

The Resurrection of the Son of God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 February 2007

Preacher: Philip Wells

[0 : 00] So can I welcome everybody to this particular Be Thinking talk.! This evening we're going to be looking at the subject of the resurrection, or more fully! the resurrection of the Son of God.

And I'm going to be giving the talk this evening. I hope I will be able to speak clearly enough for everybody to understand.

There are some technical words. Some of them are explained as we go through. And if you want to ask a question, that will be possible as well.

So I'm going to talk about the resurrection of the Son of God, which obviously is a topic in the Bible, but I'm going to particularly refer to this book, The Resurrection of the Son of God, a book by N.T. Wright.

Yeah, it's useful for standing on to get to high shelves as well. So I have actually read all the way through this, and I'm going to refer to it.

[1 : 05] Can I say that I don't automatically agree with everything that Tom Wright has said? In some things I think he's mistaken. But this book, nearly everything he says in this I found very, very helpful.

So there's Tom Wright. I was lent this book that Brian lent me, The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus. And that too is very, very helpful.

There's also some very helpful talks on the web, on the Be Thinking website, www.bethinking.org. Some very good talks, including one by William Lane Craig. Okay, I'm going to be thinking about the apologetic power of the resurrection, by which I mean it's an argument for the defence of Christianity.

An apologia doesn't mean I'm sorry for something. I apologise. It means I, in this sense, defending Christianity with a strong argument. Negatively, the resurrection, if it is not true, then Christianity is itself false.

[2 : 20] If somebody can prove, demonstrate that the resurrection is false, mistaken, then Christian faith is demolished at one go.

In fact, one of the leading early Christian missionaries, Paul, said, in so many words, if Christ is not raised, our preaching, our message is useless, and so is your faith.

So it's absolutely crucial. Negatively, Christianity would be destroyed. Positively, if it is true, then it has very strong implications for the identity of Jesus.

It doesn't automatically tell us something, but it leads us to an understanding of who Jesus is. So, if it's true, those implications can't be avoided.

It also positively has implications for the truth of his message. If the resurrection happened, it says that the things that Jesus said also are true.

[3 : 38] It has strong implications for the existence of God. So, it would show that we live in a world which, to say the least, has got supernatural things happening in it, which come from some supernatural source.

Again, it doesn't follow just straight away. There's a train of sequence of ideas, but it does have implications in that way. And it has those implications, whether we like it or not, and whether we feel like it or not.

So, the resurrection is a fact, or I'm saying it's a historical fact, which is there, whether we like it or not, whether we feel it's true or not.

And that's helpful for Christian people, because sometimes their faith goes up and down, depending on their circumstances, depending on how they're feeling, depending even whether it's a sunny day or not.

And this is true no matter how we feel. Even at our worst moments as Christians, here is something that actually stands.

[4 : 53] And in that sense, it's a bedrock for Christian experience. Okay. Now, because it's so important, the resurrection is objected to.

Now, let me first define what I mean by resurrection. And this is one of the things in which Tom Wright's book is very, very helpful, because he has a strong definition of resurrection.

And his definition is, and I think this is a correct definition, this is something after physical death, after being dead, to become physically alive again.

So, he's not talking about life after death, you know, floating round out-of-body experiences, ghosts, ghosts, spirits.

That's a different thing. This is life after that, physical life after being dead. So, do you see there's an important statement there about what resurrection actually is?

[6 : 06] It is becoming physical again. So, having hands and skin and a body. So, people object and they say that it is intrinsically improbable.

Statistically, it's a very rare event. And therefore, that's an objection. They say it is scientifically impossible.

So, this cannot be investigated in some scientific ways. You can't reproduce this and test it all over again because of the unusual nature of it.

So, here's an objection. Scientifically impossible. And people also say it is historically unprovable or unproven. And that does depend on what we mean by history.

So, there are some objections. And Tom Wright, in his book, deals with some more focused theological objections which are more the ones I'm going to focus on this evening.

