



IS IT TRUE?

The resurrection of Jesus

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DayOne





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1. The resurrection of Jesus — does it matter?

The fact that you have opened this little booklet may mean that you have at least some interest in the possibility that Jesus really did rise from the dead. Or you may simply want material to debunk the whole impossible story.

Either way, a helpful suggestion is that first you read the last chapter of the Gospel of Luke. This will give you the fullest account covering most of the events. You will find it at the end of this booklet on pages 40–43.

If you don't have time for that, you can pitch straight into this booklet and you will pick up some of the events as you go along.

2.....

The fact that Jesus lived in Judea and was crucified by the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate around AD 33 is so well supported in history that it should not need defending—though we do this in the next chapter!

It is equally a matter of history that all his disciples believed that Jesus had risen from the dead and they claimed they had personally seen him.

But did he really rise? Or is there another explanation?

If the resurrection of Jesus is true, then it is the most astounding and significant miracle ever recorded in the history of the human race. There are no accounts of a resurrection from the dead so fully reported, tested and confirmed as that of Jesus.

By the end of this small booklet, you will have to decide whether the evidence is so strong that you must take the implications of it seriously.





This would mean that:

- His recorded miracles and the claims that he made for himself must also be accepted.
- The entire Christian faith is based on the firm evidence of the resurrection of Jesus as a real event in history.
- To ignore this astounding miracle and its implications is the gravest mistake anyone can make in this life. The last chapter will tell you why. But don't start there!

By all means begin as a sceptic, but be ready to let your prejudice or doubts fall away.

Before we outline the evidence for the resurrection, we must settle a few other matters of importance.





2. Was Jesus a real person?

There is not a single text in Jewish or pagan literature in the first few centuries that ever denies the historical reality of Jesus.

Yet, oddly, there are some people today who still believe that there never was such a person in history as Jesus of Nazareth. However, no reputable scholar, using the accepted methods of historical research, denies the reality of Jesus.

In the next chapter we will look at how reliable the four Gospels are, but for now, put the Bible on one side and consider the historical evidence.

Tacitus was born about twenty years after Jesus died. He is accepted as a reliable Roman historian. He wrote about the persecution of what he called ‘Chrestians’ (his spelling) and added, ‘The founder of this name Christus, had been executed in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate...’.

Josephus was a Jew born only four years after the crucifixion of Jesus. He is recognised as a trustworthy witness to the history of the times. He introduced James, who he claims was stoned to death on the orders of the high priest Ananus, as ‘The brother of Jesus, who was called Christ’. No one doubts that Josephus wrote this and that it is a reference to Jesus.

The Jewish Talmud is a collection of discussions and wise sayings of the rabbis from the fourth century. There are references to Christ that confirm his historical existence.





Serapion was a Stoic philosopher from Syria sometime after AD 70. He clearly referred to the historical Jesus in his writing.

Celsus was a Roman philosopher around the year AD 178. He was aggressively opposed to the Christian faith and gave his own ‘spin’ on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. But he never questioned that Jesus really did live. It would have been in his interest to debunk Jesus as a fable.



Tiberius became Emperor of the mighty Roman empire in AD 14 on the death of his stepfather, Caesar Augustus. Therefore, he was Emperor throughout the adult life of Jesus

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Lucian of Samosata was a second century Greek who ridiculed the Christians and Jesus Christ, but he never denied his existence.

It is pointless to waste time denying that Jesus lived. It is far more sensible to ask the question: Who was he?





3. Are the four Gospels reliable?

The four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, were completed very soon after the death and resurrection of Jesus. But are they a reliable evidence for the life of Jesus?

It is an accepted legal principle that a document has the right to be taken as true and accurate unless it is proved otherwise. It is also accepted in law that if a name is attached to that document then that is to be taken as the author unless it is proved false.

So, in a court of law, evidence would have to be shown that these four men were not the writers of the Gospels and that they were unreliable witnesses. *Evidence* would be demanded, not wishful thinking.

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Without exception, for the first four hundred years all the mainstream church leaders across the Roman Empire, and beyond, never challenged the names attached to the four Gospels. Only these four Gospels were accepted as reliable records for the life of Jesus.

- Every available manuscript of the first Gospel includes the title ‘according to **Matthew**’.
- The early church leaders who referred to **Mark’s** Gospel, from AD 125 to 400 agreed that John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas and a junior companion of the apostles Paul and Peter, was the author of this Gospel under Peter’s direction.



- Like Matthew and Mark, no other name for authorship has ever been attached to the Gospel of **Luke**. Luke was not one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, but he was a travelling companion of Paul and the author of the Acts of the Apostles.
- **John** was one of Jesus' disciples. The writer of John's Gospel claims to be an eyewitness (John 1:14, 19:35, 21:24–25). All the early church leaders accepted John as the author. Today only the most extreme critics deny this, but they offer no positive evidence.

