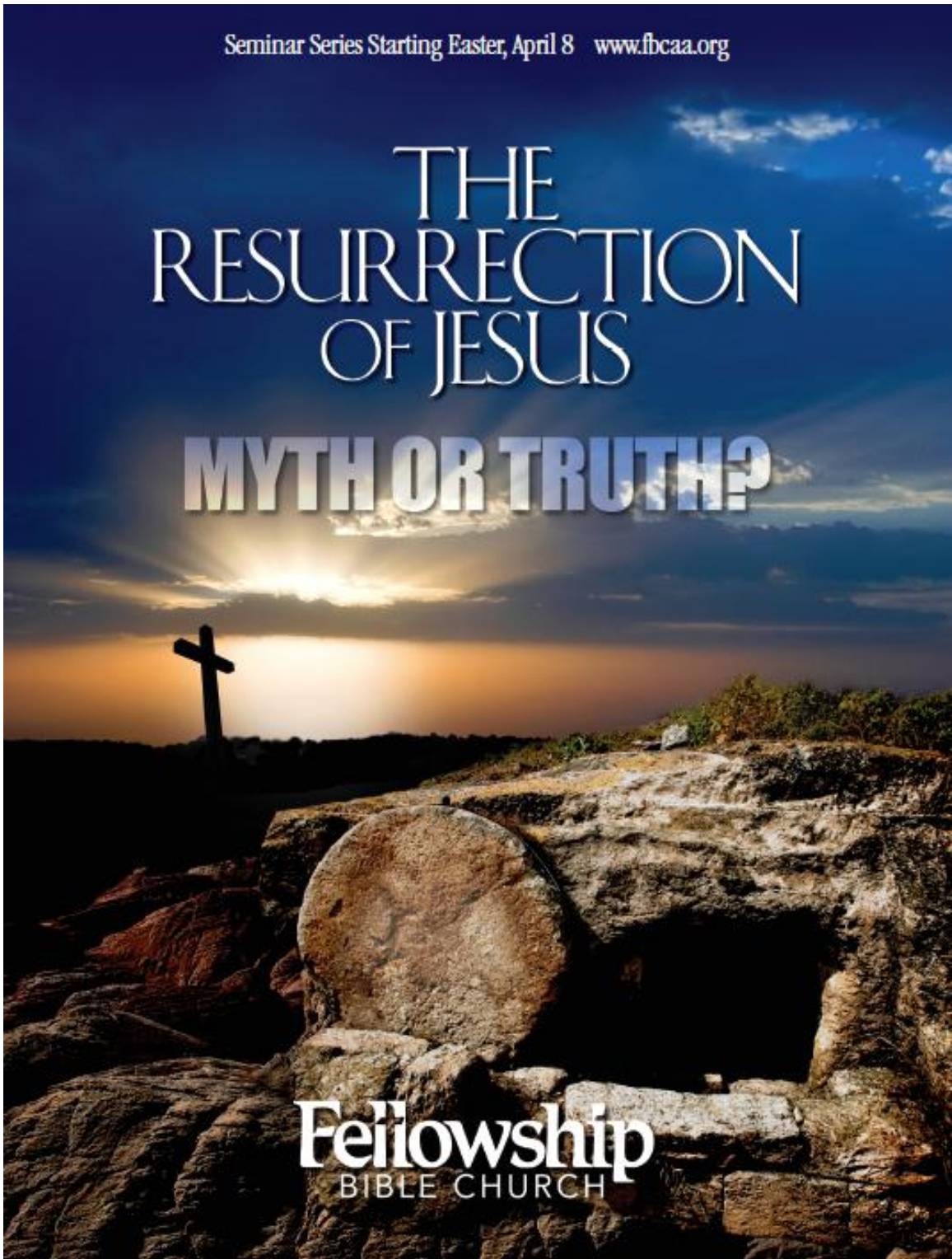


Seminar Series Starting Easter, April 8 [www.fbcaa.org](http://www.fbcaa.org)

# THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

## MYTH OR TRUTH?



**Fellowship**  
BIBLE CHURCH

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# The Resurrection of Jesus Myth or Truth?

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We will examine the resurrection under five headings:

1. The Historical Record of the Resurrection—Stating Our Beliefs, Part 1
2. The Importance and Meaning of the Resurrection—Stating our Beliefs, Part 2
3. Objections to the Resurrection—Considering Opposing Views
4. The Resurrection and You—Making it Personal
5. Some Important Review

So...here goes!

- I. The Historical Record of the Resurrection—Stating Our Beliefs, Part 1
  - A. The existence of Jesus and crucifixion are accepted by most scholars. What happened after the crucifixion comes into question. Death? Resurrection? Empty tomb? Theories abound.
  - B. Testimony of the Scripture is a valid testimony to admit as evidence.
    1. The Bible is an ancient historical document.
    2. Among other things, there is no more ancient or accurately copied document than the New Testament. There are 5800 manuscripts of the New Testament. Some of them date back to within a generation of the original manuscripts (100-150 AD), which themselves we date to within the lifetimes of the apostles who lived with Jesus and were commissioned by Him. Entire copies of the NT date back to 325 AD (Vaticanus, both OT and NT), and 350 AD (Sinaiticus, NT). Besides copies, there are also manuscripts called lectionaries, which have Scripture passages written in units for reading in church services but not in full or in Bible order.
    3. Then there are versions of the New Testament translated into other languages, like Latin (over 8000 manuscripts), Syriac (350), Coptic (Egyptian), and others.
    4. There are also enough quotations in the writings of the early church fathers (before 325 AD) to reconstruct the New Testament. They have 32,000 references to Scripture in their writings.
    5. The Bible was copied far more than any other literature and far more accurately. The total number of manuscripts of the New Testament is 25,000. Second place is Homer's Iliad (643 manuscripts, oldest manuscript 2000 years after the writing in 8<sup>th</sup> century BC). There are other documents, like Caesar's Gallic wars (10 manuscripts, oldest is 1000 years after the original in 1<sup>st</sup> century BC); Herodotus wrote *History of the Persian Kings* (8 manuscripts, 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, oldest is 1300

