Christianity’s Core Belief

Volume 1

By

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Part 1

The core belief of Christianity is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul made this bold statement:

“… if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”
1 Corinthians 15:17

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is THE core belief of Christianity. If Jesus didn’t rise from the dead, our faith is futile and we are still in our sins.
We can talk about a lot of things in the Bible that are important to what we believe, but if Jesus did not rise from the dead then everything we believe as Christians is pointless (futile).

Here’s the full version of Paul’s statement:

“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen
asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.” 1 Corinthians 15:12-21

Paul wrote as someone who preached the resurrection of Jesus Christ because he was an **eyewitness** of the risen Christ:

“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, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.” 1 Corinthians 15:3-7
Three Weeks to Easter

We are three weeks away from Easter Sunday 2019. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then there is no reason for us to celebrate this year because our faith is futile and we are still in our sins. A pointless faith that means we are still living without forgiveness of sins is no reason to celebrate. That would actually be something to mourn. However, since we know that Jesus rose from the dead we have everything to celebrate because we are forgiven and our lives will continue beyond the grave!

During the next three weeks in this special series we will look at many reasons to believe that Jesus rose from the dead. I hope you'll join us here each day for insights into Christianity’s Core Belief.
Part 2

As we approach Easter Sunday 2019, we are looking at Christianity’s core belief – the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

“For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.” 1 Corinthians 15:16-21

Paul presented the world with a truth claim that can be falsified. Either Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead or he didn’t. Period. It’s that simple. Answer this question and you can make your own decision about how you will live the rest of your life.
Life and Death

In the process of determining whether the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is true or false, you may find it helpful to ask and answer a couple of questions first:

1. Did Jesus of Nazareth live during the early part of the 1st century AD?
2. Did Jesus of Nazareth die on a cross during the early part of the 1st century AD?

In order for someone to rise from the dead, they first had to be alive, then they had to die.

Let’s start with question #1: Did Jesus of Nazareth live during the early part of the 1st century AD?

While there are some atheist scholars who don’t believe Jesus was a real person who lived during the early part of the 1st century (known as the Jesus myth), most ancient scholars will acknowledge that someone named Jesus did live and teach during the time period ascribed to Him. They don’t necessarily believe that Jesus rose from the dead, but they agree that there is a historical Jesus of Nazareth.
New Testament

The New Testament was written during the 1st century AD by men who said they knew Jesus personally. Many of them (e.g. Matthew, John, Peter) were disciples of Jesus and spent years traveling with Him around what we know today as Israel. Some of them were related to Jesus (e.g. James, Jude). One of them was an enemy of the people who knew Jesus (Saul of Tarsus/Apostle Paul). Paul’s life was radically changed when he met Jesus after He rose from the dead and became a powerful spokesperson for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Two of the New Testament writers never met Jesus, but were close friends with the people who did know Jesus (Mark and Luke).

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote separate accounts of the life of Jesus of Nazareth and made truth claims that thousands of people living in Israel during the early part of the 1st century had seen Jesus, heard Him teach and watched Him work miracles. Hundreds, if not thousands, claimed that Jesus healed them of many types of diseases and birth defects. Jesus even raised some of them from the dead.

Jesus interacted with government leaders during that time, people we know lived and worked in and around Jerusalem in the early part of the 1st century. Here are a couple of examples.
Pontius Pilate

“Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate.” Mark 15:1

Marcus Pontius Pilatus was the Roman *prefect* (governor) of Judea from 26-36 AD. That fits the New Testament’s time frame for when the Jewish rulers would have brought Jesus of Nazareth to Pilate for trial. You can read more about the life of Pontius Pilate here.

Pilate’s title of *prefect* was confirmed by an inscription discovered in 1961. Italian archaeologist Antonio Frova and his team were excavating in Caesarea and discovered a carved limestone with an inscription that mentioned Pontius Pilate as being a prefect of Judea from 26-36 AD. You can read more about the Pilate Stone here. You can see the Pilate Stone at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.
Caiaphas the High Priest

“Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him. And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year. Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people ... Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. ... Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning.” Luke 18:12-14, 24, 28

Josephus, a well-known historian who lived during the 1st century AD, was a leading source for the life of Joseph Ben Caiaphas. Josephus wrote in Antiquities of the Jews that Caiaphas became high priest in 18 AD. That would have been several years before Jesus of Nazareth began his public ministry and would have spoken to Caiaphas.

As for material evidence for the life of Caiaphas, workers found an ossuary in 1990 in the city of Jerusalem that contained the human remains including that of an elderly man. The inscription on the ossuary read “Joseph son of Caiaphas.” Many scholars believe those bones belonged to the former high priest who knew Jesus of Nazareth. You can see the ossuary at the Israel Museum.
Seen by More Than 500 Witnesses

The Apostle Paul said this about the number of people who knew that Jesus lived during the 1st century AD in Israel –

“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, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.” 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

We’ll spend more time looking into what these people saw in future articles, but it’s important to see how Paul listed these witnesses, most of whom were still alive and who could be questioned about what they saw.
Josephus

**Flavius Josephus** was both a Jewish and Roman historian. He wrote The Jewish War in 75 AD and Antiquities of the Jews in 94 AD.

Dr. Paul Maier, Emeritus Russell H. Siebert Professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University, wrote this about Josephus and what he wrote about Jesus of Nazareth –

“Josephus is the most comprehensive primary source on Jewish history that has survived from antiquity, and done so virtually intact despite its voluminous nature (the equivalent of 12 volumes). Because of imperial patronage by the Flavian emperors in Rome —Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian —Josephus was able to generate incredible detail in his records, a luxury denied the Gospel writers. They seem to have been limited to one scroll each since the earliest Christians were not wealthy. Accordingly, Josephus has always been deemed a crucial extrabiblical resource, since his writings not only correlate well with the Old and New Testaments, but often provide additional evidence on such personalities as Herod the Great and his dynasty, John the Baptist, Jesus’ half-brother James, the high priests Annas and Caiaphas and their clan, Pontius Pilate, and others.

Against this background, we should certainly expect that he would refer to Jesus of Nazareth, and he does—twice in fact. In Antiquities 18:63—in the middle of information on Pontius Pilate (A.D., 26-36)—Josephus provides the longest secular reference to Jesus in any first-century
source. Later, when he reports events from the administration of the Roman governor Albinus (A.D. 62-64) in Antiquities 20:200, he again mentions Jesus in connection with the death of Jesus’ half-brother, James the Just of Jerusalem. These passages, along with other non-biblical, non-Christian references to Jesus in secular first-century sources—among them Tacitus (Annals 15:44), Suetonius (Claudius 25), and Pliny the Younger (Letter to Trajan)—prove conclusively that any denial of Jesus’ historicity is maulding sensationalism by the uninformed and/or the dishonest.” *Josephus and Jesus*

**Tacitus, Seutonius and Pliny**

Dr. Maier mentioned the names of three other people who lived during the 1st century AD and wrote about Jesus of Nazareth.

**Publius Cornelius Tacitus** was a Roman senator who referred to Jesus of Nazareth and His execution. He also wrote about followers of Jesus (Christians) who lived in Rome during the 1st century AD. Tacitus was not sympathetic to Christianity, so most scholars accept his words about what Christians believed about Jesus to be accurate. You can read more about Tacitus and his writings here.

**Gaius Seutonius Tranquillus** was a Roman biographer, historian and antiquarian who lived during the latter part of the 1st century and early part of the 2nd century AD. Seutonius was a protege of Pliny the Younger. He wrote about early followers of Christ in his work called *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*. Seutonius also mentioned Christians and Christ in his biography...
of Emperor Nero. You can read more about Seutonius and his writings here.

**Pliny the Younger** lived during the latter part of the 1st century and the early part of the 2nd century AD. He was the Roman governor of Bithynia et Pontus and wrote a letter (Epistle X.96) to Emperor Trajan asking for advice about how to deal with followers of Christ living in his area. Pliny was conducting trials of suspected Christians and asked for guidance from the emperor. While no specific crimes against Rome were mentioned in the letter, Pliny said they were extremely superstitious. You can read more about Pliny the Younger and his writings here.