The four Gospels are full of historical details such as people, places and events. Most of these are known from texts and inscriptions outside the Bible. Nothing has ever shown the writers to be untrustworthy or deceivers.

Remember, a writer has a right to be taken as reliable unless *evidence* is shown to the contrary.

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4. Did the Jews expect Jesus?

From the very beginning of their history, Israel looked forward to the coming of one who would rescue them from their enemies. He was called the *Messiah*. The Greek word is *Christ*, which means 'anointed One'.

You will need to open a Bible for this, so that you can check the references. Use the contents page at the front of the Bible to find where the books are.

In Genesis 3:15, God gave a promise that one day a deliverer would come who would crush Satan—the great enemy and deceiver of the human race. The fulfilment of this promise runs like an unbroken thread throughout the Old Testament. Here are just a few examples.

- 1500BC. In Deuteronomy 18:15, God promised a special person in the future like **Moses**. In Acts 3:22 and 7:37, Peter made it clear that this '*prophet*' was Jesus Christ. See also John 1:45.
- 1000BC. In Psalm 22 (read it alongside Matthew 27), **David** wrote of the details of the life and death of the Messiah.
- 750BC. **Micah** even prophesied the exact birthplace of the Messiah (Micah 5:2 compare Matthew 2:1–6). Ancient Jewish commentators all accepted this passage as a prophecy of their coming Messiah.
- 700BC. In **Isaiah** 53:3–9 the prophet described the sufferings of the Messiah. Compare with Acts 8:35. The Jews had always understood that this passage referred to their Messiah

- 500 BC. **Zechariah** prophesied the events of Palm Sunday when Jesus rode on a donkey into Jerusalem (Zechariah 9:9 compare Matthew 21:1–11). The ancient Jews always believed this referred to their Messiah.
- 450 BC. In the last book of the Old Testament, **Malachi** prophesied that a second ‘Elijah’ would come as the herald of the Messiah—this was John the Baptist (Malachi 3:1 and 4:5 compare with Matthew 11:10–15).

Some have calculated that there are more than three hundred prophecies in the Old Testament that refer to Christ, and that twenty-nine of them were fulfilled in the final twenty-four hours of his life. Here are a few to illustrate this:

Old Testament reference	Prophecy	New Testament reference
Zechariah 13:7	Deserted by his disciples	Mark 14:50
Psalms 35:11	Falsely accused	Matthew 26:60
Isaiah 50:6	Brutally beaten	Matthew 26:67
Isaiah 53:7	He would not retaliate	Matthew 27:14
Isaiah 53:12	Executed with criminals	Matthew 27:38; Luke 23:32
Isaiah 53:9	Buried in a rich man’s tomb	Matthew 27:59
Psalms 22:16; Zechariah 12:10	His hands and feet pierced	John 19:34
Psalms 34:20	Yet his bones not broken	John 19:33
Psalms 22:18	They would gamble for his clothes.	John 19:23-24

If you serve within HMPPS and would like a free copy of these booklets or the study called *The Coming Messiah* (which shows the prophecies concerning Jesus in the Old Testament), please contact CPR at PO Box 61685, London SE9 3BL

5. Who was Jesus?

The claims that Jesus made about himself are either true or false. He was either God, a fool or a blasphemous liar.

In chapter 3 we saw that it is an accepted legal principle that a document has the right to be taken as true and accurate unless it is proved otherwise.

- Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. The Jews asked, *‘Are you then the Son of God?’* Jesus replied, *‘You are right in saying I am’* (Luke 22:70). Elsewhere, Jesus spoke of God as his Father and himself as God’s Son. For this the Jews wanted to stone him because *‘He was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.’* Immediately Jesus referred to himself as the ‘Son’ of God no less than eight times (John 5:16–27).
- Jesus claimed that he should be honoured just as God is: *‘That all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father’* (John 5:23).
- Jesus claimed to be without sin: *‘Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?’* (John 8:46).
- Jesus claimed to forgive sin: Something the Jews acknowledged that only God can do (Mark 2:7).
- Jesus claimed to be before the time of Abraham. To the Jews he said, *‘before Abraham was born, I am’* (John 8:56–59). In that last phrase, *‘I am’*, the Jews knew that he was making himself equal with God because it was the name of God given to Moses in Exodus 3:14, *‘This is what you are to say to the Israelites: “I AM has sent me to you.”’*



- Jesus claimed to be the only way to eternal life: *‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’* (John 14:6).
- Jesus claimed that he would be responsible for a final resurrection of all who believe in him: *‘No-one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day’* (John 6:44).
- Jesus claimed that his miracles were signs of who he was: *‘Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake’* (John 14:11).