- years later). The accuracy of these manuscripts is unknown. The accuracy of the New Testament is known to be about 99.9%.
6. We ought to conclude, based on massive evidence of manuscript evidence, that we have fully reliable copies of the New Testament which accurately reflect the original.
- C. One way to get to the facts is to look for eyewitness accounts, both firsthand and secondhand.
1. Mary Magdalene (Matthew 28:1, 9; John 20:16)
  2. Other Mary (Matthew 28:1, 9; the mother of James, Mark 16:1)
  3. The 11 disciples on a Galilean mountain (Matthew 28:16-17). Note they were doubtful at first.
  4. Cleopas and the other disciple on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:31).
  5. Simon Peter (Luke 24:34).
  6. The disciples and others in the upper room, without Thomas (Luke 24:36-37).
  7. The disciples with Thomas (John 20:26-29).
  8. Simon Peter, Thomas the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, James and John sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee, John 6:1).
  9. The apostles (disciples) saw Him alive after his suffering, in many unmistakable ways throughout a period of 40 days (Acts 1:3) after which they observed Him ascend into the clouds (1:9).
  10. Joseph Barsabas Justus and Matthias who met the qualifications of being witnesses of Jesus' resurrection (1:23).
  11. Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6, 17, 27; also 22:6-21, 26:12-19, 1 Cor. 9:1).
  12. Paul in Arabia (Gal. 1:12). This is not certain.
  13. Paul in the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-18).
  14. Paul in prison in Caesarea (Acts 23:11).
  15. Apostle John (Revelation 1:12-20).
  16. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 records a summary of all this, plus additional information recorded below.
    - (i) Peter.
    - (ii) The 12 (the 11 + Matthias).
    - (iii) 500 people at one time, most of whom lived until the writing of 1 Corinthians in AD 55, which was 23 years later.
    - (iv) James, the brother of the Lord.
    - (v) All the apostles.
    - (vi) Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).
  17. This makes at least 519 people, and there were probably more given the number of people in Acts 1:15. Walvoord lists 17 distinct appearances in *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, pp. 192–195.

- D. One objection to my list is that it comes from data recorded by far fewer writers than there were eyewitnesses. I do not know how it could be otherwise, unless you now require each eyewitness to write out their own account. Even in courtrooms, the recorder takes the official notes and could presumably twist the information for later generations. It seems to be a stretch to go to this length to deny the massive evidence for the resurrection.
- E. The historical record also includes details about the resurrected Jesus, such as:
1. He had a tangible body with flesh and bones (Luke 24:39), and hands, feet (24:40), side (John 20:20).
  2. He could and did eat food (Luke 24:41-42).
  3. His body was changed from the pre-crucifixion body so that it had certain extra-human properties. He could apparently enter rooms that had doors closed (John 20:19) and do other supernatural things (ascend to heaven, Acts 1:9; rapidly disappear, Luke 24:31).
  4. Further characteristics of Jesus' body are given in the book of Revelation (1:12-17).
- F. Other Evidences (see Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, pp. 195–200).
1. An empty tomb (many passages quoted above).
  2. Disciples who were not gullible, especially Thomas.
  3. Disciples who were emboldened and preach the resurrection.
  4. The disciples' miracle-working power after the resurrection.
  5. Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit had previously been linked to Jesus' resurrection and ascension.
  6. The lack of rebuttal from the crowds in the early preaching.
  7. The origin of the first day of the week as the day of worship. This is the day that Jesus rose from the dead.
  8. The origin of the church itself. Without a resurrection, it wouldn't have happened.
- G. Secular History
1. Historian Tacitus (56 – 117 AD) wrote about 116 AD: “Nero fastened the guilt . . . on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of . . . Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition [the resurrection?], thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome. . . .”
  2. A disputed passage in Josephus, first century Jewish historian: “About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he . . . wrought surprising feats. . . . He was the Christ. When Pilate . . .condemned him to be crucified, those who had . . . come to love him did not give up their affection for him.

On the third day he appeared . . . restored to life. . . . And the tribe of Christians . . . has . . . not disappeared.”

3. Pliny the Younger, Roman governor of Bythinia in Asia Minor, wrote about 112 AD to Emperor Trajan about the Christians but apparently without any reference to resurrection. The Babylonian Talmud (70 – 500 AD) contains some references to Jesus. Lucian, a second-century Greek satirist wrote about the man the Christians worship.