**Agnostic/Atheist Perspective**

One of the leading agnostic scholars today, Dr. Bart Ehrman, does not believe Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead. However, he does believe Jesus was a real historical figure.

“With respect to Jesus, we have numerous, independent accounts of his life in the sources lying behind the Gospels (and the writings of Paul) — sources that originated in Jesus’ native tongue Aramaic and that can be dated to within just a year or two of his life (before the religion moved to convert pagans in droves). Historical sources like that are is pretty astounding for an ancient figure of any kind. Moreover, we have relatively extensive writings from one first-century author, Paul, who acquired his information within a couple of years of Jesus’ life and who actually knew, first hand, Jesus’ closest disciple Peter and his own
brother James. If Jesus did not exist, you would think his brother would know it.

Moreover, the claim that Jesus was simply made up falters on every ground. The alleged parallels between Jesus and the “pagan” savior-gods in most instances reside in the modern imagination: We do not have accounts of others who were born to virgin mothers and who died as an atonement for sin and then were raised from the dead (despite what the sensationalists claim ad nauseam in their propagandized versions).

Moreover, aspects of the Jesus story simply would not have been invented by anyone wanting to make up a new Savior. The earliest followers of Jesus declared that he was a crucified messiah. But prior to Christianity, there were no Jews at all, of any kind whatsoever, who thought that there would be a future crucified messiah. The messiah was to be a figure of grandeur and power who overthrew the enemy. Anyone who wanted to make up a messiah would make him like that. Why did the Christians not do so? Because they believed specifically that Jesus was the Messiah. And they knew full well that he was crucified. The Christians did not invent Jesus. They invented the idea that the messiah had to be crucified.

One may well choose to resonate with the concerns of our modern and post-modern cultural despisers of established religion (or not). But surely the best way to promote any such agenda is not to deny what virtually every sane historian on the planet — Christian, Jewish, Muslim, pagan,
agnostic, atheist, what have you — has come to conclude based on a range of compelling historical evidence.

Whether we like it or not, Jesus certainly existed.” Dr. Bart Ehrman, Did Jesus Exist?
Part 3

We addressed in yesterday’s article about the reality of Jesus of Nazareth living in the early part of the 1st century AD. That’s important as we look at Christianity’s core belief that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead. We also looked at the ancient evidence for His existence and the mistake of those who claim Jesus did not exist (e.g. Jesus mythicism).

If Jesus did not exist, He could not have died on a Roman cross. If Jesus did not exist and did not die on a Roman cross, He could not have been buried in a tomb and raised from the dead. That goes to the heart of the core belief of Christianity –

“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have
fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.” 1 Corinthians 15:12-21

Jesus: Human or Apparition?

How do we address the argument of some that Jesus only “appeared” to be human? There has been an argument for many centuries that Jesus was only an apparition or illusion and did not have a human body that could die on a cross or rise from the dead.

One of the strongest arguments for the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth is what He told His disciples He was going to do and what He did.

“Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.” Matthew 20:17-19

What Jesus described here are physical actions – “betray, condemn, deliver, mock, scourge, crucify, rise.” Let’s look closely at Matthew’s account of what happened to see if we can find anything that looks remotely like an apparition or illusion.
“So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them.” Matthew 21:6-7

The disciples “set” Jesus on the colt. They physically lifted Jesus onto the animal and Jesus rode it into Jerusalem. Lifting someone onto something is a physical action on a physical body. People don’t lift an illusion. An apparition doesn’t “ride” on the back of an animal. There can be no physical interaction between physical beings and an illusion.

The Jewish rulers of Israel had long wanted to kill Jesus, but the Lord was so popular with the people that the rulers had not risked arresting Jesus before; but that was about to change.

“Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. But they said, ‘Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.”’ Matthew 26:3-5

One of the physical actions in the burial of a dead body was pouring oil on it. We see in Matthew’s Gospel evidence of that and more proof for the Humanity of Jesus.
“And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table. But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, ‘Why this waste? For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor.’ But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, ‘Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.” Matthew 26:6-13

Jesus described His Body as a physical body – “For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial.” Oil could not be poured “on” an illusion. Oil has physical properties and could not be poured “on” an apparition. If Jesus was an illusion, this would have been an opportunity for Him to explain why the oil passed through Him without touching Him. He did not because He was not an illusion. He was and is Human.

The rulers of Israel needed a way to arrest Jesus to kill Him and one of the Lord’s own close disciples gave them that way. “Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, ‘What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?’ And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.” (Matthew 26:14-16)
Judas knew that he could do what the Jewish rulers wanted him to do because Jesus was Human. Judas had been with Jesus and the other disciples for three years and had seen every aspect of the Lord’s Humanity. Judas knew Jesus was not an illusion. Judas knew that Jesus could be physically betrayed and arrested. Judas used his position as a disciple and his knowledge about Jesus to betray the Lord.

“And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, ‘Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him.’ Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, ‘Greetings, Rabbi!’ and kissed Him.” Matthew 26:47-48

Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. A human being cannot kiss an illusion. The kiss was physical; another proof of the Humanity of Jesus.

The arrest, trial, scourging, and crucifixion of Jesus are dynamic proofs of His Humanity. All of these verses are from Chapters 26 – 27 of Matthew’s Gospel. None of these human activities could be performed with or on an illusion.

“And those who had laid hold of Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.”
“Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands.”

“And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.”

“Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.”

“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.”

“And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink. Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots.”

“Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left. And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, ‘You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come
down from the cross.’ Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, ‘He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.”

“Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, ‘This Man is calling for Elijah!’ Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. The rest said, ‘Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him.’ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.”

“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 to be given to him. 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.”
“On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, ‘Sir, 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 they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.”

In every detail of Matthew’s account of Jesus’ arrest, trial, scourging, crucifixion, death, and burial, we see the Humanity of Christ. Not once do we see any hint of an apparition or illusion.
Part 4

We are looking at the core belief of Christianity which is the **physical resurrection** of Jesus of Nazareth. As Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians –

>“And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty … And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!” 1 Corinthians 15:14, 17

In yesterday’s article we looked at whether Jesus of Nazareth had a physical body that could die on a cross since some say Jesus was an apparition or illusion. Today, we want to look at whether Jesus still had a physical body after His resurrection. Did Jesus shed His humanity after He rose from the dead?

**Jesus’ Post-Resurrection Body**

>“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 went out 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!’ So 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.”

Matthew 28:1-8

An angel of the Lord spoke to the women who had come to see the body of Jesus. He told them that Jesus, who had been crucified (killed by means of crucifixion), had risen from the dead and was alive. Jesus met the women and told them to “rejoice!” Notice – “they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him.” The women “held” Jesus by His feet. That is physical. Jesus was still in the Physical Body He had before His death, but He had been Raised and was alive.

What other proofs of His Humanity after Resurrection do we see in the Gospels? He continued to appear human and did physical things that humans do. Here we see Jesus walking, sitting at a table, picking up bread, blessing it, breaking it, and giving it to others to eat. They Jesus did something humans don’t do – He vanished into thin air. It is a demonstration of the abilities of the Glorified Body of Christ.
“Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. But they constrained Him, saying, ‘Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.’ And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, ‘Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?’ So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, ‘The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!’ And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.” Luke 24:28-35

The following verses are some of the most powerful proofs of the Humanity of Jesus after His Resurrection. Jesus knew His disciples thought He was a spirit, so He proved to them that He was physically present with them.

“Now as they 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 a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence.”

Here is another interesting aspect of the Lord’s Resurrection – He still carried some of the marks of His Crucifixion. Those marks convinced Thomas that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead.

“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.’ So 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, 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.” John 20:24-29
The Holy Spirit, the Writer Who inspired the writers of the Gospels, has carefully crafted the story of Jesus Christ so that we would know everything He wanted us to know, for that is the Holy Work of the Spirit.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.” John 16:12-15

We Christians have the finest documents ever written. We have the Holy Writer living inside our body. He will guide us into all truth, tell us of things to come, and glorify the Great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. We have much to thank Him for. When someone questions why you believe what you believe, you have the answers in the Holy Word. Speak what you have heard with great confidence and joy.

