — your Bible says your WHOLE CHRISTIAN "FAITH" IS VAIN, EMPTY, VOID AND USELESS! It means, unless you accept the *fact* of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, your *sins* have *not* been forgiven, and the penalty of eternal *death* is still hanging over you (Rom. 6:23).

And yet, how *shocking* today, to see vast segments of "Christianity" *openly* denying the RISEN Christ, *openly* proclaiming they believe His second coming to be sheer "myth" and yet still claiming His name, still calling themselves "Christian."

NO WONDER so many "laymen" are mixed up. *No wonder* people are so confused, uncertain, *unsure*. Their PASTORS aren't sure, either.

Today's theological students — *tomorrow's ministers* — are DIVIDED in their beliefs.

Poll-takers were *shocked* to find only 44 percent of them believe in the *virgin birth of Christ*. ONLY 46 PERCENT BELIEVE THAT JESUS ASCENDED PHYSICALLY WHOLE INTO HEAVEN AFTER HIS CRUCIFIXION!

But the most *SHOCKING* of all is that only ONE OUT OF ONE HUNDRED of the "divinity" students in today's leading theological institutions believe there will be a second coming of Christ!

Yes, NO WONDER people *doubt* the resurrection of Christ. Even the MINISTERS of today and tomorrow DOUBT it.

But what about YOU? Do YOU believe it? Do you REALLY believe it? Can you really conceive of a RISEN Christ? *Really?*

## Was the Resurrection a Hoax?

No single miracle of the Bible has escaped the caustic sarcasm of the supposed "higher critics" who, having *denied* the actual AUTHORITY of God and the Bible, have been given over to REPROBATE MINDS (Rom. 1:28).

The Resurrection has come in for the greatest share of criticism.

Some say the JEWS stole Jesus' body away. Others believe the Roman soldiers HAD His body secretly, to bury it elsewhere, at a later time. Still others actually believe His OWN DISCIPLES spirited His body away, and reburied it. Some claim the disciples were victims of hallucinations, or self-hypnosis because of their fervent belief Christ

would rise again, and their great *desire* to see Him resurrected.

Some professing Christians of today believe He *stayed buried*, or IF HE "came to life" again, that He disappeared — departed into obscurity — living out His natural life elsewhere, to finally die of old age.

Mostly — professing "Christianity" of today simply ISN'T SURE. They simply DON'T KNOW.

Remember, only FORTY-SIX PERCENT of tomorrow's ministers BELIEVE Christ was resurrected, and of *these* ONLY ONE PORTION OF ONE PERCENT BELIEVE HE'S COMING AGAIN.

*What about it? Are* these widely accepted opinions about Christ's resurrection really TRUE?

## Did the Jews Steal His Body?

Some people reason His Pharisaical enemies *stole* His body, spiriting it away to a different location, where they secretly buried it again.

But *could* this be true? Does this make any sense?

*Think* for a moment! On MANY different occasions, the Pharisaical leaders had attempted to have Jesus Christ *killed*. They would have done *anything* to have discredited Jesus as the true Messiah. After the death and reported resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Jewish leaders themselves "... gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, *His disciples* came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is *commonly*

reported among the Jews until this day" (Matt. 28:12-15).

Notice it. The *Jews themselves* paid a large sum of money to the soldiers to spread the lie that Jesus' DISCIPLES had stolen His body away. If the JEWS had stolen His body, why would they bribe the soldiers to say the *disciples* had done it?

Think again. What would have been one of the greatest PROOFS to the Jews that Jesus was NOT the Messiah? Surely the finding of His own *body* would have!

Let's face the plain facts — and be in doubt no longer! Had the Jewish leaders, or any of the Jews of Jesus' day been able to find Jesus' body they would have PRODUCED that body. Just as the Italian people dragged the body of Mussolini through the streets of Milan, to hang it ignominiously in a public square, upside down beside the body of his mistress, so would the Jews of Jesus' day have paraded Christ's broken body through the streets of Jerusalem and all the other towns and villages around, and displayed it publicly for all the world to see!