God the Father confirmed all this: *‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!’* (Matthew 17:5).

Jesus was much more than a good man and a great moral teacher—we have to decide.

The renowned literary scholar, C S Lewis, once wrote,

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Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

(from *Mere Christianity*)



6. What was Jesus' message?

Jesus came to show us what God is like, what we should be like, the importance of obeying him and how we can be brought into a right relationship with God.

Jesus showed us what God is like

When Jesus made the claim, *'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father'* (John 14:9), he was claiming that his character, his actions and his teaching, perfectly reflected what God is like. No one has ever lived like Jesus did.

Jesus showed us what we should be like

Because he is God, Jesus' life and teaching were a model for us to follow: *'Why do you call me, "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I say?'* He then told a parable of two men: one built his life obeying Jesus and lived securely; the other did not obey, and his life finally collapsed (Luke 6:46-49).

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Jesus' disciple Peter later wrote that Jesus left us an example *'that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth'* (1 Peter 2:21).

When we understand the perfect character, life and teaching of Jesus, we realise how unlike him we all are.

Jesus showed us the importance of obeying him

The serious thing is that at the end of time, the whole world will be divided into those who obey and trust Jesus and those who do not: *'When the Son of Man comes in his glory ... all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another'* (Matthew 25:31-32).



God will say to the disobedient: *'Depart from me, I never knew you'* (Matthew 25:41).

Jesus showed us how we can be brought into a right relationship (reconciled) to God

Jesus claimed that only through him could anyone find God: *'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'* (John 14:6).

And he promised: *'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life'* (John 3:16).

Jesus explained why he was here: *'The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'* (Mark 10:45).

His death on the cross paid the cost for those who believe in him to be reconciled to God.



Jesus said, 'Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled' (Mark 14:49)



7. Why did the Romans use crucifixion?

Crucifixion was deliberately both painful and shameful. For the Romans it was a public execution kept for slaves, the worst of criminals—and a warning to their enemies.

Crucifixion had been practised for centuries. Alexander the Great crucified 2,000 after the siege of Tyre in 332 BC. After the defeat of the slave-gladicator revolt under Spartacus in 71 BC, Rome crucified 6,000 along the Appian Way. In one night during the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70 the Roman General, Titus, crucified 500 Jews around the city wall as a warning to the defenders. The Romans used the Latin word, *crucifixio*, literally ‘to fix to a cross’.

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No Roman citizen or woman would be crucified by the Romans. It was intended to be an agonising and humiliating way to kill a man.

‘Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head’ (John 19:1–3)



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The condemned prisoner would often be flayed with a lead-tipped whip until the back was torn and bleeding. This happened to Jesus, and the soldiers mockingly twisted a wreath from a thorn bush and jammed it on his head (Matthew 27:26–31). A prisoner carried his cross-beam of the cross, but Jesus was too weak, so Simon of Cyrene was forced to do this. At the cross, the prisoner was offered a drink to deaden pain; Jesus refused it (Matthew 27:32–34). The feet would be nailed to the upright and the arms either nailed or tied to the cross.

The only way a prisoner could breathe was to lift the chest up by pressing down on the nailed feet—a fearfully painful effort. When the chest muscles weakened, the prisoner, unable to draw breath, died by suffocation. A few lasted days in this agony.

The Jews requested the bodies be taken down before the Jewish Sabbath, so the soldiers broke the legs of the two criminals beside Jesus and they suffocated immediately (John 19:31–34). Jesus was already dead, so a soldier simply thrust a spear into his side. Pilate, the Roman Governor of Jerusalem, expressed surprise that Jesus had died so soon and demanded that the centurion report to him in person (Mark 15:44–45).

Under the watchful eye of the execution squad, the Governor could allow the body to be handed over to family or friends (Matthew 27:57–58). Otherwise the body would be thrown into a common pit.



8. Did Jesus really die on the cross?

No one can seriously claim that Jesus was not crucified by the Romans around the year AD 33, but some still suggest that he did not really die. Is that possible?

- A false teaching by very early splinter groups of the early Church (they were known as Gnostics), suggested that someone else took his place.

Check that out: Were the Roman authorities so bungling that they somehow crucified the wrong man?

- It has even been suggested that the Jews moved the body to stop it being ‘stolen’ by the disciples. Or the disciples went to the wrong tomb.

Check that out: The Jews never produced the body, or pointed to the correct tomb, in order to destroy the whole story.

- Some people think that his disciples stole the body, disposed of it, and people had hallucinations that they saw Jesus.

Check that out: Individuals may have hallucinations, but crowds don’t.

- Some people still suggest that Jesus was alive when he was taken from the cross and that he recovered in the cold tomb. Then the disciples stole his wounded body, nursed him back to health, hid him away and planned a conspiracy of a resurrection.

