

## CHRISTOLOGY

### V. Christ in Resurrection

#### I. Introduction

- A. The word “resurrection” means a rising from the dead or a return from the dead and always in the Bible refers to the resurrection of the body. There can be no resurrection of the soul or spirit for these cannot die.
- B. In a world of atheistic science, philosophical confusion and religious superstition, does the Christian have any objective basis to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Is it intellectually sensibly to believe in resurrection or is it just an emotional binge? Every Christian must face this honestly in his heart!
- C. The Bible teaches that the whole Christian faith rests upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If it is true that the Christian faith rests on Christ’s resurrection, are there any objective facts that would help us prove this? Truth is based on facts, not feelings.
- D. It may be confidently asserted that as an event the resurrection will stand up to the most rigorous and exacting examination, and remain unshaken. In fact, Matthew Arnold called the resurrection “The best attested fact in history.”
- E. Of course, anyone who wished to throw doubt upon the fact of resurrection may do so. But in so doing he will reject all acknowledged standards of historical proof, and doubt the trustworthiness of all historical records. In all history a certain amount has to be taken upon trust. Some sources have to be accepted, otherwise there can be no history. As historical sources, the New Testament records may without prejudice qualify. Even if a person does not acknowledge the inspiration of scripture, he must, if he is intellectually honest, recognize the New Testament as reliable history.
- F. Sir Edward Clarke, K.C., wrote to the Rev. E. L. Macassey, D.D. the following:

“As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the events of the first Easter Day. To me the evidence is conclusive. And over and over again in the high court I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling. Inference follows on evidence, and a truthful witness is always artless and disdains effect. The Gospel evidence for the resurrection is of this class, and as a lawyer I accept it unreservedly as the testimony of truthful men to facts they were able to substantiate.” (J. R. W. Stott, Basic Christianity, p. 16)

#### II. Evidences for Christ’s Bodily Resurrection

- A. The Old Testament scriptures: For hundreds of years before Christ ever came into this earth it was prophesied that He would be raised from the dead (Jonah 1:17; Is. 53:10-12; Ps. 16:10 cf. Matt. 12: 39-40).
- B. Christ’s Own Words: Christ Himself many times told His disciples that He would be raised from the dead (Matt. 12:40; 16:21; 17:9; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; 26:32; Mark 8:31; 10:34; John 2:19-22). As the God-Man Christ had to keep His word concerning His resurrection. If He deceived His disciples, He could not be trusted; thus disqualifying Him to be Lord and Savior. If we cannot accept His words concerning His resurrection, then we cannot accept anything else Christ taught.
- C. The Empty Tomb: The body of Jesus on Easter morning was not in the grave. Some explanation must be given to this fact. The one piece of evidence which would have squelched the faith of the early Christians in the risen Christ, the world could not

produce — the dead body of Jesus Christ. The Bible states that Jesus Christ supernaturally rose bodily from the grave after lying there for three days as a dead corpse (cf. Luke 24:38-43).