Think again! If the *Jews* had stolen His body, and KNEW where that body was, why would the New Testament be absolutely filled with accounts of how *these same Jews* finally persecuted and even MURDERED at the jeopardy of *their own* lives, those who went about teaching that Jesus HAD risen from the dead? Would it make any sense to take vows to eat no food or drink no water until they had killed the Apostle Paul, to kill James the brother of John, to martyr and butcher numerous other disciples and true apostles of God for teaching Jesus *had risen from the dead*, if the Jews absolutely KNEW He had NOT risen from the dead?

Of course not!

A person would have to be a literal FOOL in the face of such absolutely conclusive evidence, to believe *the Jews* stole Jesus' body.

### Did the DISCIPLES Steal His Body?

As you have already read, it is commonly told today that His DISCIPLES stole His body.

But does this make any sense? Remember, His disciples were very *reluctant* to believe He HAD risen again. Peter had said, "I go fishing." Others had scattered to different areas.

To them, the whole thing was over — finished. They thought it had been "nice" while it lasted, but now their leader had been martyred, and they were about to *go their own way*, back to their respective jobs and positions of before, and give up the whole thing.

Remember, they had not as yet been *converted*, had not received God's Holy Spirit.

KNOWING these facts, is it then even *remotely possible* to believe that these same disciples could have been so filled with power and the deep-down CONVICTION of the *truth* of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that they went out fervently preaching against *all opposition*, even at the expense of their own LIVES, that Jesus truly *had risen*?

Would dozens of men be torn limb from limb, thrown in to wild beasts, drawn and quartered, sawn asunder, hung upside down, *burnt at the stake* in horrible martyrdom FOR SOMETHING THEY KNEW TO BE A DELIBERATE HOAX?

Certainly not!

No, not by the wildest stretch of a fool's imagination could the happenings as recorded in the book of Acts have taken place, if these dedicated men were suffering such terrible tortures for a cause which *they knew* to be a *lie*, a Leader *they knew* to be a *hoax*, a hope *they knew* to be *false*.

The mere suggestion that His disciples stole His body so defies all logic, reason and true facts so as to appear ludicrous.

Remember another ironclad fact. The early New Testament apostles who first preached and published the story that Jesus Christ had risen from the tomb BELIEVED it to be a fact. They were not resting their faith on an empty tomb, but upon supernatural, miraculous APPEARANCES of Jesus Christ on MANY different occasions.

Thomas had actually investigated His wounds and scars. Christ had appeared to over 500 brethren at the same time! He had appeared in a room where they

were meeting, but with the doors locked.

Yes, Jesus was SEEN ALIVE after His resurrection, not once or twice, but at least *ten times*, as recorded in the New Testament. He was seen, not by just one individual whose word could be doubted, but by groups of two, seven, ten, eleven, and even 500! More of these vital proofs later.

### Could It Have Been Mass Hypnotism?

Could the resurrection of Christ merely have been an hallucination, as a result of a fervent desire in the hearts of the apostles? Could it have been an ecstasy? Could it have been merely a dream or a vision? Was it, perhaps, an apparition?

But this would be utterly impossible!

Remember, His disciples DID NOT BELIEVE He had risen.

"And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but SOME DOUBTED" (Matt. 28:17.) "It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which *told these things* unto the apostles. *And their words seemed to them as idle tales*, and they BELIEVED THEM NOT" (Luke 24:10-11.)

*How plain!* When the women had returned from the empty sepulchre, breathlessly telling their story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the apostles and others thought they were relating a mere "idle tale."

Later, reading the account from Luke 24, verse 13 to verse 31, the inescapable evidence is given that the disciples *did not want* to believe He had risen! Jesus had drawn near to them as they were nearing a small village outside of Jerusalem. Their eyes were closed that they did not recognize Him (verse 16) and He began speaking to them. But Cleopas (verse 18) began to relate what had occurred, in a doubtful, hesitating manner. "Then he said unto them, O fools, and SLOW OF HEART TO BELIEVE ALL THAT THE PROPHETS HAVE SPOKEN" (verse 25).