“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.’ And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.” Luke 24:44-53

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, is both Human and Divine. What He did for us 2,000 years ago and what He is doing for us today is the greatest thing our God could do for those He loves.
Part 5

We are sharing daily posts about the core belief of Christianity as we approach Easter Sunday 2019. That core belief is the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth after His death on a Roman cross. Paul made the resurrection the Christian core belief in this truth claim –

“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” 1 Corinthians 15:13-19

That brings us to the importance of Christ’s death and resurrection.

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.” 1 Corinthians 1:1-2
What is the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

“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.” 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

What is the proof for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ?

“... 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, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.” 1 Corinthians 15:6-8

Why do some people say there is no resurrection?

“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen
asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Christ is risen from the dead!

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” 1 Corinthians 15:20-22

The Glorious Body!

“But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.
And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.” 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

Our Resurrection!

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 15:52-58
Part 6

We addressed the question of the importance of Jesus of Nazareth’s death and resurrection yesterday. Today, we’ll try to answer this question:

If the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth are true, why don’t more Christians believe it?

The Apostle Paul has made believing the core belief of Christianity easy to falsify. If Jesus rose from the dead, then Christianity is true – along with all its other truth claims. However, if Jesus did not rise from the dead, then Christianity is false and is pointless.

“And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” 1 Corinthians 15:17-19

Christians Don’t Believe in the Resurrection?

Why did Paul even address with the Christians in Corinth the question of whether Jesus rose from the dead? Because some of them were saying there is no resurrection of the dead.
“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” 1 Corinthians 15:12

I understand why Buddhists don’t believe in Jesus’ resurrection – why Muslims don’t believe it – why Jews don’t believe it – why Hindus don’t believe it – why pagans don’t believe it – why atheists and agnostics don’t believe it – but why don’t Christians believe it? Millions of people today who claim to be Christians do not believe that Jesus Christ rose from the grave! The Bible is emphatic about the Resurrection of Jesus and its impact on our future resurrection from the dead. Being a witness of the Resurrected Lord was primary to who the Apostles chose to take the place of Judas as one of the 12 Apostles. Look at what Peter said to the 120 followers of Christ before Pentecost –

“Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” Acts 1:21-22

Does that sound like someone who did not believe that Jesus Christ literally rose from the dead? Peter said that beginning with the baptism of John to the day when Jesus ascended into Heaven, it was vital that the person they chose to take Judas’ place be “a witness with us of His resurrection.” The Death and Resurrection of Christ was the starting point of Peter’s great sermon on Pentecost.
“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 purpose 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 … 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. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.” Acts 2:22-24, 29-33

So, again how can Christians say Jesus did not rise? Why would they say that? When did that belief – or lack of it – begin in Christianity? Some believe it began during the 18th century as part of the “Age of Enlightenment” – and grew into the liberation theology and Christian existentialism of “liberal” and “progressive” Christianity. Not believing in the Lord’s Resurrection is just one of the foundational teachings of the Bible they do not believe. In fact, many don’t believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. They believe the Bible is filled with errors. They believe that many
of the events in the Bible – like Creation, Adam and Eve, Noah’s Ark and the worldwide Flood – are just stories believers made up to help people understand universal spiritual truths. Some believe that much in the New Testament is mythical. They question major doctrines of the Faith – the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the Virgin Birth of Christ, the Miracles of Jesus, the resurrection of Lazarus, the Death of Christ on the Cross, the Blood Atonement of our Lord, the Ascension of Christ, the miracles of the Apostles, the Return of Christ for His Church, Heaven and hell.

The great debate about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and other essential beliefs of the Christian Faith began much earlier than the 18th century. In fact, they began in the 1st century. Paul, Christ’s Apostle to the Gentiles, warned church leaders to be on guard for those people “inside the Church” who would turn it upside down and try to change the very soul of its spiritual fabric. Here’s what Paul told the elders of the Church at Ephesus.

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Acts 20:28-30
That very thing has happened throughout the history of the Church. People who call themselves Christians rise up, speak perverse things, and draw away many disciples after themselves. Many of these “savage wolves” have perverted major aspects of the Christian Gospel and taken believers captive to their teaching – and they are still around. Could any be lurking in our church? We say that couldn’t happen, but I hear the words of Paul to the elders of a church that Paul himself founded – “take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

The Church does not belong to any believer or group of believers. The Church belongs to Christ. He purchased the Church with His Blood on the Cross.

Years before Paul told the Ephesian elders to keep their eyes out for wolves in their own church, Paul dealt with a major doctrinal problem in Corinth. Some members of the church there did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. How did Paul handle it? Head on!

Paul addressed a lot of doctrinal errors in the Corinthians Church. The most important was the Resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of those who believed in Him. In 1 Corinthians 6:14, Paul made what appears to be a basic statement of fact that all Christians would accept. “And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.” (1 Corinthians 6:14) But later in the letter, Paul addressed a major error some Christians had about the resurrection. “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Corinthians 15:12) No question about it –
some Christians at Corinth said there is no resurrection of the dead. How did Paul deal with this? Methodically and powerfully.

Paul began his portion about the resurrection by pointing Christians to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.” 1 Corinthians 15:1-2

**What is the Gospel of Jesus Christ?**

“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.” 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

**What is the Evidence for the Resurrection?**

“… 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, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.” 1 Corinthians 15:6-8
Christ is Risen from the dead!

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” 1 Corinthians 15:20-22

The Glorious Body!

“But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of
the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.” 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

Our Resurrection!

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 15:52-58

As we approach Good Friday and Easter in a couple of weeks, let’s remember how important remembering these Events is to the Body of Christ. Let us not be swept away by the world’s view of them, but may we
see them through God’s Eyes and rejoice in the power of spiritual freedom we have in our Lord.

“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.” Romans 6:8-10
Part 7

We are now about two weeks away from celebrating an event that goes to the core of Christianity – Easter Sunday. It is the day hundreds of millions of Christians around the world celebrate the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth almost 2,000 years ago.

As we continue our special series into Christianity’s Core Belief, let’s put Easter Sunday into perspective.

Perspective

There have been four great attacks on Jesus Christ during the last 2,000 years:

1. His Incarnation
2. His Crucifixion
3. His Resurrection
4. His Ascension

If the Son of God did not become flesh – the Incarnation – if the Son of God did not die for our sins on the Cross – the Crucifixion – if the Son of God did not rise from the dead – the Resurrection – and if the Son of God did not ascend to the highest position of Power and Authority in Heaven – the Ascension – then our faith is in vain. It is empty, useless, worthless.
The Church received many warnings from the Lord’s Apostles that Truths about Jesus Christ would be attacked – even by leaders and teachers inside the Church.

“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.” 2 Peter 1:16 – 2:3
“I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jude 3-4

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” Acts 20:28-31

Evidence

In defense of our Lord’s Resurrection, one important question to answer is how do we prove with certainty that Jesus rose from the dead?

Proving anything with certainty usually comes down to eye witness accounts and recorded documentation that is verifiable. Did anyone see the event? Are they credible witnesses? Did anyone record the event so that others would know what happened? Are the recordings credible? Is it reasonable to believe the event occurred as described?
The Apostle Paul wrote this about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ:

“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, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.” 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

Paul said there were credible documents (the Scriptures) and credible witnesses (Peter, all of the Apostles, more than 500 people at once, the Lord’s half brother James, and Paul) to the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Critics of the Lord’s Resurrection often say only a handful of people saw Jesus alive after His Crucifixion, but the Apostle Paul put the number at more than 500 people. That was more than sufficient to prove with certainty that Jesus rose from the dead at a time when most of the witnesses could come forward to refute Paul’s claims. They didn’t because what Paul said was true. They had seen the Risen Christ! Convincing proof that Jesus rose from the dead.