- D. Grave Clothes Untouched: According to John 19:38-42 Christ's body was wrapped with linen and expensive spices, weighing about 100 lbs., which were laid on the body and between the folds of the wrappings. The body was wrapped from the feet to the shoulders and a napkin was placed around the chin and head, leaving the neck and face open. These spices were of powder and sticky ointment and would harden the wrappings when they dried. According to John 20:5-7, the grave clothes were lying completely intact. They may have been collapsed because of the heavy spices but they had not been unwrapped; the spices would have made the linen clothes impossible to unwrap. The napkin around the head was wrapped up and the original Greek could be translated twisted up. It may well be that the napkin was in its original convolutions, standing up with a rounded shape which was left from the shape of the head as the body moved physically through the grave clothes. The stone slab, the collapsed grave clothes, the shell of the head cloth and the gap between the head cloth and body showed that Christ's body had moved through the clothes in a resurrected body.
- E. The Appearances of the Lord after the Resurrection to the Disciples: Luke, an accurate historian, indicated that Jesus Christ proved His resurrection by many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3). Our Lord appeared at least 15 times to various parties after His resurrection. He revealed Himself to men, and women, individuals, small groups and large groups, in different geographical locations, under various circumstances. Our Lord's appearances are as follows:
1. Mary Magdalene (John 20:14-18)
  2. Group of Women (Matt. 28:9-10)
  3. Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5)
  4. Two Emmaus Disciples (Luke 24: 13-31)
  5. Ten Disciples, Minus Thomas (John 20:24-29)
  6. Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James, John and two other disciples at the sea of Tiberias (John 21:1-23)
  7. Eleven Disciples (John 20:21-29)
  8. Five hundred Brethren at one time (1 Cor. 15:6)
  9. James (1 Cor. 15:7)
  10. Eleven disciples at a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:15-20)
  11. Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6)
  12. Paul in the temple at Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-21)
  13. Paul at Jerusalem (Acts. 23:11)
  14. Stephen at his martyrdom (Acts 7:55)
  15. John on the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:10-19)
- Jesus Christ talked with the disciples. They ate with Him. They saw His physical form. They saw His hands and feet and side where the nails and spear had pierced. They touched the wounds in His feet, hands, and side. Our Lord did not just appear to a few but to hundreds and the testimony of these all agreed and harmonized.
- F. The Changed Life of the Disciples after the Resurrection: The Gospels present the disciples as despondent, disillusioned and at the point of despair because of Christ's death. But in the book of Acts they emerge as men who endanger their lives for the person of Christ and they go everywhere teaching the death and resurrection. Fearful and denying Peter became a believing rock. Doubtful James became a leader of the church at Jerusalem. Pragmatic Thomas became a missionary to India. Why? Because of the resurrection. They were convinced. The resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost made them literally new men. Built, for it was the resurrection which gave the disciples power, and the resurrection which was the content of their message.

G. The History of the Christian Church: The resurrection of Jesus Christ has been a pillar in the church since its very inception. Wilbur Smith says:

“The resurrection entered intimately into the life of the earliest Christians; the fact of it appears on their tombs, and in the drawings found on the walls of the catacombs; it entered deeply into Christian hymnology; it became one of the most vital themes of the great apologetic writings of the first four centuries; it was the theme constantly dwelt upon in the preaching of the ante-Nicene and post-Nicene period. It is in the creedal formulae of the church.” (Smith, Therefore Stand).

H. The Fact of the Christian Church Today: The fact that there are believers today shows that these people have experienced the resurrection power of the living Christ. After 2000 years men are still experiencing in their lives the resurrected Christ. If any business was operated in the manner which the church of Jesus Christ has been operated down through the years, it would have long since lost its existence. The fact of its presence today shows that someone is in this group alive and eternal.

I. Day of Pentecost: Three-thousand souls were saved on the day of Pentecost. Had they doubted the resurrection they could have walked a few blocks and examined the tomb or talked to the Jewish leaders or the disciples. But none on the Day of Pentecost doubted the resurrection.

J. Changing of the Day of Worship from Saturday to Sunday (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 15:3): The day of worship would have reverted back to Saturday if the resurrection had been just a hoax.

III. Arguments against the Empty Tomb Refutes: The body of Jesus was not in the grave. Some explanation must be given to this fact. The one piece of evidence which would have squelched the faith of the early Christians in the risen Christ, the world could not produce — the dead body of Christ. A world of skeptics and infidels denies the supernatural and do their best to explain away the obvious facts of the resurrection. These arguments are the best that the unsaved world have to offer.

A. The Wrong Tomb Theory: This theory says that the women went to the wrong tomb and got a false rumor going and it spread like wildfire. It was dark and they couldn't see (cf. John 20:1).

OBJECTIONS

1. It was probably dawn, not dark (Matt. 28:1; Luke 24:1; Mark 16:2).
2. The women knew clearly where Jesus was buried (Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55).
3. The women saw the whole process of the burial (Matt. 27:60-61).
4. There were at least four women (Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10). Did they all go to the wrong tomb and make a tragic mistake? These women were not stupid but sound in mind.
5. Mary Magdalene was at the same tomb later in the morning when Christ appeared to her. She didn't make a mistake then (John 20:11-18).
6. If the ladies made a mistake about the tomb, so did the angel because the angel was in Christ's empty tomb (Matt. 20:1-7).

