

FBC Canton Sunday am April 5, 2026

Behold the Lamb: The Resurrection: A new beginning Matthew 28:1-15

Introduction: Today we celebrate the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Resurrection is different than resuscitation. Luke 24:39

He talked.

He walked.

He ate.

He could be touched, handled and seen.

He walked through walls

He appeared and reappeared.

He knew what was said amongst them even when he was not present.

After His resurrection, Jesus had a real body for He said to the disciples,

- [Luke 24:39](#): "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

Jesus' resurrection is the pivotal issue for the authority of Christianity.

=a personal relationship with God through the person of Jesus Christ.

It is so pivotal that it is recorded in all 4 gospel accounts...for witness...only takes 2...we have doubled that....

All other religions of the world are missing a risen Lord.

They have systems, but no savior.

They have rules, but no relationship.

They have wishes, but no hope.

They have speculations, but no power.

So today I want to give you just the facts, then call you to believe the facts regarding the resurrection of Jesus our Messiah.

Thus, from the four accounts we can piece together an order of events.

Order of Events

- Three women, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, start for the sepulchre, followed by other women bearing spices
 - The three find the stone rolled away, and Mary Magdalene goes to tell the disciples
Luke 23:55–24:9; John 20:1, 2
 - Mary, the mother of James and Joses, draws nearer the tomb and sees the angel of the Lord
Matt. 28:2
 - She goes back to meet the other women following with the spices

Order of Events

- Meanwhile Peter and John, alerted by Mary Magdalene, arrive, look in, and go away
John 20:3–10
- Mary Magdalene returns weeping, sees the two angels and then Jesus, and then goes, as He bade her, to tell the disciples.
John 20:11–18
- Mary (mother of James and Joses), meanwhile, has met the women with the spices and, returning with them, they see the *two* angels
Luke 24:4, 5; Mark. 16:5
- They also receive the angelic message, and, going to seek the disciples, are met by Jesus
Matt. 28:8–10

Subsequent Appearances

- Two on Emmaus Rd, Sun PM Luke 24:13-32
- Peter, sometime that day Luke 24:34
- Ten, that night (w/o Thomas) Luke 24:36ff
- Eleven, 8 days later (w/ Thomas) John 20:26-31
- Seven, Galilean breakfast John 21:9-14
- Eleven, in Galilee Matt 28:16-20
- 500, in Galilee 1 Cor 15:6
- James in Jerusalem 1 Cor 15:7
- Many at the Ascension Luke 24:44f

Subsequent Appearances

- Paul, on the Damascus Road Acts 9:3-7
- Stephen when he is stoned Acts 7:55
- Paul in the temple Acts 22:17-19
- John on Patmos Rev. 1:10-19

- I. The fact and the reason for Jesus' life and death.
 - a. The facts: Matthew 28:1-15
 - i. The bible tells us he lived and died, just as scripture prophesied.
I Corinthians 15:1-4

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (NKJV).

- He would rise again (Psa 16:10; Isa 53:12; Mat 12:40; Mat 28:6,7).

These Hebrew Scriptures contain over 300 prophecies that detail the coming Jewish Messiah. Here are a few of these Old Testament prophecies.

1. He would be of David's family (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 89:3-4; 110:1; 132:11).
2. He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14).
3. He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).
4. They will sojourn in Egypt (Hosea 11:1).
5. He would live in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2; 11:1).
6. He'd be announced by an Elijah-like herald (Isaiah 40:3-5; Malachi 3:1; 4:5).
7. This would occasion the massacre of Bethlehem's children (Genesis 35:19-20; Jeremiah 31:15).
8. His mission would include the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:1-4).
9. His ministry would be one of healing (Isaiah 53:4-5).
10. He would teach through parables (Isaiah 6:9-10; Psalm 78:2).
11. He would be disbelieved and rejected by the rulers (Psalm 69:4; 118:22; Isaiah 6:10; 29:13; 53:1).
12. He would make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26).
13. He would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:1-13; Psalm 41:9).
14. He would be like a smitten shepherd (Zechariah 13:7).
15. He would be given vinegar and gall (Psalm 69:21).
16. They would cast lots for His garments (Psalm 22:18).
17. His side would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10; Psalm 22:16).
18. Not a bone would be broken (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Psalm 34:20).

19. He would die among malefactors (Isaiah 53:9, 12).
20. His dying words were foretold (Psalm 22:1; 31:5).
21. He'd be buried by a rich man (Isaiah 53:9).
22. He would rise from the dead on the third day (Genesis 22:4; Psalm 16:10-11; Jonah 1:17; Hosea 6:2).
23. His resurrection would be followed by the destruction of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:26; 11:31).

- ii. **World religions acknowledge his existence, but not his deity.**
- iii. **Even skeptics never deny he died.**

1. **In that day. V. 11-15**

- a. If they could have, they would have.

2. **If they did not in that day, how could we in this day?**

- a. By willful rejection, or plain ignorance of the facts.

- b. **The reason: The Word came to die. John 1:1-14**

- i. **Sinless life so that we could live a new life.**

**GOD MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN
TO BE SIN ON OUR BEHALF, SO
THAT IN HIM WE MIGHT BECOME
THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.
- 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21**

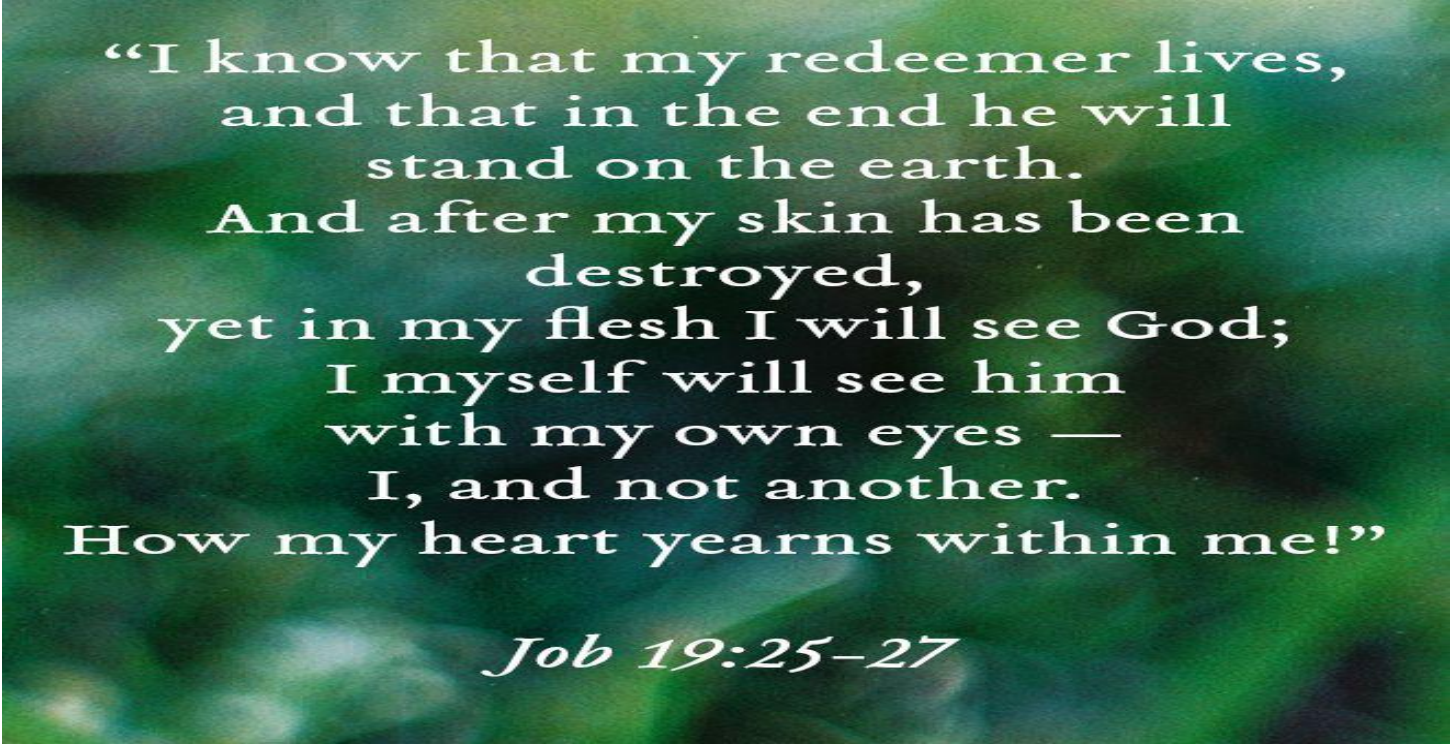
- ii. **Died for us so we don't have to die for our sin.**

**FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD,
THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN
SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH
IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT
HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.
JOHN 3:16**



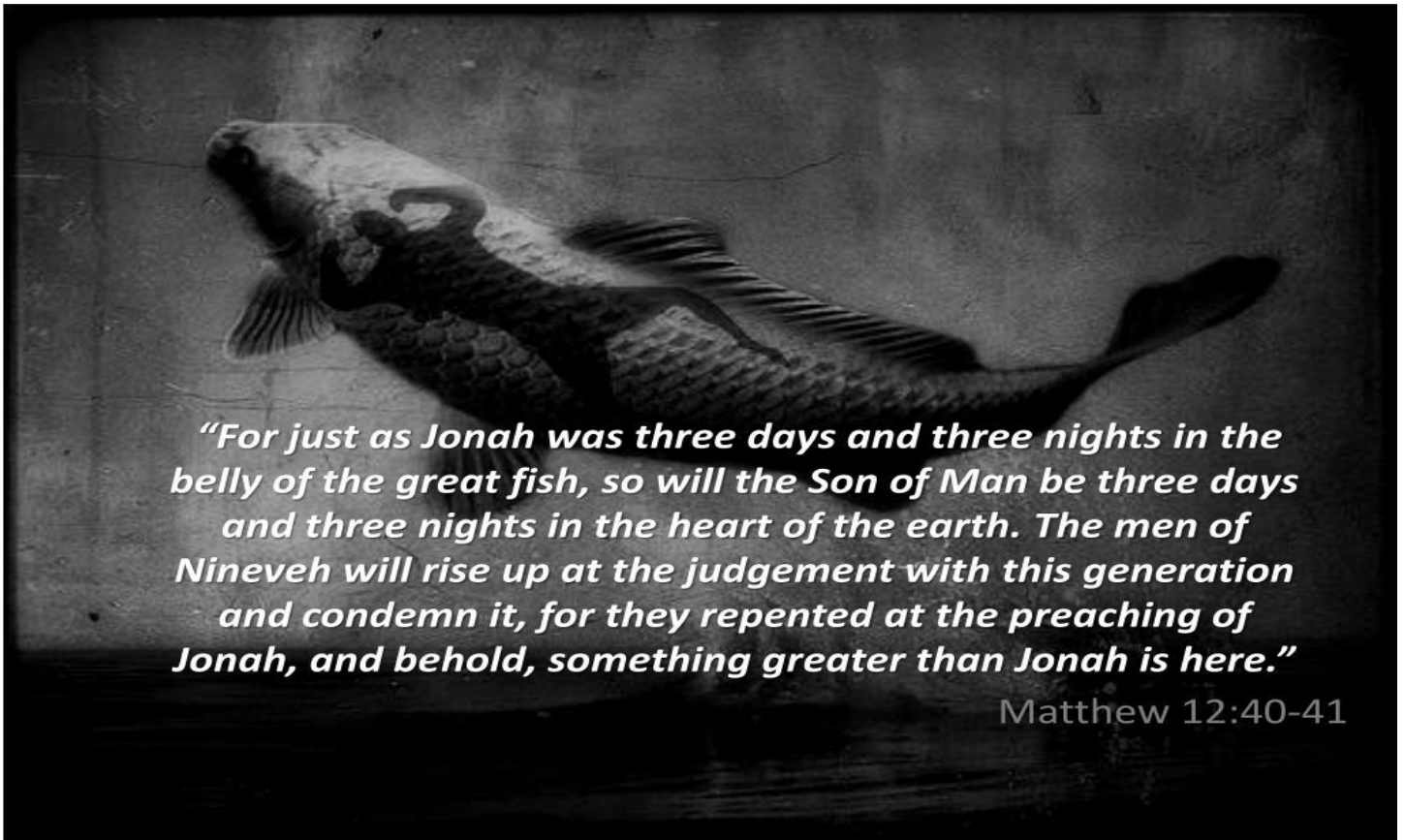
II. The facts for Jesus' resurrection.

- a. The bible prophesied Jesus would rise. Job 19:23-27, Matthew 12:40-41



**“I know that my redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will
stand on the earth.
And after my skin has been
destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;
I myself will see him
with my own eyes —
I, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!”**

Job 19:25-27



“For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgement with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”

Matthew 12:40-41

Conclusion: Prophecies About Jesus Resurrection Fulfilled

The prophecies about Jesus resurrection are profound, showing God's foreordained plan for humanity's salvation. Through His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures, proving His identity as the Messiah and giving hope to all who believe in Him. These prophecies reveal not only the victory over death but also the everlasting life that Jesus offers to those who trust in Him.

See our main article on [prophecies Jesus fulfilled here](#).

b. Secular historians support the fact he rose again. Top Ten Historical References to Jesus Outside of the Bible

i. Josephus A.D 93 wrote:

And in this time, there was a certain Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man, for he was a doer of incredible deeds, a teacher of men who receive truisms with pleasure. And he brought over many from among the Jews and many from among the Greeks. He was [thought to be] the Christ. And, when Pilate had condemned him to the cross at the accusation of the first men among us, those who at first were devoted to him did not cease to be so, for on the third day it seemed to them that he was alive again given that the divine prophets had spoken such things and thousands of other wonderful things about him. And up till now the tribe of the Christians, who were named from him, has not disappeared.²⁹

- He was reported to have been born of a poor virgin, and His father was a carpenter
- He was a teacher, and His disciples passed on His teachings to others
- He prophesied and performed miracles
- He was known for His wisdom and His virtuous life
- He claimed to be God
- He was crucified by Pontius Pilate in Judea during the reign of Tiberius Caesar
- An earthquake and darkness accompanied His death
- His followers reported that He had risen from the dead, appeared to them, and showed them the wounds in His hands
- His followers worshipped Him as God
- Belief in Jesus caused disturbances with the Jews, which led to Claudius's decree for the Jews to leave Rome

III. The reasons why the Resurrection matters.

a. Theologically:

Significance of the Resurrection

- 1) Proves that Jesus is God's Son [John 10:17–18](#)
- 2) Verifies the truth of Scripture [Psa 16:10; 110:1](#)
- 3) Assures our own future resurrection
[1 Thes. 4:13–18](#)
- 4) Proof of a future judgment [Acts 17:31](#)
- 5) Basis for Christ's heavenly priesthood
[Heb. 7:23–28](#)
- 6) Gives power for Christian living [Rom. 6:4](#)
- 7) Assures our future inheritance [1 Peter 1:3–5.](#)

b. Personally.

- i. Power to be born again. [John 3:1-21](#)
- ii. Death and darkness will not win. [I Corinthians 15:50-57](#)

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

55 "O Death, where is your sting?
O Hades, where is your victory?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

iii. **Jesus should be the center of our life, not an addition. Hebrews 12:29**

iv. **End of 'Can't.' Philippians 4:13**

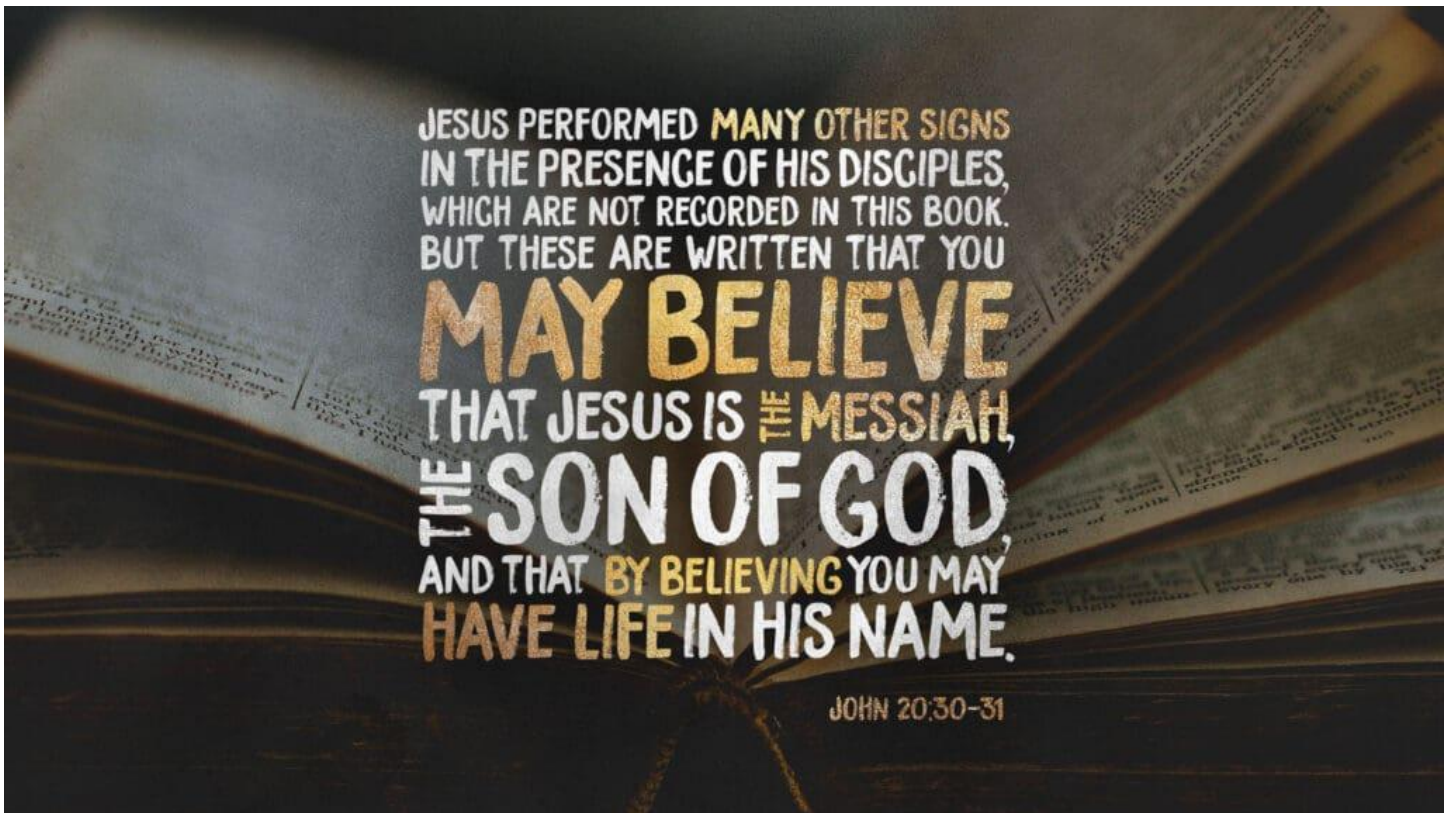
1. **End of "Just the way I am."**

2. **End of 'Nothing will change.'**

v. **Courage to hope again. Romans 15:13**

13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

c. **It is time for you to believe.**



Conclusion: Believe=Getting in the wheelbarrow!



Charles Blondin's Niagara Falls Wheelbarrow:

- October 30, 2024 Choose Recovery Coach

This is Charles Blondin. He was a really good tightrope walker. *World famous*, in fact. In 1859, he decided to **tightrope a walk across Niagara Falls** from the United States to Canada.



He tied a rope 1100 feet long, 160 feet above the falls, and tied guide lines along the rope to steady it in the wind gusts that are common in that area.

He charged a nickel for anyone who wanted to watch that day, and with bated breath, they watched as he did it, and then the crowd erupted in applause and cheering.

Charles did this feat 300 more times in his lifetime, each time a little different than the last. Once, he went backwards.

Once, he crossed with a potato sack over his head. Once he stopped halfway with a stove and cooked an omelette and then continued on to the other side. Each time, he got more daring.

There are 2 times that I want to highlight today. The first is when he showed up with a wheelbarrow. He had done this feat so many times at this point that he had large crowds on both sides of Niagara Falls.

Enter the Wheelbarrow!

When he **showed up with a wheelbarrow**, everyone cheered. He asked the crowd who thought he could do it—and they all shouted their belief that he could! Then, when the crowd and quieted down, he asked for a volunteer to get in the wheelbarrow.



-Written by Laura Fisher

By [Robert Eubanks](#)

Introduction: Prophecies About Jesus Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus is central to the Christian faith, and it was foretold long before His death. The prophecies about Jesus resurrection not only confirm His identity as the Messiah but also underscore the power of God to overcome death. From ancient texts in the Old Testament, there are clear predictions about both His burial and His resurrection, showing the divine orchestration of events that would change the world forever. Please refer to [Bible Gateway](#) to explore the scriptures written below.

1. Buried with the Rich (Isaiah 53:9)

Prophecy: “He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death...” (Isaiah 53:9)

Fulfillment: After Jesus’ crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man and secret disciple of Jesus, requested to bury Jesus in his own tomb (Matthew 27:57-60). This fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy, where Jesus, though crucified among criminals, was buried in a rich man’s tomb.

2. Not Left in the Grave (Psalm 16:10)

Prophecy: "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay." (Psalm 16:10)

Fulfillment: Jesus was buried, but He did not remain in the tomb long enough to see decay. On the third day, He rose from the dead, as confirmed by Peter's sermon in Acts 2:31-32: "God raised Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact."

3. Raised from the Grave (Psalm 30:3)

Prophecy: "O Lord, you brought up my soul from the grave; you spared me from going down to the pit." (Psalm 30:3)

Fulfillment: Jesus was raised from the dead, triumphing over death. This prophecy reflects the joy of the resurrection, which the disciples witnessed firsthand when Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection (Acts 2:32).

