**What in the World Happened Today?**

***What is SO Special About the FIRST Day of the Week?***

Luke 24:1

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1. **Introduction (Luke 24:1)**
   1. **In case you have forgotten, today IS Sunday**
      1. It has, from time immemorial, been known as the FIRST day of the week, no matter what culture you grew up in, and no matter what religion you grew up in
      2. Sunday is the first day, and Saturday has always been the last day of the week
      3. And it was on THIS day, a long, long time ago, that something marvellous, something unbelievable happened.
      4. It was **something** very big, that happened just outside the city limits of a small city called Jerusalem – what happened was bigger than anyone could ever imagine – something so very complex… something **so impossible happened**.
         1. Someone was killed…
         2. And then buried behind a huge, 1 ton stone.
         3. And then that same Person, three days later, early on Sunday morning, got back up and showed Himself to be back alive again
      5. Now, when you hear about it, and read about it, and try to get your head around it, it is basically **silly, absurd, irrational, and unbelievable** that a very brutally murdered dead man would actually, marvellously live again!
   2. **And yet, I believe it happened with all my heart AND with all my mind! Just as countless millions of others do too**!
   3. **So, I have three questions:**
      1. What is it, that happened on THIS day that has some of us so convinced that it is true?
      2. Why did it change the world throughout all of history?
      3. And why hasn’t it changed you?
2. **Background (Acts 1:1-3)**
   1. Infallible means, “provable, verifiable, without a doubt”
   2. “Most people” today think that “most people in history” were easy believers. That people found it easy to believe the Bible, and just believed whatever Jesus taught.
   3. But you would be wrong to think that sceptics are new – that people were just plain stupid “way back then”
   4. I have found that modern people are some of the most foolish people ever – stupidity is not limited to the past!
      1. Believe in UFO’s, angels visiting them, holy water curing them, magical powers
      2. People believe socialism is the answer to world problems instead of personal responsibility
      3. Believe we all evolved from rocks and worms and monkeys
      4. Believe the earth is flat
      5. Believe Hollywood is real
      6. No. Stupidity spans all time!
   5. And, No…. God has never rejected anyone for being a sceptic. As a matter of fact, He **expects** us to think things through, and weigh all the evidences, and reason things out according to ALL the facts about that awful weekend so long ago!
   6. **Nine Undeniable Facts You Must Face** (1Cor 15:17,19) – that PROVE that something UNBELIEVABLE happened on HIS day
      1. **FACTS** drawn from the record of NOT one, but FOUR eye witnesses, in all four of the Gospels in your Bible!
      2. **FACTS that have to believed, or we are of all men, most miserable!**
3. **Message - Nine Undeniable Facts You Must Face**
   1. **#1 Someone named Jesus of Nazareth was wrongfully tried, convicted, tortured, and then murdered by crucifixion** (John 19:16-19).
      1. THREE times Pilate affirms that he can find no fault with Jesus (John 18:38; 19:4, 6) – that He should NOT be crucified
         1. Joh 18:38 *Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all*.
         2. Joh 19:4 *Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him*.
         3. Joh 19:6 *When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him*.
      2. Fact #1 is undeniable
      3. It happened folks - It’s recorded in the stones of history; not just in the Bible
      4. The question is, do you believe it?
   2. **#2 His followers were completely taken by surprise, and were DISCREDITED** – everything they believed had been proven completely wrong when Jesus died
      1. Now, this goes against everything we would have thought. We would think that Jesu’ disciples/followers would have accepted whatever Jesus said to be true…
      2. Well, Jesus **constantly warned** His followers that He was going to be crucified. He constantly taught them that he had come NOT to be the King of kings YET, but to give His life in place of a lost world
         1. Luke 9:43-45
         2. Luke 18:31-34
      3. Did you notice that NONE of His disciples accepted that teaching to be true? Even at the Last Supper, they argued about who was going to sit on the right and left hand of Jesus when He would be soon crowned as the King of Jerusalem, instead of trying to fathom why Jesus would give up His life!
      4. So…
         1. When Jesus gets surrounded by the angry mob in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:51-56)…
         2. And then He LETS them capture Him (Mt 26:57)…
         3. And then STOPS Peter from trying to protect Him…
         4. And then LETS the mob drag Him away as a criminal, only to be falsely accused, and then not defend Himself before Caiaphas the High priest, and Herod and Pilate…
      5. It’s NO wonder Peter walks away from Jesus confused, and bitterly angry, and ends up DENYING that he had ever even met Jesus, much less, admit being His follower!
      6. You see, through every stage of that last evening with His disciples, Jesus lost every last follower He ever had, TO DISBELIEF!
