

RESURRECTION

What if it isn't true?



WEST SOUND COMMUNITY CHURCH

SUNDAY, APRIL 4, 2021

If the resurrection of Jesus is not true, then...

...faith in Jesus is pointless, empty, and futile...and followers of Jesus are the most to be pitied.

Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:12-29, as the Holy Spirit inspired him to write:

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Yet, the resurrection of Jesus is true. It's historical. Unlike members religious movements, followers of Jesus stand upon the bedrock truth of the veracity and reliability of the historicity of our Savior. In fact, just prior to writing what we just looked at in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, the apostle wrote:

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: 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, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Still, you might ask, "How do you know? What evidence can you cite for this position? Afterall, I always thought Christian belief is based on faith...and isn't faith believing in something even though you have no proof for it?"

Fair enough. Many people ask these questions or very similar questions. However the truth about biblical faith is it is not based upon blind hope. In fact, the primary New Testament word for the noun faith when found in the verb form is most translated as "believe." To believe in someone or something is to have confidence in, to trust, to be assured, to be certain. This is belief or trust or



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faith that has a reason to exist...it has evidence for the person or thing trusted. This why the Apostle Paul pointed to the historical evidence...*"he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me"* (1 Corinthians 15:-8).

Many scholars have taken this evidence and expanded upon it. On the right, you'll find four of them. There are many more, but these will get you started. You will especially want to look up the work of Dr, Gary Habermas. He has studied in depth what he refers to as The 12 Minimal Facts Establishing the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus. Here they are:

- Jesus died by crucifixion
- Jesus was buried
- Jesus' death caused the disciples to despair and lose hope
- Jesus' tomb was empty
- The disciples had experiences which they believed were literal appearances of the risen Jesus
- The disciples were transformed from doubters to bold proclaimers
- The resurrection was the central message
- The disciples preached the message of Jesus' resurrection in Jerusalem
- The Church was born and grew
- Orthodox Jews who believed in Christ made Sunday their primary day of worship
- James was converted to the faith when he saw the resurrected Jesus (James was a family skeptic)
- Paul was converted to the faith (Paul was an outsider skeptic)

Clearly, we do not have time to tackle all of these today, but let me explain just three of them.

First: The Empty Tomb

1. Did the disciples snatch the body?
2. Did the authorities take the body?
3. Did the disciples go to the wrong tomb?
4. Did Jesus simply pass out?

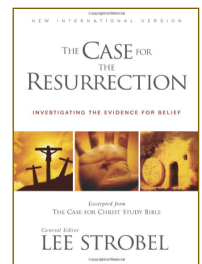
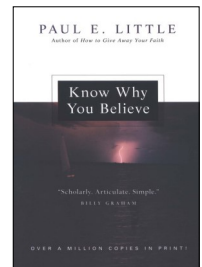
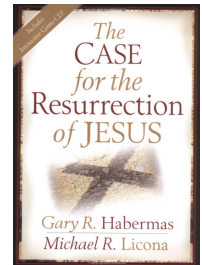
Second: The Church

1. Why does it exist?
2. Why does it meet on Sunday?
3. Why are its documents so important?

Third: The Appearances of Jesus

1. Are they historically documented? (See ch.4 of The Case for the Resurrection)
2. How did they impact Peter? (Mark 14:66-72 with Acts 4:1-22 and 5:17-42)
3. How did the impact Paul? (Acts 9)

Note: For the appearances of Jesus, be sure to read chapters one through four of Lee "Strobel's The Case for the Resurrection."



"Who Moved the Stone" (first published in 1930) is a classic apologetic on the subject of the resurrection. Frank Morison includes a powerful account of Christ's betrayal, trial, and death as the buildup to his retelling of the resurrection.