Check that out: In all recorded history, there is only one known account of anyone surviving crucifixion. The Jewish historian, Josephus, tells of three men taken down on the orders of Emperor Titus and cared for by Roman surgeons.



Only one survived. The crucifixion squad—a centurion and four soldiers—were trained for this gruesome job. They knew when a man was dead. They also knew they would be executed if they made a mistake.

When the soldier pushed his spear into Jesus' side, the flow of blood and water medically proved that his heart had been pierced because the *pericardium*, a sac of water surrounding and protecting the heart, would release blood and water (John 19:34). Can you really believe that his body was stolen, nursed back to full health in a day or two, and was able to convince hundreds that he had risen from the dead? And then he completely disappeared!

- There are a few people who suggest that after he survived the crucifixion, Jesus went to India (or somewhere else).

Check that out: The stories of Jesus in India (or elsewhere) have long ago been discredited by all serious historians.

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9. Was Jesus in the tomb for 'three days and three nights'?

Friday afternoon to Sunday morning may be counted as three days, but how can it be three nights?

Jesus had plainly claimed: *'As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth'* (Matthew 12:40). He used the story of the prophet Jonah in the Old Testament as an illustration of his own resurrection. Jonah was swallowed by a huge fish and *'after three days and three nights'* was vomited onto the dry land (Jonah 1:17).





Was Jesus mistaken in his timing?

Check that out:

The Jews counted part of a day or night as a whole day or night. Much as we do today. If you spend from Friday lunchtime to Sunday lunch time at a friend's house, you might say you had been there for three days. On at least four separate occasions Jesus prophesied that he would rise again 'on the third day' (Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Luke 9:22). The angel and Jesus confirmed this after his resurrection (Luke 24:7,46). He therefore knew that the 'three days' would not be three full days.

But what of the 'three nights'? You would not have said you spent three nights at your friend's house.

Eleazar ben Azariah, a Jewish Rabbi writing around AD 100, claimed that 'A day and night are an *Obah* [a portion of time] and the portion of an *Obah* is as the whole of it' (*Jerusalem Talmud*, Shabbath IX, 3).

The Jews counted their day as beginning at sunset. Therefore, the Friday of the crucifixion actually began on Thursday evening. Thus, according to Rabbi Eleazar, from Friday to Sunday would be three *Obahs* or three days and nights. Maybe odd for us, but not for a first century Jew.

We are now ready to look at the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.

Facing page: The Garden Tomb in Jerusalem is a rock-cut tomb discovered in 1867. It may be close to the burial site of Jesus





10. Evidence 1: Jesus had to rise from the dead

‘God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.’

When the apostle Peter was preaching in Jerusalem in the year AD 33 he gave this as the most important evidence for the resurrection of Jesus: *‘it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him’* (Acts 2:24).

Why was it impossible?

- **Because of who he was.**

Jesus was not merely a great teacher and healer.

Look back at chapter 5. Paul wrote in Colossians 2:9

‘In Christ all the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form.’

When the disciples asked Jesus: *‘Show us the Father and that will be enough for us’*, he replied, *‘Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father’* (John 14:8–9).

That was a claim to be equal with God the Father.

Because he was God, death could not finally defeat him.

- **Because of what he promised.**

Jesus promised that he would rise again: *‘The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.*

They will kill him, and after three days he will rise’ (Mark 9:31).

He also promised that he would return to heaven:

‘In my Father’s house are many rooms... I am going there to prepare a place for you’ (John 14:2).

He promised that one day he would come back to take all those who believe in him to be with him: *‘I will*



come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am’ (John 14:3).

He had to rise from the dead to keep these promises. They are either empty promises and cruel lies—or else they are true.

- **Because of the promises in the Old Testament.**

Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth *‘He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures’* (1 Corinthians 15:3). In his sermon in Jerusalem, Peter quoted from Psalm 16 in the Old Testament, written a thousand years before Jesus was born, that God would not abandon Jesus to the grave: *‘nor will you let your Holy One see decay’*. Peter added that the psalmist, King David, *‘spoke of the resurrection of Christ’*.

- **Because of why he came.**

Jesus came to defeat death. On many occasions during his life here Jesus promised to give eternal life to all who trust in him: *‘I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand’* (John 10:28). This also would be an empty promise if death finally defeated him.

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*The Scriptures
of the Old
Testament
promised that
the Jewish
Messiah
would not be
destroyed
by death*





11. Evidence 2: Jesus planned to die and rise again

Jesus knew exactly how he would die and that he would rise again!

Early in his ministry, Jesus turned the market traders out of the temple in Jerusalem because they were cheating the people. When the leaders demanded a miracle to show his authority for doing this, here was his reply:

‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days’ (John 2:19).