      7. NOT ONE PERSON, who had walked with Jesus for the past 3 ½ years, continued to believe everything was going to be fine – that He would rise again, and be okay!
      8. Fact #2 is undeniable
      9. It happened folks – It is the opposite of what any one of US would have written!
      10. The question is, do you believe it?
   3. **#3 The body of Jesus was verifiably DEAD** (John 19:31-34)
      1. It was then taken down from off the cross, and carefully wrapped, and then buried in a borrowed tomb (Mt 27:59,60)
      2. And then SEALED by Pilate the governor to make sure no one could tamper with the body and cause any more problems for him (Mt 27:62-66)
      3. Nobody denies these FACTS!
      4. No one doubts that Jesus truly died on that cross – except maybe a Muslim (just fainted)
      5. Fact #3 is undeniable
      6. The question is, do you believe it?
   4. **#4 Three horrible days and three endless nights passed after the crucifixion, with no signs and no wonderful miracles occurring to encourage Jesus’ followers of what was ahead** (Mark 8:31).
      1. No. They were completely on their own…
      2. There were no emergency medical responders to resucitate Jesus
      3. There was no “wink, wink” from the dead body of Jesus as he was placed in the tomb
      4. Jesus was dead and buried now, and would STAY dead for 72 hours!
      5. The disciples were in for 3 of the longest three days in all of history!
      6. Fact #4 is undeniable
      7. The question is, do you believe it?
   5. **#5 Then, on THIS day, ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, on SUNDAY, long before sunrise, the tomb was found to be EMPTY and the body of Jesus was no longer in it!** (Mark 16:1-6)
      1. Muhammed's body – you can find in the Al-Masjid an-Nabawi ("Mosque of the Prophet") in the city of Medina in Saudi Arabia
      2. Buddha's body - you will find its cremated ashes spread throughout temples in Kushinagar, India
      3. Confucius’ body can find it in his home town of Qufu, Shandong Province, China
      4. Sun Myung Moon's body - you can find it in Cheongseongsan, in South Korea's Gyeonggi Province
      5. Ron Hubbard's body (guy who started Scientology) – his cremated ashes were scattered in the Pacific Ocean
      6. Joseph Smith's body – it is buried at the Smith Family Cemetery in Nauvoo, Illinois in the United States, south of Chicago
      7. Mary Baker Eddy's body - is buried at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the United States
      8. Jesus – well, people have been searching for the last 2,000 years for it, and cannot find it! Because He is not dead anymore!
      9. Fact #5 is undeniable! The tomb is empty; the body is gone! And has never been found
      10. The question is, do you believe it?
   6. **#6 NONE of the disciples of Jesus expected Him to be alive – all of them doubted, and all resisted the evidences as they piled in** (Mark 16:9-14)
      1. THE WOMEN who went early to the tomb that Sunday morning before sunrise didn’t expect Jesus to be alive – they just wanted to make sure He was buried properly
      2. THE GREAT APOSTLES PETER AND JOHN did not expect Jesus to be alive – shook their heads in disbelief, even though evidences began to fly at them rapidly that first Sunday morning
      3. THE TWO MEN WALKING ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS did not believe that Jesus had actually risen from the grave – even though they were walking and talking with Him along their entire Sunday afternoon trip!
      4. THOMAS certainly did not believe Jesus was alive after how he had seen Jesus tortured and brutally murdered on the cross 3 days earlier!
      5. The FACT is, NONE of Jesus’ “great” disciples expected Jesus to get up out of that horrible and dark tomb!
      6. Yet something DID happen on that First day of the week, that changed all that!
      7. The question is, do you believe it?
   7. **#7 Jesus showed Himself alive, over and over for the next 40 days** (Mark 16:14,19) – multiple eyewitnesses, and even hostile opponents had to admit Jesus was alive
      1. First to the women in the Garden next to His tomb
      2. Then to His disciples in the Upper Room
      3. Then specifically to Thomas
      4. Then to over 500 people gathered on the day of His ascension to the right hand of God!
      5. And lastly Jesus showed Himself alive to Saul of Tarsus – one of Jesus’ most hateful enemies, who constantly admitted that he had been wrong, and that Jesus was indeed, the Son of God, risen from the dead! (Acts 17:2,3; 25:13,14,18,19)
   8. **#8 All the Unbelief of the disciples, was gloriously OVERRULED on the morning of the FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK!** (Acts 8:1-4)
      1. You know… sometimes it is just good to be proven wrong!!!
      2. **The same disciples, who had LOST absolutely all their faith, and all the hope in what Jesus and the Old Testament had said, became believers – it wasn’t fifty-fifty, or even a majority, but EVERY LAST disciple’s loss of faith was overturned on THIS DAY!**
      3. Their lives were almost instantly transformed from timid, fearful, hesitant, confused sceptics, to fully convinced fanatics – to the point of being willing to die just for saying Jesus was back alive!