## II. The Importance and Meaning of the Resurrection—Stating our Beliefs, Part 2

### A. Assumptions

1. We want to lay out all our cards on the table—to be totally transparent. We are not trying to trick anyone or make an emotional appeal. Rather, we want you to know where we are coming from.
2. **We believe**, first of all, that the Christian God exists, the Triune Father, Son, and Spirit. **We believe** further that He has revealed Himself in the books that are gathered together into what we call the Bible.
3. **We believe** the historicity of the four gospels, Acts, and 1 Corinthians, among other Bible passages about Jesus. More specifically, as Christians, **we believe** that Jesus actually died on a cross, was buried in a rock tomb, and was raised from the dead early on Sunday morning after Passover. His resurrection was an actual event in history; it was physical/bodily; and the body raised was the same one that was buried. **We believe** the Bible is a completely accurate witness to these events.
4. Our **belief** really amounts to **certainty**, because there is compelling historical evidence for the resurrection. Mainly, that evidence is that there were many people who were eyewitnesses of his crucifixion and death, and well over 500 people who eye witnessed the resurrected Jesus.
5. The issue is Jesus. It is not “God in general.”

### B. The Importance of the Resurrection to Christians

1. Basic Truth: **If the resurrection did not happen, then the Christian faith is completely fraudulent.** It would be worse than just false or misguided—it would be misleading people and taking away from them what they could otherwise have. Therefore, the resurrection is of primary importance to Christians. It is rightly called one of the essentials or fundamentals of the faith, because if it did not happen, then the Christian faith is false.
2. Application: If you can disprove the resurrection, then you don’t have to worry about the Christian message. But if indeed Jesus did rise from the dead, then you need to take careful stock of your life and your relationship to God.
3. 1 Corinthians 15:12-34 makes this very argument. God used Paul to point out the critical nature of the resurrection. Christians today are not hiding that this is the

lynchpin, and neither did one of the foremost apologists for the faith, the apostle Paul, shortly after the inception of the new Christian faith.

4. So what if Jesus were not raised? **1 Corinthians 15:12-19**
- (i) Some people associated with the Corinthian church were denying that any resurrection happens, in diametric opposition to the message that Paul brought. Many today do the same, a subject we will take up in Part III.
  - (ii) If we assume the opposition is correct, that then implies a whole chain of thought that is devastating to the Christian faith (15:12-19). If there is no resurrection of any kind:
    - (a) then Christ is not risen;
    - (b) then Christian preaching is empty...futile...useless;
    - (c) then Christian faith is empty;
    - (d) then Christian preachers are liars;
    - (e) then Christians are still in their sins;
    - (f) then Christians who have died are lost;
    - (g) then Christians are the most pitiful people;
  - (iii) The faith would be empty because behind it lies a falsehood which cannot have any good effect. It would be devoid of any intellectual, moral, or spiritual value.
  - (iv) Christian preachers would be liars because they affirm something to be true that is not true. Throughout the Bible mention is made dozens of times of Christ's resurrection. Without that, we are a bunch of liars.
  - (v) Christians would still be in their sins. What this means is this: Christians believe that they are sinful people who fall short of God's standard of behavior. Besides knowing of the sinful condition of man from the Bible, we see it in personal experience throughout our lives and throughout the world. It is obvious. Because of sin, God has assigned the penalty of death for all who fall short of holy living. That we know from the Bible as well. This destined-for-dead state causes an inability to have a real and peace-filled relationship with God the Father. We believe that Jesus came to rescue us from this sinful condition and give us a new life that can live above sin, above the world if you will. He accomplished that in part by dying to take the death penalty God assigned for each and every one of us. This he accomplished at the cross. Proof was given through the resurrection. But if he died and did not rise, he would be just like any other man, taking the permanent penalty for his own sin and not having anything to offer anyone else. Therefore, we would still be in our sinful condition.
  - (vi) Christians who died believing this empty faith would be lost in their sins. Whatever the situation is for sinful people after they die, they would be experiencing it.

- (vii) Christians would be the most pitiful of people because our (empty) hope would only last as long as this life, then be extinguished. Our hope would evaporate as soon as we died. As Paul later argues, if we do not rise from the dead, then we should follow a pleasure-driven lifestyle. After all, if we do not rise, there is no accountability for what we do, and we should live it up.
5. But Jesus has been raised, **1 Corinthians 15:20-28**
- (i) Christians assert that the no-resurrection belief is wrong. We do so based on the historical record, the facts. That is, **the Christian faith is not fraudulent after all.** With our belief come important implications:
  - (ii) The implications of the resurrection are significant (15:20-28).
    - (a) Christ is the firstfruits of the dead;
    - (b) Christ reversed the death brought by Adam;
    - (c) Christ opens the door to resurrection for all men;
    - (d) Christ rose first, to be followed by those who rise to receive eternal life at Christ's second coming, and then the rest will rise to eternal death at the end of time;
    - (e) Christ will subdue all his enemies (yes, He has that kind of power);
    - (f) Christ has defeated death;
    - (g) God the Father will rule over everything in the world and all enemies, death included, will be subdued.
  - (iii) Each of the above points can use a bit of explanation.
6. The inconsistency of living as a Christian if there is no resurrection, **1 Corinthians 15:29-34**
- (i) Another implication is in the form of a question: Why would you live as a Christian if the resurrection were not true?
    - (a) You've seen people die who are ultimately hopeless. Why would you follow in their footsteps? Why would you become like them by being baptized, thus filling up the gap they left when they died---particularly when it is meaningless to do so?
    - (b) Why would you endanger yourself with persecution?
    - (c) If it were not true, then you should just live it up.
  - (ii) The implication for our associations is also important. If we are Christians, then we should not be having close associations with people who deny the resurrection. They will corrupt us. If we do, that is shameful and shows an important lack in our knowledge of God.
- C. The Meaning of the Resurrection, **Other Scripture**
- The resurrection is God's stamp of approval on what Jesus accomplished in His life and death.