[7 : 14] So, here is a resurrection. Sorry, here is an objection. But in the Jewish context in which this first happened, in the context in which Jewish people saw the things to do with Jesus, they used the word resurrection in Greek, anastasis.

And it is said that they could have meant a variety of things by that. So, there's one objection which we will look at during the course of this talk.

Here's a second theological objection which says that the Apostle Paul, when he uses the word resurrection, is meaning something spiritual.

He does actually use the expression spiritual body. And this objection says, well, he means a ghostly thing, a spirit sort of thing.

And here's another objection, that the earliest Christians used the language of resurrection, anastasis, to mean Jesus is in heaven.

[8 : 30] He is enthroned in heaven. He's very important. We worship him.

And they used language backwards and said, because that's who we believe he is, we will say that he is resurrected. And these objectors say that even when the idea of the empty tomb is used, it's not meant literally.

And this sort of objection, I think, was more common in the mid-20th century.

But anyway, here's what he's saying. In addition to that, it is objected that the gospel accounts, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are late and they are inventions.

So somebody used their imagination to take an idea and enlarge it and make up stuff and write it down as gospel.

[9 : 39] And further, objections that when people in the Bible say they saw Jesus, what they really mean is they saw a vision of Jesus.

So the seeings were subjective experiences only. So if you were to say that you could see the Virgin Mary standing there and the rest of us couldn't, then that would be an experience just for you. And what these people are saying is that when in the Bible it says people saw Jesus or met Jesus, they mean they met him in their hearts, they met him as a hallucination, a fantasy, or some sort of subjective experience.

And lastly, these objectors say categorically, whatever else it may mean, Jesus' body was certainly not raised from the dead.

Okay, that's the objections of these people. So I'll stop just there and say does anything need to be clarified? Okay.

[11 : 02] Right. Before we go any further we need to think about the idea of a world view. A world view is a set of presuppositions or assumptions which we hold consciously or subconsciously about

the basic make-up of our world.

and we take this world view with us wherever we go, whatever we think about and talk about, we have basic presuppositions.

So, for example, we might on a social level have a presupposition that everybody we meet in England is out to cheat us.

so we would react in a certain way to everybody in England if that was our view. Or alternatively, we might have the view that everybody in England is an English gentleman with a bowler hat who is going to help us and that would affect the way that we lived our lives.

Now, here, of course, is a little bit more profound than that. So, if we think historically in European history, the Enlightenment was that period in which people began to think in a new way.

[12 : 32] Before the Enlightenment, there were people believed that there were few secondary causes. So, for example, if there was thunder and lightning, people would say, this is the hand of God.

And they wouldn't say, God is using low pressure and high pressure and a cold front and a warm front and the structure of clouds. They would just say, this is directly the hand of God.

And you can actually see something of this in the writings of Martin Luther, who believed in the existence of ghosts and demons in certain forests. Well, rightly or wrongly, but that's pre-enlightenment thinking.

In the time in which the Bible was written, they had a worldview, things they would assume. They would assume that Yahweh, Jehovah, is God.

That's taken for granted. And also, they would take for granted that the Bible described his working in the world and that he had made promises to Israel about their peace, their living securely in the land, and that at that time, God's promises still had not been fulfilled.

[13 : 55] And that would be some of their assumptions as they looked around at the world.

Post-enlightenment, people's assumptions would be true freedom lies in removing God and the supernatural.

So that when we look at the world, we exclude God, we exclude the supernatural, and only things that can be seen and measured are real, as in mathematics, hard science, proving things, QED. and that is at least part of the view that most of us will have grown up with and perhaps find rather difficult to get rid of in our thinking.

A post-modern world view would be slightly different. A post-modern world view would accept that there can be isolated events, but find it difficult to believe that this means anything in one big story, that there's one meaning behind it all.