B. Swoon Theory: Jesus did not die on the cross. He only fainted. He revived in the tomb and then left it, making Himself known to the disciples.

OBJECTIONS:

1. Pilate wondered whether Jesus was dead but the centurion assured him that He was dead (Mark 15:44-45). Pilate was convinced Christ was dead and so was the centurion.
2. Pilate commanded the soldiers to break the legs of those crucified to hasten death. The soldiers were under orders to make sure Christ was dead. These

seasoned executioners, who were under orders, were convinced that Jesus was dead; thus they did not break His legs (John 19:31-34).

3. Jesus had His side pierced with a spear (John 19:34). This was done to assure death.
4. Is it logical that Jesus, after having been beaten to a pulp and crucified with a horrible wound in His side, could survive for 36 hours in a cold, damp tomb with no food, water or medical care? Would He have enough strength to remove the heavy rock covering? Could He, half dead, wiggle His way out of mummy-like burial wrappings?
5. During the burial preparations, which often took hours, there was not so much as a groan out of Christ.

C. Thieves Theory: This view states that some thieves slipped into the tomb and stole the body of Jesus.

OBJECTIONS:

1. This viewpoint is unthinkable and without a shred of evidence. The soldiers were “hand picked” sentries and were good soldiers. How could the thieves get by these soldiers without causing a great stir?
2. What would be the thieves motives? Why would the thieves have taken the body of Christ without the grave clothes? Why weren’t the grave clothes wrinkled or torn?

D. Disciples’ Falsehood Theory: This view says that the disciples removed the body of Jesus themselves and spread a lie about His resurrection in order to push their new religion.

OBJECTIONS:

1. It is stated in scripture that this is the rumor that the Jews themselves got started in order to cover up for the absence of Jesus’ body (Matt. 27:62-66; 28:11-15).
2. How could the disciples get by the guards? Would all sleep on duty when told to watch? The guards could have been killed for sleeping on duty.
3. The disciples were skeptical and in unbelief; therefore they would have no cause to remove the body.
4. In Acts they preached the resurrection in every message. Are some actually willing to say that the disciples proclaimed for years what they knew to be a deliberate lie? To say this is plainly ridiculous in light of the high moral standards and achievements of the apostles and their followers.
5. Would the disciples be willing to suffer, be beaten, jailed and martyred for a fairy-tale? We must conclude that the disciples were sincere and honest.

E. Custody by Authorities Theory: This view says that, because the Roman and Jewish Authorities feared the fanaticism of the disciples and what might happen if the disciples could have gotten the body out of the tomb, they took the body into their custody for protection.

OBJECTIONS:

1. Why did Pilate post the guards if there was no body? Why were the guards stunned at the time of resurrection?
2. Within a few weeks after the resurrection the new Christian movement was spreading like wildfire. The resurrection was being preached everywhere. Why didn’t the authorities produce the body and publish throughout the Roman Empire what they had done? This would have stopped the movement instantly. Instead they were silent and tried to put the movement down by force. The church was founded on the resurrection. Disprove the resurrection and the church would collapse. But the authorities could not produce the body to prove their point.

F. Joseph of Aramathea Theory: This view claims that the tomb was found empty because the only one who had the right to take out the body from the tomb was Joseph, the owner. Joseph removed the body during the night or early morning.

### OBJECTIONS:

1. There is not the slightest bit of evidence from any of the four Gospels that Joseph took the body. We should not accept something when there is no evidence for it.
2. Because the Jews hated Christ, Joseph had taken great chances and risked his life to take Jesus' body down from the cross and place it in his own tomb. What could have come over Joseph in the next 30 hours to change his mind about the place of burial? Joseph would dishonor the body of Christ by removing it from a tomb of honor to some obscure burying place.
3. How did Joseph get by the Roman guards at the tomb? Pilate had given specific commands that the body was not to be taken out of the tomb. Not even Joseph could get it out. If it had been Joseph that had removed the body of Jesus, then what a really good, believable story the soldiers would have had to tell to the Jewish authorities on Easter morning. That would have been enough, and the Sanhedrin would have been saved the trouble and expense of creating a foolish story, and bribing the soldiers to repeat it.
5. Joseph was an honorable, good and just man and a disciple of Jesus. Thus Joseph would not deliberately deceive others. Surely Joseph saw the other disciples after the resurrection. As an honorable man and when He saw the disciples rejoicing over the resurrected Lord, he would be compelled to tell them the truth that he removed the body. But he never told them this because he did not remove the body (Cf. Luke 23:50-51).