1. Justification accomplished – Romans 4:25.
2. Continual priesthood possible – Hebrews 7:23-24.
3. Death defeated – Acts 2:24, Romans 6:9
4. Become the firstfruits of the dead – 1 Cor. 15:23, Acts 26:23
5. Fulfillment of OT prophecy – Acts 2:27, Psalm 16:10, Acts 13:33, 17:3
6. Declaration of Jesus’s Divine Sonship – Romans 1:4
7. The most remarkable display of God’s power – Eph. 1:20, Col. 2:12
8. Make possible our own resurrection from the spiritual death – Col. 3:1
9. Core of the Christian message – Acts 4:33, Romans 10:9, 2 Tim. 2:8
10. Salvation and rebirth – 1 Peter 1:3

In summary, Jesus accomplished paying for sin and finished all his work (John 19:30). The resurrection is God’s receipt to us that he accepts what Christ did and that guarantees what the Bible predicts will yet come (final judgment, for instance).

Without the resurrection, there is no Christianity. But with it, our faith is full of reality and meaning and richness. The glorious message of Easter is that Christ arose and so we know He has provided a complete deliverance from sin and death. See 1 Cor. 15:1-4 for the response to this message that God requires of us.

### III. Objections to the Resurrection—Considering Opposing Views

Many people do not believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. This belief allows them to dismiss the entire body of Christian theology. We believe they do so to their own peril. However, they raise formidable objections to the resurrection that are worthy of our attention.

A. Examples. Denials of the physical, identical, bodily resurrection come from all sides – Catholic, Neo-Orthodox, Protestants, Evangelicals, and New Agers (see Norman Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection*).

1. Edward Schillebeeckx (C) – resurrection of Jesus a “salvation event” not a physical bodily resurrection.
2. Emil Bruner (N)– not bodily, not identity, (but continuity of personality)
3. Rudolph Bultmann (N) – not historical (incredible, mythical, he is anti-supernatural)
4. Wolfhart Pannenberg (P) – spiritual/immaterial resurrection
5. E. Glenn Hinson (E) – similar to Pannenberg, a spiritual, not physical, body
6. George Eldon Ladd (E) – Jesus’ resurrection body cannot be tangible because it would be impossible to pass through the tomb’s rock or a closed door.
7. Murray Harris (E) – denies material aspect of the bodily resurrection
8. Levi Dowling (NA) - essentially immaterial and invisible body; deification of man

B. Philosophical bases of these views.



1. Anti-supernaturalism. Resurrection cannot happen, or a physical resurrection with supernatural properties cannot happen.
  2. A belief that the New Testament is not reliable.
- C. Stolen body theory
1. Either the disciples or the authorities stole the body of Jesus. There would be no interest on the part of either Roman or Jewish authorities to do this. The disciples would be the most likely culprits.
  2. Thievery by the disciples is the earliest of all theories, since it originated on the day of the resurrection. See Matthew 28:11-15. One positive thing for the Christian is that this theory is considered openly in the Biblical account. Good transparency.
  3. Evaluation
    - (i) Had it really been the case that the disciples stole the body, the Roman soldiers would have been liable for execution for failure to attend their assigned duty (guarding the tomb). They would have paid the Jewish authorities to save their lives. The Roman soldiers had no interest in seeing their mission compromised and so become good evidence of what really happened.
    - (ii) Instead of the soldiers bribing the authorities, the Jews gave a large sum of money to the soldiers to cover up their eyewitness account. I believe this corroborates the truth of the resurrection! The soldiers told the chief priests what they had been eyewitnesses of—the resurrection, the empty tomb, that the disciples did *not* steal the body, the angels, etc. They also had no reason to lie about the strange events they had seen because those events might get them off the hook. The story they manufactured was incredible—that they knew what happened to Jesus body as they slept—which they were not supposed to be doing on duty anyway. In other words, they were told to relay a story that could get them into bigger trouble than the truth. So the sum of money had to be large because they were actually endangering themselves more.
    - (iii) The Jews agreed to help in the cover-up in the case that the news reached the governor and the soldiers became in danger of execution.
    - (iv) All of this shows that the conspiracy was on the side of the Jews, not on the side of the Christians.
- D. Swooning theory
1. This theory states that Jesus did not actually die on the cross, but just passed out. Later, he awoke in the tomb and got up and left, or was helped by his friends.
  2. Variations
    - (i) Jesus himself swooned.

(ii) Jesus was given a toxin to make him appear dead, and was taken off the cross early. This was accomplished as a hoax in close connection between Jesus and his close disciples.

### 3. Evaluation

(i) This theory flatly denies the record of the New Testament and is not compatible with the Christian faith.