So as we come to this, we have to be aware that we bring our own world view to all these things. And one other NB, we shall use the word history.

[15 : 23] If you come to look at this book, you'll find that he has quite a bit about the idea of history as a way of finding things out. And we use the word historical in slightly different ways, which we might as well just notice as we go through.

A historical event can simply be an event even though nobody saw it happen. So the death of the last pterodactyl, assuming you believe in pterodactyls, we presume that the last one of them must have died sometime.

None of us saw it, it's not documented, but we would say that happened in history and is therefore a historical event, even though no one saw it.

We also use the word history or more precisely historic to mean a significant event. So in English history, 1066 is a significant event.

Why is 1066 a significant event in English history? history. That's the Battle of Hastings. It's when England was invaded by the Normans, which were sort of French people.

[16 : 47] Historical can mean a provable event. Again, like in maths or science. science. So the Holocaust is a provable event because people were there, people have got evidence, people have written down their testimony, and therefore it is a foolish thing and a perverse thing not to believe it.

However, Robin Hood, we would say, is probably not historical in this sense that nobody actually could prove his existence.

Doing history, being interested in history, writing, talking, going over the events of the past, that too can be referred to as history or something that's historical, having historical interest.

And again, the meaning is slightly different. So the 4th of July, apparently, is important for some people. I'll put that there for Brian because he could have told us what that was there for.

So for the USA, that's the Independence Day, isn't it? Am I right? I don't know who they're independent from, but I expect somebody will tell me. So you have historical novels.

[18:10] So they're to do with just history as a general thing, local history. We use the word in that connection. without trying to prove anything, or just that there are different sort of levels of expectation.

And people talk about the quest for the historical Jesus, which is just there. There is something called the Jesus Seminar in the United States, and they use historical in a very narrow sense indeed, combining three and four, that things must be provable in a very reductionist sense.

They won't take anything, for example, if it was local history, they wouldn't believe it unless you could really find two or three people who could really give you exact confirmation information of, shall we say, when Lewis Castle was built, or something like that.

So, the quest for the historical Jesus, or it uses the word history, it uses it in a very narrow sense, and people sometimes use that when they're talking about the resurrection.

They expect something to be proved in a mathematical or scientific way, which is not the usual way in history.

[19:38] Anyway, so there's a little note on that. In my personal view, there is a sort of spiral at work here, that you can start on the outside and say, well, I don't know really how much I believe about Jesus, but I certainly believe that he existed, and then you can take that honest step and say, I wonder what sort of person he was, what sort of things he said, what sort of things he did, and you can pick up on that, and you say, well, he was really more remarkable than I thought he was, and then you can move in a little bit and say, he was actually extremely special, and you can move in a little bit further and say, it says he rose from the dead, it says he did miracles.

I do tend now to believe that. It says that he rose from the dead, and you can follow the spiral round in increasing certainty until you yourself might come to be a believer, having started off as not a believer.

Anyway, that's a slightly different thing. I'm going to look at the context in which all this took place. This is the context of proclamation, so that when the first Christians said things about Jesus, they said them using certain language, believing that people would understand them in a certain way. It's the context in which they proclaimed. It's quite often said that resurrection is like many other religions, so the ancient context would be the source of parallels if there were any.

So if resurrection ideas are copies of other ideas, then the context should provide them. So we're talking about the non-Jewish world, what the Greeks believed, what the Romans believed, and to a certain extent what the Egyptians believed.

[21:38] Now, in Tom Wright's book he goes into this in considerable detail, and it is without doubt the most tedious part of the book. He has a chapter and verse on lots of things that the Greeks and the Romans believed.

And I'll just summarise it by saying they believed lots of things, but they did not believe in bodily resurrection. If you had said to one of the ancient Greeks or the ancient Romans, do you believe that a man dies and could possibly come back alive physically, they would say, well there's one thing I can tell you, matey, it won't be that.