The Jews thought he was referring to the physical building in Jerusalem, but John adds that ‘the temple he had spoken of was his body’ (John 2:21).

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A year or so later at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus made this even clearer to his disciples:

‘From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life’ (Matthew 16:21).

Shortly after, in Galilee, Jesus repeated this:

‘The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life’ (Matthew 17:23).

Later, when Jesus and his disciples were on their way to Jerusalem, he again warned:

‘We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to






the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!’ (Matthew 20:19).

Each time, Jesus emphasised that it would be on the third day that he would rise from the dead, and each time, the disciples could not believe this would happen—and they said so. However, after the death and resurrection of Jesus the angels at the tomb reminded the women of these statements by Jesus (Luke 24:7), and Jesus himself reminded the disciples (Luke 24:46).

Jesus knew exactly how his end would come and that he would rise again on the third day.



Part of the temple and its precincts as it would have appeared to Jesus and his disciples. From a 1:50 scale model of the temple in Israel's Holocaust Museum. The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD70



12. Evidence 3: Women saw the risen Jesus first

According to all the four Gospels, the first people to see Jesus after his resurrection were women!

Check it out: Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-8; John 20:1-2.

There can be no doubt about it. All the Gospels claim that it was women who first saw Jesus alive. Since the Gospel details are different (not contradictory), they obviously didn't each copy from the same source. They are independent of each other.

So, why is this important?

Jesus treated women and men with equal honour and dignity. But he did so in a strongly male-dominated society. In his day the Jewish leaders considered women to be inferior to men. Her word was not as reliable or as important as that of a man. A man could divorce his wife, but she couldn't divorce him.

Reflecting the general attitude of the Pharisees and Scribes in the first century AD, the Jewish historian Josephus wrote: 'Let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex'. Whilst this was not the attitude of all, it was generally the rule of many. The same was broadly true for Roman and Greek society at this time. A woman's word was certainly not as important as that of a man.

Check that out: If you were making up the account of the resurrection, to give your 'invented' story more credibility, it would not be clever to allow women as the first to testify to the resurrection. It would play into the





hands of doubters to mock: ‘Well, you expect women to believe that sort of thing.’

That’s actually what happened. Luke records that when the women told their story of an empty tomb to the disciples ‘*They did not believe the women because their words seemed to them like nonsense*’ (Luke 24:11).

If it didn’t happen this way, why would four independent writers make up the story of women being the first to see the risen Jesus?

If you lived in the time of Jesus, surely you would choose one of the male disciples like Peter or John. They would be considered more reliable.



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‘On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus’ (Luke 24:1–2)

13. Evidence 4: Eyewitness of the resurrection

'The number of independent witnesses confirms the greater likelihood of the accuracy of their report.'

This was the conclusion of Professor Simon Greenleaf, one of the founders of the Harvard Law School in America who wrote a three volume *Treatise on the Law of Evidence* (1842–1853).

Let's apply that to the four Gospel writers.

We have seen that all four were clear that Jesus really died on the cross (see chapter 8) and that the women were the first to see Jesus (see chapter 12).

They were equally certain that Jesus rose again from the dead.

- Not one of them expected that Jesus would rise from the dead, even though he had promised this (Mark 16:13–14; Luke 24:11, 36–47; John 20:24–25).
- Thomas was not prepared to believe until he had personally seen Jesus (John 20:24–29).
- All the disciples believed Jesus was resurrected and they were ready to die for this.
- Both Matthew and John were disciples of Jesus and therefore were eyewitnesses of their report.
- In his Gospel, John refers to himself when he wrote, *'The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe'* (John 19:35).



- Luke claimed that he was aware of accounts of the life of Christ from those who *‘from the first were eyewitnesses’* and that his own record was *‘carefully investigated’* (Luke 1:1–3).
- Mark wrote his Gospel under Peter’s careful oversight.
- Before his own martyr death around AD 64, Peter left on record: *‘We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty’* (2 Peter 1:16).
- These men show themselves to be men of total honesty and faultless morality. They were not liars or con men.



‘Jesus said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”’
(John 20:27–28)





14. Evidence 5: There are no contradictions in the resurrection accounts

In any court of law, differences are only contradictions if they are proved to be completely conflicting. The differences in the various resurrection accounts are not contradictory.

It may not be possible to reconstruct an exact order of events, but a little thought and study shows that nothing in the four accounts contradict each other. Perhaps this is how the events unfolded on that momentous resurrection Sunday.

