

## Proofs Of Christ's Resurrection

**Scriptural, Historical, Logical Evidence**

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Now if you will, please consider this story. It is a set of circumstances that I made up but it points to something.

Hundreds of years before the event in question, not just one, but several men, living at different times and in different places—men who claimed to be prophets—predicted that a time would come, long after they were dead, sometime in the future, when an astounding miracle would occur. This miracle was to be that an actual mountain (not a mere rise in the plain, not even a hill, but an actual mountain) would move overnight from the interior of their nation into the sea off the coast. They put these predictions of theirs in writing and they were preserved for future generations and guarded very jealously so that they would not be lost.

Just before the time predicted, a man comes. He comes on the scene saying that the time for the removing of the mountain had come. It would come and it would happen very soon. And he predicts the specific time it would happen and he is very clear about it. Further this man claims not just to be a mere prophet, but the divine Being who inspired the old prophets who had made all those predictions many years before. He preaches profound truths. He collects and teaches disciples and works many healings and miracles to validate who he is and what he says.

Then on the exact day, at the exact time predicted, the mountain disappears from the landscape. And numerous eyewitnesses, many of them the divine Man's disciples, testify that a new island lies off the coast. The divine Man, though, cannot be found. But his disciples proclaim that He was right all along, He was right in everything that He said. But the people and the government do not believe them. So they persecute them and eventually execute nearly all of them.

But even though they could have saved their lives by simply recanting their ridiculous story, as it was seen about a mountain being transferred into the sea, the disciples of this divine Man refused to change their tune. Not one bit. Instead they write down their testimony in various letters and histories, and even a prophecy, all of which agree remarkably. There are no contradictions between them. And even their enemies have to admit that the mountain had disappeared one night and a new island had risen from the sea at about the same time. But they declare, hands firmly covering their ears, it was no prophesied miracle—just a natural phenomenon that they cannot yet explain!

That is the end of the story.

I think it is pretty easy for you to see through my little story and identify the Old Testament prophets, their predictions about the Messiah, the ministry of Jesus Christ, and the greatest miracle of all—His resurrection from the dead. We can also see the disciples' positive and unchanging testimony even in the face of the persecution and martyrdom. These men went to their deaths singing the same song over and over again to the men who would listen and nothing could shut them up—except death.

Of course in this story we see the willing disbelief of scholars and skeptics down through history—people of all stripes who will willingly disbelieve that such a story could be true. They just will not believe it. They will not. It is a volitional thing. Even though all the evidence is presented to them, they have set their will not to believe the evidence. Instead what they do is they proclaim, without any proof whatsoever, that Christ's miracles, especially His resurrection, never happened. They basically say they did not happen. But this, that, and the other thing? No, they never happened.

Why did not they happen? Miracles cannot happen. There is no such thing as miracles and there is especially no such thing as resurrection from the dead. Like I said, they close their ears. And of course, in Romans 1 it says they suppress this type of knowledge in unrighteousness.

Scholars and skeptics have invented many 'theories' (notice that word) to explain away Jesus' miracles and the resurrection. These theories are concoctions. There is nothing behind them. They just say "Well, what about this?" And particularly about the resurrection, they propose so-called "more believable" explanations for it. Let me give you six of them. These are the things that they say.

1. The disciples truly believed that they had seen the risen Jesus, but in actuality they had all suffered a mass hallucination.
2. Jesus never really died, but just went into a coma. And then sometime in the next three days He woke up in the tomb, escaped, and appeared to His disciples who hid Him until He fled the country. Now that is kind of funny. The man had no blood and He wakes up in a tomb, cold and dark, with a heavy stone covering the only possible exit. And let us say He does somehow break out of that, bloodless and all. He runs and finds His disciples, and they worship Him even though they disbelieve. Of course, He has to somehow get through the walls of the upper room. But instead of appearing healthy and whole, here is this bloodless, pale man with wounds and no life to Him at all. I mean really, how could He have lived after such a thing?

(We will see shortly that it is very clear He had died.)