Even after this stern admonition and His expounding of all the scriptures concerning Himself (verse 27) it wasn't

until after the meal that they *finally recognized* with whom they were speaking!

All the way through the Gospel accounts, the Gospel writers themselves attest to a very great *reluctancy* on the part of His closest apostles and servants to BELIEVE in His resurrection!

COULD it then have been an hallucination? Do men "conjure up" a vague or nebulous dream in something they are "hoping for" if they really *are not even hoping for it*? Would they have an ecstatic "vision" of something they *didn't believe would occur* in the first place?

No, there is no logic under the sun which would even remotely support such a foolish belief. Further, different groups of people kept on seeing Jesus Christ in different places at different times. It was neither "mass hypnosis" nor was it a dream. The same dream *does not keep on occurring* to totally *different* people in widely *separated* areas at totally *different* times.

Remember, then, that the disciples of Jesus Christ THEMSELVES *did not believe* the resurrection of Christ *until they simply HAD to believe it!*

### Was Jesus Not Really Dead?

Some have advanced a theory that perhaps Jesus was only in a "swoon."

Perhaps He wasn't really dead, but revived after He had been in the tomb, and somehow escaped it, to journey off to a far place and there live out His natural life and die of old age.

Could that have been true? Remember, His *own mother* and others with her had actually *seen Him DIE!* When a person has been BEATEN and WHIPPED until he is so exhausted he literally *collapses* on the public streets, when he has been up all one day and all one night and part of another being buffeted about, kicked and spit upon — when he has been without food or water, and lashed within an inch of his life, finally to have *spikes* driven through his hands and feet, to hang in the blazing sun for hours, *then* to have a huge spear *plunged into his side*, with great spurts of gushing blood and fluids from his stomach come pouring

out of his body — when His lifeless, limp body was taken *down* from the stake, carefully wrapped in grave clothes by Joseph of Arimathaea, and laid away in a tomb — *was there any question but that He was DEAD?*

What if there could possibly have been the *remote* chance that He wasn't dead? Could He have been, in such a horribly wounded condition, weak and exhausted, able to move a great huge stone that required several Roman soldiers, in all of their youth and strength, to move?

Remember further that the Jews were carefully *guarding* against this possibility!

The chief priests and Pharisees had said to Pilate, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive [showing they firmly believed Him to be now DEAD, and were satisfied He really *was* dead], After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be *made sure* until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first" (Matt. 27:63, 64).

Pilate cooperated. He said, "Ye have a watch: go your way, *make it as sure as ye can!*" (Verse 65.)

Notice carefully! Anyone advancing the foolish notion Jesus had only "swooned" is denying logic, reason, historical fact, the inspired Word of God and SANITY ITSELF!

The Jews were CONVINCED He WAS DEAD! Not only were they thoroughly SATISFIED of this fact, but they were making sure the stone could not even be opened FROM THE OUTSIDE — *let alone* from the *inside* by a mortally wounded man!

"So they went, and made the sepulchre SURE, *sealing the stone*, and setting a WATCH!" (Matt. 27:66.)

Further, when the stone WAS rolled back, it was NOT done by secretive disciples at night, but by A POWERFUL ANGEL! The WATCHERS the Jews had set FAINTED DEAD AWAY at the sight of him! This was NOT some "secretive" thing, of Jesus' inert body being whisked away at *night*, but a TREMENDOUS,

AWESOME, GLORIOUS MIRACLE! (See Matt. 28:2-8.)

If He were merely *physically* alive after His so-called "resurrection" and had *not really died* but been in a "swoon," and subsequently *escaped* from the tomb, how is it He was able to manifest Himself *right through locked doors!* Jesus Himself said, "I am he that liveth, and WAS DEAD!" (Rev. 1:18.) He said, "These things saith the first and the last, which *was dead*, and is alive!" (Rev. 2:8.)

