

DEFENDING YOUR FAITH - 1

To Your Family, Friends & Foes



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“But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” -- 1 Peter 3:15 (NASU)

Before the resurrected Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave His believers one commandment: *“to go and preach the gospel”* (Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8). This was His commission to His church, which means it includes all of us who have been redeemed and born again.

Each one of us has been commissioned by the Lord to proclaim the good news of His salvation. The Lord Jesus commanded us to go forth with His precious gospel to all the creation, meaning everywhere, and to all the nations, meaning all people of every race.

So we must proclaim the gospel because our Lord, the One who died for us and rose from the dead, commanded us to do so. He has given us the responsibility to preach the gospel to sinners all around us, and even to the whole earth.

As Christians, we are all also called to defend our faith. Every Christian is expected by God to do it at some point in their life. Sharing the gospel *“the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ”* begins where we are ... and it is to continue and go wherever we go. **Which means our sphere of influence and opportunity begins with those closest to us, and it expands from there ... namely, *“to our family, friends and even foes.”***

Please understand ... everything about our faith hinges on the “the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” To put it bluntly, “heaven and hell” hang it the balance, not just for us but for everyone! Having this understanding should cause all of us to have a sense of urgency to share our faith and defend our faith.

¹² Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁴ and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. ¹⁵ Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; ¹⁷ and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.” -- 1 Corinthians 15:12-17 (NASU)

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

Central to the redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ is his death for our sins. A theology of atonement is a biblical-theological explanation of why Jesus, as God's Son, had to die ... and what He achieved in His death for us as our Savior.

Christians believe that Jesus' death on the cross was no ordinary death. It can be compared to a **sacrifice**. Jesus was punished for **all the things that sinful humanity has done wrong** so they could receive **forgiveness from God**. In summary, Jesus died:

- To save humans from the consequences of sin.
- Because no-one else was able to pay the price for the sin of the whole world.
- To restore humans to a right relationship with God

The truth of Christianity rests on the evidence of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In a world filled with numerous false religions, faiths, and the freedom to create one, what sets Christianity apart, aside from its sacrificial and revival claim of Jesus, is its ability to provide proof of it.

Scripture teaches that Jesus was crucified (John 19:16), between two criminals (Luke 23:33), just outside Jerusalem (John 19:20), near a garden which had a newly cut tomb (John 19:41).

Although crucifixion was widely described in the literature from the time, it was not until 1968 that the actual remnants of a crucified person from a similar time and place were found. While working in Jerusalem, construction workers uncovered an ancient tomb. Inside the tomb they found a nail in knotted wood, piercing through an ankle bone. The discovery has been dated to the first century. This is a picture of the discovery took the photo in The Israel Museum in Jerusalem.



The nail was left in the bone because the executioners—who typically reused nails after the crucified persons died—were unable to extract it. The nail was hammered into a hard knot in the olive wood of the vertical stake of the cross, which made the end of the nail bend and curl. So the nail, the ankle, and the wood knot were preserved together.

The person about to be crucified would often carry the cross beam to the site, and then the cross beam would be placed on one of the trees (typically by the side of the road).

TO BE CONTINUED ...