That certainly does not happen. Everybody knows that, if only it did happen, but it doesn't. But you may say, well, there are other things like it, aren't they? For example, their emperors were said to become God.

There was the divinisation of the emperors, but it wasn't ever said that they came back alive physically, apart from Nero. There was a rumour that Nero had come back, but that was a very odd sort of thing, not a regular thing.

The emperors went to heaven, and it was their souls that became God. And Tom Wright says that in that ancient world, death was the realm of witless shadows in a murky world.

[23:08] So, after death, you might become a spirit, or a ghost, or a half a being, or something like that, but not raised from the dead. dead. There are legends of dying and rising gods, Adonis, Persephone, corn kings, corn mothers, and sometimes these are referred to, but they are not human, bodily resurrection.

They're myths and stories to do with other worlds, to do with realms of fantasy. None of these people at all ever claim that human beings come alive again physically after death. Of all possibilities, they would say, unanimously, we all know that dead men do not rise. And that's why when the Apostle Paul went to the Greek centre of learning, they sneered at him. When they heard him talk about the resurrection of the dead, they sneered, because they were saying, we're clever people, we've heard it all, we know resurrection from the dead just does not happen.

There's the ancient context. Let's look at the Jewish context, because the people who were writing about the resurrection of Jesus were writing in a Jewish context.

[24 : 41] In fact, the Apostle Paul said that Jesus was raised on the third day according to the scriptures. So, which scriptures? So, in the Bible, in the Hebrew scriptures, in the book of Genesis, bodily death is the consequence of sin.

So, Adam sinned, according to the book of Genesis, and therefore died. And that sets the agenda, that's the problem that God promises to solve.

And from a very early stage, the idea that God can solve that problem is there in the background. So, Hebrews 11 is a reference to Abraham, who was going to sacrifice his son Isaac and kill him. But he believed that God was able to raise him from the dead, or bring him back from the dead. So, that's at an early stage. So, Tom Wright is much more negative about that than I think he should be. I think that promise has been there. There were hints of this through the Bible. So, Enoch, who I think is in Genesis chapter 5, was somebody who walked with God and he was not, for God took him.

[26 : 05] It doesn't say very much more than that, it's just a hint. Elijah was taken into heaven in a whirlwind. So, he didn't die.

In that sense, Job says things like, I know my Redeemer lives and I will, in my flesh, I will see God. Psalm 16 is quoted in the New Testament in this connection and it says, my heart is glad, my tongue rejoices, my body also will rest secure because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

So, no decay is envisaged in Psalm 16. Psalm 73, it says, afterwards you will receive me to glory. Isaiah 52, 53 is about a suffering servant who, although it doesn't specifically say he will rise from the dead, yet there is a jigsaw puzzle which includes the fact that he dies and includes the fact that he ends up being raised very high and exalted and how you put that together, well, it's a hint of resurrection.

Later on in the Bible, in Daniel, is a specific reference which says, multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting content.

So, it's difficult to see what that means if it isn't a reference to future judgment and resurrection. And that's a key paragraph for later.

[28 : 01] chapter. And Ezekiel 37 talks about a vision of dry bones, dead bodies, coming together, coming back to life again, and it says that these dry bones are the whole house of Israel, and it is coupled with settling Israel back in her land.

land. So, again, it's a hint, it's rather perplexing how it all should be fulfilled, but it does talk about bones coming to life physically, and it links it with the promise of God to settle Israel in the land. So, there's the Jewish scriptures. So, I'll stop there and ask if there's anything you want to have clarified. Well, I think I'm going to argue that the two things are the same, that the promise of restoration to Israel is fulfilled in the resurrection, and you've got two lines here that actually intersect in the end.

So, to summarize the Jewish context in this period that Jesus was in, which is Second Temple Judaism, again, there were various ideas.

So, the Sadducees, for example, said, there is no resurrection. The Pharisees had a different view. They believed that there would be a final day of judgment resurrection of the righteous and the wicked.