To that critics will say Jesus didn’t die on the Cross – that He fainted from exhaustion and the people around Him were mistaken about His condition when they took Him down from the Cross and that He awoke and was revived later by friends. Some say that Jesus faked His Death on the Cross and presented Himself as risen.
We heard from a surgeon earlier in this series about the results of the Roman beating on Jesus’ Body. If someone in the Lord’s condition after the beating was rushed to a hospital, they would be pronounced DOA at the hospital or admitted in extremely critical condition. The beatings would have cut through flesh so severely that people would be able to see bones, tendons, ligaments, veins, and internal organs. Nerves would be slashed to the point that some bodily functions would be greatly disrupted. The amount of blood loss would place the cardiovascular system in shock and the heart would pump at an accelerated rate to try to meet the need for new blood to keep vital physical functions moving. The body would be fighting for its very life!

The surgeon also addressed the physical and mental shock of having giant nails driven through the Lord’s hands and feet. That would have been extreme torture. In fact, the Latin word for torture is *excrucio* – “out of the cross.” We get our English word “excruciating” from it. The shoulders would come out of the socket because of the positioning of the arms nailed to the cross trying to hold up the weight of the body. The person being crucified would sink into a permanent position of inhale, so the only way to exhale was to use the feet and legs to push the body up long enough to exhale. The buildup of carbon dioxide in the blood would be poison the body. Many would die from asphyxiation as the feet and legs could no longer push the body up to exhale. After many hours or even days on the cross, soldiers would sometimes break the legs of people being crucified so they would die within a few minutes.
The Gospel accounts of the Lord’s Crucifixion are quite clear about the fact that Jesus was dead when Roman soldiers ran a spear into the Lord’s Body, took His Body off the Cross by pulling nails out of His Hands and Feet, checked for signs of life, then gave His Body to two Jewish leaders to be buried. Crucifixion was a common means of killing the enemies of Rome, so the soldiers were very familiar with death. They killed tens of thousands of men throughout the Roman Empire every year. It’s estimated that 30,000 Jewish men were crucified during the time that Jesus ministered in Israel. The soldiers who daily crucified these men knew a dead body when they saw it. The also knew they would be killed if they didn’t carry out their responsibility. No enemy of Rome was to be left alive after their crucifixion. Forensic medical experts say that the mixture of water and blood that came out of Jesus’ side when the spear was removed from it is proof that Jesus was dead and that He died of a ruptured heart. Convincing proof that Jesus died on the Cross.

To that critics will say the Lord’s disciples stole His Body from the grave, buried it elsewhere and made up the Resurrection story so they could keep the Messianic hope alive for Israel. Really?

The Gospel accounts record that Roman soldiers were commanded to keep watch around the tomb if anyone tried to steal the Body of Christ. The tomb was sealed to make sure nobody could get inside without the soldiers knowing it. The soldiers were well armed and able to carry out their duty. To fail in carrying out their duty would have meant severe penalties up to and including death. The soldiers could have easily defeated the disciples. They told the chief priests about the great earthquake and the angel rolling back
the stone in front of the tomb. The priests bribed the guards and told them to say that Christ’s disciples came at night and stole His Body while the guards slept. The guards took the money and did as they were instructed. Matthew wrote that the guards’ story was commonly reported among the Jews. More convincing proof that Jesus rose from the dead.

For those who say that the women went to the wrong tomb and the disciples only thought Jesus was raised from the dead because they couldn’t find the body – the chief priests would have paraded Jesus’ body through the streets of Jerusalem to show that He was still dead and the disciples were greatly mistaken. That didn’t happen because the women and the disciples went to the correct tomb and the Lord’s Body wasn’t there. Why? Because He was Alive!

Another convincing truth is that while people will die for something they believe to be true – they will not die for a lie. Most of the apostles and many other disciples died as martyrs saying they had seen Jesus Christ alive after His Crucifixion. They would not have died for something they knew to be untrue. We learn in the Book of Acts that Jesus spent 40 days with the disciples after His Crucifixion, teaching them about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). This is certainly strong evidence that proves the disciples did not hallucinate or see an apparition or a ghost. They spent 40 days with Jesus and knew Jesus was alive. They touched Him and He touched them. They ate together, talked together and walked together. As Jesus said to them during His first meeting with them – “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.” (Luke 24:39) Again, powerful proof that Jesus was alive and not a ghostly spiritual image floating around the disciples.

To that critics will say the Gospels were not written in the 1st century by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but by unknown people in the 2nd century who copied stories from pagan religions to bolster the claims of Christianity. Really?

None of the Gospels mention the destruction of the Temple – which was a major prophecy of Jesus during His Ministry. We know from historical records that the Romans destroyed the Temple in 70 A.D. If the Gospels were written before 70 A.D., then it is probable the Lord’s apostles would still be alive. Luke wrote the Book of Acts after he wrote his Gospel account and Acts also does not mention the destruction of the Temple and speaks of Peter, Paul and other apostles as still alive at the time of its writing.

The Apostle Paul – the most prolific writer of the New Testament – gave support in his writings to the Lord’s apostles being active in ministry during his lifetime. We know historically that Paul died in Rome about 64 or 65 AD, prior to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Paul visited Jerusalem numerous times after seeing the risen Jesus and Temple worship was still occurring during those visits.
The last time we are sure Paul was in Jerusalem is recorded in Acts 21.

“Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them … And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.” Acts 21:26, 30

Based on the fact that the Temple was still open for offerings during Paul’s visit, which had to be prior to his death in mid-60’s AD, we know Paul’s arrest had to be prior to 70 AD.

Based on other events in Paul’s life that can be timed with historical accuracy, we know he was arrested in Jerusalem about 57 AD. Based on information we have about Mark and Luke’s involvement with Paul and Peter (who also died in Rome in mid-60’s AD), we know they (Mark and Luke) would have written their Gospel accounts and the history of the early Church (Acts) prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

Mark and Luke traveled with Paul and Peter and some of what they wrote in their Gospel and Acts accounts would have come from the Apostles. An early copy of a portion of John’s Gospel – called The John Rylands papyrus fragment 52 – is dated about 125 A.D. Since it was a copy, John would have to have written the original prior to that. Most scholars date the original to the late 1st century. *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* – dated from the middle of the 2nd century – includes sayings of Jesus which have parallels

This is convincing evidence that the Gospel accounts and Acts were written before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. More support of the credibility of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
To that critics will eventually say they do not believe in the Bible, the God of the Bible, or the supernatural. Now, we’re getting somewhere! The attacks on Jesus Christ are a smoke screen for what’s really going on in the hearts and minds of skeptics and scoffers. They are naturalists and do not believe in the possibility of the supernatural. Of course they’re going to deny the Resurrection. Paul stated it well in his letter to the Church in Rome –

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Romans 1:18-21

Many unbelievers do not want to face the truth about their sin nature and their need for God’s forgiveness, so they suppress the truth in unrighteousness.
In today’s article we attempted to share some perspective about Christianity’s core belief, which is the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. As the Apostle Paul wrote –

“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.” 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

In today’s article we’ll look deeper into the importance of the empty tomb of Jesus.
The Jesus Timeline

[Jewish time is known as **halachic hour** – relative hour, variable hour, proportional hour or seasonal hour. There are 12 hours assigned to the day and 12 hours assigned to the night. The first hour of the day is daybreak (dawn). The third hour is 9am. The sixth hour is Noon. The ninth hour is 3pm.]

We know from the Gospel accounts that Jesus of Nazareth died on a Roman cross.

“Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: ‘They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.’ Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.” Matthew 27:35-37

“And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it. And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take.” Mark 15:22-24

“There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the
other on the left. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’ And they divided His garments and cast lots. And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, ‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.’ Luke 23:32-35

“And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” John 19:17-19

We know Roman soldiers placed Jesus on the cross about 9:00 in the morning.

“Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him.” Mark 15:25

We know darkness came over the whole land about 12pm and lasted until about 3pm.

“Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land.” Matthew 27:45

“Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land …” Mark 15:33
“Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.” Luke 23:44

We know Jesus died about 3:00 in the afternoon.

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, ‘This Man is calling for Elijah!’ Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. The rest said, ‘Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him.’ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.” Matthew 27:46-50

“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, ‘Look, He is calling for Elijah!’ Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, ‘Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.’ And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.” Mark 15:34-37

“Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ Having
said this, He breathed His last. So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, ‘Certainly this was a righteous Man!’” Luke 23:44-47

“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, ‘I thirst!’ Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.” John 19:28-30

We know that some of Jesus’ family and friends were nearby and saw Jesus die.

“And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.” Matthew 27:55-56

“There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.” Mark 15:40-41

“But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.” Luke 23:49
“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold your son!’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother!’ And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.” John 19:25-27

We know that two Jewish rulers, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, asked Pilate for the body of Jesus so they could bury Him in a new tomb. We also know that some of the women who watched Jesus die also saw where His body was buried. We also know the women did not return to the tomb on the Sabbath.

“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 to be given to him. 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.” Matthew 27:57-61

“Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body
of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was laid.” Mark 15:42-47

“Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.” Luke 23:50-55

“After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in
strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews’ Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.” John 19:38-42

We know that the chief priests and Pharisees met with Pilate the day after Jesus was crucified about securing the body of Jesus in the tomb so the disciples would not steal the body.

“On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, ‘Sir, 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 they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.” Matthew 27:62-66

We know that when family and friends of Jesus went to His tomb on the first day of the week (Sunday), they found that the tomb was empty.

“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 went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.” Matthew 28:1-8

“Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, ‘Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?’ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.’ So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” Mark 16:1-8
“Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, 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. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’ And they remembered His words. Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.” Luke 24:1-11

“Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” John 20:1-2
The chief priests and Pharisees were partially correct. Jesus did say “After three days I will rise.” However, their best efforts to secure the tomb did not work. Jesus rose from the dead. What would the Jewish rulers do? How would they deal with the fact that the soldiers were not able to secure the tomb of the Resurrected Son of God? We’ll look at that tomorrow.
Two weeks until Easter – what are Christians around the world doing to get ready?

Many are preparing for the annual celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Some are preparing for Good Friday programs – Passion Plays – Easter Contatas – Easter Sunrise services. Many are fasting and praying. Some have given up something for Christ during the time before Easter to remember what Jesus gave up for us. Good Friday vigils and Easter celebrations were well established by the 2nd Century A.D. Fasting began on Good Friday and continued until Easter morning when Christians would rise early, wash, and greet the sun in celebration of the Lord’s Resurrection. Easter is the oldest annual Christian celebration.

*What was Jesus doing weeks before Easter?*

He was preparing His followers for what was going to happen to Him and them.

“Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.’ But they understood none of these things; this saying was
hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.” Luke 18:31-34

“All Things That Are Written By The Prophets Concerning The Son of Man Will be Accomplished!”

Jesus was speaking about hundreds of Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. His profound statement to His disciples was that everything the prophets wrote about the Messiah’s arrest, trial, beatings, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection would be accomplished in Him.

450 years before Easter

“Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the LORD of hosts.” Malachi 3:1

God was prophetically silent for 400 years. He didn’t say anything new to Israel. Malachi was the last Old Testament prophet. The Lord spoke through Malachi and told the people of Israel that another prophet would come to prepare the way of the Lord. We learn in the New Testament that John the Baptist was that prophet. We also learn that John the Baptist recognized Jesus Christ as the One Who God said would be the “Messenger of the covenant.”
550 years before Easter

“Then I said to them, ‘If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain.’ So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter’—that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter.” Zechariah 11:12-13

This prophecy was fulfilled with Judas who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, tried to return the money to the chief priests and elders who had hired him, then threw the silver into the temple, went out and hanged himself. The chief priests took the 30 pieces of silver and used them to purchase a potter’s field for the burial of strangers.

“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.” Zechariah 12:10

Fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ.
580 years before Easter

“And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself.” Daniel 9:26

Fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ.

600 years before Easter

“I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.” Ezekiel 34:23-24

Fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

620 years before Easter

“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor,
every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” Jeremiah 31:31-34

Fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

770 years before Easter

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

Fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ.

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” Isaiah 40:3-5

Fulfilled by John the Baptist and Jesus Christ.
“Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men.” Isaiah 52:13-14

**Fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ.**

“He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.” Isaiah 53:3-5

**Fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ.**

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of
righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.” Isaiah 61:1-3

**Fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus Christ.**

“For He said, ‘Surely they are My people, Children who will not lie.’ So He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the Angel of His Presence saved them; In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; And He bore them and carried them All the days of old.” Isaiah 63:8-9

**Fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ.**

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.” Micah 5:2

**Fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ.**

800 years before Easter

“And it shall come to pass in that day,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘That I will make the sun go down at noon, And I will darken the earth in broad daylight.” Amos 8:9

**Fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ.**
1,000 years before Easter

“I have set the LORD always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” Psalm 16:8-10

**Fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

“I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.” Psalm 22:14-18

**Fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ.**
1,500 years before Easter

“And the LORD said to me: ‘What they have spoken is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.” Deuteronomy 18:17-19

**Fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus Christ.**

1,900 years before Easter

“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.” Genesis 49:10

**Fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus Christ.**

Thousands of years before Easter

“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:15

**Fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ!**
Part 10

Yesterday we looked at what Jesus of Nazareth and His disciples were doing just weeks before His crucifixion and resurrection. We also looked at some of the Old Testament prophecies that Jesus fulfilled hundreds of years later.

In today’s article we’ll look at the strength of those prophecies and how Jesus fulfilled them.

Mathematical Probability That Jesus Is The Messiah

Jesus of Nazareth told His disciples “all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished” (Luke 18:31). The mathematical/statistical probability that one person would fulfill every prophecy concerning the Son of Man in the Old Testament is beyond our ability to comprehend. Here are some examples to help us see how amazing the Lord’s statement was to the disciples just weeks before His death and resurrection.

More than 50 years ago the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship at Pasadena City College in Pasadena, California sponsored a class in Christian evidences. More than 600 students participated and the results of their findings were studied and approved by experts in mathematics and statistics. Peter Stoner, a professor mathematics and astronomy, evaluated
the findings and changed some to make them even more conservative. Here’s what the students discovered.

**Student Discovery**

Concerning the prophecy in Micah that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem – the students asked – “One man in how many, the world over, has been born in Bethlehem?” Based on the population of the world and Bethlehem between Micah’s prophecy and the birth of Christ, the students estimated the mathematical probability would be one man in $2.8 \times 10^5$ was born in Bethlehem. That’s 280,000 men.

If we poured 280,000 silver dollars into a large room – drew a cross on one of the dollars – and led a blindfolded man into that room to select one of the dollars – what are the chances he would pick up the dollar with the cross drawn on it? 1 in 280,000.

Next, the students took Micah’s prophecy and added seven other prophecies to it – for a total of eight prophecies about Messiah. Those seven other prophecies were Malachi 3:1, Zechariah 9:9, Zechariah 13:6, Zechariah 13:12, Zechariah 11:13, Isaiah 53:7, and Psalm 22:16. None of them included prophecies concerning the Virgin Birth – since that is truly impossible in the natural world.

What is the chance that one person could fulfill all eight prophecies? 1 in $10^{17}$. That’s a 1 followed by 17 zeroes! 100,000,000,000,000,000. It is estimated that if we were to pour that many silver dollars on the state of
Texas, it would cover the state two feet deep. If we added a silver dollar with the cross drawn on it and put it in the mix of coins before we poured them across the State of Texas, then sent our blindfolded friend into the state and asked him to walk as far as he wanted to go, then pick up one coin – what are the chances he would find the coin with the cross? 1 in $100,000,000,000,000,000$.

Next, the math students doubled the number of prophecies to 16 – without any being the Virgin Birth. The chances of one person fulfilling those 16 Messianic prophecies increased to $1$ in $10^{45}$. That’s a 1 followed by 45 zeroes. Now we have silver dollars that would cover a space in all directions 30 times the distance of the earth to the sun. That’s $30 \times 93,000,000$ miles in all directions!