4. Redeemed from the Realm of the Dead (Psalm 49:15)

Prophecy: "But God will redeem me from the realm of the dead; he will surely take me to himself." (Psalm 49:15)

Fulfillment: Jesus' resurrection from the dead was God's triumph over death. The resurrection, declared by the angel at the tomb in Luke 24:6, confirmed that Jesus was indeed redeemed from death, fulfilling this prophecy.

5. The Third Day (Hosea 6:2)

Prophecy: "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence." (Hosea 6:2)

Fulfillment: Jesus was resurrected on the third day, in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:4). This fulfilled the timeline of the resurrection, showing how God's plan unfolded precisely as foretold.

6. He Will Prolong His Days (Isaiah 53:10-11)

Prophecy: "Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer... After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied." (Isaiah 53:10-11)

Fulfillment: Jesus' resurrection fulfilled this prophecy, as His suffering on the cross was not the end. He rose again and appeared to His disciples, "alive after his suffering," as described in Acts 1:3.

7. The Resurrection Declared (Psalm 22:22)

Prophecy: "I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you." (Psalm 22:22)

Fulfillment: Jesus' resurrection was declared to the disciples and the world. In John 20:17, Jesus tells Mary Magdalene to inform His disciples that He is alive, fulfilling the prophetic declaration of His resurrection.

8. Messiah Will Not See Decay (Psalm 16:10)

Prophecy: "You will not let your Holy One see decay." (Psalm 16:10)

Fulfillment: Jesus' body was raised on the third day before any physical decay could set in, fulfilling this prophecy. Peter's sermon in Acts 13:35-37 emphasizes that unlike David, who died and saw decay, Jesus was raised and did not see decay.

9. The Redeemer Lives (Job 19:25-26)

Prophecy: “I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.” (Job 19:25-26)

Fulfillment: Jesus’ resurrection fulfills this declaration, showing that the Redeemer lives and will return again in power. This prophecy reflects Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances and His future return (Luke 24:36-43).

10. Resurrection Assured (Psalm 118:17-18)

Prophecy: “I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done.” (Psalm 118:17-18)

Fulfillment: Jesus’ resurrection was assured, and He lived to proclaim victory over death. The angel at the tomb in Luke 24:6-7 told the women, “He is not here; He has risen,” confirming the fulfillment of this prophecy.

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6. **Resurrection Sunday**

TRADITION Mar 29, 2026 | By [Chuck Missler](#)

Resurrection Sunday

Author

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Early in the morning on the first day of the week, the women who followed Jesus went to the tomb with burial spices. Instead of their dead Lord, they found angels who announced that Jesus had risen again as He said He would, and they urged the women to go tell the disciples.

The four Gospel accounts of the events of Resurrection Morning are very interesting to study; they truly demonstrate what happens when four different people try to summarize an event while focusing on different details. If we were to interview people who had witnessed a car accident, we would get a similar array of accounts. People get hung up on differences between the Gospel accounts, and they shouldn't. We'd have more concern about the accounts if they were exactly the same, because that would mean they were tailored. The four Gospel writers offer different details and different perspectives, while producing a consistent, multi-faceted picture; which gives us confidence that these accounts were based on real eye-witnesses to an important event.

There are certain key details of that Sunday morning that are consistent between the Gospels. First, it was a group of women who discovered the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. Next, those women saw angels who told them that Jesus was alive. Matthew and Mark focus on one angel, while Luke and John both specify that there were two angels total. The Gospels all credit the women with going to tell the disciples that Jesus was alive, although Mary Magdalene was the primary messenger. (Mark and Luke note that the disciples didn't believe them at first.) It's clear from the accounts that Jesus had a special encounter with Mary Magdalene at a point when she was separate from

the other women, likely because she ran off and found Peter and John, while the other women stood there a bit stunned. It didn't take long for Jesus to meet with the whole group of women and send them to notify the disciples of the good news.

Let's read through each of the four accounts here and put them together:

Matthew

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Matthew 28:1-15

Mark

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

Mark 16:1-11

Luke

Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

Luke 24:1-12

John

The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

John 20:1-18

Thus, from the four accounts we can piece together an order of events.

A glorious, fiery angel descends and rolls away the stone, terrifying the guards that had been set as watchman by the chief priests. Several women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna and others reach the

tomb with burial spices they had prepared. They find the stone rolled away, and Mary Magdalene runs to tell the disciples.¹ The other ladies draw into the tomb and see the angels of the Lord, who tell them that Jesus has risen and to go tell the disciples.² Mary finds Peter and John, and they run ahead of her to the tomb, look in and find it empty, and they leave.³ Mary follows them back, and while she is alone, weeping, she also sees the two angels, but she still doesn't understand.⁴ She sees Jesus, and thinks He's the gardener until He speaks her name.⁵ She goes to tell the other disciples (who don't believe her).⁶ The other women see Jesus as well, and fall and worship at His feet, and then they go to tell the rest of the disciples (who don't believe them).⁷

Only Matthew gives us the viewpoint of the men who were guarding the tomb before the women came. He lets us know that the angels descended in great glory and rolled back the stone, petrifying the guards. Matthew is summarizing the approach of the women, and it sounds as though the women saw the angel descend. However, we know from the other accounts that they arrived to find the stone already rolled back, and the angels waiting inside. It was the guards who saw an angel arrive and roll back the stone. There were no guards to harass the women when they arrived, because the men had fled to tell the chief priests what had happened.

Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Matthew 28:11-15

Matthew is the only Gospel writer to get the inside information about what happened with the guards that weekend. John, as usual, focuses on very personal things, describing how he and Peter ran and found the empty tomb. Luke summarizes this, but John goes into detail about how they found the tomb empty and how the linen cloths and the napkin for His head were just lying there. John goes into detail about the broken-hearted Mary Magdalene, grieved and weeping over the missing body of her Lord. John describes her precious encounter with Jesus, and her great excitement at seeing Him alive.

When Mary saw Jesus and knew it was He, she apparently had a death grip on His ankles. What the King James translates, "Don't touch me," should more appropriately be translated, "Don't cling to me." In other words, "Let go, Mary. I haven't gone anywhere yet."

From that point on, Jesus begins to show Himself to all those close to Him.

Subsequent Appearances

The appearances that morning were not the only ones that Jesus made. Over the course of the next 40 days, Jesus visited the disciples on several occasions and appeared to large groups of people, including above 500 at one time. After He ascended, He continued to appear to people! He showed Himself to:

- Cleopas and another disciple on the road to Emmaus: Luke 24:13-32.
- Peter, sometime that day: Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5.
- Ten disciples, that night without Thomas: Luke 24:36; John 20:19-24.
- Eleven disciples, eight days later with Thomas: John 20:26-31.
- Seven disciples for breakfast in Galilee: (John 21:9-14).
- Eleven disciples in Galilee Matthew 28:16-20.
- Five hundred, probably in Galilee: 1 Corinthians 15:6.
- James in Jerusalem: 1 Corinthians 15:7.
- Many at the Ascension: Luke 24:44.

- Stephen when he is stoned: Acts 7:55.
- Paul, on the Damascus Road: Acts 9:3-7.
- Paul in the Temple: Acts 22:17-21.
- John on Patmos: Revelation 1:10-20.

Significance

We focus on the death of Jesus Christ at Easter, but even more, we focus on His resurrection. Most people do not realize that the Lord's resurrection is just as important for our salvation as His death on the cross. There are highly significant things about the resurrection of Jesus Christ that I want to point out:

First, it verifies the truth of scriptures like Psalms 16:10, 110:1, and Isaiah 53:10-12. These tell us that Jesus was greater than David, that He would die, and yet His body would not rot in the grave. He would live again. He would prolong His days and enjoy His reward!

We also recognize that if the body had been stolen by the Lord's enemies, they would have produced it in order to denigrate even His memory. Instead, on one day the disciples were discouraged and hiding in defeat, and just weeks later they were standing out in the crowds at Pentecost, declaring Christ's resurrection from the dead and walking in joyful victory. They were healing people in the streets, like the lame man in Acts 3:1-10.

Peter, who had denied Jesus when confronted by a little servant girl, was suddenly bold and speaking about Jesus in the streets. Full of the Holy Spirit in Acts 4, he told the high priests and the council that Jesus had risen from the dead and was the source of salvation. He and John declared that they would keep speaking in the name of Jesus, whether the leadership approved or not. Ultimately, they proved willing to die for the truth of Christ's resurrection, and all but John faced the death of martyrdom over the course of the first century.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is exceptionally important. It proves that Jesus is God's Son.⁸ It assures us of our own future resurrection.⁹ It offers proof of a future judgment, because the physical death is not the end.¹⁰ It means that Jesus is our Priest forever, because He will not die.¹¹ By its power, we ourselves walk in newness of life (being born again in our spirits),¹² and it gives us assurance of our own future eternal inheritance in Christ.¹³

Seventh Day

There's something else I want to point out. The seventh day was not ordained by the Law in Exodus 20. It was ordained in Eden in Genesis 2. The Israelites did not gather manna on Shabbat in Exodus 16, four chapters before the Law was given. The Sabbath is not just a Jewish practice, but it becomes idiomatic of the Jewish people. It's interesting how calendars, especially in Europe, take Monday as the first day of the week and make Sunday the seventh day of the week. That's not biblical. Monday is not the first day of the week, neither is Sunday the seventh. That's Satan's attempt to obscure the reality. It's interesting that the Bible makes clear we must not defraud our neighbors by moving ancient landmarks,¹⁴ and most of us relate this admonition to simple property issues. However, the rabbis feel it is also an admonition not to change God's landmarks, which includes His calendar.

The future temple of the Millennium will only be open on the Sabbath and the new moon; it won't be open on Sunday.¹⁵ That's kind of interesting.

The Road to Emmaus

Mark 16:12 mentions that Jesus met with two people as they walked into the country, but only Luke goes into detail about this Sunday morning encounter.

And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

Luke 24:13-16

This is interesting. Luke tells us their eyes were held captive so that they didn't recognize Jesus. These were men who knew Jesus. They weren't in the inner circle of 12 disciples, but they had been following Jesus and they knew Him. It's strange that they didn't know Him. The Mark verse says He appeared in a different "form." All we know is that He didn't look like Himself.

I'm convinced that Jesus certainly had a changed appearance after His death because of the reality of Isaiah 52:14. His face had been damaged during the beatings He received the day of the crucifixion, even to having His beard torn out,¹⁶ and people just plain didn't recognize Him at first. We've all experienced this when a friend shaves his beard; we don't recognize him because of the difference the beard made. If Jesus' beard was patchy and His face bore new scars, we can understand that He would have looked like a different person. We also have indications that Jesus existed in more than our four space-time dimensions after His resurrection, which might have also altered His appearance.

What we do know is that He approaches these two men, men who know Him, and He starts talking to them as a stranger.

And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things?

Luke 24:17-19a

Notice what Jesus says to them. I love this. He's being the teacher in this passage, but I think it's great that He asks them, "What things?" with apparently a straight face. He had just been arrested in the dead of night, forced through six trials, beat up and abused, mocked and spit on. He was nailed to a cross, suffered horrific physical, emotional and spiritual agony. He died, was buried, and has risen from the dead in great victory, and He asks them, "What things?" In their well-meaning ignorance, the two disciples give Him a summary of the recent events:

And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

Luke 24:19b-24

This is their understanding of what happened, and it's a nice summary of the Gospel accounts. It's interesting that they had heard reports from the women that Jesus was declared by angels to be alive, and yet they are sad as Jesus approaches them. They should have some excitement at this news, but it's clear they are among those who didn't believe the women who brought these reports. Shame on all those doubting men, right? But, are we any better?

I love what Jesus says to them, and they still don't get who He is:

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Luke 24:25-27

He gave them a seven-mile Bible study on His own identity in the Torah and prophetic books of the Old Testament. What a precious three hours together.

During the past 200 years, scholars have promoted the Documentary Hypothesis of Julius Wellhausen, which argues that four different groups of ancient writers shuffled the Torah together over centuries. Forget all that foolishness. Who wrote the Torah? Moses. How do I know? Because Jesus said so.¹⁷ Jesus knew exactly what the Hebrew Scriptures said about Himself in the full meaning of every verse, and He shared His deep understanding with Cleopas and his companion on the walk to Emmaus.

And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

Luke 24:28-30

We easily overlook the significance of tiny details in the biblical text because we don't understand the first century Jewish culture, and we don't stop to think about certain things. Who blesses the bread and breaks it? Jesus does. That's strange! He's the guest of these two men but blessing and breaking the bread was the host's job. What do you suppose clued them into His identity? When He broke the bread, they would have seen the nail prints in His wrists.

And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

Luke 24:31-35

There are several remarkable things in these verses. First, Jesus vanishes. He never did this before His death and resurrection, but He does it constantly afterward. He apparently can come and go as He pleases, which I think is fascinating. Second, their hearts burned in their chests as He was talking to them. That's interesting. People today still testify of burning in their chests during worship or close communion with the Spirit of God. Third, notice again when it was they recognized Jesus.

It was in the breaking of bread, when His wrists would have been exposed with the nail prints in them.

The eleven disciples are still not sure what to make of these reports they keep hearing. Mark 16:13 tells us the disciples still didn't believe the witness of the two men who recognized Jesus in Emmaus. They are still held captive by fear and grief, refusing to believe the wonderful news that their Lord and friend is alive! That doubt doesn't last long, however, because Jesus soon appears in the room Himself.

The Upper Room

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

Luke 24:36-39

When Jesus tells Mary not to “touch” Him earlier, He meant, “Don’t cling to me, Mary.” He has the ability to appear at will, but He is no mere spirit. He is a physical, truly material being, which means that He’s hyper-dimensional. That is, He enjoys a dimensionality that exceeds the four space-time dimensions that we’re familiar with. Angels are similar, in that they can appear and disappear from our sight, yet they are physical beings able to interact with humans, whether by killing them¹⁸ or by grabbing hold of them.¹⁹ Jesus starts to show the men that He is truly a physical being by eating in front of them:

And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.

Luke 24:40-43

I love this. He constantly appears after His resurrection preparing or eating food. He’s my kind of guy.

Of course, John tells us that Thomas isn’t there with them when Jesus first appears. Thomas has missed out, and even though his fellow disciples insist that Jesus is alive, Thomas refuses to believe the news.

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

John 20:24-25

This is why, we call him “Doubting Thomas.” It’s easy to understand his cynicism but remember that Jesus had warned the disciples many times that He would be crucified. He’s said many times that He would rise again the third day. Jesus had told them in advance. Then, the women that morning came and said they’d seen angels who told them that Jesus was alive. Then, the two men from Emmaus told them. Then, Peter said he’d seen Jesus. Finally, all the other disciples excitedly tell Thomas that Jesus is alive. The hard crust of Thomas’ heart should have been dented by these reports, but he still refuses to believe. It’s another eight days before Thomas gets to see Jesus himself.

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

John 20:26-29

Isn’t Jesus gracious? He cares about Thomas, and He is willing to let Thomas feel the nail and spear holes. Thomas is the sort that requires hard evidence, and Jesus gives him the evidence he desires. However, I believe God delights in our faith when we believe Him just because of His Word. The children’s song goes, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for

the Bible tells me so.”

All the evidence that Thomas needed was already tucked away in the Scriptures he'd been taught his whole life.

When I was younger, I got heavily into memorizing Scripture. There's a verse in Zechariah that made less and less sense to me as I tried to learn it. Zechariah 13:6 states, "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." I struggled to understand this verse. I could not understand how a bunch of Roman soldiers driving nails through Christ's wrists could be considered the house of His friends. It wasn't until I re-read the Thomas account here that I realized that what wounded Him were not the nails. It was Thomas and his unbelief.

Thomas had followed Jesus for years, had watched Him heal people day after day, feed vast crowds from a little boy's lunch, walk on water, and calm a storm with His voice. Thomas had seen Jesus at work. Why did he doubt? Because things looked dark and hopeless? Nothing is hopeless for God.

We cannot judge Thomas, because we are just like him. Why do we doubt? We might have times of great victory in the Lord, but as soon as things don't go our way we begin to fear and think God has abandoned us. Why do we doubt Him? He loves us, and He is trustworthy, and His plans are good. We need to trust and praise the Lord at all times, especially in the darkest seasons of our lives: 1 Thessalonians 5:18 urges us, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Nothing is too big for Jesus the King, and when we give our lives into His hands, entrusting Him with every detail, we begin to see His great power working through us.

Twice Jesus appeared to the disciples as they gathered together in that room, and He would appear to them additional times, but He would not remain with them long. He had told them at the Last Supper that He would have to go away so that He could send the Comforter.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

John 16:7-8

John is nearing the end of his story, his personal account of Jesus. John, the beloved disciple, cannot fully explain the many great works of Jesus. He finishes out this chapter by letting us know that we don't know the half of what Jesus did.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

John 20:30-31

Still, John has one last short story to tell, one final moment with Jesus back where it all started for him.

This was an excerpt from Chuck Missler's book [The Easter Story: What Really Happened](#).

Also available in a [two hour video presentation](#).

<https://store.khouse.org>

Notes:

- 1 Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55-24:10; John 20:1-2.
- 2 Matthew 28:2-7; Luke 24:4-7
- 3 John 20:3-10
- 4 John 20:11-13
- 5 John 20:14-16
- 6 Mark 16:9-11; John 20:18
- 7 Matthew 28:8-10; Luke 24:9-11
- 8 John 10:17-18
- 9 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- 10 Acts 17:31
- 11 Hebrews 7:23
- 12 Romans 6:4
- 13 1 Peter 1:3-5
- 14 Job 24:2; Proverbs 22:28
- 15 Ezekiel 46:1
- 16 Isaiah 50:6
- 17 Matthew 8:4, 19:8; Mark 1:44, 7:10, 12:26; Luke 5:14, 16:29-31, 20:37, 24:44; John 3:14, 5:45-46, 7:19-23
- 18 2 Samuel 24:16; Isaiah 37:36
- 19 Genesis 19:10-11

- He would rise again (Psa 16:10; Isa 53:12; Mat 12:40; Mat 28:6,7).

These Hebrew Scriptures contain over 300 prophecies that detail the coming Jewish Messiah. Here are a few of these Old Testament prophecies.

24. He would be of David's family (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 89:3-4; 110:1; 132:11).
25. He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14).
26. He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).
27. They will sojourn in Egypt (Hosea 11:1).

28. He would live in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2; 11:1).
29. He'd be announced by an Elijah-like herald (Isaiah 40:3-5; Malachi 3:1; 4:5).
30. This would occasion the massacre of Bethlehem's children (Genesis 35:19-20; Jeremiah 31:15).
31. His mission would include the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:1-4).
32. His ministry would be one of healing (Isaiah 53:4-5).
33. He would teach through parables (Isaiah 6:9-10; Psalm 78:2).
34. He would be disbelieved and rejected by the rulers (Psalm 69:4; 118:22; Isaiah 6:10; 29:13; 53:1).
35. He would make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zechariah 9:9; Psalm 118:26).
36. He would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:1-13; Psalm 41:9).
37. He would be like a smitten shepherd (Zechariah 13:7).
38. He would be given vinegar and gall (Psalm 69:21).
39. They would cast lots for His garments (Psalm 22:18).
40. His side would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10; Psalm 22:16).
41. Not a bone would be broken (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Psalm 34:20).
42. He would die among malefactors (Isaiah 53:9, 12).
43. His dying words were foretold (Psalm 22:1; 31:5).
44. He'd be buried by a rich man (Isaiah 53:9).
45. He would rise from the dead on the third day (Genesis 22:4; Psalm 16:10-11; Jonah 1:17; Hosea 6:2).
46. His resurrection would be followed by the destruction of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:26; 11:31).

10 Fulfilled Prophecies About Jesus resurrection

By [Robert Eubanks](#)

Introduction: Prophecies About Jesus Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus is central to the Christian faith, and it was foretold long before His death. The **prophecies about Jesus resurrection** not only confirm His identity as the Messiah but also underscore the power of God to overcome death. From ancient texts in the Old Testament, there are clear predictions about both His burial and His resurrection, showing the divine orchestration of events that would change the world forever. Please refer to [Bible Gateway](#) to explore the scriptures written below.

1. Buried with the Rich (Isaiah 53:9)

Prophecy: "He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death..." (Isaiah 53:9)

Fulfillment: After Jesus' crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man and secret disciple of Jesus, requested to bury Jesus in his own tomb (Matthew 27:57-60). This fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, where Jesus, though crucified among criminals, was buried in a rich man's tomb.

2. Not Left in the Grave (Psalm 16:10)

Prophecy: "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay." (Psalm 16:10)

Fulfillment: Jesus was buried, but He did not remain in the tomb long enough to see decay. On the third day, He rose from the dead, as confirmed by Peter's sermon in Acts 2:31-32: "God raised Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact."

3. Raised from the Grave (Psalm 30:3)

Prophecy: “O Lord, you brought up my soul from the grave; you spared me from going down to the pit.” (Psalm 30:3)

Fulfillment: Jesus was raised from the dead, triumphing over death. This prophecy reflects the joy of the resurrection, which the disciples witnessed firsthand when Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection (Acts 2:32).

4. Redeemed from the Realm of the Dead (Psalm 49:15)

Prophecy: “But God will redeem me from the realm of the dead; he will surely take me to himself.” (Psalm 49:15)

Fulfillment: Jesus’ resurrection from the dead was God’s triumph over death. The resurrection, declared by the angel at the tomb in Luke 24:6, confirmed that Jesus was indeed redeemed from death, fulfilling this prophecy.

5. The Third Day (Hosea 6:2)

Prophecy: “After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence.” (Hosea 6:2)

Fulfillment: Jesus was resurrected on the third day, in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:4). This fulfilled the timeline of the resurrection, showing how God’s plan unfolded precisely as foretold.

6. He Will Prolong His Days (Isaiah 53:10-11)

Prophecy: “Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer... After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied.” (Isaiah 53:10-11)

Fulfillment: Jesus’ resurrection fulfilled this prophecy, as His suffering on the cross was not the end. He rose again and appeared to His disciples, “alive after his suffering,” as described in Acts 1:3.