      4. Not die for just preaching the words of Jesus, or preaching a new religion…
      5. But willing to die simply because they fully believed the unbelievable! That a dead man had BY HIMSELF got up from the grave and was alive forevermore!
   9. **#9 Jesus’ most critical opponents became His most ardent followers**:
      1. Jesus’ half-brother, James was an ardent unbeliever, until the resurrection – and he became the SECOND man to die for preaching Jesus was alive after Stephen!
      2. Saul of Tarsus changed from being so fierce and hateful against the name of Jesus, into the greatest risk taker of all time, living on the edge, risking his life and health to just tell another soul – all because Saul/Paul believed Jesus was alive!
      3. Lee Strobel
         1. Earned a journalism degree from University of Missouri and a Master of Studies in Law degree from Yale Law School
         2. Became a journalist for the Chicago Tribune and other newspapers for 14 years.
         3. Strobel states he was an atheist when he began investigating the Biblical claims about Christ after his wife's conversion. Prompted by the results of his investigation, he became a Christian on November 8, 1981.
         4. Wrote four tremendous books
            1. The Case for Christ
            2. The Case for Faith
            3. The Case for a Creator
            4. The Case for the Real Jesus
      4. Peter Hitchens, brother of militant atheist Christopher Hitchens, who became a Christian late in life in spite of his brother, and avidly debated with atheists about the facts of Biblical Christianity!
      5. Myself. Born a sinner, grew up without faith and without God, mocked religious fanatics and TV evengelists, and people addicted to religion - until someone shook my confidences, and challenged me to check out the facts about Jesus! And “I” crumbled under the weight of the truths and facts of the resurrection!
4. **Conclusion**
   1. **I know it is so hard to believe…**
      1. That God would take our place under righteous wrath and judgment and DIE, and then unbelievably RISE AGAIN
      2. And invite absolutely every sinful man, woman and child to receive the free gift of eternal life that was purchased at His expense!
   2. **But God made it that way so that you would have to believe something**
      1. Either that YOU are so smart and so good and have nothing to worry about
      2. Or that you are so sinful and wicked, and need a Saviour, who beat sin and death, to prove that He can even save a wretch like you!
   3. **The Facts are Staggering!**
      1. Someone named Jesus of Nazareth was wrongfully tried, convicted, tortured, and then murdered by crucifixion
      2. His followers were completely taken by surprise, and were DISCREDITED
      3. The body of Jesus was verifiably DEAD
      4. Three horrible days and nights passed after the crucifixion, with no signs and no wonderful miracles occurring to encourage Jesus’ followers of what was ahead!
      5. Then, on THIS day, THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, long before sunrise, the tomb was found to be EMPTY and the body of Jesus was no longer in it! Just as he said it would be!
      6. None of the disciples of Jesus expected Him to be alive – all of them doubted, and all resisted the evidences as they piled in
      7. Jesus showed Himself alive, over and over for the next 40 days
      8. All the Unbelief of the disciples, was gloriously OVERRULED on the morning of the FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK!
      9. And Jesus’ most critical opponents became His most ardent followers!
      10. Maybe they don’t impress you, but they did ME!
   4. **The greatest PROOF of the life of Jesus, if you are looking for one, is found in the transformed lives of those who just believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ!**
      1. You do realise that believers in the resurrection do not mobilize into armies, and do not take up arms, and riot in the streets for their rights, RIGHT?
      2. Instead, they gladly lay down their lives, humbling themselves, rejecting anger, wrath, revenge, and complaining!
      3. They lose their lives; lose their health; lose their careers; and lose their families; all so that a lost world, that has no hope, hears about the only true miracle that matters – the miracle of life after death!
      4. I wish THIS generation of sceptics could see some believers. Some REAL believers! Ones who forsake their plans, and their pride, their prestige, their fears, their sports, their wealth, and their hang-ups, and would just go all out for Christ!
   5. **So, let me ask you the same three questions I started off with:**
      1. What is it, that happened on THIS day that has some of us so convinced that it is true?
      2. Why did it changed the world throughout all of history?
      3. And why hasn’t it changed you?
      4. I will tell you why… There is only ONE reason!
      5. Because all the facts in the world about Jesus mean nothing until they are BELIEVED (Romans 10:9,10; 4:24,25)
      6. And I mean “**believe with all your heart**” not just your understanding in your head like so many try to do. Head knowledge will never save! Heart belief WILL!
      7. The question is, do you believe ANY of it?