(ii) This theory is extremely implausible because Jesus was beaten by the Romans and then hung on a cross. He would be in no condition to revive. I will spare you the extremely gory details of the procedures of beating and crucifixion. You can find them in the article "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ, Journal of the American Medical Association Special Communication, 1986:255:1455–1463 by William D. Edwards, MD; Wesley J. Gabel, MDiv; Floyd E. Hosmer, MS, AMI. The abstract of that article is as follows:

Jesus of Nazareth underwent Jewish and Roman trials, was flogged, and was sentenced to death by crucifixion. The scourging produced deep stripelike lacerations and appreciable blood loss, and it probably set the stage for hypovolemic shock, as evidenced by the fact that Jesus was too weakened to carry the crossbar (patibulum) to Golgotha. At the site of crucifixion, his wrists were nailed to the patibulum and, after the patibulum was lifted onto the upright post (stipes), his feet were nailed to the stipes. The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion was an interference with normal respirations. Accordingly, death resulted primarily from hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. Jesus' death was ensured by the thrust of a soldier's spear into his side. Modern medical interpretation of the historical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead when taken down from the cross.

The concluding paragraph of the article:

Thus, it remains unsettled whether Jesus died of cardiac rupture or of cardiorespiratory failure. However, the important feature may be not how he died but rather whether he died. Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death (Fig 7). Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds

with modern medical knowledge.

(iii) The swooning theory is also extremely implausible because the Roman soldiers were experts in crucifixion and knew how to kill people. They did not release the body until they were sure it was dead. They were asked by their commanding officer, Pontius Pilate, whether Jesus was dead, and they confirmed that he was (Mark 15:44). The spear thrust in his side was an exclamation point on his death that would have ensured his death had he not already been dead.

E. Substitute theory

1. The substitute theory says that someone else died in Jesus' place.
2. Remember, we believe in what is called the substitutionary atonement, but that is because Jesus substituted for US. The substitute theory we are talking about here is that someone substituted for JESUS.
3. Variations on who the surrogate was.
  - (i) Judas – Muslims and heretical “Christian” sects believe that Judas took Jesus' place or was in the unfortunately situation of having a personal resemblance.
  - (ii) Some unspecified person that looked like Jesus.
4. Evaluation
  - (i) Given the account in the text of the Bible, it is impossible to believe that someone took Jesus' place. Jesus was personally identified by Judas; the disciples watched, some from very close up; Jesus' mother saw him on the cross; the governing officials and even the crowds identified the man as Jesus.
  - (ii) Once again, this theory is in absolute contradiction to Biblical Christianity.

F. Mistaken tomb

1. This theory simply says that the disciples looked in the wrong tomb.
2. Evaluation
  - (i) This view is lacking because not only the disciples, but also the Roman soldiers and Jewish authorities would have to be mistaken about the location. Joseph of Arimathea also would have had to miss the obvious.
  - (ii) In support of the Biblical account, Joseph owned the tomb; the women saw where the body was laid after the crucifixion; they returned there; the soldiers were there; and the soldiers told what happened to the Jewish authorities.

G. Hallucination View

1. This view says that the disciples were overcome by some psychological effect, such as delusions, wishful thinking, hallucinations. They thought they really saw what they reported, but they actually had not seen it.
2. Evaluation

- (i) The number of disciples, number of appearances, length of time (40 days), and the lack of gullibility of at least the disciples like Thomas all point away from this view.
- H. The Passover Plot (Schonfield, 1967)
1. Jesus schemed with Joseph, Lazarus, and another young man to convince people he was the Messiah. He actually died in carrying out the plot, so his co-conspirators disposed of the body, left the tomb empty, and mistaken identity explains the “post resurrection” appearances.
  2. Evaluation
    - (i) There is absolutely no evidence for this theory.
    - (ii) It impugns the sinlessness of Jesus, and the basic integrity of Joseph and Lazarus.
- I. The Spiritual Resurrection Theory
1. The idea of this objection is that the Lord was raised in some other way than physically and bodily.
  2. Variants
    - (i) In its most extreme variant, it promotes a kind of “spiritual resurrection in the heart of the believer” which basically amounts to a matter of personal perspective and mystical religious experience.
    - (ii) In closer-to-the-truth variants of this theory, Jesus’ was raised, but in a spiritual, ghost-like, intangible form. He could appear as material at times, but was not inherently that way upon His resurrection. Jesus’ resurrection was in a spiritual body that was immaterial and invisible (Origen, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Evangelical Murray Harris.)
  3. Evaluation
    - (i) The spiritual resurrection theory denies the physical bodily resurrection and so is another heretical view.
    - (ii) The view ignores Luke 24:39 where Jesus did not only appear to have flesh and bones, he said, “I have [flesh and bones].”
    - (iii) Conservative Christians contend for the view that says Jesus rose historically, in a physical body, and in the identical body that was killed.
- J. The New Age View
1. Levi Dowling, a new age mystic, denies the identity and materiality of the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus was, according to Levi Dowling (*The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*), transmuted into a flesh divine, which was essentially immaterial and invisible but which he could “materialize” when he wanted to be seen by the disciples. This “materialized” form apparently was visible and had scars and so forth. The new age idea promotes the “omnipotence of man” and the deification of man since all people can do what Jesus did.

2. Evaluation

- (i) This is just Satanic heresy. Note the arrogance of men trying to become like God. Satan was like that.