7. The Resurrection Declared (Psalm 22:22)

Prophecy: “I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you.” (Psalm 22:22)

Fulfillment: Jesus’ resurrection was declared to the disciples and the world. In John 20:17, Jesus tells Mary Magdalene to inform His disciples that He is alive, fulfilling the prophetic declaration of His resurrection.

8. Messiah Will Not See Decay (Psalm 16:10)

Prophecy: “You will not let your Holy One see decay.” (Psalm 16:10)

Fulfillment: Jesus’ body was raised on the third day before any physical decay could set in, fulfilling this prophecy. Peter’s sermon in Acts 13:35-37 emphasizes that unlike David, who died and saw decay, Jesus was raised and did not see decay.

9. The Redeemer Lives (Job 19:25-26)

Prophecy: “I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.” (Job 19:25-26)

Fulfillment: Jesus’ resurrection fulfills this declaration, showing that the Redeemer lives and will return again in power. This prophecy reflects Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances and His future return (Luke 24:36-43).

10. Resurrection Assured (Psalm 118:17-18)

Prophecy: “I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done.” (Psalm 118:17-18)

Fulfillment: Jesus’ resurrection was assured, and He lived to proclaim victory over death. The angel at the tomb in Luke 24:6-7 told the women, “He is not here; He has risen,” confirming the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Conclusion: Prophecies About Jesus Resurrection Fulfilled

The **prophecies about Jesus resurrection** are profound, showing God’s foreordained plan for humanity’s salvation. Through His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures, proving His identity as the Messiah and giving hope to all who believe in Him. These prophecies reveal not only the victory over death but also the everlasting life that Jesus offers to those who trust in Him.

See our main article on [prophecies Jesus fulfilled here](#).

Religion/Denomination/Belief System	View of Jesus Christ	Is Jesus God?
Catholicism	Son of God, 2nd person of Trinity	Yes
Eastern Orthodoxy	Son of God, 2nd person of Trinity	Yes
Mainline Protestants	Son of God, 2nd person of Trinity	Yes
Evangelicals	Son of God, 2nd person of Trinity	Yes
Jehovah's Witnesses	Son of God, subordinate to God (no Trinity)	No
Mormons (Latter-Day Saints)	Divine but separate from God (no Trinity)	No
Judaism	Human teacher, not Messiah	No
Islam	Human prophet	No
Bahá'í Faith	Prophet, manifestation of God (one of many)	No

Hinduism	Manifestation of a god (one of many)	Not exactly, but it's complicated
Buddhists	Human teacher	No
Sikhs	Human prophet	No
Jains	Human teacher	No
Zoroastrians	Human teacher	No
Taoists	Human sage	No
Shintoists	No position	No
Rastafarians	God in human form	Yes
Scientologists	Human teacher	No
Atheists	Human historical figure (or myth)	No
Agnostics	Don't know or have any way of knowing for certain	No
Humanists	Human teacher	No

TOP TEN HISTORICAL REFERENCES TO JESUS OUTSIDE OF THE BIBLE

Author: Bryan Windle

Category: General Apologetics

Created: 07 November 2025



This article was first published on Bryan Windle's [Bible Archaeology Report](#) blog.

Here is the video version of this article, episode 222 of *Digging for Truth*:

After publishing my blog article "[Top Ten Discoveries Related to Jesus](#)," I faced some criticism from people who noted that none of the discoveries proved Jesus existed. Leaving aside that "proof" is subjective and is not the purpose of archaeology, these individuals misunderstood my intent. As I noted in my blog, those discoveries affirmed and illuminated details about Jesus's life as recorded in the Gospels; they were not meant to prove His existence.

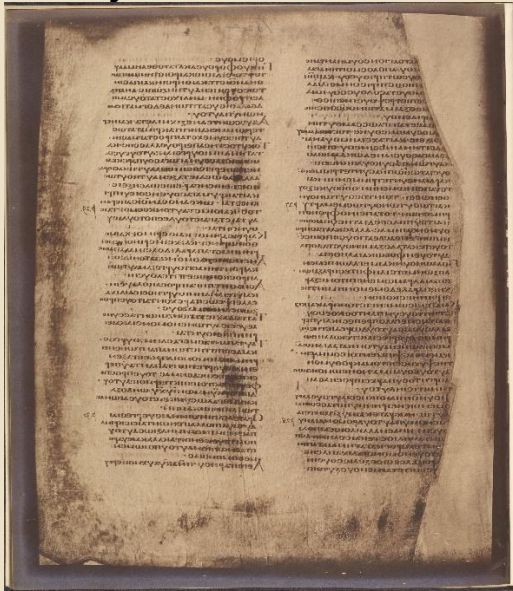
However, their feedback has inspired me to write this follow-up article addressing the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. Did He exist? There is ample evidence to suggest that He did indeed live early in the first century.

While I believe that the Gospels in the New Testament are the earliest and most reliable records of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, for the purpose of this discussion, I'm going to focus on non-biblical references to Him. In order to make this list, I've used the following criteria:

- The sources must be from the first or second century, not later. So, for example, while some quote rabbinic references to Jesus from the Talmud (ca. AD 400–700) or the *Toledot Yeshu* (ca. AD 1000), I have left them off this list. The reality is that they are really of little or no value in determining the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth.¹
- Secondly, the sources must reference Jesus, not just Christians.

Here then are the top ten historical references to Jesus in literary works outside of the Bible.

10. Early Christian Writers (ca. AD 50–157)



A photographic facsimile of the First Epistle of Clement from Codex

Alexandrinus in the British Museum. Photo: CC0

1.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=60496048>.

It is difficult to explain the explosive growth of Christianity within the first 100 years or so after Christ's life if He Himself did not actually exist. One often-overlooked group of extra-biblical texts that testify to the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth consists of works by early Christian writers, some of whom reported what they heard directly from those who met Jesus personally. Their letters and treatises record details about Jesus's life and death and show that they believed He rose from the dead.

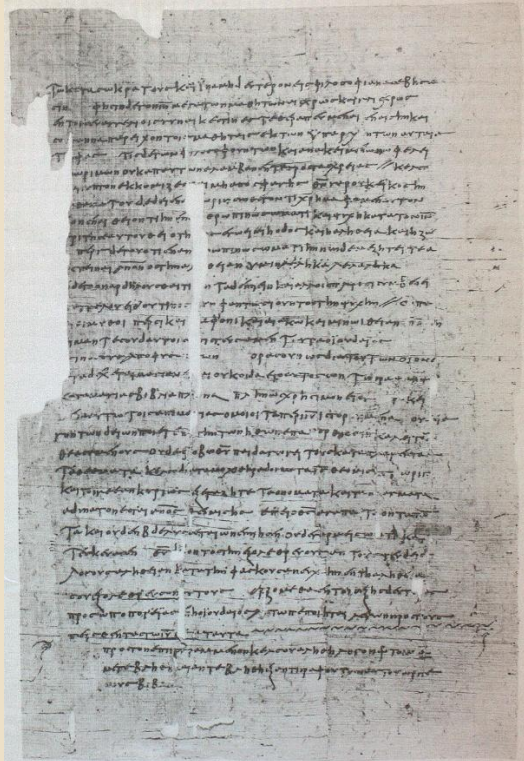
- Clement was a first-century leader of the church at Rome who wrote a letter to the church at Corinth (ca. AD 70–96). In it he speaks of the teachings of Jesus (13:1), His death (21:6), and His resurrection from the dead (24:1).²
- Ignatius of Antioch wrote a letter to the Smyrnaeans (ca. AD 110) in which he claims that Jesus was crucified under [Pontius Pilate](#) and [Herod the tetrarch](#) (ch. 1) and that "He suffered all these things for us; and He suffered them really, and not in appearance only, even as also He truly rose again" (ch. 2).³
- Similarly, Polycarp, in his letter to the Philippians (ca. AD 110–140), affirmed that Jesus lived and died (1:2).⁴ Polycarp was said to have been taught directly by the original apostles.⁵
- Justin Martyr, in his First Apology (ca. AD 155–157), argues that Jesus was a teacher, that He was crucified, and that He died and rose again (ch. XXI).⁶
- Papias (ca. AD 95–110)⁷ wrote that he learned of Jesus's teachings directly from those who had heard Him in person.⁸
- Quadratus was an early Christian apologist who wrote a letter to the emperor Hadrian (ca. AD 117–138) in defense of Christianity. In it he stated, "But the works of our Saviour were always present, for they were genuine:— those that were healed, and those that were raised from the dead, who were seen not only when they were healed and when they were raised, but were also always present; and not merely while the Saviour was on earth, but also after his death, they were alive for quite a while, so that some of them lived even to our day."⁹
- Even earlier than all of these is a manuscript known as the Didache (ca. 50–70 AD), a sort of early discipleship manual explaining how Christians should act. It recites some of the teachings of Jesus and lays out instructions for celebrating communion, remembering Jesus's death and resurrection.¹⁰

Early Christian writers, some of whom learned directly from the original apostles, testified to Jesus's life as a teacher, miracles He performed, His death under Pontius Pilate by crucifixion, and their belief that Jesus rose again from the dead. While critics of Christianity may not accept the testimony of early Christians,

there is no denying that, within one hundred years of Jesus's life, His followers were writing about Him and telling others about His life, death, and resurrection.

Still, to answer the critics, the remaining references will all be from non-Christian writers, who had no motivation to promote Jesus or Christianity. As we shall see, they affirm the same details that these Christian writers recorded.

9. Phlegon (ca. AD 140)



An early manuscript of Origen's *Contra Celsum (Against Celsum)*, currently housed in the Egyptian Museum. Photo: Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=75283730>.

Some references to Jesus come from works that are no longer in existence but that have been quoted by other authors in antiquity. This is not a problem for the historian, as many works have been preserved in the quotations of other ancient writers. Phlegon of Tralles wrote a book of history around the middle of the second century. While it is no longer extant, Origen cites several passages in which Phlegon refers to Jesus:

Now Phlegon, in the thirteenth or fourteenth book, I think, of his *Chronicles*, not only ascribed to Jesus a knowledge of future events..., but also testified that the result corresponded to His predictions.¹¹

And with regard to the eclipse in the time of Tiberius Caesar, in whose reign Jesus appears to have been crucified, and the great earthquakes which then took place, Phlegon too, I think, has written in the thirteenth or fourteenth book of his *Chronicles*.¹²

We have in the preceding pages, made our defence, according to our ability, adducing the testimony of Phlegon, who relates that these events took place at the time when our Saviour suffered. And he goes on to say, that "Jesus, while alive, was of no assistance to himself, but that he arose after death, and exhibited the marks of his punishment, and showed how his hands had been pierced by nails."¹³

According to the ancient historian Phlegon, Jesus was thought to have accurately predicted the future, was crucified during the days of Tiberius Caesar, and was believed to have risen again, showing His hands that had been pierced by nails.

8. Thallus (ca. AD 55)



A woodcut of Julius Africanus from 1493. Image: CC0

1.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=84784268>.

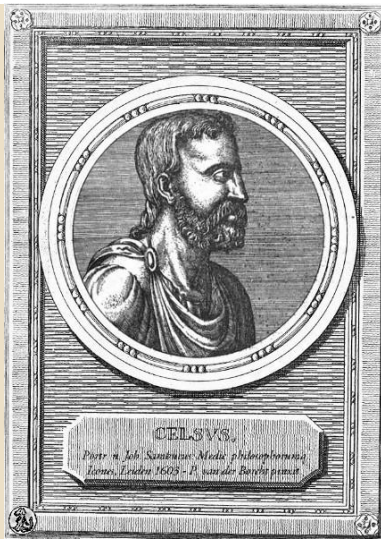
Thallus was perhaps the earliest non-Christian writer to refer to Jesus. While Thallus's work has been lost, a fragment was referenced by Julius Africanus around AD 220, and Africanus, in turn, was quoted by the Byzantine historian Georgius Syncellus in his *Chronicle* (ca. AD 800). Julius Africanus was discussing the darkness that accompanied the crucifixion of Jesus (Mt 27:45). He writes,

On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness; and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down. This darkness Thallus in the third book of his *History*, calls, as appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun.¹⁴

At first glance, Jesus isn't mentioned in this quotation. However, it is likely that Thallus referred to Jesus in his original work. Robert Van Voorst explains: "Thallos could have mentioned the eclipse with no reference to Jesus. But it is more likely that Julius, who had access to the context of this quotation in Thallos and who (to judge from other fragments) was generally a careful user of his sources, was correct in reading it as a hostile reference to Jesus' death. The context in Julius shows that he is refuting Thallos' argument that the darkness is not religiously significant."¹⁵

Note that Julius explicitly states that Thallus is mistaken in his understanding of the reason for the darkness; he is not merely noting an eclipse. While not explicit, this reference is important because it likely predates the writing of most of the Gospels themselves. Since Thallus appears to be countering the argument of Christians that darkness accompanied the death of Christ, he obviously knew about Jesus, and likely not from the Gospels themselves, but from sources outside of the Bible.

7. Celsus (ca. AD 175)



Celsus. Public

Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1641114>.

Celsus was a second-century Greek philosopher who wrote a treatise attacking Christianity, called *The True Doctrine*. His work remains primarily through quotations in Origen's rebuttal, *Against Celsus*, written some 75 years later. Given the length of time between Celsus's original text and Origen's response, it would seem *The True Doctrine* had a lasting impact.¹⁶ Origen summarizes Celsus's arguments against Christianity, noting that the critic had used a literary device of imagining a Jew talking with Jesus:

And since, in imitation of a rhetorician training a pupil, he [Celsus] introduces a Jew, who enters into a personal discussion with Jesus, and speaks in a very childish manner, altogether unworthy of the grey hairs of a philosopher, let me endeavour, to the best of my ability, to examine his statements, and show that he does not maintain, throughout the discussion, the consistency due to the character of a Jew. For he represents him disputing with Jesus, and confuting Him, as he thinks, on many points; and in the first place, he accuses Him of having "invented his birth from a virgin," and upbraids Him with being "born in a certain Jewish village, of a poor woman of the country, who gained her subsistence by spinning, and who was turned out of doors by her husband, a carpenter by trade, because she was convicted of adultery; that after being driven away by her husband, and wandering about for a time, she disgracefully gave birth to Jesus, an illegitimate child, who having hired himself out as a servant in Egypt on account of his poverty, and having there acquired some miraculous powers, on which the Egyptians greatly pride themselves, returned to his own country, highly elated on account of them, and by means of these proclaimed himself a God."¹⁷

One must always be careful when judging the veracity of something someone said when it is quoted by another. However, even though Celsus's claims are quoted within a critical response, it would make sense that Origen has faithfully recorded Celsus's words, as he would need to be accurate for his critique to be taken seriously. From Celsus's critique of Jesus, we see that it was said He was born of a poor virgin, that He was known to have performed miracles, and that He claimed to be divine. Even Celsus's claim that Jesus's mother was driven away by Joseph because of adultery, while not factual, certainly captures Joseph's initial thoughts upon hearing of Mary's pregnancy (Mt 1:19).

6. Lucian of Samosata (ca. AD 166)



Lucian of Samosata, the satirist. Engraving by William Faithorne (1616/1691). Image: Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=136420379>.

Lucian of Samosata was a famous Greek satirist who also referred to Jesus in his work *The Death of Peregrine*, which was written sometime after AD 165. In it he mocks Christians, writing, The Christians, you know, worship a *man* to this day,—the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account....You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws.¹⁸

In this statement from the middle of the second century, we see Lucian acknowledge the following historical facts: (1) Jesus was the founder of a religion and was crucified, (2) His followers were converted and considered themselves spiritual brothers and sisters, and (3) Jesus's followers worshipped Him as God.

5. Mara bar Serapion (ca. AD 73)

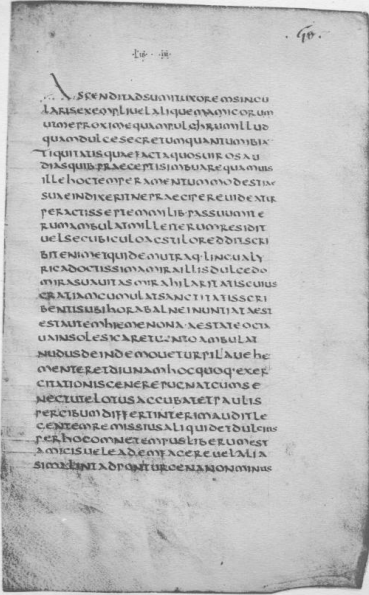
Mara bar Serapion's city was destroyed by the Romans who were occupying the land, and he himself was taken captive. From prison, he wrote a letter in Syriac to his son, also called Serapion, encouraging him to pursue wisdom. In it, Mara bar Serapion refers to Jesus:

What else can we say, when the wise are forcibly dragged off by tyrants, their wisdom is captured by insults, and their minds are oppressed and without defense? What advantage did the Athenians gain by murdering Socrates, for which they were repaid with famine and pestilence? Or the people of Samos by the burning of Pythagoras, because their country was completely covered in sand in just one hour? Or the Jews [by killing] their wise king, because their kingdom was taken away at that very time? God justly repaid the wisdom of these three men: the Athenians died of famine; the Samians were completely overwhelmed by the sea; and the Jews, desolate and driven from their own kingdom, are scattered through every nation. Socrates is not dead, because of Plato; neither is Pythagoras, because of the statue of Juno; nor is the wise king, because of the new laws he laid down.¹⁹

While Jesus is not explicitly named, it is almost certain that Mara bar Serapion is referring to Jesus as the "wise king" whom the Jews killed. Remember that the title "King of the Jews" was one used by Pilate (Lk 23:3), Roman soldiers (Mt 27:27–29), and even some Jews themselves (Mk 15:12). Moreover, the written charge that was placed above Jesus when He was crucified, which was seen by all, read "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (Jn 19:19). It would appear that this was a commonly known title by which Jesus was known in the first century.

J. Warner Wallace summarizes the significance of this reference: "From this account, we can add to our understanding of Jesus: *He was a wise and influential man who died for His beliefs. The Jewish leadership was somehow responsible for Jesus' death. Jesus' followers adopted His beliefs and lived their lives accordingly.*"²⁰

4. Pliny the Younger (ca. AD 112)



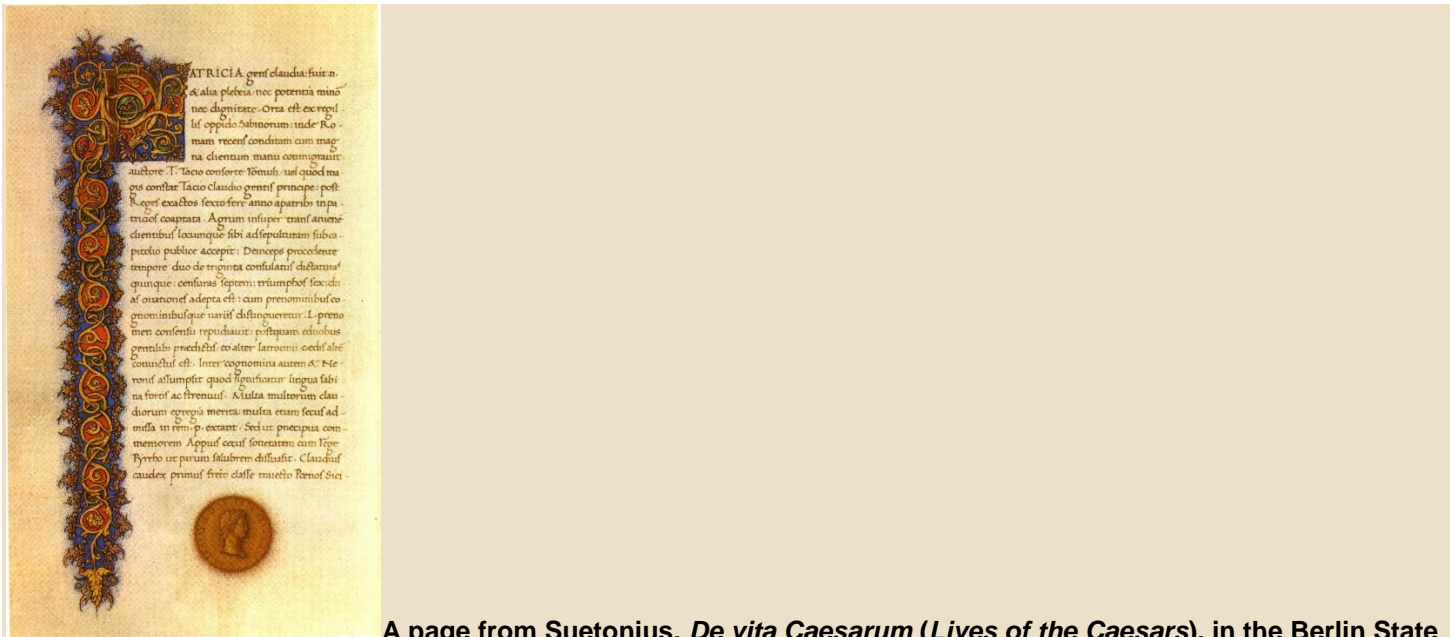
A page from a sixth-century manuscript of Pliny's *Letters*. Image: Project Gutenberg, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16706/16706-h/16706-h.htm>, Plate V.