[29 : 57] So, that's what Martha says when Jesus asks her about her brother Lazarus, and she says, I know he will rise again at the last day.

And interestingly, Jesus says, I am the resurrection and the life. Jesus claims that he encapsulates in himself all that Martha could see God would do on the last day.

So, this basically, when they're talking about resurrection, they're talking about a one-stage resurrection which is coupled with judgment. moment. So, that's the context.

Let's look now at what is said in the Bible and we'll look at what Paul says and we'll look at what the gospel says before we try and put it all together. So, Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15, makes a statement which I've written out pretty much in full.

I've translated it myself. I want to remind you of the good news I good newsed you, good newsed to you, because he uses the idea of gospel as a noun and a verb.

[31 : 16] And he says, you received this, and he uses a word which means to pass on a tradition. And I traditioned you, I passed on to you as a first importance, and then he says a number of bullet points, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, then to the twelve, after that to more than five hundred, most of whom are still living.

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, last of all he appeared to me also as to one abnormally born. And that is in 1 Corinthians and there are a number of features of that which I'll draw attention to in a moment, but just notice this way he's done it as a formula, that something, that something, that something, and that something.

It's got the appearance of a little formula which has been concocted, which he's repeating, which they might almost have memorised.

past. And that's of course the idea of a tradition, which is the verb that's used. Here is something like a package which I'm passing on to you, and I want you to keep that package as it is and pass it on to other people.

So, this is very early, it's 51 or 52 AD, you can date the letter from the things that happen in it.

That's 21 years or so after the death of Jesus.

[33 : 07] And by that time it is a tradition. It's a fixed, non-negotiable tradition. In other words, the objection that this was made up later and read backwards into history doesn't fit the facts.

it's already a fixed package that you're not allowed to add things to or mess about with. I tradition you, I hand this over to you, says Paul.

Clearly, Jesus was believed to be genuinely dead, that's part of what's said. He died for our sins according to the scriptures. And this is something that was capable of living eyewitness proof.

So, Paul does not say, I felt I saw Jesus and other people felt that they saw him. He says he was literally seen by Peter, by James, and at one point by 500 people at once, most of whom are still living, is what he said.

So, as far as he's concerned, this is something that you really could prove, that you really could substantiate, all you had to do was buy a ticket and go over the Mediterranean and talk to these people.

[34 : 30] So, it's like Diego Maradona's Hand of God goal, which was, I believe, in 1986 in the Football World Cup.

There are people sitting here who can remember seeing that. so it's not, you know, it might be, whatever it is, 21 years ago, but it's not so far away that nobody knows, you know, who knows whether that happened or not.

There are people here who were alive to see it. It's that sort of distance to the resurrection from where Paul is writing. A little bit more on Paul.

He himself says that this marks out Jesus as the son of God with power. And also another key point is that this is the initial part of a two-stage resurrection process.

The Jews believed in a one-stage resurrection right at the end of the world. But if this is true, it's actually a two-stage resurrection that number one, Messiah is raised, and then stage two, the people that belong to him are raised.

[35 : 46] And that's the very point Paul goes on to make in 1 Corinthians 15. There's first fruits, and then following on from that something else. A little bit like a snake getting through a bamboo fence.

First the head of the snake goes through, then the rest of the body follows. It's saying that if Jesus rose from the dead, he experiences physical resurrection, and the people that are joined to him, his body as it were, will in due course themselves experience resurrection.

And that two-stage process is actually referred to in lots of places in the Bible. For example, Romans 8, the spirit, if the spirit lives in you, the spirit will give life to your mortal bodies.

That's the same argument. And Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 15 that if this didn't happen, then Yahweh, the Lord God, has not brought salvation, he has not solved the problem, he has not fulfilled his promises, and Christian faith is a useless thing.

Okay, there's the resurrection and Paul. We're going to look at the resurrection in the Gospels. Again, there's a lot to be said about this, but I'll just summarise some of these things.