3. The women do not have any directions. They do not know how to do anything. They do not know north from south, left from right, east from west. They and the disciples went to the wrong tomb! That is all it is. They just went to the wrong tomb and they saw it was wide open, and that was that. Little chauvinism there maybe.
4. The disciples stole the body away and lied about it just claiming He was resurrected. They pitched Him somewhere else—covered the body up—and nobody knows where it was.
5. The disciples colluded and agreed on a bogus resurrection story so that they could keep hope alive. So it was a big conspiracy theory from day one.
6. Someone else died on the cross in His place.

Now these go from the ridiculous to the absurd. More importantly, we have to remember that they are only *theories*. They are things that are concocted in their minds. They are essentially imaginary possibilities without a shred of proof. There is nothing they can reach forward and say "Here, this piece of evidence right here gives weight to our theory." But they cannot.

They are all just philosophical mind games that they are trying to play with the truth—and with us, with our beliefs—and it all starts with the fact that they do not want to accept the miraculous. They do not want to accept that anything could happen outside of their own ability to explain. There is no such thing as the supernatural in their world.

Now a bigger reason for why they do this is because they do not want to have to do what accepting this story would demand of them, and that is they would have to submit to this God-man who rose from the dead and showed by many proofs that He was their Savior, Creator, and soon-coming King. They want to remain in ignorance, as it were. They want to remain entirely in a physical type of world so they will not have to listen to God. So they will go to any length to deny the miracles, deny the resurrection, and certainly deny the truthfulness and historicity of the Bible itself. Because if they could try somehow to undercut the Word of God, they think that they have a hand up (or a leg up).

Now each of these half-dozen invented theories that I gave you has a clear and concise answer, either in the Scriptures, or that it is documented in history that we have actual manuscripts that tell us certain things, or it can be explained through logic, not to mention plain old common sense, which is not so common as we say. But when you are willingly blind and deaf to these things, common sense cannot get through; and not even evidence can get through, which is very sad.

For instance, let us just have a little thought process about the last one—someone died in His place—which is really ridiculous. Could they really have found a doppelganger for Jesus Christ? Now think about the timing here. It was midnight or so when He was arrested. He was under guard—for the next 12 hours or so (the last part of His life)—of the Jews, the ones that came to get Him, Sanhedrin, Herod, the priests and whatnot that saw Him. Finally, they get to Pilate and it is the same guy! When did they get a chance to insert the doppelganger? Even if there was someone (let us say a cousin) that maybe looked a little bit like Him, how could they have done that? Who would have volunteered?

Now here is another thing to think about. How could some lookalike have fooled Mary, His mother, who was at the foot of the cross—and not only Mary but His best friend who was also standing there with Mary, and several of the other disciples, all the women that were there consoling Mary? He even spoke with them (“Mother, this is your son”; “Take care of My mother”). So would they really have gotten it past them? You see them weeping and totally astounded that this has happened to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is kind of ridiculous. And it works. It happens that a lot of people believe this particular concoction of theirs. As a matter of fact, there is a whole religion out there called Islam that actually teaches that it was somebody else there and that Christ was taken to heaven.

Besides all that, a handful of non-biblical documents by such luminaries in history as Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, Suetonius, Thallus, Lucian, Celsus, and even the Jewish Talmud, all verify without a shadow of a doubt that Jesus of Nazareth lived. A few of them even mention that He died by crucifixion when Pilate ruled in Judea. They specifically say *He died*.

Let us go to Mark 15 if you will. We will begin in verse 42; we will go down to verse 45. Let us just see how we know that He died.

**Mark 15:42-43** Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath [so this would be a Wednesday and it was before the

Sabbath, which was the First Day of Unleavened Bread; so this was the day of the Passover which is also a Preparation Day for the First Day of Unleavened Bread], Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, . . .

We have to understand here that Joseph of Arimathea was part of the Sanhedrin. He was on the council. So he was a very important man in Judaism, in Judea, in Jerusalem.

**Mark 15:43** . . . who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God [so he believed what Jesus had said], coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

So we have Joseph here, of Arimathea, who was a man well-respected within the community. He could be believed in what he saw and what he reported. Then we have Pilate, the governor, the one who was ruling, standing in for the government of Rome. Let us go on.

