

## The Historical Case for the Resurrection

### Intro:

As I began to write out what I would say this evening, a single thought persisted in my mind: “I have 25 minutes to talk about the most significant event in all of history.” I am of course referring to Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. As C.S. Lewis points out, Jesus the Nazarene can only be one of three things. He can be a liar, a lunatic, or the very Lord he claimed to be. We can be sure which of these titles belongs to the central figure of Christianity on the basis that He left us a way of knowing. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and God Himself, sent into the world to pay for the sins of the world, by dying and rising again. So with the time I have allotted to me, that is the evidence I will be presenting. I am not the first to attempt to tackle the subject, and so it seems only fitting to begin with a quote from Christian Apologist David Wood, who has debated secularists on this very issue.

“Did Jesus rise from the dead? The short answer: yes. The long answer: yeesss.” -David Wood, Apologist and Philosopher

In order to determine whether Jesus rose from His crucifixion, we need to begin by investigating whether the Messiah was crucified.

### Was Jesus crucified:

It may come as a surprise to anyone who is guilty of spending as much time as I have on social media that Jesus’ crucifixion is a historical fact recognized by the Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Christians at the time of its occurrence. Today, scholars of all different worldviews acknowledge this truth. Therefore, I will not make the claim that Jesus’ died in this way stand on the ground of myself or any other Christian scholar, but rather, the rest of the scholarly world.

“Jesus’ death as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable.” -Gerd Lüdmann, atheist new testament scholar.

“(There is not the) slightest doubt about the fact of Jesus’ crucifixion under Pontius Pilate.” -John Dominic Crossan, of the Jesus Seminar.

“(Jesus’ execution is the) most certain fact about the historical Jesus.” -Marcus Borg, of the Jesus Seminar.

“(Jesus’ death by crucifixion is) historically certain.” -Pinchas Lapide, Jewish scholar.

“The single most solid fact about Jesus’ life is his death: he was executed by the Roman prefect Pilate, on or around Passover, in the manner Rome reserved particularly for political insurrectionists, namely, crucifixion.” -Paula Fredrickson, a convert to Judaism.

“One of the most certain facts of history is that Jesus was crucified on orders of the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate.” -Bart Ehrman, skeptic and scholar.

### Did crucifixion kill him:

Still, some deny that the Romans knew what they were doing to insurrectionists by crucifying them, despite putting them on public display as a warning to any rebels. Therefore, I have broken down the methodology of this Roman infliction as a testimony to the fact the Jesus did die on the cross. Crucifixion had a 3-step process:

Scourging or flogging is the first item of business in a Roman crucifixion.

Scourging was carried out by soldiers of Rome who were given whips entwined

with shards of metal and other creature's bones. This weapon was created with the intention of removing flesh from the skeleton of the victim, who would be nude during the process. Bone was known to be visible by the end of this first step and sometimes, intestines would gush out. Some victims never made it to the next part of the punishment.

"It is more grievous to be scourged than to be put to death." -Julius Caesar.

1. The next form of punishment came by nailing the victim to a wooden cross. The person this happened to would hang on the nails going through their body and into the wooden beams behind them, while forcing their back up against the cross for every breath as their blood drained from their body. This intense pressure would cause an irregular heartbeat that would lead to asphyxiation or a heart attack.
2. Finally, after some time, whether the victim had suffocated or not, they would be given a deathblow to ensure fatality. This would consist of smashing the person's head in, stabbing them through the heart, etc.

This means that the swoon theory, claiming that Jesus did not die on the cross but only fainted, does not work. The swoon theory also fails to explain how Jesus would manage to roll away the massive stone in front of his tomb and fight the roman guards keeping watch with hands that would be unusable because of the nail holes in them. We can be confident that Jesus' death is historically certain. So what conspiracies rise in light of this fact? The first is the twin theory.

#### Did Jesus have an identical twin brother:

The twin theory argues that Jesus had an identical twin brother nobody knew about, who took Jesus' place on the cross. However, if this were true, nobody who believes the twin theory should claim to know about it. Intellectuals must likewise reject the twin theory because it ignores the historical evidence surrounding Mary, Jesus' mother, being at Jesus' crucifixion and her knowing which of her Children was on the cross. This theory also lacks an explanation for the empty tomb, a fact recognized by the Jews who murdered Him. Beyond this, Mary's family would have had to have kept the child hidden with the express purpose of letting him take Jesus' place on the cross 30 years later, an event they could not have predicted. Finally, this view fails to explain where Jesus ran off to after making His final appearances to the world.

#### Wrong tomb theory:

Others argue that the Apostles and the women close to Jesus visited the wrong tomb and drew radical conclusions about his resurrection. This ignores the fact that Jesus' mother, according to the texts, was at the tomb when Jesus was buried. Second, Pilate set Roman guards to watch over the tomb. Third, it does not explain why the Jews of the time, who had Him murdered, recognized the empty tomb.

#### Did Jesus rise again:

So, did Jesus rise again? The gospels and epistles claim that Jesus appeared to individuals, small groups (such as the Apostles), and large parties (500 at once in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8). Jesus reportedly appeared to both friends and foes. Among these foes were James, Jesus' brother, who was publicly an unbeliever of Jesus, and Paul, who persecuted the Church and pursued Christians specifically on his manhunts. This means we can discard two of the

arguments commonly circulating the internet that deny Christ's resurrection. The first is the legend hypothesis. The Second is the hallucination hypothesis.

The legend hypothesis claims that Jesus resurrected is a theory that developed several decades after Jesus' life. However, not only does this fail to explain the conversions of men like Paul and James, it makes no recognition of when 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 was written.