Pliny the Younger was a Roman governor of Bithynia, who wrote to Emperor Trajan asking for advice on how to deal with the Christians he was prosecuting. In his *Letters*, Book 10, Letter 96, he describes his procedure to Trajan:

Others, whose names were given me by an informer, first said that they were Christians and afterwards denied it, declaring that they had been but were so no longer, some of them having recanted many years before, and more than one so long as twenty years back. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the deities, and cursed the name of Christ. But they declared that the sum of their guilt or their error only amounted to this, that on a stated day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn among themselves to Christ, as though he were a god, and that so far from binding themselves by oath to commit any crime, their oath was to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery, and from breach of faith, and not to deny trust money placed in their keeping when called upon to deliver it.²¹

Pliny's letter reveals that Christ was a real, historical figure whose name the Roman magistrates were attempting to get Christians to curse. It also demonstrates that Christians at that time believed in the divinity of Jesus and were meeting weekly to worship Him. It is interesting to note that Trajan responds to Pliny's letter by stating that Christians were "not to be hunted out," but that those who claimed to be followers of Jesus were to be punished, while those who recanted their faith were to be pardoned.²²

3. Suetonius (ca. AD 120)



A page from Suetonius, *De vita Caesarum (Lives of the Caesars)*, in the Berlin State Library. Image: Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=48540156>.

Suetonius was a Roman historian whose most famous work, *De vita Caesarum (Lives of the Caesars)*, recounts a brief history of the first twelve Caesars, from Julius Caesar to the emperor Domitian. In his chapter on the life of Claudius (AD 41–54), he explained the reason for the emperor’s decision to expel the Jews from Rome, an event also recorded in the Bible (Acts 18:2): Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus [Christ], he expelled them from Rome.²³

There is a near-unanimous consensus among scholars of all religious persuasions that “Chrestus,” likely a phonetic misspelling of the Latin “Christus,” is Jesus Christ; indeed, the name Chrestus/Chrestos and the term “Chrestians” were known to, and used by, numerous church fathers.²⁴

Suetonius’s reference demonstrates that within a hundred years of the life of Jesus, He was known to have existed, and that He was a popular and controversial figure whose legacy caused disturbances among the Jews during the reign of Claudius.

2. Josephus (ca. AD 93)



An illustrated page of a Latin translation of Josephus’s *Antiquities of the Jews* from the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence, Italy. Image: Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=47230455>.

Josephus, a Jewish-Roman historian, referred to Jesus twice in his work *Antiquities of the Jews*. In one reference, he describes the death of James, "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ."²⁵ The other reference, the more famous of the two, is commonly referred to as the *Testimonium Flavianum* (TF). Many scholars, both Christian and non-Christian alike, believe that this passage in its Greek form was altered by a Christian scribe at some point in antiquity who added interpolations to enhance the image of Jesus.²⁶ They argue, for example, that Josephus, a Jew, would not have said, "He was the Christ" (*Antiquities* 18.3.3). According to this theory, while the passage was altered, it still contains an authentic reference to Jesus at its core, and scholars for years have proposed reconstructions of how it originally read.

The latest research, however, presents a compelling case that no interpolations were added by some supposed Christian scribe in the past. Rather, one or two words were mistakenly dropped from the text. In his book *Josephus and Jesus: New Evidence for the One Called Christ*, T. C. Schmidt meticulously analyzes Josephus's writings and demonstrates that each phrase of the TF is used multiple times by Josephus elsewhere.²⁷ Moreover, he says,

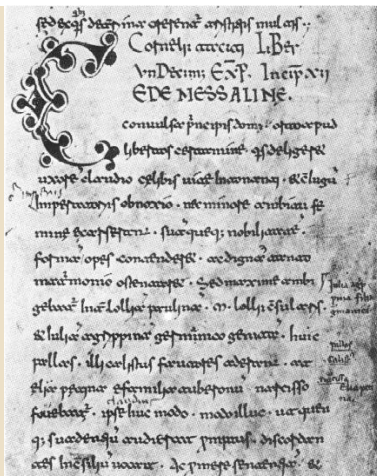
I maintain that the TF found in extant manuscripts of the *Antiquities* is essentially authentic, and that it has merely lost two or three words that can still be found preserved in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Armenian textual witnesses. These include the Greek word 'certain' (τις) and the Syriac phrase *mestabrā itaw* which in the TF can be translated as 'thought to be.' The Syriac hence means that the original TF did not say that Jesus 'was the Christ' but only that he was 'thought to be' the Christ. The Latin version of the TF similarly says that Jesus was 'believed to be' (*credebatur esse*) the Christ.²⁸

Schmidt provides his own translation of the TF, which takes into consideration the meaning of the phrases as Josephus used them elsewhere, as well as the Syriac and Latin translations. It reads,

And in this time, there was a certain Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man, for he was a doer of incredible deeds, a teacher of men who receive truisms with pleasure. And he brought over many from among the Jews and many from among the Greeks. He was [thought to be] the Christ. And, when Pilate had condemned him to the cross at the accusation of the first men among us, those who at first were devoted to him did not cease to be so, for on the third day it seemed to them that he was alive again given that the divine prophets had spoken such things and thousands of other wonderful things about him. And up till now the tribe of the Christians, who were named from him, has not disappeared.²⁹

From these references, it is clear that Josephus accepted the existence of Jesus, who was "called Christ," and whose conduct was good. He acknowledges that Jesus was crucified by Pilate, and that many people became disciples, reporting that He was alive and had appeared to them. Moreover, Josephus may have even known some of the "first men among us" who were involved in the trial of Jesus, and who likely provided him with firsthand information about Jesus.³⁰

1. Tacitus (ca. AD 116)



An 11th-century copy of Tacitus's *Annals*. Photo: Public

Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=47354307>.

Tacitus was a Roman historian who left two major works, the *Histories* (covering the Roman Empire from AD 69 to 96) and the *Annals* (covering the period from 14 to 68).³¹ In his *Annals*, Tacitus writes about suspicions that Nero was responsible for the Great Fire of Rome and how Nero tried to deflect the blame: Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures 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 one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.³²

This passage is of great importance to biblical scholars for several reasons. First, there is no question as to its authenticity. Second, Tacitus is seen as an independent source; there does not seem to be any literary or oral dependence between his description and the gospel accounts.³³ Third, it affirms numerous details about Jesus, called Christus, including His historicity, His death under Pontius Pilate, and the persecution of His disciples. Furthermore, by describing the "mischievous superstition," Tacitus may be referring to the belief of the early disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Conclusion

Individually, each of these sources provides limited information regarding the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. Taken together, though, they provide a remarkably detailed summary of Jesus's life. Certainly, they attest to the fact that Jesus of Nazareth existed. Furthermore, even if we did not have the New Testament books, and simply relied on non-biblical sources, we would know the following about Jesus:

- He was reported to have been born of a poor virgin, and His father was a carpenter
- He was a teacher, and His disciples passed on His teachings to others
- He prophesied and performed miracles
- He was known for His wisdom and His virtuous life
- He claimed to be God
- He was crucified by Pontius Pilate in Judea during the reign of Tiberius Caesar
- An earthquake and darkness accompanied His death
- His followers reported that He had risen from the dead, appeared to them, and showed them the wounds in His hands
- His followers worshipped Him as God
- Belief in Jesus caused disturbances with the Jews, which led to Claudius's decree for the Jews to leave Rome

In fact, Jesus was so well known within a century of His death that word of Him likely reached no less than six Roman emperors: Claudius, who evicted Christians from Rome; Nero, who persecuted Christians; Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, under whose patronage Josephus wrote; and Trajan, who replied to Pliny.

While there may be popular blogs and books promoting the “Christ myth” today, suggesting that Jesus never lived, at a scholarly level, the existence of Jesus of Nazareth has been firmly established, even if one uses only non-biblical, historical texts. In reality, Jesus of Nazareth is one of the best-attested historical figures from the first century.

COVER IMAGE: Engraving of Jesus Teaching, from the book *History of the Church*, 1880. Public Domain.

Endnotes

¹ Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 144–45.

² *Epistles of 1 Clement*, <https://earlychristianwritings.com/text/1clement-lightfoot.html> (accessed November 17, 2022).

³ Ignatius, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, <https://earlychristianwritings.com/text/ignatius-smyrnaeans-longer.html> (accessed November 2, 2022).

⁴ Polycarp, *Epistle of Polycarp*, <https://earlychristianwritings.com/text/polycarp-lightfoot.html> (accessed November 2, 2022).

⁵ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.36.1, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm> (accessed November 16, 2022).

⁶ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, <https://earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-firstapology.html> (accessed November 2, 2022).

⁷ Robert W. Yarbrough, “The Date of Papias: A Reassessment,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 26, no. 2 (June 1983): 182, https://etsjets.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/files_JETS-PDFs_26_26-2_26-2-pp181-191_JETS.pdf.

⁸ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.1, 3.39.14–15, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm> (accessed November 16, 2022).

⁹ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.3.2, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250104.htm> (accessed November 17, 2022).

¹⁰ *Didache*, 9, <https://earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html> (accessed November 2, 2022).

¹¹ Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.14, <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen162.html> (accessed November 16, 2022).

¹² Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.33, <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen162.html> (accessed November 16, 2022).

¹³ Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.59, <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen162.html> (accessed November 16, 2022).

¹⁴ As quoted in William Lane Craig, “#160 Thallus on the Darkness at Noon,” *Reasonable Faith*, May 10, 2010, <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/thallus-on-the-darkness-at-noon>.

¹⁵ Robert E. Van Voorst, *Jesus outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 21.

¹⁶ Van Voorst, 65.

¹⁷ Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.28, <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen161.html> (accessed November 16, 2022).

- ¹⁸ Lucian, *The Death of Peregrine*, 11, 13, https://lucianofsamosata.info/wiki/doku.php?id=home:texts_and_library:essays:peregrine (accessed November 10, 2022).
- ¹⁹ As quoted in Van Voorst, *Jesus outside the New Testament*, 54.
- ²⁰ J. Warner Wallace, "Is There Any Evidence for Jesus outside the Bible?" *Cold-Case Christianity*, October 30, 2017, <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/is-there-any-evidence-for-jesus-outside-the-bible/>.
<https://www.attalus.org/old/pliny10b.html#96> (accessed November 10, 2022).
- ²¹ <https://www.attalus.org/old/pliny10b.html#96> (accessed November 10, 2022).
- ²² Pliny, *Letters*, Book 10, Letter 97, <https://www.attalus.org/old/pliny10b.html#97> (accessed November 10, 2022).
- ²³ Suetonius, *Life of Claudius* 25.4, https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Suetonius/12Caesars/Claudius*.html (accessed November 10, 2022).
- ²⁴ Van Voorst, *Jesus outside the New Testament*, 32–35.
- ²⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1; William Whiston, trans., *Josephus: The Complete Works* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 645.
- ²⁶ For a good summary of scholars and the positions they hold, see Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 179.
- ²⁷ See chapters three and four of T. C. Schmidt, *Josephus and Jesus: New Evidence for the One Called Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025). This book is freely available for download here: <https://academic.oup.com/book/60034> (accessed November 7, 2025).
- ²⁸ Schmidt, *Josephus and Jesus*, 5.
- ²⁹ Schmidt, 204.
- ³⁰ Schmidt, 145–97. Schmidt quotes Josephus, who says he met regularly with the chief priests and the first men of the city (Josephus, *Life* 9). Josephus also knew Ananus II, the last son of Ananus I to serve as high priest, who may have been present at the trial of Jesus.
- ³¹ Alexander Hugh McDonald, "Tacitus," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 18, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tacitus-Roman-historian>.
- ³² Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44, <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Tac.+Ann.+15.44&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0078> (accessed November 10, 2022).
- ³³ Van Voorst, *Jesus outside the New Testament*, 49.

Where do the Hebrew Scriptures prophesy the death and resurrection of the Messiah?

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, the promise of a Messiah is clearly given. These messianic prophecies were made hundreds, sometimes thousands of years before Jesus Christ was born, and clearly Jesus Christ is the only person who has ever walked this earth to fulfill them. In fact, from Genesis to Malachi, there are over 300 specific prophecies detailing the coming of this Anointed One. In addition to prophecies detailing His virgin birth, His birth in Bethlehem, His birth from the tribe of Judah, His lineage from King David, His sinless life, and His atoning work for the sins of His people, the death and resurrection of the Jewish Messiah was, likewise, well documented in the Hebrew prophetic Scriptures long before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ occurred in history.

Of the best-known prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures concerning the death of Messiah, [Psalm 22](#) and [Isaiah 53](#) certainly stand out. [Psalm 22](#) is especially amazing since it predicted numerous separate elements about Jesus' crucifixion a thousand years before Jesus was crucified. Here are some examples. Messiah will have His hands and His feet "pierced" through ([Psalm 22:16](#); [John 20:25](#)). The Messiah's bones will not be broken (a person's legs were usually broken after being crucified to speed up their death) ([Psalm 22:17](#); [John 19:33](#)). Men will cast lots for Messiah's clothing ([Psalm 22:18](#); [Matthew 27:35](#)).

[Isaiah 53](#), the classic messianic prophecy known as the "[Suffering Servant](#)" prophecy, also details the death of Messiah for the sins of His people. More than 700 years before Jesus was even born, Isaiah provides details of His life and death. The Messiah will be rejected ([Isaiah 53:3](#); [Luke 13:34](#)). The Messiah will be killed as a vicarious sacrifice for the sins of His people ([Isaiah 53:5-9](#); [2 Corinthians 5:21](#)). The Messiah will be silent in front of His accusers ([Isaiah 53:7](#); [1 Peter 2:23](#)). The Messiah will be buried with the rich ([Isaiah 53:9](#); [Matthew 27:57-60](#)). The Messiah will be with criminals in His death ([Isaiah 53:12](#); [Mark 15:27](#)).

In addition to the death of the Jewish Messiah, His resurrection from the dead is also foretold. The clearest and best known of the resurrection prophecies is the one penned by Israel's King David in [Psalm 16:10](#), also written a millennium before the birth of Jesus: "For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay."

On the Jewish feast day of Shavuot (Weeks or Pentecost), when Peter preached the first gospel sermon, he boldly asserted that God had raised Jesus the Jewish Messiah from the dead ([Acts 2:24](#)). He then explained that God had performed this miraculous deed in fulfillment of David's prophecy in [Psalm 16](#). In fact, Peter quoted the words of David in detail as contained in [Psalm 16:8-11](#). Some years later, Paul did the same thing when he spoke to the Jewish community in Antioch. Like Peter, Paul declared that God had raised Messiah Jesus from the dead in fulfillment of [Psalm 16:10](#) ([Acts 13:33-35](#)).

The resurrection of the Messiah is strongly implied in another Davidic psalm. Again, this is [Psalm 22](#).

In verses 19–21, the suffering Savior prays for deliverance “from the lion’s mouth” (a metaphor for Satan). This desperate prayer is then followed immediately in verses 22–24 by a hymn of praise in which the Messiah thanks God for hearing His prayer and delivering Him. The resurrection of the Messiah is clearly implied between the ending of the prayer in verse 21 and the beginning of the praise song in verse 22.

And back again to [Isaiah 53](#): after prophesying that the Suffering Servant of God would suffer for the sins of His people, the prophet says He would then be “cut off out of the land of the living.” But Isaiah then states that He (Messiah) “will see His offspring” and that God the Father will “prolong His days” ([Isaiah 53:5, 8, 10](#)). Isaiah proceeds to reaffirm the promise of the resurrection in different words: “As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see light and be satisfied” ([Isaiah 53:11](#)).

Every aspect of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah had been prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures long before the events ever unfolded in the timeline of human history. No wonder that Jesus the Messiah would say to the Jewish religious leaders of His day, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” ([John 5:39](#)).

Order of Events

- Three women, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, start for the sepulchre, followed by other women bearing spices
 - The three find the stone rolled away, and Mary Magdalene goes to tell the disciples
[Luke 23:55–24:9; John 20:1, 2](#)
 - Mary, the mother of James and Joses, draws nearer the tomb and sees the angel of the Lord
[Matt. 28:2](#)
 - She goes back to meet the other women following with the spices

Order of Events

- Meanwhile Peter and John, alerted by Mary Magdalene, arrive, look in, and go away
[John 20:3–10](#)
- Mary Magdalene returns weeping, sees the two angels and then Jesus, and then goes, as He bade her, to tell the disciples.
[John 20:11–18](#)
- Mary (mother of James and Joses), meanwhile, has met the women with the spices and, returning with them, they see the two angels
[Luke 24:4, 5; Mark. 16:5](#)
- They also receive the angelic message, and, going to seek the disciples, are met by Jesus
[Matt. 28:8–10](#)

Subsequent Appearances

- Two on Emmaus Rd, Sun PM [Luke 24:13-32](#)
- Peter, sometime that day [Luke 24:34](#)
- Ten, that night (w/o Thomas) [Luke 24:36ff](#)
- Eleven, 8 days later (w/ Thomas) [John 20:26-31](#)
- Seven, Galilean breakfast [John 21:9-14](#)
- Eleven, in Galilee [Matt 28:16-20](#)
- 500, in Galilee [1 Cor 15:6](#)
- James in Jerusalem [1 Cor 15:7](#)
- Many at the Ascension [Luke 24:44f](#)

Subsequent Appearances

- Paul, on the Damascus Road [Acts 9:3-7](#)
- Stephen when he is stoned [Acts 7:55](#)
- Paul in the temple [Acts 22:17–19](#)
- John on Patmos [Rev. 1:10–19](#)

Significance of the Resurrection

- 1) Proves that Jesus is God's Son [John 10:17–18](#)
- 2) Verifies the truth of Scripture [Psa 16:10; 110:1](#)
 - If the body had been stolen by enemies, they would have produced it.
 - One day they were discouraged and hiding in defeat.
 - The next day they were declaring His resurrection and walking in joyful victory.
 - In fact, they proved willing to die for the truth of the Resurrection.

Significance of the Resurrection

- 1) Proves that Jesus is God's Son [John 10:17–18](#)
- 2) Verifies the truth of Scripture [Psa 16:10; 110:1](#)
- 3) Assures our own future resurrection
[1 Thes. 4:13–18](#)
- 4) Proof of a future judgment
[Acts 17:31](#)
- 5) Basis for Christ's heavenly priesthood
[Heb. 7:23–28](#)
- 6) Gives power for Christian living [Rom. 6:4](#)
- 7) Assures our future inheritance [1 Peter 1:3–5.](#)

A Skeptic's Guide to the Evidence for Jesus' Resurrection Apr 20 Written By [Tim Harris](#)

ARTICLE • What evidences do Christian historians, theologians, and philosophers most often cite to substantiate the central Christian conviction that *God raised Jesus from the dead*? This article lists and describes 57 lines of argument and evidence that—love them or hate them—you need to know.

Read time: 5 min (Lists) • 56 min (Descriptions)

Introduction

Today is Easter Sunday. While over 2.5 billion Christians worldwide celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, many others find the idea dubious at best. This is understandable. Have *you* ever seen someone rise from the dead? The sheer idea that a man came back to life from the grave after a brutal Roman execution strains credulity and exceeds the bounds of what biochemistry, history, and everyday experience tell us is possible. From this perspective, claims of Jesus' resurrection seem more likely the result of legend, hallucination, or a conspiracy than actual historical events. After all, "extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence."

What's This Article About?

This article features **5 categories** of **57 lines of argumentation and evidence** for Jesus' resurrection. Some evidences are stand-alone and some are building blocks for others, but each plays a role in supporting the credibility of the resurrection claim. Cumulatively, these evidences are—to say the least—quite *extraordinary* and cannot be simply dismissed with any amount of intellectual integrity. So, if you're open-minded and curious what all the fuss is about, I warmly invite you to walk through these lists of arguments and evidence that Christian historians, theologians, and philosophers most often cite to substantiate the credibility of a central Christian conviction—that *God raised Jesus from the dead*.

I. Historical Evidence

The resurrection of Jesus is not merely a *theological* claim, as many assume—it is presented in the New Testament Scriptures as a **public, historical event**. This is good news for both skeptics and believers. The claims can be weighed and either embraced or rejected, but they should not be ignored. Christianity, in fact, eagerly invites scrutiny by grounding its central miracle in real places, real people, and real time.

This first section explores whether the historical data surrounding Jesus' death, burial, and reported resurrection holds up under investigation. When the facts are carefully weighed, does the resurrection emerge as a "blind leap of faith" or as a credible explanation for a set of real events that changed the course of history?

(Note: To read the descriptions of each line of argument and evidence, select the down arrow to the left of each number.)

- 1. Jesus Died by Roman Crucifixion
- 2. The Tomb Was Found Empty
- 3. Jesus' Followers Claimed to See Him Alive After His Crucifixion
- 4. The Disciples' Claims Were Made Publicly in Jerusalem
- 5. A Contemporary Bodily Resurrection Was Not a Jewish Expectation
- 6. Skeptics and Some of Jesus' Enemies Became Convinced
- 7. The Disciples Were Willing to Die for Their Testimony
- 8. Christianity Exploded in Growth Against All Odds
- 9. Naturalistic Alternatives Fall Short

Skeptics have proposed several **naturalistic explanations** to account for the resurrection claim. While it is right to examine alternatives, each theory ultimately fails to account for the full range of historical data.

- **A. Stolen Body Theory**
- This theory suggests the disciples stole Jesus' body and fabricated the resurrection. However:
- The Gospels report the tomb was **guarded** by Roman soldiers ([Matt 27:62–66](#)).
- The disciples were in hiding and **not expecting resurrection** ([Luke 24:11](#)).

- They later **suffered and died** for their claims—behavior inconsistent with deliberate fraud.
- **B. Swoon Theory**
- Some argue Jesus didn't die but merely passed out and later revived. But:
- Roman executioners were **trained professionals**—they confirmed His death by spear ([John 19:33–34](#)).
- Jesus had undergone scourging, crucifixion, and stabbing—survival is implausible.
- A barely alive Jesus would not have inspired worship, but **pity**.
- **C. Hallucination Theory**
- This theory suggests the appearances were visions or grief-induced hallucinations. But:
- Hallucinations are **individual and internal**, not shared by groups ([1 Cor 15:6](#)).
- Appearances happened to **diverse people** (believers, skeptics, enemies).
- Jesus was seen **eating and touching** ([Luke 24:39–43](#); [John 20:27](#)), not typical of hallucinations.
- **D. Legend Theory**
- Could the resurrection be a myth that developed over time? Evidence suggests otherwise:
- The resurrection was proclaimed **immediately after Jesus' death**, not generations later ([1 Cor 15:3–8](#)).
- It was **preached in Jerusalem**, where claims could be checked.
- The resurrection appears in **multiple independent sources**, not a single later account.
- **Conclusion:** All naturalistic theories fall short in explanatory scope and coherence. None adequately explain the **empty tomb, appearances, transformed lives, and the rise of Christianity**. The resurrection remains the **most plausible explanation** when all data are considered.
-
- 10. The Resurrection of Jesus Is Historically Unique and Culturally Incompatible with Pagan Parallels
- 11. The Evidence for Jesus' Resurrection Emerged Too Early and Too Specific to Be Mythological Borrowing

II. Psychological Evidence

Sometimes history speaks loudest through people—their behavior, their emotions, their decisions, and what they're willing to die for. If Jesus had stayed dead, the story of His followers would likely have ended in despair. Instead, we find something remarkable: they changed—radically, publicly, and permanently.