G. Vision-Hypothesis Theory: This view states that the disciples really believed in the resurrection, but that mere visions of Christ had wrought in them this belief. According to some, these visions were the outcome of an excited imagination, of a morbid state of the nervous system. In short, this view says that because the disciples longed with such a passion for the Lord to come back to life they had hallucinations and actually believed the Lord was resurrected although He never did. Thus the literal, bodily resurrection is explained away psychologically.

### OBJECTIONS:

1. The scriptures present all the disciples, not as expecting the resurrection, but as skeptics. They could not believe Christ had risen and had to be convinced. Only the facts changed the minds of the disciples.
2. Christ appeared to men and women, individuals, small groups, and large groups, in different geographical locations under various circumstances; thus this makes the idea of a mere vision impossible. Hundreds of people could not have had the same vision.
3. Besides, the visions of an excited imagination would not have endured and led to such results; most likely they would soon have given place to corresponding depression.

H. Historical Myth Theory: This view attempts to connect the account of the resurrection with legend. They try to show that similar accounts of resurrection can be found in oriental religions and heathen myths.

### OBJECTIONS:

1. There is nothing like the resurrection of Jesus Christ recorded in any oriental religions or literature.
2. Objective scholarship can find no links between Christ's resurrection and myths.
3. These proponents completely ignore the teachings of scripture on the resurrection and the eye-witness accounts by hundreds of people.

I. Spiritualizing Theory: This group recognizes the fact of resurrection but explains it away. They say Christ's resurrection was not bodily but the coming to life of man's soul and spirit, or revival of the personality.

### OBJECTIONS:

1. If we spiritualize the resurrection of Christ, we have no Christianity and might

as well throw away our Bibles.

2. These proponents completely ignore the scriptural teaching on the resurrection.

J. Conclusion: The only satisfactory explanation that satisfies the intellect and harmonizes the facts of scripture is that Christ was supernaturally raised from the dead in bodily form. This is what scripture claims and it has never been disproved in two thousand years. All the attacks of hell and infidels have never been able to refute the scriptural claims of resurrection.

#### IV. Modern Day Objections to the Resurrection Refuted

A. Science: Some say that the resurrection is scientifically impossible because this would deal with the supernatural and the supernatural cannot exist. They acknowledge the facts of Christ's resurrection but cast them aside because it does not coincide with the natural laws of the universe. Often the unbeliever does not try to disprove the facts of the resurrection, but simply ridicules anyone who does believe in it as uneducated, Bible-thumpers, unscientific, one who is against progress, superstitious, etc.; ridicule is a powerful force when facts cannot be disproved.

One skeptic said the following about the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

“If there were fifty times the evidence for Christ's resurrection, I still would reject it because there is no such thing as supernatural phenomenon.”

#### OBJECTIONS:

1. Whatever scientists say about the impossibility of resurrection, the facts are still there and they must be dealt with honestly.
2. Science is not in a position to judge a miracle. Science deals with the regular and normal laws of nature. A miracle cannot possibly conform to any known law or it would not be a miracle. The discussion of a miracle does not properly belong to the sphere of science at all. It must be remembered that all laws are created laws.
3. On what grounds can science say a miracle is impossible? It may do so on the basis of uniform principles of natural law or on the philosophical basis that there is no God controlling the universe. The Christian does not accept any of these assumptions. The Christian begins with God who is the creator and sustainer of this universe. God can miraculously intervene in his own creation any time he wants. The Christian is not satisfied that the scientist even knows all the so-called laws of this world, much less that those laws are fixed and irrevocable for God as well as man. The Christian is not satisfied that the general scientific conception of the world and of God is the correct one.

B. Scriptural Accounts of the Resurrection in Scripture Do Not Harmonize: This group says there are too many discrepancies in scripture and therefore the whole foundation for the historical fact of the resurrection is insecure.