K. The Literary construction view

- 1. This view says that the resurrection of Jesus is a myth, fiction, legend or even a fable.

2. Evaluation

- (i) In Part I, we examined the historical evidence of the resurrection. It is clear from that evidence that we are not talking about a fictional or mythical thing.
- (ii) The New Testament portrays the resurrection as a historical fact.

L. The Last Temptation of Christ

- 1. This 1988 movie is based on a 1953 novel in which Jesus is taken down from the cross and goes on to wed Mary Magdalene, and then Mary and Martha the sisters of Lazarus.
- 2. The Da Vinci Code, a 2003 book by Dan Brown and a 2006 movie, picks up on the idea of Jesus and Mary Magdalene marrying.
- 3. Evaluation: Based on a fictional novel. There is no evidence for it.

IV. The Resurrection and You—Making it Personal

If our teaching on the resurrection does not come down to a personal application then we have missed a great deal of the importance of it. We'll consider the truth as it applies to two groups of people—those who are Christians and those who are not Christians. That covers all people.

A. For the person who is not yet a Christian

- 1. Such a person has a choice to make. One can believe, not believe, not care, or put off a decision until later. Belief, unbelief, apathy and procrastination seem to cover most responses.
- 2. In light of the historical witnesses (over 500 people); the many distinct and unmistakable appearances of Jesus; the massive effect that Jesus had on the disciples; and His effect on the world through those disciples all make a case for accepting the resurrection as a true fact.
- 3. If the resurrection is a true fact, then the Christian faith is true. The whole package rises or falls together. We know then that:
  - (i) the **good news** that Jesus died for our sins is also true;
  - (ii) the **bad news** that we are in fact sinners is true;
  - (iii) the **good news** that if we believe in Christ we will be forgiven all sins is true;
  - (iv) the **bad news** that the wages of sin is death is true;
  - (v) the **good news** that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ is true;
  - (vi) the **bad news** that punishment for sins is in the lake of fire is true;

- (vii) the **good news** that Jesus is preparing a blessed place of rest for Christians in heaven is true.
  - (viii) the **bad news** that sin is our master before we are saved is true;
  - (ix) the **good news** that Jesus is our Lord after we are saved is true.
4. The resurrection also guarantees that the unbeliever will be raised from the dead (1 Cor. 15:22). The nature of his/her resurrection is described in Revelation 20:11-15.
- B. For the person who is already a Christian, in the present
1. The resurrection of Jesus means that the Christian's faith is meaningful, that is, not empty or futile. It is real, as we saw in Part II.B., and the entire argument of the opening portion of 1 Corinthians 15. It is basically what 15:58 says, that our Christian life and labor is not in vain in the Lord, because the resurrection did happen, and the faith is not a figment of our imagination.
  2. The resurrection of Jesus means that the work of salvation is complete and approved by God, giving the believer assurance of justification, an ever-living priest to intercede for us, victory over death, a clear declaration of the deity of Christ, fulfillment of OT prophecy, among many other things. It ties together an entire rich body of theological truth for us to know, believe, and rejoice over. See Part II.C. for a more complete listing of truths.
  3. The resurrection of Jesus is a demonstration of the power of God operates in the believer's life right now.
    - (i) This is important in light of the internal and external opponents that the Christian has in living a life that pleases God. These opponents include the *world*, the *Devil*, and what we call the *flesh*. The *world* is the sin-dominated society and culture in which we live, that provides opportunities to express depravity in a multitude of ways (think of some). It tries to press us into its mold (Romans 12:2a). The *Devil* is the archenemy of God, of Jesus, of all believers, and of everything that is truly good. He is a counterfeit, a deceiver, a liar, and a murderer (John 8:44, 2 Corinthians 11:14-15). The *flesh* is also known as the sin nature, that is, the tendency or disposition toward sin that lies within every person, even the Christian (James 1:13-16). Though this disposition is not the dominant force in the believer's life, it can still exert a lot of influence. We should note that sins of the flesh can include things we do, things we neglect to do, things we think, doubts, any kind of unbelief, etc.
    - (ii) The key verses supporting this idea are found in Ephesians 1:19-23. In the surrounding sentences, Paul is relaying a prayer that he offers for the Christians in the church of Ephesus. This prayer is for them to have spiritual insight into three things: the hope of our calling; the riches of what we

inherit in Christ; and the greatness of God's power toward us. This power was expressed in the resurrection of Jesus; in the ascension of Jesus; in the establishment of Jesus as sovereign over all things; and in his placement as the head of all things, including the church.