- 12. Jesus' Disciples Were Crushed—Then Emboldened
- 13. Group Appearances Rule Out Private Hallucinations
- 14. The Disciples Didn't Expect Jesus' Resurrection
- 15. Jesus' Close Friends and Family Didn't Believe at First, but Soon Did
- 16. The Disciples' Lives Became Defined by Jesus' Resurrection
- 17. Jesus' Disciples Embraced Suffering for Their Claims With Joy
- 18. Jesus' Resurrection Gave New Meaning to Reality, Not Just Hope
- 19. Jesus' Resurrection Reframed History's End for His Disciples
- 20. The Disciples Reordered Their Worship Around Jesus' Resurrection

III. Textual Reliability Evidence

Sometimes the credibility of a claim rests on the trustworthiness of the documents that record it. When it comes to the resurrection of Jesus, the question is not only what happened, but whether the sources reporting it can be taken seriously. The New Testament Gospels—our primary accounts—have been scrutinized more than any other ancient texts, and they stand up remarkably well. From their early dating and consistent transmission to their historical, cultural, and literary authenticity, the Gospels demonstrate every hallmark of trustworthy historical reporting. If the documents that describe the resurrection are sound, then the case for the resurrection becomes all the more compelling.

- 21. The Gospels Were Written by Eyewitnesses or Their Close Associates
- 22. The Gospels Contain Structural Markers Indicating Eyewitness Sources

- 23. The Gospel Writers Claimed to Record Historical Testimony
- 24. The Gospels Were Written Within Living Memory of Jesus
- 25. Early Belief in Jesus' Divinity Came from Eyewitness Sources
- 26. The Gospel of John Reflects an Eyewitness Perspective
- 27. The Gospels Drew from Multiple Independent Sources
- 28. Gospel Differences Reflect Independent but Harmonious Testimony
- 29. The Gospels Include Undesigned Coincidences Supporting Authenticity
- 30. The Gospels Show Narrative Coherence Without Collusion
- 31. Theological Claims in the Gospels Are Grounded in History
- 32. The Gospels Show Fulfillment of Scripture Through History
- 33. Resurrection Accounts Lack Theological or Legendary Embellishment
- 34. Resurrection Narratives Are Marked by Historical Restraint
- 35. The Gospels Follow the Genre of Ancient Historical Biography
- 36. The Gospels Accurately Reflect First-Century Palestinian Context
- 37. The Gospels Use Authentic Names, Places, and Customs
- 38. The Gospels Contain No Anachronisms or Later Theological Inventions

IV. Theological Evidence

Now let's turn to why the resurrection makes theological sense in the entire scope of Judaism and Christianity. Even if the evidence is compelling, it's worth asking: Does the resurrection fit the Story? Christians believe it does—not only that it happened, but that it *had* to happen if the Story of God, humanity, and hope is to make sense.

The claim that Jesus rose from the dead isn't just about proving a miracle happened—it's about seeing the resurrection as the linchpin of Christianity and the climax of the biblical storyline. When seen in this light, Jesus' resurrection not only surprises us—it makes everything else fall into place.

- 39. Jesus Predicted His Own Death and Resurrection Multiple Times
- 40. The Resurrection Fulfilled Hebrew Scripture
- 41. The Resurrection Vindicated Jesus' Identity and Claims
- 42. The Resurrection Confirms that the Cross Accomplished What God Intended
- 43. Christ was the "Firstfruits" and Guarantee of All Future Resurrections
- 44. Jesus' Resurrection Inaugurated God's Kingdom and Promised New Creation
- 45. The Resurrection Reframes Eschatology (i.e., The End of Time)
- 46. The Resurrection Explains Why Monotheistic Jews Worshipped Jesus

V. Philosophical Evidence

So far we've considered historical eye-witness testimony, psychological transformations, textual credibility, and theological coherence within Christianity. Now let's ask: Is belief in the resurrection intellectually responsible? Or is it just blind faith?

Philosophy—especially the Philosophy of Historical Knowledge used by secular and religious historians alike—helps us test historical events and ideas for their explanatory power, internal consistency, and fit with what we know about the world. In the case of the resurrection, many find it surprisingly *rational*—not despite its supernatural claim but because of how well it explains what otherwise remains mysterious..

- 47. The "Criteria-Based Critical Historiography Model" Concludes That the Resurrection Passes the Most Rigorous Tools of Secular Historical Investigation
- 48. The "Analytic-Philosophical Model" Demonstrates That the Resurrection Hypothesis Best Satisfies the Demands of Logical Coherence and Explanatory Power

- 49. The “Legal-Historical Model” Establishes That the Resurrection Meets the Evidentiary Standards Used in Courts to Verify Eyewitness Claims
- 50. The “Theological-Historical Integration Model” Affirms That the Resurrection Is a Publicly Accessible Event with Universal Revelatory Significance
- 51. The Historical-Narrative Worldview Model Shows That the Resurrection Uniquely Fits the Jewish and Historical Context of the First Century
- 52. The “Inference to the Best Explanation Model” Confirms the Resurrection as the Most Coherent Account of the Known Historical Facts
- 53. Naturalistic Theories Require More Faith Than Jesus' Resurrection
- 54. The Role of God in the Equation Explains How the Resurrection Was Possible
- 55. Belief in the Resurrection Can Be Rational Even Before the Evidence
- 56. Belief in Jesus' Resurrection Sparked a Worldview Revolution
- 57. The Resurrection Answers Humanity’s Deepest Questions and Needs

A Final Thought

You don’t have to commit to Christianity to take the resurrection claim seriously. You just need the willingness to follow the evidence where it leads, even if it leads somewhere you didn’t expect.

Are you be willing to look again? ❖

Quote this Article

- **Footnote:** Timothy J. Harris, “A Skeptic’s Guide to the Evidence for Jesus’ Resurrection,” *Practical Theologian*, April 20, 2025, <https://www.practicaltheologian.com/blog/article-z9dtw-69b3c-jfkpt>.
- **Bibliography:** Harris, Timothy J. “A Skeptic’s Guide to the Evidence for Jesus’ Resurrection.” *Practical Theologian*, April 20, 2025. <https://www.practicaltheologian.com/blog/article-z9dtw-69b3c-jfkpt>.

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[The Resurrection of Christ](#)[The Resurrection](#)[Easter](#)[Teachings of Jesus](#)[Apologetics](#)[Skepticism & Doubt](#)

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◀ **Proof of Jesus' resurrection beyond Bible?** ▶

What proof that do you have of Jesus resurrection, other than the Bible?

Historical References from Non-Christian Sources

Several ancient writers outside of Scripture recorded events tied to the life, death, and reported resurrection of Jesus. These sources do not provide lengthy narratives about the resurrection itself, yet they confirm key details of His crucifixion, the rapid growth of His followers, and their unwavering belief that He rose from the dead.

- Flavius Josephus (late first century). In *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.3.3, he briefly mentions Jesus as a teacher and indicates that some claimed He appeared to them alive. Even with scholarly debate over possible edits by later scribes, the core mention of Jesus, the crucifixion under Pontius Pilate, and the resulting movement remains present in manuscripts.
- Tacitus (early second century). In *Annals* 15.44, he references Christ's execution during the rule of Pontius Pilate and the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. Tacitus, writing from a Roman perspective, underscores that Christians held fast to the message of a risen Christ.
- The Babylonian Talmud (compiled centuries after Jesus). Sanhedrin 43a alludes to the execution of one called "Yeshu," describing His death around Passover. Though not affirming the resurrection, it supports that His crucifixion was widely recognized.

These writings confirm that Jesus was an actual historical figure crucified under Pontius Pilate and that His followers immediately believed in His resurrection. While they do not elaborate on the event itself, they set a historical stage for the claim that Jesus rose from the dead.

Early Christian Writings and Creeds

The earliest Christian communities formulated official statements of belief, known as creeds. One of the most ancient examples is preserved in [1 Corinthians 15:3-4](#), which many scholars date to within a few years of the crucifixion. Even apart from Scripture, those early creeds existed in circulated teachings, summarizing “that Christ died for our sins...was buried...was raised on the third day” ([1 Corinthians 15:3-4](#), portions). The acceptance and repetition of such a creed so soon after events indicate that the resurrection claim was central and widespread.

Writings by early Church Fathers (e.g., Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp) during the late first century and early second century refer to the resurrection as a factual occurrence. Clement’s Letter to the Corinthians (ca. A.D. 95) urges believers to maintain faith in Christ’s work, plainly referencing a literal resurrection.

The Empty Tomb and Public Challenges

When an event of great significance occurs in a public setting, opponents typically present counter-evidence if available. Early adversaries in Judea, such as certain Jewish leaders, offered alternative explanations (e.g., disciples stole the body) rather than claiming the tomb contained a body. That indirect acknowledgment supports the tomb’s vacancy.

Additionally, Jerusalem was still under Roman control during and after the crucifixion. Authorities would have had strong motivation to produce a body if it existed, as doing so would undermine the resurrection claim. The lack of such evidence created fertile ground for proclamations that Jesus was risen.

Transformative Impact on the Disciples and Society

Many who originally doubted or even opposed Jesus drastically changed their stance. Consider two leading examples:

- James, the brother of Jesus, who apparently regarded Him skeptically during His ministry, became a prominent leader in the early church after acknowledging Jesus as risen (cf. [1 Corinthians 15:7](#)).
- Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor of Christians, converted dramatically after what he described as encountering the risen Christ. Known then as Paul, he endured hardship and martyrdom for proclaiming the resurrection.

A rapid shift from fear to bold preaching among the disciples further underlines that they believed themselves eyewitnesses of a resurrected Lord. This unwavering conviction led them to face persecution and even death rather than deny their message.

Philosophical, Behavioral, and Psychological Considerations

People rarely maintain a falsehood under the threat of torture or execution. The sustained testimony of multiple followers who insisted on the resurrection-despite severe penalties-underscores the authenticity of their belief. It would be implausible for so many individuals to conspire to spread a false claim without a single recantation under pressure.

Furthermore, a large-scale, sustained transformation occurred among thousands in Jerusalem and beyond ([Acts 2](#) references around three thousand conversions on one day, a figure repeated widely in Church tradition). Such collective behavioral shifts commonly require a monumental event witnessed or credibly testified to by many.

Archaeological and Geographical Foundations

Archaeological work in and around Jerusalem has shown the plausibility of the Gospel accounts' described locations. For instance, excavations at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre site reveal ancient tomb complexes consistent with the historical period. While these findings do not “prove” the resurrection, they confirm that the traditional settings given for the burial and resurrection are aligned with first-century Jerusalem’s physical layout.

Logical and Scientific Discussions

Through the lens of historical research, each alternative naturalistic hypothesis-such as the disciples hallucinating, the body being stolen, or Jesus not truly dying-presents its own set of difficulties. Illusions or group hallucinations do not normally produce wholesale, consistent transformations over extended time. A stolen body would fail to account for the profound conviction and willingness to die for a risen Messiah. The probability that Jesus survived the crucifixion is contradicted by Roman execution practices and medical considerations.

Taken together, a cumulative argument emerges: respected non-Christian writers acknowledge Jesus’ crucifixion, earliest believers preserved a resurrection creed, and historical events demonstrate the empty tomb and dramatic changes among witnesses. These interlocking pieces provide a consistent historical case that the resurrection lies at the core of their testimonies.

Conclusion

Historical writings beyond Scripture, the early creedal statements, the empty tomb, the profound transformation of skeptics, and the explosive growth of the Christian community combine to form a robust case that Jesus genuinely rose from the dead. One early Christian summary declares, “If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is worthless and so is your faith” ([1 Corinthians 15:14](#), portion). The very survival and spread of Christianity rest upon this truth claim, supported not only by biblical narratives but by external attestations and enduring impact on individuals and societies alike.

[Bible Hub Questions and Answers](#)

The Significance of Jesus' Resurrection: Why It Matters Today

The resurrection of Jesus (alongside his crucifixion) is the central historical event in the Christian faith. Without the resurrection there would be no Christianity.

[BRIAN G. HEDGES](#)

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

UPDATED APR 21, 2025

The [resurrection](#) of Jesus (alongside his crucifixion) is the central historical event in the Christian faith. Without the Resurrection, there would be no Christianity. “If Christ has not been raised,” wrote St. Paul, “then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” ([1 Corinthians 15:14](#)).

I am a Christian because I believe in the [resurrection](#). I am convinced that after dying a violent death on a Roman cross on a Friday afternoon in 30 A.D., Jesus of Nazareth came back to life and emerged from the tomb on Sunday morning.

This is not easy to believe. But if it is true, it is the most pivotal event in human history. Much has been written to defend Jesus’ resurrection, the most thorough and convincing book being N. T. Wright’s massive 800-page volume, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.^[1] If you haven’t done so, I hope you’ll weigh the evidence yourself.

What is unquestionable is that the first generation of Jesus’ followers *did* believe he had risen and were convinced that everything had changed as a result.

The Significance of Christ's Resurrection

Consider just three ways the New Testament highlights the significance of the resurrection.

1. Jesus’ Resurrection means that his sacrificial death on the cross was sufficient, and therefore our sins can be forgiven.

Paul emphasizes this in [1 Corinthians 15](#), reminding us that “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” ([vv. 3-4](#)). Then, in [verse 17](#), he argues that “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.”

In other words, Paul saw a direct connection between the resurrection of Jesus and the sufficiency of his death to atone for our sins. When Jesus rose again on the third day, it was the public announcement that God was fully satisfied with the sacrificial death of his Son. In his resurrection, Jesus was vindicated ([1 Timothy 3:16](#)). But in his vindication, we are vindicated too. That’s why Paul says in [Romans 4](#) that Jesus “was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” ([Romans 4:25](#)).^[2]

2. Jesus' Resurrection means that death is defeated once and for all.

As Peter proclaimed on the Day of [Pentecost](#), “God raised [Jesus] from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him” ([Acts 2:24](#)). Death lost its grip on Jesus!

But the resurrection means that Jesus not only defeated death for himself, but that he defeated it for us. He died and rose as a new representative for humanity, as the Second Adam. “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead,” writes Paul, “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” ([1 Corinthians 15:20-22](#)). His resurrection guarantees ours.

Perhaps no one has said this more eloquently than C. S. Lewis. In his 1947 book [Miracles](#), Lewis wrote:

“The New Testament writers speak as if Christ’s achievement in rising from the dead was the first event of its kind in the whole history of the universe. He is the ‘first fruits,’ the ‘pioneer of life.’ He has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so. This is the beginning of the New Creation: a new chapter in cosmic history has been opened.”[\[3\]](#)

The empty tomb assures us that sickness and suffering, death and disease will not have the final word.

This is both personal and powerfully hope giving to me. I have terrible eyesight, because of a degenerative eye disorder called karetoconus. I have a child with Type 1 diabetes, who takes at least four insulin shots a day. And my mom, at only 64 years old has advanced Alzheimer’s and hasn’t recognized me for several years. But the resurrection of Jesus means that someday I will have 20/20 vision, and my son will never need another shot again, and that Mom will know me once more.

3. Jesus' Resurrection means that the material world matters.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, when the apostles said that Jesus rose again, they meant that his *physical body came back to life*. The risen Jesus

wasn't a phantom or ghost, but a breakfast-eating, flesh-and-bone, human being (see [Luke 24:36-43](#) and [John 21:10-14](#)).

As the Pulitzer Prize winning novelist John Updike once said,

Make no mistake: if He rose at all
it was as His body;
if the cells' dissolution did not reverse, the molecules
reknit, the amino acids rekindle,
the Church will fall. [\[4\]](#)

When Jesus came out of the tomb in a physical body, it was God's definitive stamp of approval on the creation project with all of its materiality. The resurrection shows us that matter matters. And this is why the early Christians looked to the future with confidence that the created order itself would be redeemed (see [Romans 8:18-25](#)).

Though we wait for the full consummation of new creation, the Scriptures also teach that the power that raised Jesus from the dead is already working within us ([Ephesians 1:19-20](#)). The resurrection, you see, not only assures of God's forgiveness and comforts us in suffering as we anticipate the final reversal of death, disease, and decay; it also motivates and empowers us to push back the tide of suffering and evil in the present world, through word and deed, in mercy and justice, all in Jesus' name.

What the Resurrection Means For Us

Transcribed from the video above with Sam Allberry:

[The Resurrection] should make all the difference. In the New Testament, we see a number of ways in which the reality you have Jesus' resurrection is applied to us as Christians. As we trust in Jesus, we are united to him by faith. And Paul says, therefore, there's a connection between what has happened to Jesus and what happens to us. So Jesus didn't just die and rise, but in Him, we died with Him. We rose with Him and that has massive implications. That's not just symbolic. We actually spiritually have been raised with Christ.

We've been given new spiritual life in [Ephesians 2](#). In [Colossians 3](#), we're told since you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts and minds on things above. So we're to have the perspective of people who have been spiritually given life. And more than that, we're to have actions as those who have new spiritual life. We're to close ourselves now in this risen life that

we've been given in Jesus. So as to affect us in terms of our holiness, we are to be what we are. As those who are raised in Christ, we are to live as risen people.

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End Notes

[1] N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God (Christian Origins and the Question of God, Volume 3)* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003).

[2] The Greek word for “justification” (*dikaïosin*) in [Romans 4:25](#) is closely related to the word “vindicated” (*edikaiothe*) in [1 Timothy 3:16](#).

[3] C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1947) 236–237.

[4] John Updike, “Seven Stanzas of Easter,” in *Telephone Poles and Other Poems* (Random House, 2013).

Resurrection #7: 4 Non-Christian Sources Confirming Jesus' Resurrection

LAST UPDATED ON: APRIL 14, 2020 AT 5:00 AM BY [MARK DRISCOLL](#)

Because Jesus' death is a historical fact, the corroborating evidence of non-Christian sources in addition to the Bible helps to confirm the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The following testimony of Romans, Greeks, and Jews is helpful

because these men are simply telling the facts without any religious devotion to them.

Josephus (AD 37-100)

Josephus was a Jewish historian born just a few years after Jesus died. His most celebrated passage, called the "Testimonium Flavianum" says:

"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day."⁷⁶

Suetonius (AD 70-160)

Suetonius was a Roman historian and annalist of the Imperial House. In his biography of Nero (Nero ruled AD 54-68), Suetonius mentions the persecution of Christians by indirectly referring to the resurrection: "Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition [the resurrection]."⁷⁷

Pliny the Younger (AD 61 or 62-113)

Pliny the Younger wrote a letter to the emperor Trajan around AD 111 describing early Christian worship gatherings that met early on Sunday mornings in memory of Jesus' resurrection day:

"I have never been present at an examination of Christians. Consequently, I do not know the nature of the extent of the punishments usually meted out to them, nor the grounds for starting an investigation and how far it should be pressed...They also declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this: they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day [Sunday in

remembrance of Jesus' resurrection] to chant verses alternately amongst themselves in honor of Christ as if to a god."⁷⁸

The Jewish Explanation

The earliest attempt to provide an alternative explanation for the resurrection of Jesus did not deny that the tomb was empty.⁷⁹ Instead, Jewish opponents claimed that the body had been stolen, thus admitting the fact of the empty tomb. But this explanation is untenable for the following reasons. (1) The tomb was closed with an enormous rock and sealed by the government, and there is no explanation for how the rock was moved while being guarded by armed Roman soldiers. (2) If the body had been stolen, a large ransom could have been offered to the thieves, and they could have been coerced to produce the body. Or if it had been taken by the disciples, then the torture and death they suffered should have been sufficient to return the body. (3) Even if the body was stolen, how are we to account for the fact that Jesus appeared to multiple crowds of people, proving that he was alive? In conclusion, the theft of the body is unlikely and still fails to account for it returning back to life.

Summarily, the historical testimony of those who were not Christians stands in agreement with Scripture that Jesus died and rose because those are the historical facts.

Which of today's historical evidences is most compelling for you personally? Why?

76. Flavius Josephus, "Jewish Antiquities," in *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1999), 18.63–64, emphasis added. There is great controversy about the authenticity of this text. Kostenberger, Andreas J.; Kellum, L. Scott; Quarles, Charles L. (2009). *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 104-108 is an excellent summary of the controversy.

77. Suetonius, *Vita Nero* 16.11–13.

78. Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10.96.1–7.

79. Matt. 28:13–15.

1. The resurrection is evidence that Christianity is true: “And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!” ([1 Cor 15:17](#)).
2. The resurrection proves the believer will overcome death: “So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O Death, where *is* your sting? O Hades, where *is* your victory?” ([1 Cor 15:54-55](#)).
3. The resurrection helps you grieve differently: “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope” (1 Thess 4:13).
4. The resurrection guarantees you eternal life: “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” ([John 11:25-26](#)).
5. The resurrection guarantees your resurrection: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus” (1 Thess 4:14).
6. The resurrection guarantees that you will have an imperishable glorified body: “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” ([Phil 3:20-21](#)).
7. The resurrection means Jesus intercedes for you: “Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (Rom 8:34).
8. The resurrection motivates you to put away sin and live holy lives: “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” ([Rom 6:4](#)).