[37 : 17] One of the features of the Gospel stories is that they are unpolished. As you read them, there are some of the references, you find that people have got room to object and to say, it doesn't say that there, it says that there, there are two angels there but only one, you know, they obviously haven't got their act together and come up with a combined effort without any rough edges.

The stories show the mark of being unpolished. They all talk about the empty tomb, which again is an objection to the idea of just seeing Jesus in your heart.

Well, what happened to his body? All the stories say they went to look for his body and it could not be found, that the molecules of Jesus' body are nowhere to be found in this part of creation.

They're somewhere else, the empty tomb. The stories talk about angels, they talk about initial misunderstanding by the disciples, they talk about testimony from women who went to the tomb, there are sightings of the risen Jesus who seem to be the same and yet different, that's a common feature in most if not all of the stories.

There is also a struggle to believe something so odd. In Matthew's gospel it says that even when people have had several chances to see Jesus, some still doubted.

[38 : 50] So these accounts are honest about how really difficult it was to believe this. It was so odd, so strange. And yet in all these we find people's lives were changed, their minds were changed and their lives were changed.

So let's notice something about these accounts further. Strangely, there are very few, I think there are probably no biblical quotations that adorn the accounts.

If they were read backwards, you would expect people to say, and so was fulfilled, and this reminds me of this, and so on, but that isn't the case. Again, if it was being read backwards and written up later, it's surprising that the gospel accounts contain virtually no mention of the general resurrection. The risen Jesus seems different, and yet he's a real human being. There are other accounts which say, talk about a moving cross, and Jesus' head touching the sky, a very extraordinary Jesus, but the canonical gospels, he's in some ways just very ordinary.

He can eat food, eat fish, he can stand and talk. It's surprising that women are put in the role of witnesses, because in those days women were not counted as fully competent witnesses.

[40 : 29] And I think, and Tom Wright puts it this way, if you wanted to explain things about Jesus, if you wanted to be a propagandist, you would not have told stories like this, you would not have made it up that way, you would have done a better job, you'd have put something more polished, it doesn't have the holes in it like having women going to the tomb first, etc.

So let's try and put this all together. Perhaps we can bear in mind some of those objections. The context in which resurrection is claimed is one in which the resurrection is either unthinkable or far off in the future, they did not expect something like this.

And that counts strongly against the idea of wishful thinking, that they just hoped Jesus would rise from the dead. It is strongly against the idea that they've copied the idea from somewhere else, because there aren't anywhere else to copy it.

It was just a complete surprise. And for that reason, the fact that they ended up believing it, well, how can you explain that if it didn't really happen?

the attestation, the witnesses are many and they are early.

[41 : 59] That is good evidence for believing anything. The claims for the resurrection have got at least these three strands.

The people who saw Jesus, the fact that his tomb was empty, and the fact that it all fits in with scripture. The people who were best placed to know, that's the people near to the event, who had the opportunity to check it out, clearly believed it.

They were willing to die for it. Again, the idea of it being a conspiracy or made up, would be a very strange thing, to think that people were willing to die for something they really knew was a lie.

The alternative explanations require bigger, if not enormous, leaps of faith. So the idea that it was a conspiracy, or the so-called swoon theory, which says that Jesus didn't really die, he was just sort of rendered unconscious, and then he was losing blood, he was dehydrated, and they put him in a

cold cave, and after leaving him there for three days, he was better, and he managed to roll away the stone, and make his way into Jerusalem, and appear to his disciples, and when they saw him, instead of saying, oh, you look awful, we better get an ambulance, they all said, wow, you are the son of God.

So, that's the swoon theory, and it requires an enormous leap of faith, I think, to believe that. I once heard it said, if you believe that, you'll believe anything. As we investigate what they actually said, what the circumstances were, we should be open to having our worldview challenged.