The Math students then tripled the number to 48 prophecies – again without the Virgin Birth included. They found that the mathematical probability that one man could fulfill 48 Messianic prophecies was $1$ in $10^{157}$. That’s a 1 followed by 157 zeroes. Now we have silver dollars filling galaxies! What is the chance that our blindfolded man could find the one silver dollar marked with a cross? $1$ in $10^{157}$.

Keep in mind that we’ve only gone up to 48 prophecies about the Messiah. There are hundreds of Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. The statistical probability of one man fulfilling every Messianic prophecy – except for the prophecy of the Virgin Birth – would be a 1 followed by thousands of zeroes. We would have silver dollars filling the universe! The possibility that a blindfolded person would find the marked coin could truly
be called statistically impossible. We know there is only one way Jesus fulfilled every Messianic prophecy – He is the Eternal Son of God.

Oh, and as soon as we include the prophecy about the Virgin Birth – we do have the impossible. It would be a true miracle of God. When God is involved – the chances are always 1 in 1. God is always right!

Two weeks until Easter – what does it mean to you?

#1 – You can trust the faith you have in Jesus Christ. It is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. The Greek word for “substance” (hupostasis) means “confidence.” The word for “evidence” (elegchos) means “proof, that which is tested, reproof, reprove, rebuke, certain persuasion, leading to conviction.” The proof of our faith is so powerful that it is overwhelming!

#2 – You can depend on God to do everything He promises. For a Christian, that includes the promise that we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of God, “who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” God will do everything He promised to do! Jesus is who He said He is – did what He said He would do – and will do what He says He will do. We can depend on God in every area of our life.

#3 – You can know the power of God in your life. The same power that forgave sins on the Cross and raised Jesus from the grave is operating in you! You wonder if you can go on? You can in the power of God! You don’t know if you can forgive any longer? You can in the power of God! You don’t know if you can do what God asks you to do? You can in the power of God!
As we continue to look at Christianity’s Core Belief – the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth – let’s consider what that means to us. The Apostle Paul said it this way –

“And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”
1 Corinthians 15:17

If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then our faith is futile (pointless) and we are still in our sins (unforgiven). That’s a powerful statement with eternal consequences. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then none of the following truth claims are true. If Jesus did rise from the dead, then every one of these truth claims are true and vital for your eternal future.

When Jesus Died and Rose from the Dead

1. He redeemed us and forgave our sins — Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14
2. He justified us freely by His grace and saved us from the wrath to come — Romans 3:23-26; 5:9
3. He saved our lives by atoning for our sins — Romans 5:10-11
4. He gave us the gift of righteousness — Romans 5:12-21
5. He freed us from sin by placing us under grace — Romans 6:6-14
6. He died for the ungodly sinners — Romans 6:6-7
7. He gave us the gift of eternal life — Romans 6:23
8. He delivered us from the sin nature — Romans 7:21-25
9. He removed us from the condemnation of God — Romans 8:1
10. He made us free from the law of sin and death — Romans 8:2
11. He made us joint-heirs in the inheritance of God — Romans 8:16-18
12. He gave us every good spiritual thing — Romans 8:31-34
13. He gave us an unbeatable love — Romans 8:35-39
14. He showed us the power of wisdom of God — 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23-24
15. He became the foundation of all Christian service — 1 Corinthians 2:1-2; 3:11
16. He died for our sins according to the Scripture … He fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies about the suffering Messiah — 1 Corinthians 15:3-4
17. He placed all His enemies under His feet — 1 Corinthians 15:24-26
18. He gave us victory over sin — 1 Corinthians 15:55-57
19. He became sin for us — 2 Corinthians 5:21
20. He made us rich — 2 Corinthians 8:9
21. He delivered us from this present evil world — Galatians 1:3-4
22. He gave us the Holy Spirit and freedom from the law — Galatians 3:1-3
23. He redeemed us from the curse of the law — Galatians 3:13
24. He made us spiritual sons — Galatians 4:4-7
25. He gave us freedom and liberty from the law — Galatians 5:1-4
26. He crucified the world to us and us to the world — Galatians 6:14
27. He blessed us with every spiritual blessing — Ephesians 1:3
28. He accepted us in the beloved — Ephesians 1:6
29. He sealed our salvation with the Holy Spirit of Promise — Ephesians 1:13-14

30. He became the Head of the Church, His Body — Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23

31. He opened the way for the spiritually dead to come to life — Ephesians 2:1, 5

32. He made a place for us to sit in the heavenlies — Ephesians 2:6

33. He demonstrated the exceeding riches of His grace — Ephesians 2:7

34. He created us unto good works — Ephesians 2:10

35. He made a way for the Gentiles to come to God — Ephesians 2:13

36. He abolished the law of commandments in ordinances and blotted them out — Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14

37. He made the Jew and Gentile fellow citizens in the family of God — Ephesians 2:15-19; 3:6

38. He demonstrated His love for us — Ephesians 5:1-2, 25

39. He made us spiritual lights — Ephesians 5:8

40. He set us apart to be holy and without fault — Ephesians 2:25-27

41. He gave us weapons to fight spiritual warfare — Ephesians 6:10-18

42. He became our example of obedience and service to God — Philippians 2:5-8

43. He provided a way to guard our hearts and minds from worry and anxiety — Philippians 4:6-7

44. He gave us strength to face the difficulties of life — Philippians 4:12-13

45. He supplied all our needs — Philippians 4:19

46. He made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance — Colossians 11:12

47. He delivered us from the power of darkness — Colossians 1:13
48. He earned pre-eminence in all things — Colossians 1:18
49. He made peace and reconciled us to God — Colossians 1:20
50. He presented us holy to God — Colossians 1:22
51. He delivered us from the wrath to come — 1 Thessalonians 1:10
52. He became our mediator with God — 1 Timothy 2:5-6
53. He called us with a holy calling — 2 Timothy 1:9
54. He abolished death — 2 Timothy 1:10
55. He redeemed us from all iniquity and purified us as a special people — Titus 2:14
56. He cleansed our sins — Hebrews 1:3
57. He tasted death for us — Hebrews 2:9
58. He became the author of our salvation — Hebrews 2:10; 5:9
59. He destroyed the devil — Hebrews 2:14
60. He became our High Priest of Heaven — Hebrews 4:14
61. He became the mediator of a better covenant — Hebrews 8:6
62. He entered once into the holy place and obtained eternal redemption for us — Hebrews 9:12
63. He cleansed our conscience from dead works to serve the living God — Hebrews 9:14
64. He fulfilled the new covenant putting the promise of inheritance in full force — Hebrews 9:15-17
65. He appeared in the presence of God for us — Hebrews 9:24
66. He bore the sins of many — Hebrews 9:28
67. He set us apart for God’s service — Hebrews 10:10
68. He offered one sacrifice for sins for ever — Hebrews 10:12
69. He spiritually completed us forever — Hebrews 10:14
70. He made a way for us to boldly enter into the holiest place — Hebrews 10:19-20
71. He became the author and finisher of our faith — Hebrews 12:2
72. He suffered for us to set us apart — Hebrews 13:12
73. He washed us from our sins — Revelations 1:5
74. He made us kings and priests — Revelation 1:6
75. He received the keys of hell and of death — Revelations 1:18

What have you done with Jesus? What has He done with you?
Part 12

Jesus accomplished great things on the cruel cross. We know about them because God inspired the Apostles to tell us. The following is a list of more than 50 things the Apostle Paul said Jesus did for us on the day He died voluntarily on the Cross.

Non-Christians have difficulty understanding why Christians make such a big deal about the death of Jesus Christ. As a former atheist, I understand why that seems strange to people who do not believe Jesus was anything more than just a man. However, for those of us who believe Jesus is both God and Man, we understand that His death is at the core of our spiritual salvation. If Jesus had not died, we would not be saved. It’s as simple as that.