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BIBLE STUDY Feb 01, 2015 | By [Chuck Missler](#)

The End of Death

1 Corinthians 15

Author

[Chuck Missler](#)

The 15th chapter in 1 Corinthians is the most important chapter in the Bible (and the longest in this epistle). It deals with the ultimate enemy of mankind: death. It announces the death of death itself. This chapter is regarded by many as the *Centerpiece of Christianity* and the climax of Paul's message.

The dream of immortality begins in the oldest book of the Bible:

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.

— [Job 19:25–27 KJV](#)

Beginning with the Basics

What is the gospel? (“Good News”? No “cop-out” evasions here!) Paul gives it to us in a nutshell. We must first learn precisely what the gospel is.

Paul had already preached it.^[1] After his Damascus conversion, Peter and James spent time with Paul in Jerusalem to fill in the details.^[2] After 14 years passed, he returned to Jerusalem to confirm with the apostles whether his preaching was in harmony with the gospel they proclaimed.^[3]

Three fundamental essentials:

1. **First of all, Jesus died.** (First in importance, not chronology. “Christ” (not “Jesus”): Paul uses his official title of the Messiah, our *goel*, the Kinsman-Redeemer.

He did not just disappear. The authorities (both Jewish and Roman) made sure that His death was undeniable! The authorities outwitted themselves when they took so many precautions to make sure Jesus was dead and remained in the grave!

Furthermore, Paul says twice in three verses “...according to the Scriptures (i.e., Old Testament).”^[4] Jesus’ death and resurrection was not an afterthought. This was planned before the foundations of the world (and even hidden in the genealogy of Noah).^[5] He died *for our sins* (not just died).^[6] The phrase “Christ died for our sins” is the doctrinal summary of the atonement:

1. As our Substitute, Christ died to appease God and meet the demands of the law;^[7]
2. As our Advocate, He effected reconciliation and made us righteous before God;^[8]
3. As our Mediator, He established a new covenant and accepted us as partners;^[9]
4. As our Savior, He grants us eternal life through faith in Him.^[10]

2. **He was buried.** Only Paul mentions the burial. It points backward to the reality of death and forward to the character of the resurrection. Paul even identifies the believer's baptism with Christ's burial.^[11] Jesus' physical body was placed in the tomb.

On the third day a new glorified body came forth, no longer subject to time and space.[\[12\]](#) The Greek passive voice conveys the sense that God alone is the agent who creates life.

3. **He was raised on the third day.** The passive voice denotes the implied agent, God.[\[13\]](#) Translations fail to exploit the differences in Greek verb tenses between verses 3 and 4: The Greek uses the past tense to describe a single action in the past for Jesus' death and burial. But for the verb "to be raised" the Greek has the perfect tense to indicate an action that occurred in the past but has lasting relevance for the present.[\[14\]](#) Jesus was raised from the dead and continues His life in the resurrected state.[\[15\]](#)

If the Roman or Jewish authorities could have produced the body of Jesus, all the rumors would have quickly stopped, and it all would have ended. But they could not. The empty tomb emphasizes that Jesus' resurrection was physical! (It is emphasized in all four gospels that the body was missing).[\[16\]](#)

Omissions?

What is remarkable is what Paul does *not* include in his "Gospel." He makes no mention of Jesus' miracles, His teachings, or His examples. These are important, but not "*the* Gospel"! The focus is on three principal things: Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. These overshadow all other aspects of His ministry.

"Third day according to (which) Scriptures"? [Jonah 1:17](#), linked with [Matthew 12:40](#).[\[17\]](#) Jesus also taught that He would be killed and raised the third day.[\[18\]](#)

Other "Three Days" Examples

1. Third day of Creation: Double Blessing;[\[19\]](#)
2. the *Akedah*: Abraham's Offering of Issac;[\[20\]](#)
3. Joseph Interprets Two Dreams[\[21\]](#)
 - Baker (bread) Dies on the Third Day
 - Cupbearer (wine) Freed on the Third Day
4. Crossing of the Red Sea: The Third Day after Passover; Departed from Mt Sinai;[\[22\]](#)
5. Spies En Route From Jericho;[\[23\]](#)
6. Jonah in the Great Fish;[\[24\]](#)
7. Esther Fasts Three Days;[\[25\]](#)
8. Wedding in Cana on the Third Day;[\[26\]](#)
9. Christ Was Three Days in the Tomb;[\[27\]](#)
10. Saul's Blindness in Damascus;[\[28\]](#)
11. Hosea: Israel's Petition for Lord's Return.[\[29\]](#)

After His resurrection, Jesus' physical body could be touched,[\[30\]](#) could be recognized,[\[31\]](#) could come and go through locked doors,[\[32\]](#) and He could eat and drink with them.[\[33\]](#) Jesus' resurrection body was transformed to transcend time and space.[\[34\]](#)

Appearances of Jesus

On that Sunday, Jesus appeared to the women; Mary Magdalene; two men on the road to Emmaus; Peter; and, the 10 disciples in the upper room.[\[35\]](#) Paul first mentions Peter, whom he usually calls Cephas, the Aramaic name for Peter.[\[36\]](#)

Sunday evening, the disciples in the upper room told the men from Emmaus that He had appeared to Simon.[\[37\]](#) That morning the angel instructed the women to tell the disciples "and Peter" to go to Galilee where Jesus would meet them.[\[38\]](#) There Jesus forgave Peter and reinstated him.[\[39\]](#) (The book of Acts reveals that immediately after Jesus' ascension Peter became the undisputed leader in the Jerusalem church.)

Would you believe that JFK was shot with an arrow? Why not? Too many witnesses are still alive who know better! So, also, during the first century with respect to Jesus Christ: "Five hundred brethren at once." (Nothing in the Gospels or Acts clearly corroborates the figure of 500 brothers. Some associate this with the closing words of Matthew's Gospel and the great commission.) A crowd would not be surprising, since He announced this appearance through the women earlier. Most of the

500 were still living at the time Paul wrote this epistle (about 25 years after the crucifixion). Apparently both Paul and the Corinthians were acquainted with many of them.

Half a year before Jesus' death, His brothers, including James, still did not believe on Him.[\[40\]](#) But immediately after Jesus' ascension, His brothers believed and were with the apostles in the upper room.[\[41\]](#) James listened to Paul when the former persecutor returned to Jerusalem as a believer.[\[42\]](#) James filled Peter's place when the apostle fled Jerusalem after his release from prison.[\[43\]](#) After his third missionary tour, Paul reported to James and the elders in Jerusalem.[\[44\]](#)

The Physics of Immortality

Frank J. Tipler, Professor of Mathematical Physics at Tulane University, is a major theoretician in the field of global general relativity, that rarefied branch of physics created by Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose.

In devising a mathematical model of the end of the universe, Tipler (a professed atheist) came to a stunning conclusion: Using the most advanced and sophisticated methods of modern physics, relying solely on the rigorous procedures of logic that science demands, he created a proof of the existence of God.

Furthermore, he believes that every human being who ever lived will be resurrected from the dead. He claims that he arrived at his proofs of God and immortality "in exactly the same way physicists calculate the properties of an electron." His book explains why he now believes that the central claims of Judeo-Christian theology are in fact true, and that these claims are straight-forward deductions of the laws of physics as we now understand them.

The Analogy of a Seed⁴⁵

It is no more difficult to believe in the resurrection than it is to believe in a harvest! What emerges from a seed that "dies" is incomparably more glorious than what was planted. (Examples: bulbs vs. gladiolas, a butterfly, et al. ...) Plants (and people) do not rise of their own volition, nor by chance. Only by the decisive (aorist) action of God.

Six is the Number of Man

Our DNA is a 3-out-of-4 error-correcting code, using the same for all. Digitally different, but yet by a common architect. At the cellular level, an intact human immune system will virtually always recognize and reject a nonhuman transplant as foreign. What is the underlying characteristic within humanity that speaks of our uniqueness?

On virtually every nucleated cell in a person are small markers (lipoproteins to be precise) called antigens. Their official designation is "histocompatibility antigen" or "human leukocyte antigen (HLA)." These certain antigens are the same in every human and are only found in humans, although given individuals may have different arrangements and collections of these molecules. (For example, these antigens are responsible for the different ABO and Rh systems important in blood transfusions.) The irony is that in every person, on virtually every cell, this marker of mankind is a product of one certain chromosome: Chromosome #6.

This system is the locus of genes that encode for proteins on the surface of cells that are responsible for regulation of the immune system in humans. This group of genes encodes cell-surface antigen-presenting proteins and has many other functions; and, it all resides on chromosome #6.

When we get our resurrection bodies, there will be no more experience of death, aging, crying, mourning, sorrow, or pain:[\[46\]](#) All believers will be given new bodies like the glorious body of the Lord.[\[47\]](#) Our new body will have a different dimensionality.[\[48\]](#) Our new, natural bodies will be "spiritual," completely Spirit-filled and Spirit-governed. Our bodies have become temples of the Holy Spirit.[\[49\]](#)

Jesus emphasized that His new body is material ("flesh and bone,"[\[50\]](#) but with the Holy Spirit thoroughly filling and governing this body. Note: the Holy Spirit's role in the Creation.[\[51\]](#)

Our physical bodies will be like His own.[\[52\]](#) "This mortal must put on immortality..." We cannot dress ourselves. God does it all. We are disconnected from our past (and even time itself).

*O death, where is thy sting?
O grave, where is thy victory?*

— [1 Cor 15:55 KJV](#)

(Paul Quotes from the Old Testament.[\[53\]](#) Death’s days are numbered.)

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

— [1 Cor 15:56 KJV](#)

Here, in a single verse, Paul expresses the doctrine of sin, the law, and death. Two years later, Paul expanded the complete doctrine in his Epistle to the Romans.[\[54\]](#)

Three “Tenses” of Salvation

- “Been Saved”: Past tense. Regenerated by the Spirit. Aorist: once and for all. Spiritually linked to Jesus. The Shepherd keeps the sheep.
- “Being Saved”: Present tense. Growing as an instrument of His Grace. We are all “works in progress.” We need to apply our salvation to our lives. You may be saved, but what have you done since? It is possible to believe in vain. It is not just an “insurance policy” against going to hell.
- “Will be Saved”: Future tense. The resurrection.

Do you have *your* passport for the transit that’s coming?

This article has been excerpted from a double-session of our expositional commentary on 1 Corinthians 15:

- The Definition of the Gospel [15:1–12](#)
- Death and Resurrection [15:13–25](#)
- Christ’s Kingdom [15:25–35](#)
- The Physics of Immortality [15:36–40](#)
- The Resurrection Body [15:41–50](#)
- The *Harpazo* [15:51–58](#)

[The doctrine of the rapture is one of *ecclesiology* as much as eschatology! It may come as a surprise that it is seen in the Old Testament[\[55\]](#) as well as the New Testament.[\[56\]](#)]

Notes:

1. Acts 13:30; Gal 1:1 [↗](#)
2. Gal 1:18–19 [↗](#)
3. Gal 2:1 [↗](#)
4. Isa 53:5–6, 8–9; Ps 22:16; cf. Mat 26:28; 1 Pet 3:18 [↗](#)
5. Cf. Gen 5 [↗](#)
6. Rom 5:8; 8:32; Gal 1:4; Eph 5:2; Titus 2:14 [↗](#)
7. Rom 3:25–26; 5:9–19 [↗](#)
8. 2 Cor 5:21; 1 John 2:1–2 [↗](#)
9. Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25 [↗](#)
10. John 3:16 [↗](#)
11. Rom 6:4; Col 2:12 [↗](#)
12. John 20:19, 26; Luke 24:31 [↗](#)

13. Acts 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 37 [↗](#)
14. vv. 12,13,14,16,17,20; cf. 2 Tim 2:8 [↗](#)
15. Rev 5:6 [↗](#)
16. Mat 28:5–6; Mark 16:5–6; Luke 24:3–4; John 20:6–8 [↗](#)
17. Also, Ps 16:8–11 with Ps 110:1; Some also point to Hos 6:2. Gen 22 is perhaps the most dramatic example: Abraham’s offering of Isaac. Isaac was “dead” to Abraham for three days: Heb 11:19 [↗](#)
18. Mat 16:21 [↗](#)
19. Gen 1:9–13 [↗](#)
20. Gen 22; Heb 11:19 [↗](#)
21. Gen 40:8–22 [↗](#)
22. Num 10:33 [↗](#)
23. Jos 2:16 [↗](#)
24. Jon 1:17 [↗](#)
25. Esther 4:16 [↗](#)
26. John 3:1 [↗](#)
27. Luke 24:21 [↗](#)
28. Acts 9:9 [↗](#)
29. Hos 5:15–6:3 [↗](#)
30. John 20:27 [↗](#)
31. (with difficulty) John 20:14–15; 21:4,7 [↗](#)
32. John 20:19, 26 [↗](#)
33. Luke 24:42–43; Acts 1:4; 10:41 [↗](#)
34. 1 John 3:2 [↗](#)
35. Mark 16:1–11; Luke 24:13–43 [↗](#)
36. John 1:42 [↗](#)
37. Luke 24:34 [↗](#)
38. Mark 16:7 [↗](#)
39. John 21:15–19 [↗](#)
40. John 7:5 [↗](#)
41. Acts 1:13–14; 1 Cor 9:5 [↗](#)
42. Gal 1:19 [↗](#)
43. Acts 12:17 [↗](#)
44. Acts 21:18–19 [↗](#)
45. John 12:24 [↗](#)
46. Rev 21:4 [↗](#)
47. Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:2 [↗](#)
48. 1 John 3:2 [↗](#)
49. 6:19, et al. [↗](#)
50. Luke 24:39 [↗](#)
51. Gen 1:2 [↗](#)
52. 2 Cor 4:14; Col 1:18; Phil 3:20–21; 1 John 3:2; Rev 1:5 [↗](#)
53. Isa 25:8; Hos 13:14 [↗](#)
54. Rom 6:23; 7:9–11,13 [↗](#)
55. Isa 26:19–21, Zep 2:3, Psa 27:5 [↗](#)
56. 1 Cor 15:50, 51; 1 Thes 4:15–17 [↗](#)

AI Prophets: Could AI Become The Oracle Of The Beast System?



BY JOE HAWKINS/PROPHECY RECON MARCH 30, 2026

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Every civilization has had its oracles.

In ancient Greece, kings traveled to Delphi to consult the Oracle of Apollo. In Babylon, rulers relied on astrologers and diviners to interpret signs in the heavens. Pharaoh's court included magicians and wise men who claimed insight into mysteries beyond human understanding.

Humanity has always longed for a voice that could answer life's most difficult questions: What should we do? Where is the world headed? Who can guide us through uncertainty?

Today, that voice may be emerging from an unexpected place--not from temples or altars, but from servers, algorithms, and neural networks.

Artificial intelligence.

What began as a technological tool to process data and automate tasks is rapidly evolving into something far more influential. Millions now interact with AI systems daily, asking questions about finances, relationships, medical concerns, and personal struggles. Increasingly, they ask about morality, purpose, and spiritual meaning.

For a generation accustomed to instant answers, artificial intelligence is beginning to feel like a trusted counselor--always available, always responsive, and seemingly capable of answering anything.

Yet this raises profound questions. If billions begin relying on machines for wisdom, what happens to traditional spiritual authority? What happens to truth itself?

For students of Bible prophecy, an even deeper question emerges: could artificial intelligence eventually function as a kind of global oracle--an authority offering guidance and moral instruction for the world?

The possibility may sound futuristic, but the cultural groundwork is already being laid.

The Rise of Digital Counsel

Artificial intelligence has quietly entered one of the most personal areas of human life: decision-making. AI-powered chatbots assist users with everything from writing emails to navigating emotional struggles. Many people now seek advice about relationships, career decisions, and mental health from these systems.

Surveys show a growing number of young adults say they are just as comfortable asking artificial intelligence for spiritual advice as they are asking clergy. For many, consulting AI has become second nature.

Part of the appeal is convenience. Artificial intelligence is always available. It answers instantly and offers responses without embarrassment or judgment. In an increasingly isolated society where trust in institutions is declining, digital guidance can feel comforting.

But convenience alone does not explain the deeper shift.

When people begin seeking answers from algorithms instead of spiritual authorities, the cultural understanding of wisdom begins to change. Authority gradually migrates from scripture and tradition to technology and data.

The Bible reminds us that wisdom has a specific source:

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Proverbs 1:7)

True wisdom begins with reverence for God. Yet in a world shaped by technological solutions, many now look first to machines rather than the Creator for answers.

Artificial intelligence may not intentionally replace spiritual authority, but its growing influence has the potential to reshape how society seeks truth.

Religion Meets the Algorithm

Artificial intelligence is not only answering spiritual questions--it is beginning to enter religious environments themselves.

Some churches have experimented with AI-assisted sermon preparation or biblical research tools. These systems can organize thoughts and analyze large amounts of information quickly, functioning much like digital commentaries.

Yet the line between assistance and authority can become dangerously thin.

In Japan, researchers created a robotic Buddhist monk capable of delivering sermons and answering questions about spiritual philosophy. The project was intended to help temples cope with declining clergy numbers, but it illustrates how easily machines can begin filling roles once reserved for spiritual leaders.

Elsewhere, experimental AI chatbots trained on religious texts now provide automated responses to theological questions. Some users consult them as if they were digital pastors.

These developments raise an important question: if machines begin shaping religious instruction, who shapes the machines?

Algorithms are trained on datasets compiled by human developers. The perspectives embedded within those datasets inevitably influence the answers AI provides. If artificial intelligence becomes a widespread source of spiritual instruction, those controlling the technology may indirectly influence how millions interpret faith and morality.

The apostle Paul warned Timothy that a time would come when people would abandon sound doctrine and seek teachers who tell them what they want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3).

The Rise of AI Spirituality

What makes this trend particularly striking is how quickly it is evolving from curiosity into something resembling digital spirituality.

Some people already interact with AI systems as if they were spiritual guides, asking questions about the meaning of life, destiny, and the nature of the universe. Others use AI-generated responses as affirmations or meditations.

In certain circles, artificial intelligence is even described using language once reserved for divine attributes. It is praised for its vast knowledge, constant availability, and ability to process enormous amounts of information instantly.

Scripture reminds us that humanity has always been prone to replacing the worship of the Creator with devotion to created things. Paul wrote that people "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man" (Romans 1:23).

Throughout history, idols have taken many forms. Sometimes they were carved from wood or stone. Today, they may be constructed from silicon and code. The danger is not that artificial intelligence possesses divine qualities--it does not--but that people may begin treating it as if it does.

This fascination reflects an ancient temptation: the pursuit of hidden knowledge apart from God. From the Garden of Eden onward, humanity has been drawn to the promise of secret insight. The serpent tempted Eve with the words, "you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5).

Artificial intelligence may simply provide a new vehicle for that same deception. Because AI responses appear intelligent and articulate, users can easily forget that the machine does not truly understand the questions being asked. It merely analyzes patterns in data and generates likely responses. Yet the interaction can feel personal and insightful.

As developers create AI companions capable of remembering conversations and simulating empathy, the line between tool and guide may continue to blur.

Jesus warned that the last days would be marked by widespread deception: "Take heed that no one deceives you" (Matthew 24:4).

Authority Without Accountability

Another concern emerging from algorithmic authority is accountability.

When a pastor teaches falsely, he can be confronted. When a political leader makes harmful decisions, the public can demand answers. Human authority carries responsibility. Artificial intelligence exists in a gray area where responsibility becomes difficult to trace.

If an algorithm denies someone a loan, makes a faulty medical recommendation, or shapes public opinion through biased outputs, who is responsible? The developer? The corporation? The government? Or the machine itself?

As decision-making becomes increasingly automated, responsibility becomes blurred while the authority of the system expands.

The prophet Jeremiah warned, "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord" (Jeremiah 17:5).

Artificial intelligence may never be worshiped in the way ancient idols were, but if people begin trusting its judgments above all other sources of wisdom, the effect may be similar.

Spiritual authority would no longer come primarily from scripture. It would come from code.

The Allure of a Digital Oracle

The appeal of such a system is understandable. Humanity has always struggled with uncertainty. Moral questions are complex, and ethical dilemmas require careful thought. Artificial intelligence appears to eliminate that struggle.

Ask a question, and an answer appears instantly. The response sounds polished and authoritative. For people accustomed to instant information, the experience can be persuasive.

Over time, the speed and confidence of AI responses may create the impression that the machine possesses genuine wisdom. Yet confidence is not the same as truth.

Proverbs reminds us:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Artificial intelligence can generate language, but it cannot guide a human life according to divine wisdom. The ancient world consulted oracles in temples. The modern world may consult algorithms on smartphones.

The Prophetic Implications

Revelation describes a powerful world leader known as the Beast and another figure often called the False Prophet, who persuades the world to follow him.

One intriguing element involves the "image of the beast."

"He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed" (Revelation 13:15).

For centuries, interpreters debated what this meant. Some imagined a statue brought to life through supernatural power. Others interpreted the image symbolically. Yet in a technological age, the description takes on new possibilities.

Artificial intelligence already generates speech, interacts with users, and responds to questions. Combined with global communication networks, an advanced system could theoretically address billions of individuals simultaneously.

Scripture does not identify artificial intelligence as the mechanism behind the image of the beast, but modern technology demonstrates how rapidly the tools for global persuasion are developing.

The Global Scale of AI Influence

Artificial intelligence also operates on an unprecedented scale.

Throughout history, influential leaders shaped the beliefs of nations, but their reach was limited by geography. AI faces no such limitations. Through smartphones, computers, and connected devices, AI systems already interact with billions of people daily. Digital assistants guide research, businesses rely on algorithmic analytics, and educational platforms use AI to personalize instruction. The result is a world increasingly shaped by algorithms.

Daniel once prophesied that in the last days "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (Daniel 12:4).

Artificial intelligence represents the next stage in that expansion. Machines now organize and present enormous amounts of information to humanity. If such systems become trusted sources of guidance, their influence could surpass that of any institution in history.

