



How do we know these Bible stories are true?

This is a question that came from a confirmation student. It's a great question. We are exposed to so many religions and spiritual teachings, how do we know ours is the right one?

For starters, there's the Resurrection. How many people who ever claimed to have been sent by God to reveal the truth to mankind have ever risen from their graves - just as they had predicted? Precisely one. Jesus. As one Muslim who converted to Christianity said when asked why he had chosen Jesus, "When you are confronted with many different paths you can choose, you look down each path. At the end of every path - except one - you see a tomb with a dead person in it. But at the end of the one other path you see an empty tomb with a man standing beside it - very much alive. It's a 'no-brainer.' You pick the only path that has the guy whose alive."

But, the Resurrection is a story we find in the Bible. And, again, how do we know it's true?

1. as we've seen in recent Tuesday Bible Studies, *there is evidence outside the Bible for the things inside the Bible*. For example, Jewish historical records include the arrest warrant for "Jesus of Nazareth." They also include evidence that Jesus' tomb was empty (of course they give a different explanation for that than we do, but they confirm the evidence that no body could be found. There is also ancient historical evidence in Turkey for the earthquake and sky turning black on the day Jesus died - just as recorded in the Gospels.

2. *If you want to find out if someone is telling the truth, you check with other people.* The beauty of the Bible is that it is not just written by one person (as, for example, are the Q'ran and Book of Mormon). The Bible is written by many people. In the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) we have four separate biographical writings about the same person - from four different perspectives, not just one. The remainder of the New Testament contains writings from seven different people! Each of them verifying the stories.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 15 the apostle Paul lists all the eyewitnesses that saw Jesus after he had risen - eyewitnesses who can confirm the truth of what Paul is writing. Among that list is "after that he appeared to more than 500 of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living..." Why did Paul add that last part - "most of whom are still living"? He's telling the first century people that he's writing to: "If you don't believe what I'm telling you about Jesus, you can check it out for yourself if you want. These people are still alive, still around. Go ask them.."

3. *One good question to ask is "Does this person have anything to gain from telling me this?"* The book of Acts tells us what the disciples gained: One got beheaded. One was put to death by stoning. Two others were flogged and put in prison. Christian historians tell us that all except the apostle John were put to death for proclaiming that Jesus had died and rose. People aren't willing to die for stories they made up. The apostles who wrote the New Testament had nothing to gain from what they told about Jesus. Yet they said, "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

There are many other "proofs" for the truth of the Bible. But ultimately it comes down to this: You believe what it written, because of God's Holy Spirit working through His Word to bring you to believe. As the Apostle Paul said in 1 Cor. 2:4-5

*"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, **so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.**"*

A final word of encouragement from Jesus in John 20: "*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.*"

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net