

Sermon Title: Death to Life

Sermon Text: Matthew 12:38-41

Date: April 20, 2025

1. What stood out to you the most from Good Friday or Easter this year? Was there anything God taught you or brought to your attention?
2. In the sermon, we heard that "It is reasonable to believe in Jesus because of the evidence we have." Have you ever looked for evidence to support your belief in Jesus? What kind of evidence (facts, feelings, experiences, etc.) has been meaningful for you personally?
3. Have you ever shared the Gospel with someone who was looking for proof or evidence? How did that conversation go, and what did you learn from it?
4. Pick one section from the back of the sheet ("Was Jesus a Real Person?", "Did Jesus Really Die?", or "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?") and read it together. How might you use this evidence to share the Gospel with someone asking that question?

Pray

Go around the group and pray for someone in your life who doesn't believe in God. Ask God to soften their heart, give you an opportunity to share the Gospel, and give you boldness and the words to say.

Was Jesus a Real Person?

Tacitus (c. 56–120 AD) - Roman Historian

Christus, from whom the name [Christian] had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus...

Annals 15.44

Josephus (c. 37–100 AD) - Jewish historian

At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous... Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive...

Antiquities 18.3.3

Babylonian Talmud (c. 70–200 AD) - Rabbinic Text

On the eve of Passover, Yeshua was hanged...

Sanhedrin 43a

Pliny the Younger (c. 61–113 AD) – Roman governor

They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang... a hymn to Christ as to a god...

Letter to Emperor Trajan, 10.96

Lucian of Samosata (c. 125–180 AD) – Greek Satirist

The Christians... worship a man to this day—the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account... they are all brothers... and live after his laws.

The Death of Peregrinus

See also Suetonius (*Life of Claudius* 25.4), Mara Bar-Serapion (Letter to his son), Celsus (Quoted by Origen in *Contra Celsum* 1.28), and Thallus (quoted by Julius Africanus in *Chronographia*).

Did Jesus Really Die?

On the Physical Death of Jesus - *Journal of the American Medical Association* (1986)

Jesus likely died from hypovolemic shock (severe blood loss) and asphyxiation (inability to breathe). Scourging, nailing, and being suspended on the cross made each breath harder, leading to suffocation. The spear in his side released blood and water — consistent with pericardial effusion (fluid buildup around the heart) and pleural effusion (fluid buildup around the lungs) — supporting that Jesus was already dead when pierced. These findings, along with Roman expertise in execution, strongly confirm that Jesus did not survive the crucifixion. *Please note the article (left) includes graphic medical descriptions.*



Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?

The Tomb Was Guarded — and Still Empty

The Romans sealed and guarded Jesus' tomb, but it was found empty. Even the Pharisees didn't deny this — they spread the story that the disciples stole the body. But the disciples had no motive. After Jesus died, they ran away, hid in fear, and lost hope that he was the Messiah. Only after seeing him resurrected did they boldly proclaim his resurrection — even though it cost them their lives. Groups don't suffer and die for something they know is false.

There Were Eyewitnesses — Lots of Them

Jesus first appeared to women — a surprising detail, since women weren't considered reliable witnesses in that culture. He was then seen by Peter, by the twelve disciples, by James (his brother), and eventually by more than 500 people at one time. Many of these eyewitnesses were still alive when New Testament was written and could confirm what they saw.

Not the Messiah They Expected

First-century Jews expected a Messiah who would free them from Roman rule and restore Israel's kingdom. Instead, Jesus was crucified by the very empire they hoped he would overthrow. Proclaiming that this crucified man was the risen Son of God was foolish to Jews and offensive to Romans. The Gospel message would never have spread unless Jesus was truly raised from the dead, giving people a renewed hope in the coming of God's kingdom.