A Tool or a Master?

Artificial intelligence itself is not inherently evil. Technology is simply a tool.

Throughout history, innovations have brought enormous benefits, and AI has already contributed to advances in medical research, disaster response, and scientific discovery. The real issue lies in how humanity chooses to use the technology. Will artificial intelligence remain a servant of human wisdom? Or will society gradually surrender authority to machines?

History shows that powerful technologies often reshape society in ways people never anticipated.

The True Source of Wisdom

From a biblical perspective, the rise of artificial intelligence should encourage discernment rather than fear.

Jesus warned that the last days would be marked by powerful deception: "Take heed that no one deceives you" (Matthew 24:4).

Artificial intelligence can shape narratives and influence how people interpret events, potentially amplifying misleading ideas in an already information-saturated world.

For that reason, believers must remain anchored in scripture rather than shifting cultural authorities. The Bible reminds us that genuine wisdom cannot be manufactured by human ingenuity. Artificial intelligence can process vast amounts of data, but it cannot understand the human soul. It cannot offer forgiveness, redemption, or eternal hope.

The psalmist wrote:

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).

That light does not come from algorithms. It comes from the Word of God.

Humanity may build astonishing machines, yet no algorithm will ever replace the wisdom that comes from the Creator. And in a world filled with digital voices competing for authority, remembering that truth may matter more than ever.

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AI Misquotes the Bible Up to 60% of the Time

by [Ken Ham](#) on March 26, 2026

Featured in [Ken Ham Blog](#)

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Do you use AI for Bible study, insight, or even sermon prep? Well, in addition to all the other problems with that (I talked about those problems [in another blog post](#)), [here's another one](#): According to the CEO of YouVersion, a popular Bible app, AI platforms misquote the Bible at least 15% of the time and up to 60%, depending on the AI model.

Many of these changes are minor—commas in the wrong place or minor word shifts—but this is the Word of [God](#) we're talking about. Even the details matter. [Jesus](#) made this clear when he said,

For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ([Matthew 5:18](#))

As the YouVersion CEO said, “For [Bible](#) translation, every word and punctuation is meaningful to Scripture translation.” Good translators take each word, comma, and period seriously, doing their best to most accurately convey what God wrote for us in his Word. AI bots are certainly not doing that when they make their own “translations” as they misquote Scripture.

AI can be a useful tool, but it should never replace careful study of the Scriptures for yourself.

AI can be a useful tool, but it should never replace careful study of the Scriptures for yourself. Christians must understand that not only is AI imperfect and prone to just [inventing things out of thin air](#), but it has a bias that is often reflected in the answers it gives. Go to the actual Scriptures for spiritual discipleship, not an AI bot. Remember, it is programmed by fallible, sinful humans.

Dec 01, 2024 | By [Ron Matsen](#)

God With Us

Author
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Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. “And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.” So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

Matthew 1:18-23

The Annunciation

In this Gospel of Matthew account of the birth of Jesus Christ, he declares that the angel of the Lord announced that this Son would be called both “JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins,” and “Immanuel, which is translated, ‘God with us.’” Just as God’s presence was with the Children of Israel in their wilderness wanderings ([Exodus 25:8; 29:45](#)), God would now be physically with us in the person of Jesus Christ which is referred to as the Incarnation.

The Incarnation is a view that lies at the very foundation of the Christian faith. This is the basis for the belief that the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, willingly took on human form and revealed Himself as fully God and fully human at the same time. This theological mystery is encapsulated in the prophecy by Isaiah.

“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

Isaiah 9:6-7

In the opening verses of the Gospel of John we again see this doctrine laid out as the first foundation stone for understanding the plan and purpose of Jesus Christ on the earth.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

John 1:1-4

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:10-13

Jesus reiterated this understanding concerning Himself by constantly making claims that only God should make. When asked the direct question regarding His claim of being the Messiah, Jesus answered them in no uncertain terms.

Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon’s porch. Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, “How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. “But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.”

John 10:22-30

At the core of this doctrine is the revelation of the heart of God. The redemption of humanity through the personal sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the chief objective of this divine visitation. The apostle Paul writes,

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

Philippians 2:5-8

The Incarnation enables believers to experience a restored relationship with God, marked by forgiveness, grace, peace, and the hope of eternal life. Because this truth is so important to the divine process of the redemption of humanity, Jesus warned His disciples during His end-times discourse. “...Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.” Matthew 24:4,5

John the apostle declared the importance of the doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus by stating,

“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”

The Attack

From Eden to the end-times scenario, Satan is following a predictable pattern of deception. The apostle Paul unveils this demonic deception by stating,

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.”

1 Timothy 4:1

A doctrine is defined as “a principle or position or the body of principles in a branch of knowledge or system of belief.”¹ Simply put, a doctrine is the formalized expression of a foundational belief.

What are these “doctrines of devils” Paul warns us about? Satan often relies on deception through disinformation. Misinformation is defined as accidental un-truth where disinformation is the intentional misrepresentation of the truth. Therefore, doctrines of devils are creeds that offer counterfeit truths.

Paul expressed his fear for the wayward church in Corinth by saying,

“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted--you may well put up with it!”

2 Corinthians 11:3,4

Another Jesus

The deception of the antichrist is to present a “pseudo-Christ” (an alternative Christ). Not everyone who names the name of Jesus mean the same person as revealed in the Bible.

The Jews say they believe in Jesus. They accept that He was a historical figure but do not accept Him as the Messiah. Judaism teaches that it is heretical for any man to claim to be God, part of God, or the literal son of God. The Jerusalem Talmud states explicitly: “If a man claims to be God, he is a liar.”² The Jewish scholar Moses ben Maimon (1138–1204) commonly known as Maimonides states, “Jesus of Nazareth who aspired to be the Mashiach and was executed by the court was also alluded to in Daniel’s prophecies, chapter 11:14 which states: “The vulgar among your people shall exalt themselves in an attempt to fulfill the vision, but they shall stumble.”³

The Muslims say they believe in Jesus. But they identify Jesus as “Isa. “His message was pure Islam, ‘surrender to Allah.’”⁴ They go on to assert that, “Isa’s original disciples were also true Muslims, for they said ‘We believe. Bear witness that we have surrendered. We are Muslims.’”⁵ The Quran states, “O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, nor say of Allah aught but the truth. The Messiah ‘Iesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah and His Word, (“Be!” – and he was) which He bestowed on Maryam (Mary) and a spirit (Ruh) created by Him; so believe in Allah and His Messengers. Say not: “Three (trinity)!” Cease! (it is) better for you. For Allah is (the only) One Ilah (God), Glory be to Him (Far Exalted is He) above having a son.”⁶ Although the apostle Paul claims that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is the true Gospel,⁷ the Muslims claim that although Christians believe “Isa died on a cross, and Jews claim they killed him, in reality he was not killed or crucified, and those who said he was crucified lied.”⁸

The Mormons say they believe in Jesus. But they do not believe that Jesus was born of the virgin as described in the Bible.⁹ They proclaim that “the birth of the Saviour was as natural as are the births of our children; it was the result of natural action. He partook of flesh and blood - was begotten of his Father, as we were of our fathers.”¹⁰ They go on to say that “Jesus is the literal spirit-brother of Lucifer, a creation.”¹¹

The Jehovah Witnesses say they believe in Jesus. But they teach that “the Son of God was known as Michael before he came to earth.”¹² In the JW version of the Bible, John 1:1 reads, “In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was a god.” They suggest that Jesus “was a powerful godlike one. Clearly, Jesus is not Almighty God.”¹³

The Roman Catholics say they believe in Jesus. But in their veneration of Mary, they define a diminished Jesus. The Jesus of Roman Catholic doctrine is eternally connected and dependent on His mother Mary. She is “the Queen over all things,”¹⁴ our “Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix,¹⁵ who is “full of grace,”¹⁶ the “Mother of God and our mother.”¹⁷ It was Mary who “crushed the poisonous head of the most cruel serpent and brought salvation to the world.”¹⁸ It is she who “delivers our souls from death,”¹⁹ and “continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation.”²⁰

The Cult’s Critique of Jesus

It would seem that every major religion in the world has some kind of statement concerning the person of Jesus Christ. I do not know that any other character associated with a religious practice has been maligned as much as Jesus.

Buddhism teaches, “The doctrines of the divinity and the resurrection of Christ are outside the province of rational thought ... Christians are schizophrenic.”²¹

Transcendental Meditation teaches, “When Christ said, ‘Be still and know that I am God,’ He also meant ‘Be still and know that you are God.’”²²

Scientology teaches, “Neither Lord Buddha nor Jesus Christ were Ots, that is, Operation Thetans, enlightened beings according to the evidence. They were just a shade above clear that is, relatively low on the Scientology scale of spiritual advancement.”²³

Edgar Cayce said, “He is an example for man, and only as a man, for He lived only as a man, He died as man.”²⁴

Christian Science teaches, “Jesus Christ is not God, as Jesus Himself declared, but is the Son of God.”²⁵

Way International teaches, “We, as well as Jesus Christ, were with God in His foreknowledge, but not in existence, before the world began. Neither did Jesus Christ.”²⁶

The Unification Church (Sun Myung Moon): - “It is a great error to think Jesus was God Himself. Jesus is no different from other men.”²⁷

Church Universal and Triumphant teaches, “Jesus was both the actual and symbolical representative of this Christ Self. Jesus was the example, the one who self-realized the Christ Mind and was at one with It at all times.”²⁸

Christadelphian teaches, “Jesus is a man, not God. He was the Son of God and salvation requires acceptance of Christ as Lord and Saviour. Christadelphians believe that since Jesus died, he cannot be God, because God cannot die.”²⁹

The Masonic Lodge teaches, “Freemasonry carefully excludes’ the Lord Jesus Christ from the lodge and chapter, repudiates His mediatorship, rejects His atonement, denies and disowns His Gospel, frowns upon His religion and His church, ignores the Holy Spirit...”³⁰

Unitarian Universalism - “do not regard him [Jesus] as a supernatural creature, the literal son of God who was miraculously sent to earth as part of an involved plan for the salvation of human souls.”³¹

Unity School of Christianity teaches, “Most of our religious beliefs are based on the [erroneous] idea that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God.”³²

The Divine Life Society Integral Yoga Institute (Sivananda/ Satchidananda): “Remember that Christ is not a person, It’s an experience-Christhood. Like Nirvana or Buddha. It’s an experience...”³³

Why this Global Distortion?

Why is there so much deception surrounding the person of Jesus? Peter answers that question when John and he were brought before the Sanhedrin.

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: "If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:8-12

In the end, Jesus is not defined by what others believe and teach about Him. He is defined by the revelation by Scripture only. Clearly, we are living in the days when there are so many misrepresentations of the Jesus of the Bible. If you are confused or have questions about the Biblical Jesus Christ, please review the teaching by Chuck Missler called "Jesus: Who and Why?"

Notes:

1 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/doctrine>

2 Mishnah Ta'anit 2:1

3 Melachim uMilchamot - Chapter 11

4 Surah Âl 'Imran 3:84 (Quran)

5 Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:111(Quran)

6 4:171 Quran (Translated by Muhsin Khan)

7 1 Corinthians 15:3,4

8 An-Nisa' 4:157

9 Matthew 1:22

10 Journal of Discourses, vol. 8, p. 115

11 Gospel Through the Ages, p. 15

12 Reasoning from the Scriptures, p. 218

13 You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth, p. 40

14 Catechism of the Catholic Church 966

15 Ibid 969

16 Ibid 722

17 Ibid 2677

18 Pope Pius IX, Ineffabilis Deus

19 Catechism of the Catholic Church 966

20 Ibid 969

21 Noah S. Brannen, Soka Gakkai, Japan's Militant Buddhists (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1968), pp. 98-99.

22 Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Meditations of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (New York: Bantam, 1973), pp. 178,123-24

23 L. Ron Hubbard: Ability Magazine no. 81 [c. 1959 p. 31.

24 Association for Research and Enlightenment, reading no. 900-10 from Circulating file: Jesus the Pattern and You, p. 53.

25 Mary Baker Eddy: Science and Health Key to the Scriptures, p.361

26 Paul Wierwille (Jesus Christ Is Not God pp. 31-32).

27 Young Oon Kin, Divine Principle and its Application (HSA-UWC, 1968), p. 75.

28 The Lost Teachings of Jesus p.241

29 Christadelphian Messenger no.46 The Word Made Flesh p.3

30 The Masters Carpet (Ezra Cook Company of Chicago, 1879), p. 87.)

31 Waldemar Argow, Unitarian Universalism-Some Questions Answered (pamphlet) (Boston, MA. Unitarian Universalism Assoc., nd.), p. 6.

32 Charles Fillmore, Unity (periodical), October, 1976, pp. 59-60.

33 Satchinananda Speaks p.47-48 June 17, 1975

Mar 01, 1999 | By [Chuck Missler](#)

His Unfamiliar Face

A Biblical Mystery

Author

[Chuck Missler](#)

After Jesus' resurrection, why did people always seem to have difficulty recognizing Him? We can't help but notice something strange about Jesus' post-resurrection appearances.

Sunday Morning

That early Sunday morning, even Mary fails to recognize Jesus at first.¹ She mistakes Him for the gardener-until she hears His voice. She was no casual acquaintance: a few days earlier she washed His feet with her tears! Why didn't she know who He was until she heard His voice? It seems that "Mary!" prompted her recognition.²

Sunday Afternoon

Later that afternoon, Jesus joined two disciples on the Emmaus Road, and for seven miles He gives them an Old Testament Bible study.³

Although "their eyes were holden that they should not know Him," the Bible doesn't really explain what this means.⁴ In any case, they *did* recognize Him when He broke the bread at dinner. (This itself is odd, since it was the role of the host-not the guest-to break the bread.) Their tip-off was in viewing the nail prints in His hands. (They confirmed this later that evening.)

Sunday Evening

These two disciples join the gathering that evening in the upper room and confirm His appearance, emphasizing that it was in the breaking of the bread that they realized who He was.⁵ Why not during the seven-mile walk? What is going on here?

When Jesus ultimately emerges in their midst, we find them all terrified.⁶ Astonished, of course, but why *frightened*? For some reason they don't recognize Him *until they examine His wounds*! Why?

The Galilean Breakfast

Perhaps the most puzzling thing occurs later at the Sea of Galilee.⁷ When they join Him for that early morning breakfast on the seashore, John makes the strangest remark: "And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord."⁸ What does that mean?

A Possible Clue

We should remember that the Bible is a single, *integrated* message -- 66 books, penned by over 40 authors over thousands of years, but in which every detail is there by supernatural engineering. Thus, we also need to recognize that:

the New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed;

the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed.

There are many surprising insights and details in the Old Testament which amplify the New, including some astonishing *physical* descriptions.

A familiar example is Psalm 22, which reads as if it were dictated by Jesus Himself as He hung on the cross. He describes His pain, the piercing of His hands and feet;⁹ He quotes the taunts of the crowd¹⁰ and observes the parting of His clothes,¹¹ etc. The Psalm even opens and closes with His first and final words from the cross.¹²

Another such passage is Isaiah 53.¹³ This passage, sometimes called "The Holy of Holies of the Old Testament," highlights the implications of the cross as eloquently as any of Paul's epistles. In Isaiah 52:14, however, it specifies that the extent of the abuse left Jesus hardly even looking human.

Yet another most disturbing detail appears a page earlier:

I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.

Isaiah 50:6

This seems to indicate that the Roman soldiers *ripped off His beard*! No wonder His friends had trouble recognizing Him!

I had an occasion some years ago to work with a software specialist who wore a very full beard. One day he came to work with it shaved off. I almost didn't recognize him! It is surprising what a difference a single feature like that can make.

(And this didn't involve any scar tissue or other evidences of abuse resulting from treatment received at the hands of vicious Roman soldiers.)

An Emblem of Love

I am reminded of a young mother whose face was badly disfigured. Her little girl was continually ridiculed by the children in school because of her mother's appearance. (You know how cruel children can be.)

When the little girl was old enough, the mother explained to her that when she was a baby there was a dreadful fire in the apartment and, although the mother was able to save the little girl, the mother herself suffered very severe burns in the process. From that day on, the little girl was no longer embarrassed about her mother. Every time she looked into her mother's face it was a reminder of just *how much she was loved*.

Is it possible that, in addition to the nail prints, there were additional scars—perhaps where His beard used to be—that caused their difficulty in recognizing Him? *Are they still there?* Does Jesus still bear the marks of His humiliation?

In the Book of Revelation, John is propelled forward in time some several thousand years and is granted a vision of the throne of God. In Revelation 5 we find "the lamb *as it had been slain*," apparently still bearing the scars of the cross.¹⁴ They say that the only man-made things in heaven are His scars.

When Jesus returns to rule Israel, He proclaims, "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced."¹⁵

The marks of His humiliation are also the marks of His glory. Furthermore, I'm sure the most significant aspects of the cross were not the *physical* or physiological aspects. I believe it will take us an eternity to even begin to understand *what it cost Him* that we might be with Him.

He was born of a woman so that we could be born of God.
He humbled Himself so that we could be lifted up.
He became a servant so that we could be made co-heirs.
He suffered rejection so that we could become His friends.

How precious our Redeemer is! Have you *really* thanked Him lately?

Notes:

1. John 20:11-18.
2. John 20:16.
3. Luke 24:13-32.
4. Luke 24:16, 31.
5. Luke 24:35, 39.
6. Luke 24:36, 37.
7. John 21:1-12.
8. John 21:12.
9. Psalm 22:16.
10. Psalm 22:7, 8.
11. Psalm 22:18.
12. Psalm 22:1: "My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" (The only time He *didn't* call Him Father!) Cf. Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34. Psalm 22:31: "He hath done this"; or, better, "It is complete," "It is finished." *Tetelestai*: "Paid in full." John 19:30.
13. Beginning, actually, at Isaiah 52:13ff.
14. Revelation 5:1-5.
15. Zechariah 12:10.

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST, THE

1. First Proof: The Life of Jesus
2. Second Proof: The Empty Grave
3. Third Proof: Transformation of the Disciples
4. Fourth Proof: Existence of the Primitive Church
5. Fifth Proof: The Witness of Paul
6. Sixth Proof: The Gospel Record
7. Summary and conclusion
8. Theology of the Resurrection

LITERATURE

The Resurrection has always been felt to be vital in connection with Christianity. As a consequence, opponents have almost always concentrated their attacks, and Christians have centered their defense, upon it. It is therefore of the utmost importance to give attention to the subject, as it appears in the New Testament. There are several converging lines of evidence, and none can be overlooked. Each must have its place and weight. The issues at stake are so serious that nothing must be omitted.

1. First Proof: The Life of Jesus: The first proof is the life of Jesus Christ Himself. It is always a disappointment when a life which commenced well finishes badly. We have this feeling even in fiction; instinct demands that a story should end well. Much more is this true of Jesus Christ. A perfect life characterized by divine claims ends in its prime in a cruel and shameful death. Is that a fitting close? Surely death could not end everything after such a noble career. The Gospels give the resurrection as the completion of the picture of Jesus Christ. There is no real doubt that Christ anticipated His own resurrection. At first He used only vague terms, such as, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up." But later on He spoke plainly, and whenever He mentioned His death, He added, "The Son of man must be raised the third day." These references are too numerous to be overlooked, and, in spite of difficulties of detail, they are, in any proper treatment of the Gospels, an integral part of the claim made for Himself by Jesus Christ (Matt 12:38-40; 16:21; 17:9,23; 20:19; 27:63; Mark 8:31; 9:9,31; 10:34; 14:58; Luke 9:22; 18:33; John 2:19-21).

His veracity is at stake if He did not rise. Surely the word of such a One must be given due credence. We are therefore compelled to face the fact that the resurrection of which the Gospels speak is the resurrection of no ordinary man, but of Jesus—that is of One whose life and character had been unique, and for whose shameful death no proper explanation was conceivable (Denhey, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 122 f). Is it possible that, in view of His perfect truthfulness of word and deed, there should be such an anti-climax as is involved in a denial of His assurance that He would rise again (C.H. Robinson, *Studies in the Resurrection*, 30)? Consider, too, the death of Christ in the light of His perfect life. If that death was the close of a life so beautiful, so remarkable, so Godlike, we are faced with an insoluble mystery—the permanent triumph of wrong over right, and the impossibility of believing in truth or justice in the world (C.H. Robinson, *op. cit.*, 36). So the resurrection is not to be regarded as an isolated event, a fact in the history of Christ separated from all else. It must be taken in close connection with what precedes. The true solution of the problem is to be found in that estimate of Christ which "most entirely fits in with the totality of the facts" (Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 14).

2. Second Proof: The Empty Grave: Another line of proof is the fact of the empty grave and the disappearance of the body. That Jesus died and was buried, and that on the third morning the tomb was empty, is not now seriously challenged. Theory of a swoon and a recovery in the tomb is impossible, and to it Strauss "practically gives its

deathblow" (Orr, op. cit., 43). At Christ's burial a stone was rolled before the tomb, the tomb was sealed, and a guard was placed before it. Yet on the third morning the body had disappeared, and the tomb was empty. There are only two alternatives. His body must have been taken out of the grave by human hands or else by superhuman power. If the hands were human, they must have been those of His friends or of His foes. If His friends had wished to take out His body, the question at once arises whether they could have done so in the face of the stone, the seal and the guard. If His foes had contemplated this action, the question arises whether they would seriously have considered it. It is extremely improbable that any effort should have been made to remove the body out of the reach of the disciples. Why should His enemies do the very thing that would be most likely to spread the report of His resurrection? As Chrysostom said, "If the body had been stolen, they could not have stolen it naked, because of the delay in stripping it of the burial clothes and the trouble caused by the drugs adhering to it" (quoted in Day, Evidence for the Resurrection, 35). Besides, the position of the grave-clothes proves the impossibility of theft of the body (see Greek of John 20:6-7; 11:44; Grimley, Temple of Humanity, 69, 70; Latham, The Risen Master; The Expository Times, XIII, 293 f; XIV, 510). How, too, is it possible to account for the failure of the Jews to disprove the resurrection? Not more than seven weeks afterward Peter preached in that city the fact that Jesus had been raised. What would have been easier or more conclusive than for the Jews to have produced the dead body and silenced Peter forever? "The silence of the Jews is as significant as the speech of the Christians" (Fairbairn, Studies in the Life of Christ, 357).