Unfortunately, many Christians today understand little about what they believe. That lack of knowledge leads to a lack of appreciation for what Christ did on the Cross. It also makes explaining the importance of Christ’s death to non-Christians difficult and sometimes embarrassing. The two doctrines most fundamental to Christianity are the **Death** and **Resurrection** of Jesus Christ.

In the next two parts of our special series about **Christianity’s Core Beliefs**, we will look at **Why Jesus Died** and **Why Jesus Rose**.
The Old Testament is filled with prophecies concerning the death of Jesus Christ. It should have come as no surprise to the people who saw and heard Him, but it did. The Scriptures spoke of the great pain he would experience: physically and emotionally. Death on the cross was one of the cruelest ways of killing another human being known to the world at the time of Christ. That is the death the prophets spoke about in great detail centuries before that form of death was even created. Here are just a few examples from their ancient writings.

“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:15

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?” Psalm 22:1

“But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads.” Psalm 22:6-7

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and
my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. they divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.” Psalm 22:14-18

“He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our grievances And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearsers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked — But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with
the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was
numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And
made intercession for the transgressors.” Isaiah 53:3-12

What Jesus Did On The Cross

Jesus accomplished great things on the cruel cross. We know about them
because God inspired the Apostles to tell us. The following is a list of more
than 50 things the Apostle Paul said Jesus did for us on the day He died
voluntarily on the Cross. Consider, prayerfully, the Love and Sacrifice of
Jesus Christ as you read each one. I pray God will touch your heart deeply
and show you the Great Love He has for you.”Greater love has no one than
this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

He redeemed us and forgave our sins

• Acts 20:28

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which
the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of
God which He purchased with His own blood.”
• Ephesians 1:7-8

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence.”

• Colossians 1:13-14

“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

He justified us freely by His Grace and saved us from God’s wrath

• Romans 3:21-26

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”
• Romans 5:9

“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”

He saved our lives by atoning for our sins (Romans 5:10-11)

“For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

He gave us the gift of righteousness (Romans 5:12-21)

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification.”
For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

**He freed us from sin by placing us under grace (Romans 6:1-14)**

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall
also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”

He died to free us from sin (Romans 6:6-7)

“… knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. “

He gave us the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

He will rescue us from the sin nature (Romans 7:21-25)

“I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But
I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”

He removed us from the condemnation of God and set us free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1)

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

He made us joint-heirs in the inheritance of God (Romans 8:16-18)

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

He gave us every good spiritual thing (Romans 8:31-34)

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who
justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

**He gave us an unbeatable love (Romans 8:35-39)**

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**He showed us the power and wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23-24)**

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God … but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”
He became the foundation of all Christian service

- 1 Corinthians 2:1-2

  “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

- 1 Corinthians 3:11

  “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

He died for our sins according to the Scripture ... He fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies about the suffering Messiah (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

  “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.”

He placed all His enemies under His feet (1 Corinthians 15:24-26)

  “Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and
power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. “

**He gave us victory over sin (1 Corinthians 15:55-57)**

“O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**He became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21)**

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

**He made us rich (2 Corinthians 8:9)**

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”

**He delivered us from this present evil world (Galatians 1:3-4)**

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father”
He gave us the Holy Spirit and freedom from the law (Galatians 3:1-3)

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”

He redeemed us from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13)

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”).”

He made us spiritual sons (Galatians 4:4-7)

“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.”
He gave us freedom and liberty from the law (Galatians 5:1-4)

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”

He crucified the world to us and us to the world (Galatians 6:14)

“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

He blessed us with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

He gave us His glorious Grace in Christ (Ephesians 1:6)

“... to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”
He sealed our salvation with the Holy Spirit of Promise (Ephesians 1:13-14)

“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

He became the Head of the Church, His Body

- Ephesians 1:22-23

  “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

- Ephesians 5:23

  “For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.”

He opened the way for the spiritually dead to come to life (Ephesians 2:1-2,4-5)

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now
works in the sons of disobedience … But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”

He made a place for us to sit with Christ in the heavenlies (Ephesians 2:6)

“… and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

He demonstrated the exceeding riches of His Grace (Ephesians 2:7)

“… that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

He empowered us to do good works (Ephesians 2:10)

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

He made a way for the Gentiles to come to God (Ephesians 2:13)

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”
He abolished the law of commandments in ordinances and blotted them out

- Ephesians 2:14-15

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.”

- Colossians 2:13-14

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

He made the Jew and Gentile fellow citizens in the family of God

- Ephesians 2:15-19

“... having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby
putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”

- Ephesians 3:6

“… that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.”

**He demonstrated His love for us (Ephesians 5:1-2, 25)**

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma … Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”

**He made us spiritual lights (Ephesians 5:8)**

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”
He gave us weapons to fight spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18)

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”

He became our example of obedience and service to God (Philippians 2:5-8)

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”
He provided a way to guard our hearts and minds from worry and anxiety (Philippians 4:6-7)

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

He gave us strength to face the difficulties of life (Philippians 4:12-13)

“I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

He supplied all our needs (Philippians 4:19)

“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

He made us fit to be partakers of the spiritual inheritance (Colossians 1:12)

“... giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”
He delivered us from the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13)

“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”

He earned pre-eminence in all things (Colossians 1:18)

“And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”

He made peace and reconciled us to God (Colossians 1:20)

“... and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.”

He presented us holy to God (Colossians 1:22)

“... in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.”

He delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

“... and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”
He became our mediator with God (1 Timothy 2:5-6)

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

He called us with a holy calling and abolished death (2 Timothy 1:9-10)

“…who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

He redeemed us from all iniquity and purified us as a special people (Titus 2:14)

“… who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”

You are VERY special! Look at what God has done for you through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. God did all of this because He loves you, deeply and eternally. Don’t ever doubt it. Don’t let anyone make you think you’re not special in this life. You are! God thinks the world of you. He gave
you His greatest Gift. He'll give you everything you need to bring glory to His Name.
Part 13

We are asking two important questions at this point in our special series about Christianity’s Core Belief:

1. Why Did Jesus Die?
2. Why Did Jesus Rise From The Dead?

Yesterday, we asked the first question. Today, we will ask and answer the second question: why did Jesus rise from the dead?

The Claim

The Apostle Paul was a strong believer in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He knew Jesus was alive because Jesus called Him personally to follow Him. Paul had also spent time with Jesus learning directly from Him. Paul believed Christ’s Resurrection was foundational to God’s demonstration of His Grace and our salvation. Paul believed Christ was the first one to rise from the dead and that every Christian had the hope of personal resurrection because of Christ. Paul spoke clearly about it before crowds of people everywhere. He was not shy about what he knew to be true.
“Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, 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. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’ And they remembered His words.” Luke 24:1-8

The power of these verses is staggering! A man was brutally killed on a wooden cross, buried in a tomb, and came back to life three days later. During the days following the Resurrection, people who knew this Man well see Him, touch Him, hear Him, talk to Him, eat with Him, and learn from Him. They spend many days and nights with Him, then watch as He ascends into the sky surrounded by angels. Is this a fairy tale? lie? legend? No! It’s the truth.

Jesus Christ is that Man. He was delivered into the hands of sinful men who mocked and killed Him. Jesus is the Man Who died the cruel death of crucifixion. He was the Man buried in a tomb guarded by Roman soldiers so that no one could take away His body. Jesus was the Man Who rose
from death to live again. Jesus was the Man who proved His resurrection to hundreds of people before returning to Heaven by ascending into the sky with His angels. Jesus is the Man!