**Mark 15:44-45** Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion . . .

Now what does he mean here “summoning the centurion”? What centurion is he talking about? He is talking about the centurion who was in charge of crucifying Jesus.

Let us think about this. He was a Roman soldier. A centurion was one who held rank essentially over a group of men. A centurion would indicate he was over a hundred. That was not always the case but that is essentially the way it was worked out within the Roman army. Not only was he a soldier who was used to war, but he was an officer who had a great deal of responsibility and leadership within the Roman army. There is no telling how many people he had put to death. Now perhaps because he had done it so often, that is why he was the centurion in charge of crucifixions in Jerusalem. I do not know. Maybe he was drawn by lot. I do not know.

But, as a soldier, he knew when people were dead. He was very used to looking at bodies, touching bodies, and seeing whether they were alive or dead. I am sure on battlefields that he had been on, he had had to go around and kill the wounded of the enemy. He knew whether they were alive or dead just by looking at them.

**Mark 15:44-45** [He summoned the centurion and] asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion [yes, He had been dead for some time] . . .

It was not just He had slipped off a few minutes ago. Now he was saying, “It’s been a while since this man died.”

**Mark 15:45** . . . [so] he granted the body to Joseph.

We have here three *eyewitnesses*. And of course if we went on, we would see that obviously Joseph got the body, embalmed it, and wrapped it. He would know over a period of a couple of hours that there was no life in this body. So we have these three expert eyewitnesses who tell us, who verify the fact that Jesus was dead—Joseph, Pilate, and the centurion. All three of whom would know beyond

any shadow of a doubt the difference between someone being in a coma, or just sleeping, or knocked out fainted and dead. Pretty good evidence there from within the Bible that Jesus had died, just by looking at the text here.

Now we do mention the resurrection of Jesus quite often. It comes up in the doctrinal positions that we teach about. But I do not think I can remember very many full sermons about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I think we tend to shy away from it a little bit because Protestants and Catholics make so much of it, and they base much of their liturgical year around Easter and Christmas as well. Those are the two biggies when people who are just a little bit church-ed actually arrive at the church and go through a service—at Easter and at Christmas.

But we, during this time of the year, are much more focused on Passover and on the Days of Unleavened Bread because we are thinking about those things. We are thinking about Christ dying for us. We do think a little bit about Him being raised from the dead, but our focus seems to be more on that He died and His blood covers our sins and we now can come before the Father, and then of course to the Days of Unleavened Bread and the idea of putting out leaven.

But we should not forget the fact that He rose from the dead. Because it is *equally important* to our salvation. Not just that our sins are covered (that is with the death), but He rose from the dead tells us that we have a hope of the resurrection and that we have a living Savior. So I think it is vital for us to think about it more deeply than merely accepting it as a given that it happened. Let us prove that it happened.

We are going to look at some of the Bible's internal proofs that the resurrection of Jesus was an actual historical event, and that is where we will spend the rest of our time today. I hope you have your Bible-page-flipping fingers on because we are going to go through a series of verses. We are going to try to cover several books here and just get the story down a little bit firmer in our minds.

Let us start in Matthew 28 and we will read the first 10 verses. I may make some comments (hopefully not too many if I want to finish this sermon today). I have to just read through these things and leave the commenting till later.

**Matthew 28:1-10** Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who 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 indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you." So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" And they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

Let us go now to the book of Mark in chapter 16.

**Mark 16:14-16** Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

Let us go then to the book of Luke, in chapter 24. We will start in verse 36.

**Luke 24:36-49** Now as [these disciples had] said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, “Peace to you.” But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.” When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, “Have you any food here?” So they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence. Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

Now to the book of John chapter 20.

**John 20:24-29** Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” And after eight days His disciples were again inside [notice the time there—it was eight days later], and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to you!” Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Then to the book of Acts, in chapter 1, starting in the first verse.

**Acts 1:1-11** The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John

truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

Flip forward to chapter 10. This is when Peter was speaking with Cornelius and his household, the first of the Gentiles to be baptized into the church. Starting in verse 38.