- The women followed Joseph and Nicodemus to see where the body of Jesus was laid (Luke 23:55–56).
- They returned early on Sunday morning to anoint the body as was customary. The guards had fled and the tomb was empty (Matthew 28:11–15; John 20:8). Two angels told them to return to the disciples with the good news (Luke 24:1–8). On their way they told no one of their experience (Mark 16:8).
- The disciples did not believe the women (Luke 24:9–11), but Mary Magdalene persuaded Peter and John who ran to the tomb to confirm the story of an empty tomb (John 20:1–8).
- Mary Magdalene must have lingered, because she alone was the first to meet Jesus (John 20:10–18).
- On the same day, two followers of Jesus were walking home from Jerusalem to Emmaus (about 15 km or 9 mi) when Jesus joined them. At first they did not recognise



him. They immediately returned to Jerusalem and reported to the gathered disciples that they had seen Jesus (Mark 16:12–14; Luke 24:13–35).

- Towards the evening Jesus appeared to them all; although Thomas was absent (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36; John 20:19–20).
- Ten days later Thomas was with the rest when Jesus came to them again (John 20:24–31).
- Finally he appeared to the disciples in Galilee (Matthew 28:16–20; John 21:1–25).

We clearly do not have every detail of all that went on in those early hours of Sunday morning. These were times of great emotion. The women were *'trembling and bewildered'* (Mark 16:8), and the disciples had locked themselves in for *'fear of the Jews'* (John 20:19). But one thing is clear: they were all sure that they had met with the risen Jesus.

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The lawyer, Simon Greenleaf, concluded, 'The agreement of their evidence significantly enhances the truth of their record.'

When Mary Magdalene brought her message to Peter and John, they ran to the tomb



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15. Evidence 6: The apostle Paul believed in the resurrection

The dramatic conversion of Saul of Tarsus convinced him that Jesus was really alive.



'As Saul neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him' (Acts 9:3-5)

The story of Saul's conversion is recorded in Acts 9:1-30. He saw a brilliant light and heard a voice saying: *'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'* Saul repeated his account twice when on trial more than twenty years later (Acts 22:1-21 and 26:12-18). He was later renamed Paul. For his certainty that he knew the risen Jesus he was eventually killed under the orders of the Emperor Nero around AD 64.

In his letter to the Christians at Corinth, Paul stressed the importance of the literal resurrection of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:



- It is of *'first importance'* in the Christian faith (v.4).
- Jesus appeared to all the disciples and as many as five hundred on one occasion, most of whom were still alive at the time of writing (vv.5-7).
- Paul wrote, *'He appeared to me also'* (v.7).

Paul then outlined the significance *IF* the resurrection is a false story:

- Paul's preaching and the Christian faith are of no value (v.14).
- Paul and all the disciples are liars (v.15).
- Our sins are not forgiven because Jesus' resurrection was intended as proof that he came to forgive sin (v.17).
- All who are now dead, but who had trusted in Jesus, are also lost for ever (v.18).
- Christians are to be pitied for their vain hope (v.19).

On the other hand, *IF* Jesus really did rise from the dead:

- His resurrection is the guarantee of our resurrection (vv.20-22).
- The resurrection body for Christians will be a spiritual body (vv.42-44).
- Those who believe in Jesus will one day be changed to be like him (vv.47-49).
- Christians will enjoy life for ever, and 'death will be swallowed up in victory' (vv.53-54).

Was Paul deranged, deluded or was he declaring the truth?





16. Evidence 7: The earliest Christians all believed in the resurrection

Few of his followers expected Jesus to rise from the dead. It is the more amazing that so many were convinced and ready to die for their belief.

Look back at Evidence 2 in chapter 11. Throughout his three years of ministry Jesus warned his disciples again and again how he would die—and each time he promised that he would rise on the third day. But almost nobody believed him.

At first *‘Even his own brothers did not believe in him’* (John 7:5). However, the Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us that James ‘the brother of Jesus who is called Christ’ was later stoned to death on the orders of the High Priest for his preaching about the risen Jesus. What made James change his mind? The apostle Paul wrote, *‘Then he appeared to James’* (1 Corinthians 15:7).

After Jesus’ death, the disciples were locked in an upper room through fear of the Jewish authorities (John 20:19), and the two on the road to Emmaus were miserable because the crucifixion dashed all their hopes (Luke 24:17,21).

But within days of his death the disciples were boldly preaching that Jesus is alive (Acts 2:22–24; 3:15; 4:10).

There is no record, anywhere, of any of them changing their story. They were ready to die for their claim—and most did.