- (iii) One implication of Paul's prayer is that it is possible to be saved but not understand the resources available to us. We might face dread foes in the world, the Devil, and the flesh, but God who is in the believer is greater than all of that (1 John 3:20, 4:4) and can, if we trust Him, work in us to overcome those foes and live a life pleasing to God (Philippians 2:12-13).
  - (iv) We should recognize that it is no small miracle to take a person from spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1) to spiritual life (2:5). This is the power that God worked in us in salvation. So we ought not to think about the resurrection as only portending our own future bodily resurrection after physical death (the next section), but we also ought to think of our present lives *right now* as resurrection lives which have been brought up from spiritual death.
- C. For the Christian in the future
1. Christ's resurrection foreshadows our own resurrection with a body like His. On the fact of the resurrection, see 1 Cor. 15:23 (the firstfruits idea). On the nature of this body, see 1 Corinthians 15:35-49. The body will be tangible, connected to our present body, but glorified to be outfitted to live a heavenly, eternal existence. In comparing the two bodies (before and after resurrection), it is like this:
    - (i) Old: corruption      New: incorruption
    - (ii) Old: dishonor      New: glory
    - (iii) Old: weakness      New: power
    - (iv) Old: natural      New: spiritual
    - (v) Old: earthly      New: heavenly
    - (vi) See also 1 John 3:2 and Philippians 3:21.
  2. Christ's resurrection also assures us that *all* of us will receive a resurrection body, even those who are alive when Christ returns. See 1 Corinthians 15:50-53. Some will not die but will be changed immediately. See also 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.
  3. Christ's resurrection guarantees victory over death. Physical death is on all of our "to do lists" at some point in the future, unless C.2. above happens first (our hope!). Physical death is a grind, a disappointment, a discouragement, an enemy. Christians are victorious over and through death.
- V. Some Important Review
- A. Christians defend several related propositions:
1. Jesus actually died, not that he survived the crucifixion or revived after it.
  2. Jesus actually was buried.

3. Jesus was actually resurrected from the dead. This makes clear that we believe the resurrection was a real **historical** event.
  4. Jesus was resurrected with a physical body. We believe in a **physical, material, bodily** resurrection.
  5. Jesus was resurrected with the same body he died with. There is a continuity between not only the former person and the new person, but also between the old body and the new body of Jesus. This is sometimes call the **identical** or **numerical-identity** understanding of the resurrection.
    - (i) A denial here can posit a continuity of personhood or personality without a continuity of the physical body.
    - (ii) A denial of this point does not necessarily necessitate a denial of the bodily resurrection, but the reverse is not true because it is clear that Jesus had a material body before the crucifixion.
- B. Some scholars are wrong on all three aspects of the orthodox doctrine of the resurrection: the historical, the bodily, and the identical.
1. Some scholars are wrong on all three metrics: George Ladd, for instance, is wrong, according to Norman Geisler [Geisler1991:125-26, Geisler1989:92-94].
  2. On **historicity**: Ladd believes that physical bodies cannot pass through solid rock, etc. This, Ladd writes, is “historically incredible.” What he actually means is that the supernatural cannot happen.
    - (i) Jesus’ corpse simply disappeared—“What would an observer have seen if he had stood inside the tomb watching the dead body of Jesus? All he would have seen was the sudden and inexplicable disappearance of the body of Jesus.” (I respond: How can that be historically possible? Ladd is obviously inconsistent here.)
    - (ii) Geisler contends we actually “would have seen the very same physical body that was placed there experience a surge of life, rise up from the slab, fold up His headcloth, and walk out alive!”
  3. On **bodily**: Ladd believes that Jesus was actually raised invisible and immaterial. Jesus’ “appearances” were condescensions to the disciples’ physical senses much like angels appear in physical form but aren’t really physical.
  4. On **identity**: Geisler records Ladd as writing this: “one body is buried, another body springs forth”; in the forty days Jesus had “a different body.”
  5. Let us remind ourselves of the utter inadvisability of using Ladd to support any theological conviction. If he is so clearly wrong on the basic truth of the resurrection, why should we trust or accept his eschatology, the already/not yet, and the foundation he provides on the kingdom for progressive dispensational theologians? If we believe that thought and beliefs are part of a system of truth held by the person, then we have to wonder how these thoughts on the resurrection have some



- effect on his other thinking. If he doesn't really believe the resurrection of Jesus, then he is not really a believer to begin with (Romans 10:9-10).
- (i) Certainly people can be inconsistent in this regard so that error in one area of thought does not necessarily negatively affect errors in another area of thought. But why should I want to rely on a supposed inconsistency between two areas of Ladd's thinking to bolster my own thinking in the area where Ladd is supposedly accurate?
  - (ii) This does not suggest that everything Ladd believes is wrong. He may be in error in some respect on the resurrection, but he can happen to believe right things in other areas. I am cautioning that we not go to such men as scholarly authorities when they have things so wrong and mixed up on basics.
- C. An interesting perspective from historian Michael Licona
1. The following facts, Licona contends, are facts past doubt:
    - (i) Jesus died by crucifixion.
    - (ii) Very shortly after Jesus' death, the disciples had experiences that led them to believe and proclaim that Jesus had been resurrected and had appeared to them.
    - (iii) Within a few years after Jesus' death, Paul converted after experiencing what he interpreted as a postresurrection appearance of Jesus to him.
  2. He calls these "bedrock" historical facts.

### **Annotated Bibliography**

David Baggett, ed. *Did the Resurrection Happen? A Conversation with Gary Habermas and Antony Flew*. IVP, 2009. This is not a Biblically-centered treatment of the subject; very philosophical. Emphasis is on the biographical data with respect to Flew's conversion to theism from atheism.

William Lane Craig. *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus*. Edwin Mellen Press, 1989. I did not find this helpful for these studies.

Norman L. Geisler. *The Battle for the Resurrection*, Thomas Nelson, 1989.

\_\_\_\_\_. *In Defense of the Resurrection*. 1991. This is a response to criticisms and reviews of his 1989 book, particularly responding to Murray Harris' rebuttal in *From Grave to Glory*, Zondervan, 1990.