**Acts 10:38-41** God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

Let us flip forward a couple of more chapters to chapter 13. This is the apostle Paul speaking to the people in Antioch, in Pisidia. I am just coming here to show you that this was part of Paul’s normal preaching. Starting in verse 27.

**Acts 13:27-37** For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead. He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers, God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: “You are My Son, today I have begotten You.” And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: “I will give you the sure mercies of David.” Therefore He also says in another Psalm: “You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.

Alright, one more. We will get the testimony of Jesus Christ Himself, in Revelation chapter 1 beginning in verse 12.

**Revelation 1:12-18** Then I [John] turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to [His] feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow,

and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in his right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.”

Revelation chapter 2 verse 8. In this letter to the church at Smyrna, Jesus Himself says:

**Revelation 2:8** “These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life.”

These are actually just a few, a handful, of the verses on Christ’s resurrection and they give us a very good overview of what happened after He rose from the dead. No human being was present when Jesus actually woke from death. It was in the dark of that tomb with the rock—the stone—rolled over the entry. The disciples just witnessed and recorded the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ, and their story is “He was dead. We saw Him die.”

Of course, obviously, Pilate and the centurion proclaimed Him dead. Joseph knew He was dead. He was entombed. Joseph and Nicodemus put Him there. The women—Mary, the other Mary, and whoever else was with them—saw Him put in the tomb dead, embalmed. And afterward “we saw Him alive”—alive, speaking, walking, eating, preaching, commanding, and glorious! And of course John saw Him in His completely glorified state, as He is in heaven, in this vision in Revelation 1.

This is what they witnessed, they saw with their own eyes, they handled with their hands. They heard His voice telling them what to do, where they should go to meet Him the next time, and many other things besides.

Who knows what He taught them in those forty days after His resurrection? It would be amazing to know how much He rounded out their understanding. We find, in Luke 24, that He did talk quite a bit about how they should preach about Him from the Old Testament—that all these things (the writings, the Prophets, and the law) spoke concerning Him. Could you imagine the Bible studies that they listened to with the resurrected Jesus Christ in that upper room? How long were they with Him during those forty days? I mean, it seems like He appeared here, said a few words, and He was gone.

But Luke 24 actually tells us that He took a long journey with those two disciples on the road to Emmaus. How long was He with them? Most of a day—until they got there and started eating, and then He did the prayer, and they said “Oh, we know who You are . . .” He is gone!

But they spent a long time with Him walking and talking. They were sure. They knew that this was the same Jesus. But He was different. He had a body that could walk through walls and appear in their midst. And it seemed like He had greater authority now, because He said specifically to them all authority in heaven and earth had been given into His hand. He was not just Jesus the man; He was now Christ, fully God. Incredible!

This had impacted them so completely, down to their every cell, that they had to speak about it for the rest of their lives. They were compelled to talk about this wonderful Person who had been dead, but now He had been raised to glorious everlasting life. And they saw Him rise up into the heavens,



and then be obscured by this cloud, and then be assured by two of His angels that He was coming back the same way He had left. What hope that must have given them! But that was their story. “He was dead and entombed and afterward we saw him alive and glorious.”

There are twenty-seven documents written by eight or nine men who were eyewitnesses of Jesus in His post-resurrection form; or they were close associates of those who had seen them. Now the majority of these contain independent (meaning they did not consult one another) eyewitness accounts of the events of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as well as the events of the early church; and some of them give you multiple sources within them of who had actually seen it with them.

Most of these documents were written within two generations after they occurred. And as more and more is being found in archeology and things are being compared, they are finding that the dates of these writings are going closer and closer to the actual events. Most of them were written between fifteen and forty years after the events, which is within the lifetime of those who had seen them. They are first-generation documents.

History and archeology have corroborated not only some of these documents but scores of events and locations and individuals that are written about in these documents. Most of the Romans (especially the governors, the emperors, and such) that were written about in them have been verified. Many of the Jews (Caiaphas and Annas) have been verified. As a matter of fact, they think that they have found Caiaphas’ ossuary (his bone box) where he was actually interred. These were real things—real events, real places, real men that did real things and saw the real Jesus after He rose from the dead.