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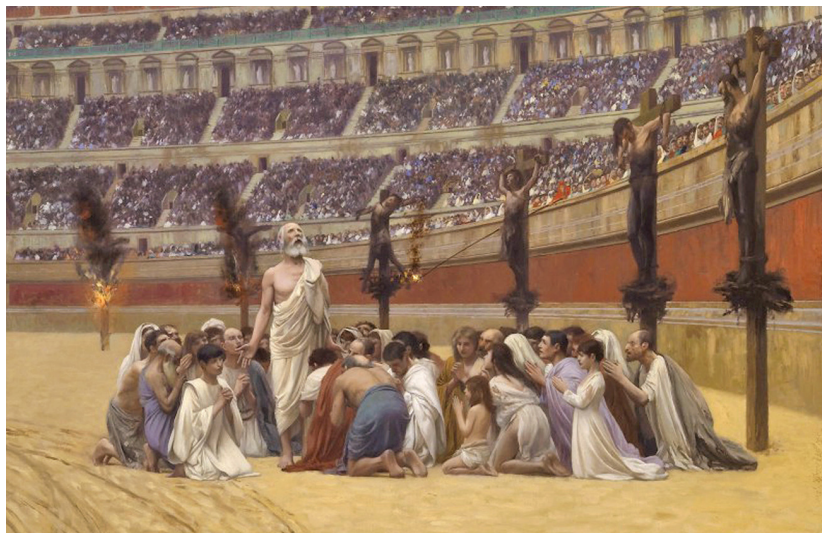
If you want to start a new religion, you would not invent an unbelievable story of a resurrected criminal! There has to be more in the Christian message than a myth.

Within a few days, thousands believed in Jesus as a risen Saviour (Acts 4:4). Over the next twenty years, the message spread across the Roman empire and beyond. From the later years of the first century until early in the fourth century, Christians were thrown into the Roman arena to be mauled by wild animals, and others were set alight on crosses.

Across the world today thousands of Christians suffer cruel persecution because they believe in Jesus as a risen Saviour. They are thrown out of their families, imprisoned and even tortured to death.

The Christians' Last Prayer.
(A detail from Jean-Léon Gérôme completed in 1883)

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17. Evidence 8: The resurrection has been rigorously tested

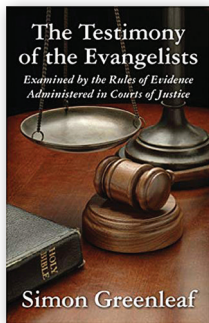
Among many others who have done the same, here are three men who examined all aspects of the resurrection in detail. They each concluded that it would stand up to scrutiny in a court of law.

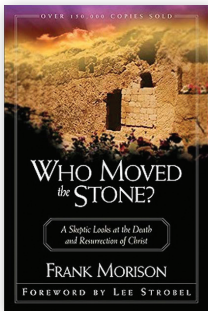
One of the founders of Harvard Law School, **Simon Greenleaf**, was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts in 1783. He was a distinguished lawyer who carefully weighed all the evidence. He concluded that the Gospel records were eyewitness accounts of the most momentous event in human history, and that it would stand in any court of law.

Greenleaf insisted that approaching the Bible does not mean ‘the surrender of the reason and judgement’ but it does mean a willingness to weigh the arguments and evidence as far as possible without prejudice or hostility. He pointed out that copies of an original document are to be accepted unless there is clear evidence that they are false. The burden of proof is with those who dispute their genuineness.

His conclusions were published in 1846 under the title: *The Testimony of the Evangelists Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice*.

Albert Henry Ross was born in Worcestershire, England, in 1881. He worked in printing and advertising and wrote a number of books under the name Frank





Morison. His best-known book *Who Moved the Stone?* was published in 1930. It was reprinted many times and is still available.

Ross was not a lawyer, although all agree that his book reads like that.

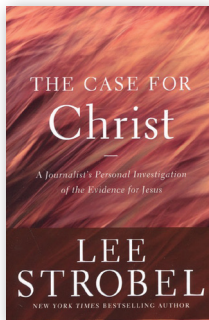
Frank Morison began his search by rejecting a resurrection miracle: ‘which on scientific grounds I held suspect.’ He examined every detail of the records in the Gospel and his conclusion was: ‘There certainly is a deep and profoundly historical basis’ for the resurrection of Jesus.

Born in Arlington Heights, Illinois in 1952, **Lee Patrick Strobel** was an award winning investigative journalist and a convinced atheist. To him the idea of God was ‘absurd’. His life was full of anger because he was always after maximum pleasure, but nothing lived up to the hype.

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Furious when his wife became a Christian, Lee examined every aspect of the resurrection accounts in order to rubbush the whole story. He interviewed experts in every field, and concluded, ‘I became personally convinced that, based on the historical evidence of the resurrection, this is actually true.’

Today Lee Strobel lectures widely on the truth of the Gospels, and a book and film was made of his story: *The Case for Christ*.





18. A verdict demanded

Everyone who reads and examines the evidence of the resurrection must come to a decision.