Critiquing Murray Harris of Trinity Evangelical: To be fully accurate, the normal state of Jesus was immaterial, but he could appear in physical tangible form, when he was seen. When he could not be seen by the disciples, this must be that he is invisible and immaterial. Murray J. Harris, *Grave to Glory*, and *Raised Immortal*. He is in actuality

denying the essential material bodily resurrection [Geisler1991:117]. Geisler points out that Harris misrepresents several other scholars [Geisler1991:119ff]: B. F. Westcott, Merrill Tenney, Wilbur Smith, and Charles Hodge.

In response I would say that Harris is claiming to make his argument based on the Scripture, but the plain reading of the text clearly contradicts his view. Jesus not only appeared to have flesh and bones, he actually said “I have...” (Luke 24:39).

Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*. IVP, 2010. Massive tome (718 pages) that is highly recommended by guys like William Lane Craig and Daniel Wallace. This seems like a very helpful book.

Though he offers quite a high level of certainty, it is not quite the level that we have as committed Christian believers.

Notes from Pages 611-622:

3400 books in last 35 years on what happened to Jesus after the crucifixion. Almost everyone agrees that Jesus was crucified (put on a cross—but not necessarily to death); but what happened after that?

The whole point of the book is to look at the question from a trained historian’s perspective, not from a Biblical or philosophical trained person’s perspective. He uses the historiographical approach.

Ch 1 – discuss various approaches of historians. Neutrality is most appropriate (don’t presume reliability nor falsehood of text). [This is definitely not a presuppositionalist approach.] Argues that even secular historians have left the postmodern methodology behind and gone back to a “realistic” approach—realism, by which he means that they believe the past is knowable to a limited extent and that narratives constructed of the past correspond to the actual past to varying degrees.

He does not offer a Biblical defense of the resurrection, but rather a historical methodological one.

Ch 2 – discuss whether historians are capable of handling miracle claims. He says yes. Miracles are defined as an event in history for which natural explanations are inadequate. Identifying miracles requires two things – extremely unlikely to have occurred given circumstances or natural law; and occurs in environment charged with religious significance.

Ch 3 – survey of primary literature on the subject within two hundred years of Jesus’ death. These included canonical literature, noncanonical Christian literature (Gnostic sources), and non-Christian sources. Paul’s letters and the oral traditions embedded throughout are the most promising material. He was a hostile eyewitness. Next on his list are canonical gospels, 1 Clement, Polycarp’s letter to Philippians, speeches in Acts, Gospel of Thomas, and some non-Christians sources.

Ch 4 – Jesus’ life is charged with religious significance (second part of a miracle identification). [As I think about it, was creation charged with religious significance? It was before religion? It certainly is related to religion after the fact, but it doesn’t seem to be necessary to me to have religious significance to identify a miracle.] He points out that Jesus did predict his violent death and resurrection. The following facts, Licona contends, are facts past doubt:

1. Jesus died by crucifixion
2. Very shortly after Jesus’ death, the disciples had experiences that led them to believe and proclaim that Jesus had been resurrected and had appeared to them.
3. Within a few years after Jesus’ death, Paul converted after experiencing what he interpreted as a postresurrection appearance of Jesus to him.

These facts are the bedrock on which Licona moves forward in his study. They are indisputable.

None of the points of contention in 1 Cor. 15 support an immaterial or ethereal resurrection. The “natural” body does not mean the exclusively “physical” body – based on a survey of 846 uses of the term “natural”. It never means physical. Therefore, Paul is NOT asserting that physical corpses are buried and immaterial ones are resurrected.

Ch 5 – He evaluates six major views. Geza Vermes: We do not know whether Jesus rose from the dead. Michael Goulder and Gerd Lüdemann proposed psychological explanations such as hallucinations, delusions, and wishful thinking; John Dominic Crossan complicated hypothesis about the Great Cleanup of the world beginning and the resurrection of Jesus far from their understanding; Pieter Craffert’s view takes the biblical reports seriously but explains them naturally; and finally the resurrection hypothesis.

He claims that the resurrection hypothesis meets all five criteria as the best explanation according to his method, only one of the other hypotheses met one criteria. The resurrection hypothesis far outdistances the competitors so that Jesus’ resurrection is

very certain. He lays down the gauntlet to his opposition to say that “since the resurrection hypothesis is based on historical bedrock, those who disagree with my conclusion must criticize my method.” The bedrock idea is like a presuppositional idea...but he arrived at it from examining the texts.

He makes no assertions pertaining to the nature of Jesus resurrection (bodily, identity) but only shows the historicity of it.

He claims that Biblical scholars need to learn from discussions of philosophers of history. His contributions have to do with the right of historians to deal with miracle-claims; with the term “natural” in 1 Cor. 15:44 and how the idea of Christians being raised with ethereal bodies has been totally discredited; and his contributions to the discussion of Jesus’ predictions of his death.

So, the critical, historical approach suggests that Jesus was in fact raised.

Charles L. Quarles, ed. *Buried Hope or Risen Savior? The search for the Jesus Tomb*. B&H 2008. Opens with an account of the media frenzy around the supposed Jesus ossuary in Feb 2007 and following. It does not appear this author accepts the resurrection.