The enemies of these authors admit, in their own documents, that the things that they wrote about are true (like, for instance, the crucifixion). It is without a doubt that Jesus died just outside Jerusalem, at the hands of Pilate and the Romans, by crucifixion. There is no doubt it is a historical fact, and many of those facts are written down by the enemies of the disciples and the enemies of the church. Even the Jews admit that He died there in Jerusalem under Pilate.

Finally, these authors write about their experiences so candidly that they even include events and details that would embarrass them—shame them—and even Jesus (not to shame Him, but to put Him in a bad light). Think about it!

I gave a sermon on the book of Mark. How stupid the disciples seemed to be in that book, that they just cannot get it. Jesus is saying “How long are you going to be so slow to understand and without faith?” And it was the same ones that were writing about this. But they do not mind making themselves look bad in order to eventually glorify God with what they wrote. They even say disparaging things about Jesus in them (it is not coming out of their mouth, but it is coming out of the mouths of the Jews and whoever else that did not believe). They called Him a winebibber and a glutton. And you know they did not hide that Jesus was not liked by some of these people—the Pharisees and the Sadducees and others besides. They are very candid that He was even accused of doing His miracles through sorcery, by Beelzebub, and of course of not speaking the truth, of breaking the Sabbath, and of many other things besides.

Now if you were concocting a story and wanted to make your side look good, would you not leave those things out? But these men were so dedicated to telling the truth that they included those things

in there as proof that they were telling everything exactly as it happened, and they were not willing to whitewash anything. Even the bad parts had to go in to give a complete understanding of what was actually going on.

Of course I am speaking about the twenty-seven New Testament books and the eight or nine authors. They are not just one book; they are actually twenty-seven different documents. They are different sources from eight or nine different men: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, Jude—and the one who may or not be here is whoever was the author of Hebrews (if you think it was Paul, there are only eight; if you think it was somebody else, then there were nine). But all of these men are contemporaries of the first-century apostles and they made their writings—put them down on paper—so that we have a testimony from many witnesses about what occurred.

The New Testament writings, no matter what you hear from other people out there, have been shown to be accurate beyond a shadow of a doubt. They are the best attested documents in history. Just think about this. A lot of these people say, “Ah, Jesus! We just know Him from the Bible, and you cannot believe the Bible.”

Did you know that the incredible career of Alexander the Great comes from, I believe, two sources? Maybe there is a third source. But they were written two hundred to four hundred years after he died.

We have twenty-seven documents just in the Bible that tell us Jesus Christ lived and they were all written within the first generation. And the book of Mark, they are finding to be closer and closer. It may now, they think, have been written in the thirties. They used to say the forties or the fifties. But with all that we are able to do with the technology that we have now, the dating is getting closer and closer and closer to the founding of the church. It is just remarkable.

Paul’s first letter, to the Thessalonians, was in the late forties. So these documents that we have in our laps, translated of course, are documents from that time and they tell you things that happened at that time, and they tell you the truth.

Most scholars need far less evidence to corroborate the ancient documents. There are thousands of manuscripts of the Bible. I am doing this off the top of my head so do not quote me on it—but there are like only a half a dozen (10, 12) that mention even biggies like Caesar or some of the emperors. There is more proof about Jesus’ life and His disciples’ life and work than there is for even some of the greats of Greek, Roman, Persian, Babylonian, Assyrian history. Most of those people are known through the Bible because it mentions them. Because we have a history here, in sixty-six books, that goes from Adam all the way to right around the end of the first century—solid, documented, reliable history.

But critics, scholars, skeptics (whatever you want to call them) demand extraordinary proof of the Bible and this is because of the element of the miraculous that is in it, especially the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That is just a bridge too far for them.

But let us see what do we have here. Let us go back to Deuteronomy 19 and pick up a principle. Then we are going to go to Matthew 18.

**Deuteronomy 19:15** One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.

Now Matthew 18 verse 15. This is in the offense of a brother here.