The Evidence

“Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and

“Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, ‘What does this babbler want to say?’ Others said, ‘He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,’ because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.” Acts 17:18

“… because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” Acts 17:31

“But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, ‘Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!’” Acts 23:6

“… unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, ‘Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.” Acts 24:21
would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.” Acts 26:22-23

Paul wrote about it in his many letters to friends:

“... concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Romans 1:3-4

“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection ... Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:4-5, 8-11

“... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” Philippians 3:10-11
“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 4:14

Paul’s greatest explanation of Christ’s resurrection and its impact on Christians is found in his first letter to friends at Corinth:

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 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, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.
Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For ‘He has put all things under His feet.’ But when He says ‘all things are put under Him,’ it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!’ Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’ Awake to righteousness, and do not
sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame. But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at
the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 15

The Victory

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is about VICTORY! God is victorious through the resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, and those who follow Christ into that resurrection. What has been the defeat of mankind since the time of Adam and Eve? Sin and death! Adam sinned and died. People have been sinning and dying ever since. Has that defeated God? Absolutely not! God had a plan for victory even before Adam sinned. Jesus Christ is the sacrificial Lamb who God sent to earth to take away the sins of the world. Jesus died for us. He shed His blood for us. He agonized on the cross because of and for us. He was buried in our place.
If Jesus had died on the cross and remained in the tomb, we could have forgiveness of sins, but that’s only part of what God planned. If Jesus remained in the grave, God would not have won the victory. The victory was complete in Christ’s resurrection. Jesus beat death. He beat sin. He beat Satan. Jesus WON!

Jesus Christ died for our sins. Jesus rose for our justification.

“Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.” Romans 4:23-25

Christians stand before God as free people. We stand before Him justified (made righteous). We stand before Him with an eternal future of life and joy. No one else can say this. Christians are alone in this amazing light…the light of Victory. The resurrection is that Victory!

“When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’”

Our lives are about to be changed forever. We are about to experience the resurrection of Christ in our own bodies. We are about to see what it is to change from perishable to imperishable … from mortal to immortal. It may be today. It may tomorrow. It may be next week, next month, or next year.
The fact is we ARE going to change. We WILL be victorious. Christ's resurrection is proof of that. Then we can sing with Paul, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

“The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 15:56-57

Look at what Christ did for us through His death and resurrection! He gave us victory over death, sin and the law. We are victorious!

I’ll be the first to tell you that Christians don’t always act victorious. We often get defeated and discouraged. We often wonder why such awful things befall us in life. We often wonder why we’re so weak. We are allowing sin and the law to keep a grip on us even though we’re spiritually free of their grip. What do we do about that? Apply the principles of Victorious Living. Here’s what God taught the Apostle Paul to do about it.

“And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you
have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:18-23

We are “free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.” We need to be smart about our freedom. We need to understand the working of our victory. We needed God in the beginning and we’ll need Him in the end. It’s silly to think we can depend on God completely for our salvation and then just throw Him aside and live out the rest of our lives without Him and be successful. We were slaves to sin. Now we are slaves to righteousness. We offered our body and mind to sin. Now we offer our body and mind to righteousness which leads to holiness. It’s a process. We don’t get everything overnight. We have to work at it. Being a slave or servant of something or someone means we work, work, work. Being a servant of God means we spend a lot of time listening, learning, praising, and doing. Look at what Paul told the Corinthians about their victory through Jesus.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 15:58

We were created in Christ Jesus with a view toward “good works.”

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10
God does not say living a victorious life will be easy. In fact, He makes it clear it will be hard and we will have trouble. However, it will not be in vain. We have a great reward. It’s the reward of pleasing Him Who so Graciously gave us everything. It’s the reward of spending eternity with Christ in great joy. That’s our victory. Sin, death, the law … they can’t do anything to us now. We are on our way to the great resurrection. Jesus rose and so will we!

“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.”
Part 14

We mentioned the name of Nicodemus earlier in this series about Christianity’s Core Belief. He was one of two Jewish rulers who buried the body of Jesus of Nazareth after His crucifixion.

“After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. 39 And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. 40 Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.” John 19:38-40

Let’s take a closer look at this man’s life and what we can learn for our own.

Nicodemus

“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” John 3:1-2
Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews. He was a member of the ruling Sanhedrin in Israel. He was also a member of the Pharisees, and as such, was anticipating the coming Kingdom of God. Nicodemus would have spent most of his life studying the Hebrew Bible, believing that living a life dedicated to God would prepare a place for him in the future Messianic Age. He came to Jesus by night. Why? Pharisees were “set apart” and had strict rules about who they talked to and why. As a ruler of the Jews, a daytime visit to Jesus might have been seen as legitimizing His teaching and ministry. Jesus had no “authority” to teach in the traditional settings of the elders of Israel, but Nicodemus knew that Jesus was a Teacher come from God – “for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” God’s Authority always trumps man’s authority.

If Jesus’ purpose in teaching was to win over the rulers of Israel to His side, this was His big chance. Nicodemus was the first ruler to express a real interest in the teachings of Jesus. How Jesus responded to Nicodemus demonstrates the true nature of the Lord’s purpose.

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’” John 3:3

Jesus did not acknowledge the position Nicodemus had as a ruler of the Jews. Even though it was dark, Jesus knew who He was talking to and His response shows a deeper concern for Nicodemus than for political opportunity. Jesus told Nicodemus the truth because He loved him.
Nicodemus had a wrong understanding about seeing the Kingdom of God. He thought he would see it one day because of his piety, privilege and position in Jewish society. Nicodemus saw Jesus as someone who could help him in his climb up the ladder of ecclesiastical success. Jesus brought that crashing down around Nicodemus by simply stating that the Pharisee had to be “born again” in order to see the Kingdom of God.

As you might imagine, Jesus’ response was not what Nicodemus expected.

“Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’”

John 3:4

What Jesus had said didn’t make sense to Nicodemus. How could a man be born again? How could he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born? It’s not possible.

Jesus did not apologize for what He had said. He did not try to take it back and explain in another way. In fact, Jesus went further so that Nicodemus would have no doubt that what Jesus was telling him was not about physical rebirth.

“Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot
tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” John 3:5-8

Not only could Nicodemus not “see” the Kingdom of God; he could not “enter” the Kingdom of God based on his religion. Why? Because the Kingdom of God can only be seen and entered by spiritual birth – “born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus still did not understand what Jesus was saying.

“Nicodemus answered and said to Him, ‘How can these things be?’” John 3:9

These are the last words recorded about what Nicodemus said to Jesus that night, but what the Lord said to him next had a deep impact on this ruler of Israel.

“Jesus answered and said to him, Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that
whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ‘He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” John 3:10-21

We hear from Nicodemus two more times in John. Most of the Jewish rulers wanted Jesus arrested, tried and killed for what He was saying about them, but Nicodemus knew there was something special about the Lord and spoke in His defense.

“Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him. Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, ‘Why have you not brought Him?’ The officers answered, ‘No man ever spoke like this Man!’ Then the Pharisees answered them, ‘Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.’ Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, ‘Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?’ They answered and said to him,
‘Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.” John 7:4-52

We have no record of Nicodemus saying anymore to his fellow rulers about Jesus, but that did not end his belief in the Lord. Nicodemus did an amazingly brave thing after the rulers of Israel conspired with the Romans to arrest, try and kill Jesus. What Nicodemus did was physically and politically dangerous. He went to the Cross and helped place the Body of Jesus in a borrowed tomb.

“After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.” John 19:38-40

On that remarkable day when Jesus died for Nicodemus and all others who would “believe in Him,” Nicodemus helped prepare the Lord’s Body for burial – and for Resurrection from the dead.

The New Testament doesn’t reveal anything else about Nicodemus. He may have continued as a ruler of Israel or he may have lost his position because of helping bury the Lord’s Body. Nicodemus may have been one of the 500 who saw Jesus after His Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15). He
may have been one of the 120 who waited for the Holy Spirit in the upper room. We don’t know what happened to Nicodemus, but I think the step of commitment he took to help place Jesus in the tomb was just the first of many steps of faith toward the Kingdom of God.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a Gospel that few people know. Jesus said that “many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matthew 22:14) The gospel that most people know – whether easy-believism, legalism, works gospel, cafeteria gospel, entitlement gospel, emerging gospel, or any one of dozens of other “gospels” being preached today – will not get anyone inside the spiritual Kingdom of God. There is only one Way in and that is believing what Jesus believes. It is not about whether we accept Jesus, but whether Jesus accepts us.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:12-13
Rejoice! Jesus is Risen!!

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