

Theme: There is strong historical evidence pointing to the fact that Jesus died and was physically raised from the dead on the third day.

## I. Intro - Questioning Jesus

- A. This year April Fools Day and Easter on the same day
- B. Some claim this is good - faith is blind and foolish
- C. Faith is not blind, it does not shy from tough questions
- D. In this series we will examine six of these questions
- E. Today we begin with the most important question - did the resurrection really happen?

## II. The Question of the Resurrection

- A. Background - questions in Corinth
  - 1. Some people were doubting & distorting the Gospel
  - 2. One of the areas questioned was the resurrection
  - 3. Interestingly in responding Paul answers many of the questions people ask today!
- B. Evidence for the resurrection
  - 1. Jesus was really dead - not just passed out  
For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that **Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,** <sup>4</sup> **that he was buried...** <sup>1</sup> Corinthians 15:3–4
    - a. The early church is clear - Jesus really died & buried
    - b. The whole Gospel is built on the fact of His death
    - c. We have eyewitness testimony that Jesus was dead

The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. <sup>33</sup> But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup> Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. John 19:32–34

- a. The Roman soldiers tested and found Jesus dead
  - b. They shoved a spear in His side to ensure this
  - c. John witnessed this personally - Jesus was dead
  - d. Modern medical research agrees the eyewitness testimony points to someone who was really dead
  - e. Interestingly no contemporaries denied Jesus died
  - f. The idea is also totally implausible
    - 1. The soldiers mistaken & then the spear did not kill?
    - 2. How did Jesus get out of the tight wrappings? Move the stone? Survive after the blood loss, walk on pierced feet?
    - 3. No one could have mistaken a beaten, crucified man for a resurrected body!
  - g. It is quite clear that Jesus actually died
- 2. The tomb was empty on Sunday morning that he was buried, that **he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,** 1 Corinthians 15:4
    - a. Paul is clear - Jesus was raised from the dead
    - b. This is the whole point of this chapter - resurrection
    - c. This is central in all sermons in the book of Acts
    - d. Enemies of Christians admitted the tomb was empty

- e. If they had Jesus' body - just produce it!
  - f. Some tried to state disciples had stolen the body
    - 1. The tomb was guarded by Roman soldiers
    - 2. The disciples had been afraid and fled - why would they suddenly be bold?
    - 3. How would the soldiers know who took the body if they were asleep?
    - 4. Why were the Roman soldiers not put to death - the penalty in such cases if they allowed the body to be stolen (see Matthew 28:11-15)
    - 5. The apostles later died for their belief in the resurrection - men may die for a false belief, but they will not die for what they know to be a lie!
  - g. No logical explanation for the empty tomb has been given
3. There were many eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus - including skeptics and enemies and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup> and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. 1 Cor 15:5-8
- a. Paul's argument is not what he believed but what many people saw - this is not 'blind faith'!
  - b. These are all early eyewitnesses - not years later
  - c. A LOT of eyewitnesses - more than 500!
  - d. Almost all of these people were still alive and could be questioned
  - e. The New Testament records all of this - and is written in the lifetime of the eyewitnesses
- f. Appearances happened at many places and times
  - g. Appearances happened to a large group at once - hallucination/personal desire is ruled out
  - h. None of the eyewitnesses expected the resurrection - and most refused to believe reports of others until they witnessed Jesus themselves (see the Gospels)
  - i. Paul had killed Christians for claiming Jesus was raised!  
For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 1 Corinthians 15:9
4. The lives, message, and deaths of the apostles  
And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. <sup>15</sup> More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised... <sup>19</sup> If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. 1 Corinthians 15:14-15, 19
- a. Paul bases EVERYTHING on the resurrection
  - b. If Jesus is dead - faith is useless, apostles are liars
  - c. Apart from the resurrection, the early believers were fools
  - d. The apostles suffered and were martyred for proclaiming the resurrection - yet not one recanted!
  - e. The scared group became brave martyrs, unwilling to recant their belief in the resurrection
  - f. Paul went from a persecutor to a martyr - all because he saw the risen Jesus
  - g. There is no other explanation for this change than that the resurrection is true!

- C. Conclusion: the evidence points to the fact of the resurrection
1. The death of Jesus is a well attested historical fact
  2. The only reasonable explanation for the empty tomb is the resurrection
  3. There are many eyewitnesses to the resurrection who give credible testimony
  4. The apostles, including Paul, were radically changed and were willing to be martyred for their belief that Jesus had actually been raised from the dead.
- D. This is why Lee Strobel, a journalist for the Chicago Tribune who set out to refute the claims of Christianity was actually converted as he spent 2 years researching the actual evidence.

### III. Applying the Word

- A. Do I see that faith is not “blind” or the opposite of “facts”?
1. This is how skeptics want to define faith
  2. This is not what faith means in Scripture, nor what it ever meant before
  3. Faith certainly goes beyond facts and evidence, but it is not in any way opposed to them
  4. The idea that Christianity is built upon “blind faith” and that Christians are living in fantasy and avoiding the evidence is a lie
  5. Throughout this series we encourage you to look at the questions and answers, to think!

- B. Have I considered the critical question of the resurrection?
1. This is really THE central question and issue
  2. As Paul said, if Jesus is not raised our faith is futile - empty of any real meaning
  3. But if Jesus is raised from the dead, then we must consider His claims
  4. What is really “blind faith” is choosing to not consider the strong evidence for the resurrection!
  5. We urge you - consider the evidence Paul lays out - and respond!
  6. It is not enough to be “open” - this calls for clear, radical commitment!  
Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you **received** and on which you have **taken your stand**. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you **hold firmly** to the word I preached to you. 1 Corinthians 15:1–2
  7. We urge you - commit yourself to Jesus Who lived, died and was raised for our salvation!

### C. The Lord’s Supper

1. For those who believe, Jesus has given this meal
2. It looks back to His death for us
3. It looks forward to His return - for the Risen One is ascended and will return
4. Eat in thanks for His death and resurrection
5. Eat in hope, looking for His glorious return!

## The Question of the Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

April 1, 2018

Communion

Ephesians 1:17-20 paraphrase

Teaching keywords: Easter; resurrection; apologetics

they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.  
1 Corinthians 15:1–11

May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ fill you with His Spirit,  
so that you may know the hope to which He has called you,  
experience the riches of His glorious inheritance,  
and live in the power that raised Jesus from the dead  
and seated Him in heaven,  
from where He now reigns as Lord of all!  
(Based on Ephesians 1:17-20)

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup> By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup> and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. <sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them — yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. <sup>11</sup> Whether, then, it was I or