**Matthew 18:15-16** “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’”

This is a well-documented principle of Israelite law, of godly law we might say. It is not only found in these two passages that we read, but it is also in four other places in God’s Word: four places in the New Testament and two in the Old. So this principle is well established in the Bible and it is generally followed in most courts of law anywhere in the world. One witness usually cannot make the case against another person. You have to have somebody else there to verify what the one says against the other. It is also a principle that is used in academia and in other (historical, archeological, and so on). The research that they do, they need two or more witnesses to validate (or invalidate) a claim.

God, right off the bat, gives us four gospels to witness to the life of Jesus Christ. So He goes above and beyond by giving us not just two, not just three, but four witnesses to the life of Christ and that includes His resurrection. But there is more. Let us go to I Corinthians 15 now.

There are many commentators who believe that what Paul says here was an early creed, meaning it was a paragraph that they would memorize that would help them to remember what they believed. It is like an early catechism answer to what the church believed at this time. I Corinthians was written about 53 or 55 AD, somewhere in that area. This was just 20 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So here we have this creed.

**I Corinthians 15:3-8** 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, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James [His brother], then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

So we not only have the four gospels and all the information that they corroborate, but we also have the fact that He was seen, not just by the apostles but by five hundred people at one time! You talk about a mass hallucination? Do you know mass hallucinations are actually impossible—they do not happen?

Have you ever shared a hallucination with anybody? Have you ever shared a dream with anybody? Someone might have had a *similar* dream, but if two people lie down next to each other and go to sleep, they do not dream the same dream! If two people take LSD and lie down next to each other, they do not have the same hallucination. It is impossible for two people to have the same hallucination. Period. It does not work that way.

Where did they come up with this idea of a mass hallucination? It is because they do not believe that they saw the risen Jesus Christ. It is that simple. They come up with a theory that is impossible in order to explain away that five hundred people saw Jesus Christ, after He died, alive and well and glorious.

So if five hundred people agree on some matter of dispute like this, normally, a sane person—a person in his right mind—would conclude that they were telling the truth; that they all saw the same thing, so it must be right; they must all have had the same experience and what they are saying is true. But people are willingly blinded to accepting the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Let us go to Luke 24. I want to start to drill into some of the specifics of the resurrection. We will read the first three verses, which we did not read before, but they are very similar to the ones we read in Matthew.

**Luke 24:1-3** Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them [he is talking about the ones who had watched Joseph and Nicodemus put Jesus' body in the tomb], came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

The women go to the tomb on Sunday morning and they find this very large stone rolled away, and the tomb, they say specifically here, is empty. *There is no body in the tomb.* John 20:2 says that they hurried to the disciples—Peter, John, James, and all the rest—and they tell them their story and they say: “They have taken away the Lord out of His tomb and we do not know where they have laid Him.”

Notice how ambiguous the ‘they’ is. Who did they think ‘they’ were? Who was it? Who was the ‘they’? They did not know. That is why they used an ambiguous pronoun ‘they.’

We do it all the time. They say that if you do this or do that, then you are going to get cancer. Well, who is ‘they’? Well, some researchers or doctors or somebody. But it is kind of an ambiguous ‘they.’

‘They’ have taken away the Lord out of the tomb. So one of the first bits of testimony that we get from these women is “Jesus is gone and we don’t know who took Him. They did it.” It could have been the Jews that they were thinking about. Why would the Jews do it? That would just verify what Jesus had said, that He will rise from the grave, right—so that His tomb would be empty after three days and three nights. They think it was “I don’t know, zombies?” It is ‘they.’

‘They’ have taken away the Lord. They are probably frantic. They do not really know what to say. Who did it? They do not have any proof. Maybe they think the guards did it. I do not know. The Romans? Why would they do it? But, being all flustered, they say: “They have taken the body. It’s not there!” Peter and John, we find out right after that, run to the tomb and they see the same thing. They find that Jesus’ body is gone and only His linen wrappings remain in the tomb.

Now let us see this though in a wider context. Let us go to Matthew 27. We are going to read verses 57 through 66.

**Matthew 27:57-66** Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body be given to him. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb [They were there but not right there at the

tomb; they were off a little ways watching what was going on.]. On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, “Sir [or Lord], we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise.’ Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead.’ So the last deception will be worse than the first.” Pilate said to them, “You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how” [So do whatever you need to do to make this thing secure]. So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.