This portion of Scripture reads: "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" (1 Corinthians 15:3-8 ESV)

This doctrine established in Paul's letter to Corinth affirms Jesus' death and resurrection. Here are what non-Christian scholars have to say about this portion of scripture:

"This tradition, we can be entirely confident, was formulated as tradition within months of Jesus' death." – James D.G. Dunn

"Paul 'received' the tradition- that is, he was taught it at his conversion- perhaps two years after Jesus' death." – Michael Goulder

"The elements in the tradition are to be dated to the first two years after the crucifixion of Jesus." – Gerd Lüdemann

"(The creed was established) within two or three years at most." – Robert Funk and the Jesus Seminar

It is widely accepted in the scholarly world that the creed found in this text was written just after Jesus' death.

The hallucination hypothesis states that Jesus' disciples hallucinated the resurrection events. This fails because a hallucination is an event within the mind of an individual. If I were to induce acid in a public setting such as a restaurant, no other person in the restaurant would see what I saw. The pursuers of this argument go so far as to say that those who claim to see Jesus had this hallucination brought forth by their minds because of grief. Not only do most people who lose loved ones not see them in their daily lives afterwards, no matter the grief they endure, they certainly do not see loved ones together. For example, it would be an extremely odd event if a family of 7 claimed to see their deceased father. Even odder still if 500 people claimed to have seen him. Yet, this narrative is faulty for a plethora of reasons including the fact that it fails to account for the empty tomb and that Paul was not a friend of Jesus; but rather an enemy of the Church. He would not be grieved at the death of the teacher of the Christians whom he hunted.

The third hypothesis that does not match the story of history is that all these people lied about seeing Jesus of Nazareth risen. This ignores the fact that Paul, upon his conversion, became one of the people he had been persecuting. The murderer joined those getting murdered. James, who had publicly denied Jesus, joined His ministry. The Apostles who had abandoned Jesus during Passover and left His body to rot on a cross, returned, and proclaimed Jesus' risen to the point of martyrdom. All these men spent their lives being beaten, mocked, stoned, imprisoned, and penniless. Peter watched his own wife be crucified. Why would they do this if it were not true? Chuck Colson stated: "I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Everyone was beaten, tortured, stoned and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate embroiled 12 of

the most powerful men in the world-and they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 Apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible.”

Paul testifies in 2 Corinthians 11:24-27 of the beatings he endured: “Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.” (2 Corinthians 11:24-27 ESV)

Bart Ehrman, a skeptic and scholar, agrees that:

“We can say with complete certainty that some of his disciples at some later time insisted that... he soon appeared to them, convincing them that he had been raised from the dead.”

So, why do some skeptics deny Jesus' life after death? First, some people refuse to believe in anything beyond science as an explanation for everything. This means that they start with the premise that miracles cannot occur. If this is the case for anyone present tonight, I pray that you perk your ears to what I am about to share. If anyone here is hiding behind science to disbelieve in God, they need a reminder of what science is. Science is the study of the natural world. This field of knowledge is only rational if the universe is comprehensible. However, if the design of our universe is intelligent, science points to an intelligent creator, not away from one. Either the universe is rational because it came from a thing with a mind, or it is irrational. If one says that it is irrational as the result of an unguided explosion, they are using rational to justify their view, something the secular worldview does not account for. So again, I ask my secular scientific friends, is the universe comprehensible?

To quote Stephen Hawking, “If the rate of expansion one second after the Big Bang had been smaller by even one part in one quintillionth, the universe would have recollapsed before it ever reached the present state. Even if there is only one possible unified theory, it would still be a set of rules and equations. What is it that breathes fire into these equations and makes a universe for them to describe? The usual approach of science, of constructing a mathematical model cannot answer the questions of why there should be a universe for the model to describe and why does the universe go to all the bother of existing at all?”

Stephen Hawking admitted that atheism as a result of science was not scientific. Science does not go to any bother of explaining *why* science is. In order to come to terms with the observability of the universe, one must recognize the rationality there in, thereby acknowledging an intelligent design, and one must also grasp that if they are a rational human being, it cannot be because their brain is the result of an unprecedented and unguided explosion.

C.S. Lewis' discusses this truth remarking, “Supposing there was no intelligence behind the universe, no creative mind. In that case, nobody designed my brain for the purpose of thinking. It is merely that when the atoms inside my skull happen, for physical or chemical reasons, to arrange themselves in a certain way, this gives me, as a by-product, the sensation I call thought. But, if so, how can I trust my own thinking to be true? It's like upsetting a milk jug and hoping that the way it splashes itself will give you a map of London. But if I can't trust my own thinking, of course I can't trust the arguments leading to Atheism, and therefore have no reason to be an Atheist, or anything else. Unless I believe in God, I cannot believe in thought: so I can never use thought to disbelieve in God.”

Finally, some people reject the resurrection simply because they do not want to wrestle with the implications of a risen Christ. However, denial of reality does not make one exempt

from it and an untreated wound can kill a man. If Jesus is Lord and Savior, making yourself lord, or proclaiming something else as your savior, is equivalent to challenging His rule and rejecting His help.

Outro:

I know this because, for the first 17 years of my life, I was an enemy of God. It took me running out of gas and realizing just how broken I was, to let God fill me and make me whole. God claims to be love, truth, forgiving, just, and merciful. I can tell you not only from the evidence, but from experience, that all the promises of God find their yes in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. Pastor William Jensen will be speaking next, and he will go into greater detail about God's call for our lives. He graduated from Western with a bachelor's degree in industrial technology and then later went on to seminary at Concordia in St. Louis. He has been both a great friend and mentor to Karalin and I, spending much time with us on the doctrine of justification by faith and I am as excited as I am confident in what he will proclaim. Therefore, I will only say, that now is the time to lay down your weapons and receive the One who sent His Son on your behalf. Thank you.