Let's summarize some of the main points presented in this booklet:

- There can be no doubt that Jesus was a real man of history who was crucified by the Romans around AD 33.
- His life, teaching, miracles and the final events of his death and resurrection are told by four independent writers.
- During his life, Jesus predicted how he would die and that he would rise again.
- Jesus certainly died on the cross because Roman soldiers never messed up their job of crucifying a man.
- Many individuals, groups and crowds claim they saw him alive after his crucifixion.
- If Jesus was who he claimed to be, he had to rise again.
- No one making up the story in the first century would allow women to be the first to see Jesus.
- The apostle Paul was at first a violent opposer of the Christian church yet he claimed to have met with the risen Jesus.
- Many of those who claimed to have seen Jesus, later gave their lives for their firm belief in the resurrection.



- Even today countless Christians claim that they have a personal friendship with Jesus.
- Many who rigorously tested the evidence by legal standards were convinced that it was true.

If the resurrection of Jesus is true, it is the greatest miracle in the history of the human race. There can be no natural explanation for it.

Jesus said:

'My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day' (John 6:40).

The evidence demands a response. The evidence will not go away simply by wishful thinking.

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What is your response?



Luke 24:6





19. Alive today!

The evidence speaks for itself, and it is the responsibility of every reader to respond.

To deny the evidence is hard. To ignore it, is a terrible mistake with everlasting consequences.

Jesus warned: *‘Whoever does not believe, stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son’* (John 3:18).

On the other hand, to find in Jesus the only Saviour who can take away our sin, clean up our life and our conscience, and bring us into friendship with God, is the greatest discovery anyone can make.

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The resurrection is not the end but a new beginning. The Gospels record that Jesus not only rose from the dead, but he went back into heaven. It is called the ‘ascension’. Look up Luke 24:50–52 on page 43. The ascension is no less astounding than the resurrection. If the resurrection is true, so is the ascension.

The resurrection and ascension of Jesus means that everything he taught and claimed was true. He promised: *‘God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned’* (John 3:16–18).

Because Jesus is alive today, he is only a word away. All who are sorry for their life of ignoring Jesus can





call on him and he will listen and respond. He will give a new life, a new start, and a guarantee for a new and eternal future.

If you would like to know more about the Christian faith or if you have taken that first step of commitment to Jesus, the risen Saviour, please contact one of the addresses on the back page.





Luke 24

The next four pages are the last chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. It describes the events surrounding the resurrection of Jesus.

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” ⁸ Then they remembered his words.

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⁹ When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹² Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.





¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles[a] from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

¹⁹ “What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”





25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

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33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands





and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.

⁴⁴ He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

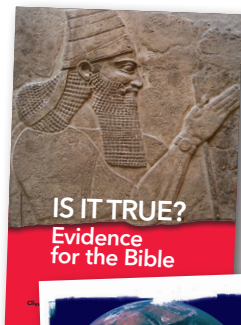
⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

⁵⁰ When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵² Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.



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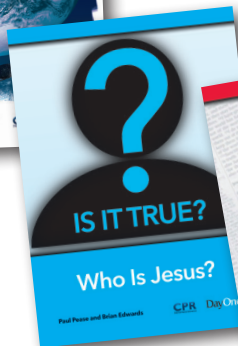
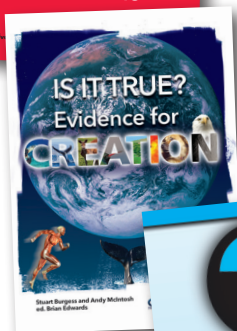
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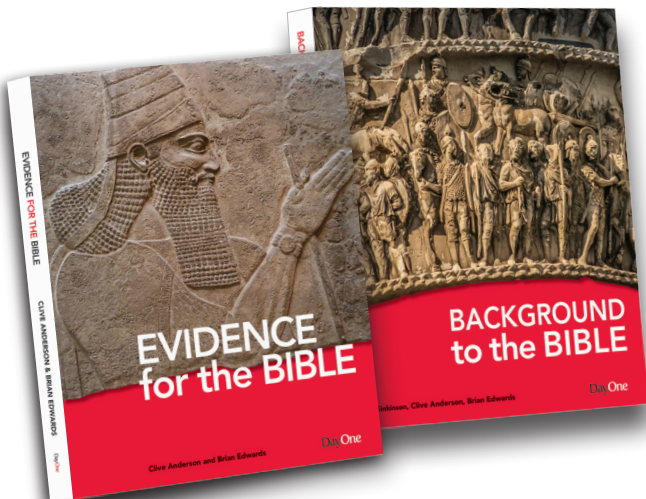
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The claim that Jesus Christ rose from the dead after three days in the grave is vital to the Christian faith. It is also the most attacked and tested event in history.

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In the New Testament, Paul said it straight: 'If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God.' Immediately Paul added, **'But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead'** (1 Corinthians 15:14–15,20).

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