And what a ridiculous, foolish and blasphemous assumption on the part of God-rejecting men, to even remotely assume that Jesus had only "swooned"!

Jesus Christ was completely, totally DEAD!

### Could the Resurrection Have Been a Spurious Addition to the Texts?

Could it be that the resurrection was a story which was inserted *into* the original writings at a *later time*?

Could the *records* have been tampered with? Could scribes at a later date have inserted the stories of His death, burial and resurrection in order to invent some fake glorification of an actual dead hero?

Hardly! It is an actual, firmly established historical *fact* that the so-called "sect" known as CHRISTIANS came into being *during the reign of Tiberius!* The thing which was attested to by even pagan writers and scholars that *brought* these Christians *into existence* was the belief that Jesus had *risen from the dead!*

The resurrection of the dead did not become a *later belief* of "Christians"! Rather, it was the *very beginning* of their belief, the *very strength* and *impetus* of their faith, the *very reason* for their fervent hope!

The cause and the *beginning* of real and true Christian faith was the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ! It did *not* gradually come to be accepted, to be "inserted" into the Bible later!

These people during that early first century *had* no written records of Christ's resurrection! Rather, they had *personal* attestation, *living* eyewitnesses,

personal *experiences of their own* upon which to base their faith!

They rested their sound and fervent faith, *not* on some "records," but on what they had seen *with their own eyes!*

Remember again, that any subsequent records of a *later* date were the *result* of their faith, not that which brought their faith into existence!

If Jesus Christ had not risen from the dead, there would have been no Church of God, and no New Testament writings at all!

Remember, the Apostle Paul said before King Agrippa, "For the king KNOWETH of these things [of the resurrection of the dead], before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that *none* of these things are *hidden* from him; for this THING WAS NOT DONE IN A CORNER"! (Acts 26:26.)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a talked-of, discussed, *well-known* event that swept the entirety of the Roman Empire in a short time.

For even more proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, request our free booklets, *The Crucifixion Was Not on*

*Friday and The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday!*

### Christ Is Alive Today!

Men have tried EVERY means to discredit your LORD, your BOSS, your RULER, your SAVIOUR! But they have failed miserably. So-called "higher critics" have shown themselves to be simpering, unreasonable, illogical, UNBALANCED men of REPROBATE MINDS! (Rom. 1:28.) Jesus Christ of Nazareth is ALIVE today!

Your Bible PROVES it! HISTORY PROVES IT! Sound logic and plain admission of concrete evidence PROVES it!

Do you realize HOW MUCH depends on the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Without it, there would have been no Holy Spirit from heaven. No New Testament of the Bible. ALL HISTORY WOULD HAVE BEEN WRITTEN DIFFERENTLY!

Without it, *you* could NOT BE SAVED, because Christians are saved by HIS LIFE, not by His death! (Rom. 5:10.) Without the resurrection of Christ, there would have BEEN NO CHURCH,

and there would NEVER *have been* a SINGLE CHRISTIAN!

It's time to face facts!

It's time to *realize* what this means!

Without the RISEN Christ, YOU would not be reading these words NOW!

God's word says, "If in this life *only* we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. BUT NOW is CHRIST RISEN from the dead, and become the FIRSTFRUITS of them that slept" (I Cor. 15:19-20).

Jesus Christ is soon going to STAND ON THIS EARTH!

He will RULE it with a rod of iron! THINK of it! The HEAVENS splitting with a rock-breaking, earth-quaking ROAR! Streaming, blinding, BRILLIANT flashes of light revealing the descending *King of Kings*, on a *huge white stallion*, followed by BILLIONS of angels, *as far as the eye can see!* THINK of it!

THINK of what YOU will say — how YOU will feel, when those blazing eyes of that conquering King focus squarely into YOUR eyes, searching the depths of YOUR heart! *What will He say to you?* □