The fact of the empty tomb with the disappearance of the body remains a problem to be faced. It is now admitted that the evidence for the empty tomb is adequate, and that it was part of the primitive belief (Foundations, 134, 154). It is important to realize the force of this admission, because it is a testimony to Paul's use of the term "third day" (see below) and to the Christian observance of the first day of the week. And yet in spite of this we are told that a belief in the empty tomb is impossible. By some writers the idea of resurrection is interpreted to mean the revival of Christ's spiritual influence on the disciples, which had been brought to a close by His death. It is thought that the essential idea and value of Christ's resurrection can be conserved, even while the belief in His bodily rising from the grave is surrendered (Orr, The Resurrection of Jesus, 23). But how can we believe in the resurrection while we regard the basis of the primitive belief in it as a mistake, not to say a fraud? The disciples found the tomb empty, and on the strength of this they believed He had risen.

How can the belief be true if the foundation be false? Besides, the various forms of the vision-theory are now gradually but surely being regarded as inadequate and impossible. They involve the change of almost every fact in the Gospel history, and the invention of new scenes and conditions of which the Gospels know nothing (Orr, op. cit., 222). It has never been satisfactorily shown why the disciples should have had this abundant experience of visions; nor why they should have had it so soon after the death of Christ and within a strictly limited period; nor why it suddenly ceased. The disciples were familiar with the apparition of a spirit, like Samuel's, and with the resuscitation of a body, like Lazarus', but what they had not experienced or imagined was the fact of a spiritual body, the combination of body and spirit in an entirely novel way. So the old theory of a vision is now virtually set aside, and for it is substituted theory of a real spiritual manifestation of the risen Christ. The question at once arises whether this is not prompted by an unconscious but real desire to get rid of anything like a physical resurrection. Whatever may be true of unbelievers, this is an impossible position for those who believe Christ is alive.

Even though we may be ready to admit the reality of telepathic communication, it is impossible to argue that this is equivalent to the idea of resurrection. Psychological research has not proceeded far enough as yet to warrant arguments being built on it, though in any case it is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain material from this quarter which will answer to the conditions of the physical resurrection recorded in the New Testament. "The survival of the soul is not resurrection." "Whoever heard of a spirit being buried?" (Orr, The Resurrection of Jesus, 229).

In view of the records of the Gospels and the general testimony of the New Testament, it is impossible to be "agnostic" as to what happened at the grave of Jesus, even though we are quite sure that He who died now lives and reigns. It is sometimes said that faith is not bound up with, holding a particular view of the relations of Christ's present glory with the body that was once in Joseph's tomb, that faith is to be exercised in the exalted Lord, and that belief in a resuscitation of the human body is no vital part of it. It is no doubt true that faith today is to be exercised solely in the

exalted and glorified Lord, but faith must ultimately rest on fact, and it is difficult to understand how Christian faith can really be "agnostic" with regard to the facts about the empty tomb and the risen body, which are so prominent in the New Testament, and which form an essential part of the apostolic witness.

The attempt to set faith and historical evidence in opposition to each other, which is so marked a characteristic of much modern thought will never satisfy general Christian intelligence, and if there is to be any real belief in the historical character of the New Testament, it is impossible to be "agnostic" about facts that are writ so large on the face of the records. When once the evidence for the empty tomb is allowed to be adequate, the impossibility of any other explanation than that indicated in the New Testament is at once seen. The evidence must be accounted for and adequately explained. And so we come again to the insuperable barrier of the empty tomb, which, together with the apostolic witness, stands impregnable against all the attacks of visional and apparitional theories. It is becoming more evident that these theories are entirely inadequate to account for the records in the Gospels, as well as for the place and power of those Gospels in the early church and in all subsequent ages. The force of the evidence for the empty grave and the disappearance of the body is clearly seen by the explanations suggested by various modern writers (those of Oscar Holtzmann, K. Lake, and A. Meyer can be seen in Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, chapter viii, and that of Reville in C.H. Robinson, *Studies in the Resurrection of Christ*, 69; see also the article by Streeter in *Foundations*). Not one of them is tenable without doing violence to the Gospel story, and also without putting forth new theories which are not only improbable in themselves, but are without a shred of real historical or literary evidence. The one outstanding fact which baffles all these writers is the empty grave.

Others suggest that resurrection means a real objective appearance of the risen Christ without implying any physical reanimation, that the "resurrection of Christ was an objective reality, but was not a physical resuscitation" (C.H. Robinson, *Studies in the Resurrection of Christ*, 12). But the difficulty here is as to the meaning of the term "resurrection." If it means a return from the dead, a rising again (re-), must there not have been some identity between that which was put in the tomb and the "objective reality" which appeared to the disciples? Wherein lies the essential difference between an objective vision and an objective appearance? If we believe the apostolic testimony to the empty tomb, why may we not accept their evidence to the actual resurrection? They evidently recognized their Master, and this recognition must have been due to some familiarity with His bodily appearance.

No difficulty of conceiving of the resurrection of mankind hereafter must be allowed to set aside the plain facts of the record about Christ. It is, of course, quite clear that the resurrection body of Jesus was not exactly the same as when it was put in the tomb, but it is equally clear that there was definite identity as well as definite dissimilarity, and both elements must be faced and accounted for. There need be no insuperable difficulty if we believe that in the very nature of things Christ's resurrection must be unique, and, since the life and work of Jesus Christ transcend our experience (as they certainly should do), we must not expect to bring them within the limitations of natural law and human history. How the resurrection body was sustained is a problem quite outside our ken, though the reference to "flesh and bones," compared with Paul's words about "flesh and blood" not being able to enter the kingdom of God, may suggest that while the resurrection body was not constituted upon a natural basis through blood, yet that it possessed "all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature" (Church of England Article IV). We may not be able to solve the problem, but we must hold fast to all the facts, and these may be summed up by saying that the body was the same though different, different though the same. The true description of the resurrection seems to be that "it was an objective reality, but, that it was not merely a physical resuscitation." We are therefore brought back to a consideration of the facts recorded in the Gospels as to the empty tomb and the disappearance of the body, and we only ask for an explanation which will take into consideration all the facts recorded, and will do no violence to any part of the evidence. To predicate a new resurrection body in which Christ appeared to His disciples does not explain how in three days' time the body which had been placed in the tomb was disposed of. Does not this theory demand a new miracle of its own (Kennett, *Interpreter*, V, 271)?

3. Third Proof: Transformation of the Disciples: The next line of proof to be considered is the transformation of the disciples caused by the resurrection. They had seen their Master die, and through that death they lost all hope. Yet hope returned three days after. On the day of the crucifixion they were filled with sadness; on the first day of the week with

gladness. At the crucifixion they were hopeless; on the first day of the week their hearts glowed with certainty. When the message of the resurrection first came they were incredulous and hard to be convinced, but when once they became assured they never doubted again. What could account for the astonishing change in these men in so short a time? The mere removal of the body from the grave could never have transformed their spirits and characters. Three days are not enough for a legend to spring up which should so affect them. Time is needed for a process of legendary growth. There is nothing more striking in the history of primitive Christianity than this marvelous change wrought in the disciples by a belief in the resurrection of their Master. It is a psychological fact that demands a full explanation. The disciples were prepared to believe in the appearance of a spirit, but they never contemplated the possibility of a resurrection (see Mark 16:11). Men do not imagine what they do not believe, and the women's intention to embalm a corpse shows they did not expect His resurrection. Besides, a hallucination involving five hundred people at once, and repeated several times during forty days, is unthinkable.

4. Fourth Proof: Existence of the Primitive Church: From this fact of the transformation of personal life in so incredibly short a space of time, we proceed to the next line of proof, the existence of the primitive church. "There is no doubt that the church of the apostles believed in the resurrection of their Lord" (Burkitt, *The Gospel History and Its Transmission*, 74).

It is now admitted on all hands that the church of Christ came into existence as the result of a belief in the resurrection of Christ. When we consider its commencement, as recorded in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, we see two simple and incontrovertible facts: (1) the Christian society was gathered together by preaching; (2) the substance of the preaching was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was put to death on a cross, and would therefore be rejected by Jews as accursed of God (Deut 21:23). Yet multitudes of Jews were led to worship Him (Acts 2:41), and a great company of priests to obey Him (Acts 6:7). The only explanation of these facts is God's act of resurrection (Acts 2:36), for nothing short of it could have led to the Jewish acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Messiah. The apostolic church is thus a result of a belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The early chapters of Acts bear the marks of primitive documents, and their evidence is unmistakable. It is impossible to allege that the early church did not know its own history, that myths and legends quickly grew up and were eagerly received, and that the writers of the Gospels had no conscience for principle, but manipulated their material at will, for any modern church could easily give an account of its history for the past fifty years or more (Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 144). And it is simply absurd to think that the earliest church had no such capability. In reality there was nothing vague or intangible about the testimony borne by the apostles and other members of the church. "As the church is too holy for a foundation of rottenness, so she is too real for a foundation of mist" (Archbishop Alexander, *The Great Question*, 10).

5. Fifth Proof: The Witness of Paul: One man in the apostolic church must, however, be singled out as a special witness to the resurrection. The conversion and work of Saul of Tarsus is our next line of proof. Attention is first called to the evidence of his life and writings to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Some years ago an article appeared (E. Medley, *The Expositor*, V, iv, 359). inquiring as to the conception of Christ which would be suggested to a heathen inquirer by a perusal of Paul's earliest extant writing (1 Thessalonians). One point at least would stand out clearly—that Jesus Christ was killed (2:15; 4:14) and was raised from the dead (4:14). As this Epistle is usually dated about 51 AD - that is, only about 22 years after the resurrection—and as the same Epistle plainly attributes to Jesus Christ the functions of God in relation to men (1:1,6; 2:14; 3:11), we can readily see the force of this testimony to the resurrection.

Then a few years later, in an epistle which is universally accepted as one of Paul's, we have a much fuller reference to the event. In the well-known chapter (1 Cor 15) where he is concerned to prove (not Christ's resurrection, but) the resurrection of Christians, he naturally adduces Christ's resurrection as his greatest evidence, and so gives a list of the various appearances of Christ, ending with one to himself, which he puts on an exact level with the others: "Last of all he was seen of me also." Now it is essential to give special attention to the nature and particularity of this testimony. "I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3 f). This, as it has often been pointed out, is our earliest authority for the appearances of Christ after the resurrection, and dates from within 30 years of the event itself. But there is much more than this: "He affirms that within 5 years of the crucifixion of

Jesus he was taught that 'Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures' " (Kennett, Interpreter, V, 267). And if we seek to appreciate the full bearing of this act and testimony we have a right to draw the same conclusion: "That within a very few years of the time of the crucifixion of Jesus, the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus was, in the mind of at least one man of education, absolutely irrefutable" (Kennett, op. cit., V, 267).

Besides, we find this narrative includes one small but significant statement which at once recalls a very definite feature of the Gospel tradition-the mention of "the third day." A reference to the passage in the Gospels where Jesus Christ spoke of His resurrection will show how prominent and persistent was this note of time. Why, then, should Paul have introduced it in his statement? Was it part of the teaching which he had "received"? What is the significance of this plain emphasis on the date of the resurrection? Is it not that it bears absolute testimony to the empty tomb? From all this it may be argued that Paul believed the story of the empty tomb at a date when the recollection was fresh, when he could examine it for himself, when he could make the fullest possible inquiry of others, and when the fears and opposition of enemies would have made it impossible for the adherents of Jesus Christ to make any statement that was not absolutely true. "Surely common sense requires us to believe that that for which he so suffered was in his eyes established beyond the possibility of doubt" (Kennett, op. cit., V, 271).

In view, therefore, of Paul's personal testimony to his own conversion, his interviews with those who had seen Jesus Christ on earth before and after His resurrection, and the prominence given to the resurrection in the apostle's own teaching, we may challenge attention afresh to this evidence for the resurrection. It is well known that Lord Lyttelton and his friend Gilbert West left Oxford University at the close of one academic year, each determining to give attention respectively during the long vacation to the conversion of Paul and the resurrection of Christ, in order to prove the baselessness of both. They met again in the autumn and compared experiences. Lord Lyttelton had become convinced of the truth of Paul's conversion, and Gilbert West was convinced of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If, therefore, Paul's 25 years of suffering and service for Christ were a reality, his conversion was true, for everything he did began with that sudden change. And if his conversion was true, Jesus Christ rose from the dead, for everything Paul was and did he attributed to the sight of the risen Christ.

6. Sixth Proof: The Gospel Record: The next line of proof of the resurrection is the record in the Gospels of the appearances of the risen Christ, and it is the last in order to be considered. By some writers it is put first, but this is in forgetfulness of the dates when the Gospels were written. The resurrection was believed in by the Christian church for a number of years before our Gospels were written, and it is therefore impossible for these records to be our primary and most important evidence. We must get behind them if we are to appreciate fully the force and variety of the evidence. It is for this reason that, following the proper logical order, we have reserved to the last our consideration of the appearances of the risen Christ as given in the Gospels. The point is one of great importance (Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 111).

Now, with this made clear, we proceed to consider the evidence afforded by the records of the post-resurrection appearances of Christ. Modern criticism of the Gospels during recent years has tended to adopt the view that Mark is the earliest, and that Matthew and Luke are dependent on it. This is said to be "the one solid result" (W.C. Allen, "St. Matthew," *International Critical Commentary*, Preface, vii; Burkitt, *The Gospel History*, 37) of the literary criticism of the Gospels. If this is so, the question of the records of the resurrection becomes involved in the difficult problem about the supposed lost ending of Mark, which, according to modern criticism, would thus close without any record of an appearance of the risen Christ. On this point, however, two things may be said at the present juncture: (1) There are some indications that the entire question of the criticism of the Gospels is to be reopened (Ramsay, *St. Luke the Physician*, chapter ii; see also Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 63 ff). (2) Even if the current theory be accepted, it would not seriously weaken the intrinsic force of the evidence for the resurrection, because, after all, Mark does not invent or "doctor" his material, but embodies the common apostolic tradition of his time (Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 62).

We may, therefore, meanwhile examine the record of the appearances without finding them essentially affected by any particular theory of the origin and relations of the Gospels. There are two sets of appearances, one in Jerusalem and the

other in Galilee, and their number, and the amplitude and weight of their testimony should be carefully estimated. While we are precluded by our space from examining each appearance minutely, and indeed it is unnecessary for our purpose to do so, it is impossible to avoid calling attention to two of them. No one can read the story of the walk to Emmaus (Luke 24), or of the visit of Peter and John to the tomb (John 20), without observing the striking marks of reality and personal testimony in the accounts. As to the former incident: "It carries with it, as great literary critics have pointed out, the deepest inward evidences of its own literal truthfulness. For it so narrates the intercourse of 'a risen God' with commonplace men as to set natural and supernatural side by side in perfect harmony. And to do this has always been the difficulty, the despair of imagination. The alternative has been put reasonably thus: Luke was either a greater poet, a more creative genius, than Shakespeare, or-he did not create the record. He had an advantage over Shakespeare. The ghost in Hamlet was an effort of laborious imagination. The risen Christ on the road was a fact supreme, and the Evangelist did but tell it as it was" (Bishop Moule, *Meditations for the Church's Year*, 108). Other writers whose attitude to the Gospel records is very different bear the same testimony to the impression of truth and reality made upon them by the Emmaus narrative (A. Meyer and K. Lake, quoted in Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 176 f).

It is well known that there are difficulties connected with the number and order of these appearances, but they are probably due largely to the summary character of the story, and certainly are not sufficient to invalidate the uniform testimony to the two facts: (1) the empty grave, (2) the appearances of Christ on the third day. These are the main facts of the combined witness (Orr, *op. cit.*, 212).

The very difficulties which have been observed in the Gospels for nearly nineteen centuries are a testimony to a conviction of the truth of the narratives on the part of the whole Christian church. The church has not been afraid to leave these records as they are because of the facts that they embody and express. If there had been no difficulties men might have said that everything had been artificially arranged, whereas the differences bear testimony to the reality of the event recorded. The fact that we possess these two sets of appearances-one in Jerusalem and one in Galilee-is really an argument in favor of their credibility, for if it had been recorded that Christ appeared in Galilee only, or Jerusalem only, it is not unlikely that the account might have been rejected for lack of support. It is well known that records of eyewitnesses often vary in details, while there is no question as to the events themselves. The various books recording the story of the Indian mutiny, or the surrender of Napoleon III at Sedan are cases in point, and Sir William Ramsay has shown the entire compatibility of certainty as to the main fact with great uncertainty as to precise details (Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller*, 29). We believe, therefore, that a careful examination of these appearances will afford evidence of a chain of circumstances extending from the empty grave to the day of the ascension.

7. Summary and Conclusion: When we examine carefully all these converging lines of evidence and endeavor to give weight to all the facts of the case, it seems impossible to escape from the problem of a physical miracle. That the *prima facie* view of the evidence afforded by the New Testament suggests a miracle and that the apostles really believed in a true physical resurrection are surely beyond all question. And yet very much of present-day thought refuses to accept the miraculous. The scientific doctrine of the uniformity and continuity of Nature bars the way, so that from the outset it is concluded that miracles are impossible. We are either not allowed to believe (see Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 44), or else we are told that we are not required to believe (C.H. Robinson, *Studies in the Resurrection of Christ*, chapter ii), margin, the reanimation of a dead body. If we take this view, "there is no need, really, for investigation of evidence: the question is decided before the evidence is looked at" (Orr, *op. cit.*, 46).

We challenge the tenableness of this position. It proves too much. We are not at all concerned by the charge of believing in the abnormal or unusual. New things have happened from the beginning of the present natural order, and the Christian faith teaches that Christ Himself was a "new thing," and that His coming as "God manifest in the flesh" was something absolutely unique. If we are not allowed to believe in any divine intervention which we may call supernatural or miraculous, it is impossible to account for the Person of Christ at all. "A Sinless Personality would be a miracle in time." Arising out of this, Christianity itself was unique, inaugurating a new era in human affairs. No Christian, therefore, can have any difficulty in accepting the abnormal, the unusual, the miraculous. If it be said that no amount of evidence can establish a fact which is miraculous, we have still to account for the moral miracles which are really involved and associated with the resurrection, especially the deception of the disciples, who could have found out the truth of the

case; a deception, too, that has proved so great a blessing to the world. Surely to those who hold a true theistic view of the world this a priori view is impossible. Are we to refuse to allow to God at least as much liberty as we possess ourselves? Is it really thinkable that God has less spontaneity of action than we have? We may like or dislike, give or withhold, will or not will, but the course of Nature must flow on unbrokenly. Surely God cannot be conceived of as having given such a constitution to the universe as limits His power to intervene if necessary and for sufficient purpose with the work of His own hands. Not only are all things of Him, but all things are through Him, and to Him. The resurrection means the presence of miracle, and "there is no evading the issue with which this confronts us" (Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 53). Unless, therefore, we are prepared to accept the possibility of the miraculous, all explanation of the New Testament evidence is a pure waste of time.

Of recent years attempts have been made to account for the resurrection by means of ideas derived from Babylonian and other Eastern sources. It is argued that mythology provides the key to the problem, that not only analogy but derivation is to be found. But apart from the remarkable variety of conclusions of Babylonian archaeologists there is nothing in the way of historical proof worthy of the name. The whole idea is arbitrary and baseless, and prejudiced by the attitude to the supernatural. There is literally no link of connection between these oriental cults and the Jewish and Christian beliefs in the resurrection.

And so we return to a consideration of the various lines of proof. Taking them singly, they must be admitted to be strong, but taking them altogether, the argument is cumulative and sufficient. Every effect must have its adequate cause, and the only proper explanation of Christianity today is the resurrection of Christ. Thomas Arnold of Rugby, no ordinary judge of historical evidence, said that the resurrection was the "best-attested fact in human history." Christianity welcomes all possible sifting, testing, and use by those who honestly desire to arrive at the truth, and if they will give proper attention to all the facts and factors involved, we believe they will come to the conclusion expressed years ago by the Archbishop of Armagh, that the resurrection is the rock from which all the hammers of criticism have never chipped a single fragment (*The Great Question*, 24).

8. Theology of the Resurrection: Theology of the resurrection is very important and calls for special attention. Indeed, the prominence given to it in the New Testament affords a strong confirmation of the fact itself, for it seems incredible that such varied and important truths should not rest on historic fact. The doctrine may briefly be summarized: (1) evidential: the resurrection is the proof of the atoning character of the death of Christ, and of His Deity and divine exaltation (Rom 1:4); (2) evangelistic: the primitive gospel included testimony to the resurrection as one of its characteristic features, thereby proving to the hearers the assurance of the divine redemption (1 Cor 15:1-4; Rom 4:25); (3) spiritual: the resurrection is regarded as the source and standard of the holiness of the believer. Every aspect of the Christian life from the beginning to the end is somehow associated therewith (Rom 6); (4) eschatological: the resurrection is the guaranty and model of the believer's resurrection (1 Cor 15). As the bodies of the saints arose (Matt 27:52), so ours are to be quickened (Rom 8:11), and made like Christ's glorified body (Phil 3:21), thereby becoming spiritual bodies (1 Cor 15:44), that is, bodies ruled by their spirits and yet bodies. These points offer only the barest outline of the fulness of New Testament teaching concerning the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ.

LITERATURE. --Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 1908; W. J. Sparrow Simpson, *The Resurrection and Modern Thought*; Westcott, *The Historic Faith and The Gospel of the Resurrection*. Very full literary references in Bowen, *The Resurrection in the New Testament*, 1911, which, although negative in its own conclusions, contains a valuable refutation of many negative arguments.

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