These two paragraphs give us a wealth of information as background to what went on. But there are two major factors that are especially useful to us in proving what we want to prove here.

First, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary watched Joseph and Nicodemus wrap Jesus’ body and lay it in his own tomb. So there goes the stupid idea that Mary and the disciples went to the wrong tomb. They knew which one it was. Mary and the other Mary had been hunkered down there for a couple of hours watching. They knew which tomb it was. They had not lost their way. They did not get befuddled with directions. They knew which tomb it was. They did not go to the wrong tomb and make a mistake.

Another important point is that Pilate gave permission to the Jews to set a guard on the tomb, and not only just set a guard to watch over it, but also to seal the stone until the third day had passed. No one was to get in or out of the tomb. No one was to have access to the tomb. Because the Jews were very afraid that the disciples would come and steal the body.

This request to Pilate happened on Thursday, on the First Day of Unleavened Bread. I do not know exactly whether it was during the daytime or the nighttime period, but it was just a short period between the time of Jesus’ burial and them setting the guard on the tomb with the seal on the stone. So there was only a short time for the disciples to have gotten to it.

Well, what were the disciples doing the evening that the body of Jesus was being placed in the tomb? They were quivering in fear and hiding so they would not be arrested by the Jews.

And we could also assume (this is not said, but we can assume) that the Jews, when they set the guard—when they brought the guard to the tomb—they rolled the stone back, they peeked inside because they knew Joseph and Nicodemus would say that they had put it in there. But they probably wanted to get their eyes on the body of Jesus and know for certain that there was a body in there. Then they rolled the stone back over and then they set a seal on it. Now this probably was a lump of wet clay which was probably over ropes they somehow put across the tomb so that if anybody tried to roll the stone away, it would break that clay seal, and they would know that somebody had tried to tamper with it. And of course then they put guards in front of the stone so that no one could have access to it. That just takes a couple of those stupid theories right out of the way.

We are here in Matthew. We read chapter 28 verses 1 through 10 before. But I want you to notice a few things here. So Mary Magdalene and the other Mary come to the tomb. That is verse 1. They are coming to the tomb. They are right there. They are standing there.

**Matthew 28:2** And behold, there was a great earthquake . . .

Notice the timing. Mary and the other Mary were there when the earthquake happened, when the stone was rolled back. And guess who else was there? The guards were there!

**Matthew 28:4** And the guards shook for fear of him [of the angel].

Mary, the other Mary, and the guards all saw the angel, all felt the earthquake, all saw the stone being moved, all heard the angel's voice (maybe they did not hear the angel's voice because, by this time, the guards, such doughty men as they are, had fainted away and were like dead men). But the women were there; they were afraid, but they were still witnessing to what was happening. So think about this. This proves that Jesus' tomb—and therefore His body—had been sealed and guarded for all but a few hours after Joseph had closed the tomb. In no way could the disciples have stolen the body.

It also tells us that when Jesus was resurrected and left the tomb, He walked through the walls. The angel did not come down, roll the stone away, and Jesus comes strolling out. He just left! There was not any kind of stone that could hold Him. When the women got there, and the guards were still there, all of them could testify that the seal was still intact. The ropes were hanging there, the seal was still on there, and no one had gotten past the guards all three days.

So there are multiple witnesses to the fact that the resurrection not only occurred, but it was divinely accomplished by a miracle. It was not the result of theft. This is your ultimate sealed room mystery like Agatha Christie's, *Ten Little Indians*, *And Then There were None*, or *Murder on the Orient Express* where you try to figure out whodunit, by a group of people that cannot go anywhere—they are all stuck there. When you come to the tomb of Jesus, there is only one answer that works, and that is that God the Father raised Him from the dead and He went through the walls. It was not a physical resurrection in the least. The only answer is that God did it.