[44 : 01] If we started off saying, resurrection is so unlikely, it can't happen, as we look at this evidence, perhaps we should be prepared to be challenged.

It doesn't usually happen, it's an extremely odd thing, but that's what Christianity is claiming, this is the one place where God really has raised somebody from the dead in this way, and our worldview ought to be challenged.

If the resurrection is true, it is saying God has the solution to the problem of physical death, somebody has, the solution is enmeshed in the Hebrew and Christian tradition and revelation and big picture.

That's where the explanation lies. Jesus is validated, he has proven to be somebody, well, prophet actually, because he said he would rise from the dead and he did, Messiah, if you follow the connections.

he has proved to be Lord, he is raised above everywhere else, and he's proved to be the son of God himself, as you follow the threads from it.

[45 : 20] Jesus is the spearhead then of promises to Israel, because this is the place where God's promises are fulfilled. It's not the way they thought it was going to be, but actually this is where his promises to Israel are fulfilled, and Jesus is also the spearhead of the future of the human race.

That if this is true, there is a new world coming, there is a new life coming, and it is to be found in Jesus.

All sorts of wonderful things follow from that. And if we were to grasp this completely, we would say, this changes everything.

Thank you. Right. B. So we usually have time for questions or comments.

Can you please comment at the beginning, we talked about that impact resurrection not being right after death. Yes.

[46 : 32] Yeah, it's one of the things that he says in here, and I think he's right.

Yeah, I too, I'm not sure that I've completely got that idea, but he's saying that, let's say, for like the thief on the cross, Jesus said, today you'll be with me in paradise.

So the thief on the cross died, and he had life after death. He's with Christ in heaven, but he is not raised from the dead yet. That's something that happens afterwards.

So, if you like, there's three stages, life, well, four, life, death as an instantaneous thing, the continuing existence of this person, life after death, but resurrection follows after that.

So, that's to distinguish it from being a ghost, from living on in people's hearts, from floating up into the sky. Because, there's lots of religions believe those things, but the uniqueness of Christianity is that it's not saying that, it's saying, life after life after death.

[47 : 55] Does that make it clearer? Well, you didn't, because I did it very quickly.

That's the bit about this, well, yes, it would take longer to do that, but the, when it says Jesus rose on the third day according to the scriptures, and you say, which scriptures?

I think there's a whole class of scriptures that talk about the future of Israel, living in the land, the new environment for Israel, which, in New Testament terms, are fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That's where this turnaround comes, that's where the exile is reversed. so you can add to that, all the promises are yes and amen in Christ Jesus.

So all the promises, everything that is headed, the Old Testament is headed towards, finds its fulfilment in Jesus. So I'm saying that the, or I'm proposing that the whole class of promises to Abraham, promises Moses, promises to Joshua, Psalm 95, there is a rest that remains to the people of God because if Joshua had led them into rest, there wouldn't be a promise still held out.

[49 : 35] But, that Paul had in mind all those scriptures, so I haven't argued it, but I'm saying that that exists. I would have thought that the Ezekiel, well certainly, the Ezekiel passage referred primarily to revival, not to resurrection.

I mean, the vision is one of resurrection, but the, it seems to me the meaning is that there is, you know, there's this heap of bones that must be totally dead, there is no, there is no spiritual life left among the people.

And yet, God would breathe life back into the people. So, to me, it's more about, it's more about revival, it's more about regeneration, resurrection.

I'm sure that's true, but the question is whether that exhausts the meaning of it, because it does say, in its context, I will open your graves and bring you up from them, I will put my spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land.

Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken and have done it, declares the Lord. So, Ezekiel saw it in the context of these larger promises to Israel.

[50 : 58] So, I put it under the heading of hints, because I think it's very tantalising that you have here resurrection, promises to Israel, you know, the work that is yet to come, all put in the same context.

I don't think it proves it, but I think it's suggested. I suppose you have to follow up the theme in fact of every temple month, which does have both of those aspects.