#### OBJECTIONS:

1. The records agree as to the main facts of Christ's resurrection; the discrepancies are only to minor details.
2. The apparent discrepancies are historically a guarantee of authenticity. It shows that these four gospel writers were eye-witnesses of the resurrection event and the broad features are broadly stated.
3. All apparent discrepancies may not be contradictions but lack of knowledge on our part because we do not have all the historical facts to fill in the gaps of the resurrection account as seen in scripture.

#### V. Meaning of the Resurrection

A. God Controls and Directs the World: Magic, superstition or science cannot make a

man come back from the dead. The resurrection was an act of the Lord of science and nature. In God's sovereignty, He may do what He pleases with His creation. God stands above and beyond all natural law and historical events.

- B. Resurrection Marks Our Jesus as the Son of God (Rom. 1:4): The resurrection shows that God, the Father, put His stamp of approval upon the incarnation and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, marking Him as the Son of God. The resurrection lends heavy proof to the Deity of Christ but does not confirm it. It is fitting that a supernatural person should enter and leave this earth in a supernatural way. God set His seal upon the Son of God.
- C. Resurrection Guarantees the Effectiveness of the Cross: The resurrection shows that Christ rose triumphant over sin and hell. Without the resurrection the cross would have no meaning.
- D. Resurrection Shows That Christ Conquered the Last Enemy, Death: Fear of death is in all men (some more than others). Christ rose triumphant over death. This Jesus is unique because He rose from the dead. The Christian does not hope in some philosophical system but we have facts of our Lord who was raised from the dead. Our faith has an objective basis.

G.W. Bromiley states it this way:

“Without the resurrection there is neither assurance of forgiveness nor knowledge of a divine destiny. Faith is empty. Life is a hopeless and meaningless muddle, leading only to nothingness, futile in its conception, futile in its course, futile in its conclusion. But because Jesus Christ died and was raised from the dead, the Christian enjoys both assurance and knowledge. Even death, the last enemy, the final stronghold of irrationality, has been overthrown. Death itself has indeed been overruled and consecrated, so that it becomes a way from frustration of being to fulfillment: from sin to God. Belief in the resurrection means belief in the purpose and love of God. With such a faith, a man may look out even on this sin-shattered world unperplexed and unafraid.” (G.W. Bromiley, “The Resurrection”, Christian Faith Series, p. 11)

## VI. Resurrection and the Unbeliever

- A. A very definite part of the gospel is the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4) and apart from it no man can be justified or declared righteous before God (Rom. 4:25).
- B. According to John 20:31 it is stated that all these things concerning Christ were written “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.” This verse is directly connected with the truth of the resurrection as it was believed and experienced by Thomas when he placed his hand into the gash in the side of the resurrected Lord. When Thomas was convinced of the resurrection he cried out, “My Lord, even my God!” (John 20:28).
- C. These things are written: A person accepts or rejects the written record of Christ's bodily resurrection. Unbeliever, reject the facts of the resurrection you may, disprove the facts you cannot. Any scoffer or unbeliever should seek to disprove the resurrection before he rejects it! Intellectual honesty demands that the facts of the resurrection be considered and examined thoroughly before they are rejected. To believe the facts of the death and resurrection means eternal salvation to the one believing in Christ.

## VII. The Resurrection and the Christian

- A. The Christian's faith must be anchored in the resurrection. Paul, in 1 Cor. 15:12-19 states that if Christ is not risen then the Christian's faith is vain, he is still in

- his sins and we are most miserable and to be pitied; there is no hope for our loved ones and we are lost.
- B. But Paul tells us that Christ has risen from the dead and because He has risen, all those that have placed their faith in Him as Lord and Savior will be raised unto eternal life. Upon the fact of Christ's resurrection our whole Christian faith rests!

#### VIII. Conclusion

- A. To believe in Christ's resurrection is intellectually acceptable and is based on the accurate facts of scripture which is reliable history. If the resurrection could be disproved, then and only then would the church go out of existence. The resurrection has not been disproved in two thousand years, and it will never be disproved!
- B. Christian, rejoice! Your Lord has risen. As Christians we worship, are united to, and serve the resurrected and living Christ who is the Head of the Church, His Body.