Of course we know, if we go down to verses 11 through 15, that the Jews then concocted a story. They paid off the guards. Because the guards, if they had said the way they wanted it said ("We went to sleep on the job"), could have been killed. It was a capital crime to go to sleep on the job as a guard. So they had to be bribed—given lots of money—and the Jews had to give them assurances that if Pilate or any of their superiors wanted to mess with them that the Jews would give assurances that they had done what they were supposed to do. And you know what, this—one of the greatest cover-ups in history—is still working to this day. There are millions of Jews who believe that the disciples stole Jesus' body from the tomb.

I have a lot more here. I was going to go to several more scriptures. Just write these down: Matthew 28:9; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:13-17; John 20:19-22, and then verses 26 through 28, and also chapter 21 verse 15. I wanted to go to all those scriptures—we have gone through many of them—but I wanted to show that Jesus' appearances to His disciples after His resurrection were far more than mere visions. They were actual interactions with Jesus. We went over this a little bit before.

And Jesus did all kinds of different things. They could touch Him. They could obviously see Him. They fell down and worshipped before Him. They were rebuked by Him. They walked with Him. They talked with Him. They put their fingers in His wounds. They might have even seen Him gardening at one point, because they mistook Him for the gardener. He even ate with them on several occasions (at least two that I know of).

Now these various personal, even intimate, interactions with Him are very strong evidence of the reality of their eyewitness testimony. It was not just that they saw Him and they were awed, they did

a lot of things with Him. They heard Him and, like I said, they were with Him for extended periods of time. These are strong proofs that they are telling the truth.

Let us go to Acts chapter 2. I want to just add a little bit more. This is in the Pentecost sermon. Starting in verse 22. He says:

**Acts 2:22-24** “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.”

This was God. This was Jesus Christ. He was not going to be held by death.

**Acts 2:25-32** “For David says concerning Him: ‘I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh will also rest in hope, because You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of joy in Your presence.’ Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.”

Peter tells them straight out that everyone knew David’s bones lay decaying in his tomb. It was right over there. They could all go there and see those bones had been there for a thousand years. But Jesus had been dead only a little bit over a month and His tomb was empty—His bones were not there.

If Peter had been wrong, all the Jews had to do was produce the body of Jesus and parade it in the streets. That would have put a pinprick in their balloon right away. That would have stopped the nascent Christian church from ever doing anything. All they had to do was produce the body to prove that the disciples were telling a lie about what had happened with Jesus Christ. But there was no body. It was gone. It had been raised from the dead. Jesus Christ had been raised to newness of life.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ changed these fearful, cowering, denying disciples into fearless preachers and crusaders who boldly spoke. Here it was, in the portico of the Temple. They were right there, and the Jews were listening, and they were proclaiming that their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ had died, was buried, but now He was no longer there—He was alive, He was working in this church, and He had just poured out upon them His Holy Spirit. And it was this Spirit that was energizing them and making them apostles of Him to the world.

Even when persecution finally arose and some were even martyred, they did not only *not* recant, but testified even more courageously that Jesus was the Christ and that He was going to return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Liars and conspirators do not act like this. At the first sign of any kind of trouble—or a little bit of pain and pressure and discomfort—they cave. What happened in Watergate? Someone caved and the whole conspiracy fell to pieces.

But not these men. There was no conspiracy. There was truth and they had seen it with their own eyes and heard it with their own ears. They had felt the body of the risen Jesus Christ. They knew it was true. And they would travel to foreign lands and face death daily to preach the message of the resurrected God-man, Jesus Christ. They were no longer scaredy cats, stupid disciples. They, like their Savior, were new men. They had put on the new man. And they were willing to die for that truth. Why were they so confident?

Let us conclude in Romans 10. Starting in verse 4:

**Romans 10:4-11** For Christ is the end of the law [meaning the goal of the law] for righteousness to everyone who believes [it is a matter of faith]. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, “The man who does those things shall live by them.” But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation. For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”

This is the idea that drove these men. They believed and they confessed that Jesus Christ died and rose again. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the final piece of the puzzle. Not only was sin paid for by the blood of Christ, but His life—His living again—opens the way to eternal life for the rest of us who believe and confess Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Now, because Jesus did not remain in the tomb but lives in heaven working for us, there is a hope for us in a resurrection from the dead. And that resurrection awaits us when our resurrected Lord and Savior returns.

And may that day come very soon!