Jesus talks about giving life now, yes. And yet, obviously, it also refers to resurrection as well, so I suppose it's a good idea that there are different aspects of the same thing, but there is a physical, whether it refers specifically to physical resurrection.

The Ezekiel one? Yeah. Well, yeah, I think, well, I put it under the heading of hints, and I'll probably keep it that way. I mean, the new, ingredient that Jesus thought was a two-stage resurrection, of which he is the first example, and yet it linked up to the end of the world.

About Lazarus, Martha said, I know people from it again in the resurrection at the last day. Yeah. So she was expecting not just that Lazarus would immediately experience spiritual resurrection.

[52 : 34] Could there be a day in the future when there's some other kind of resurrection? Yeah. Well, I think that's the standard sort of Pharisee view.

I mean, the fact that the Pharisees went wrong on everything. I mean, I think they had the right idea on that. So that's a worldview that at the end of the world there will actually be a resurrection coupled with judgment, judgment.

And that's what we have to look forward to. The thing that Jesus is doing is saying, well, I can bring the power of that and the reality of that to bear now this minute because I'm here so Lazarus can get up now.

That's, as I understand it, the spectacular point of that. Bill, would that be that fourth stage you're referring to? You said when we die, there's an intermediate stage where our bodies wouldn't be resurrected.

Maybe on the last day when Jesus comes, that's when we get our resurrected bodies. That's correct. Yes. Yeah. And Jesus is sort of temporarily bringing the future into the present by raising Lazarus' physical body there and then.

[53 : 49] That's what he's claiming to do. I just think it's, just thinking about it again, the amazing of that aspect that came alive again after dying, came alive again.

It's something that we know as Christians, but to actually think about it again, it's just so remarkable. It's so remarkable. It is. I mean, you can think about it from various points of view.

This thing was just thinking about it really from the, did it happen? There's lots of evidence that it did. You can think of it in terms of, yeah, the wonder of it, the amazement of it, which the hymns do. people saw it as well. It's quite amazing. There's a lot of people for those days, especially, and the population is so much larger than that, but 500 people then saw it.

Yeah. Well, yes, Jesus said, go to Galilee and I will meet you there. So I presume that's where that happened. Yeah.

[55 : 07] Sorry. You're saying how a lot of people are inconsistencies as people that they're fallible, that they're not being by the spider of God, just by other people, making those stories.

But you were saying that very fact that there's inconsistencies points to them being true, because if they would think they can do! I think that's correct.

Yes. I think the inconsistencies are more apparent than real. I don't think there are genuine contradictions.

There are apparent inconsistencies and I found this helpful reading the book, because I always wondered why that is, but I think it makes a lot of sense to say, here is bits, as we come to these

parts of the Gospels, they have not felt it right to tinker with what people saw, to add things to it, to sort of spiritualise it, or even to say anything devotional.

I mean, it doesn't, they don't say, oh, isn't this wonderful, they just say what happened, don't they? And that's because, that is what happened. It's almost like, really, to a police report investigation, you know, several witnesses and they take notes down, and from a witness's point of view, this is what you saw, no one witness in any particular case has seen everything, and they've seen it from a different perspective, and the point of a police investigation is then to put it all together, to get more duty together.

[56 : 55] And that's, to me, that kind of explanation helps me understand how actually, they don't contradict, they're just different, and in the end it does add to the believability.

Yeah, I think it adds to the believability of it. I was once present as an armed robbery and I was asked to make a police statement, and I could remember everything, apart from where the perpetrator went between going from here to there, and I couldn't, I had no memory of that. So I didn't make it up, I just said I don't know what happened. And I went back to the scene of the crime later, and I then realised that there was a pillar in the bank, and he'd gone round the back of the pillar, and that's why I couldn't see him.

But if you'd written it down, you'd have said, well, he doesn't know what he's talking about, because he had no, you know, there's a glaring omission here, this obviously can't be true, but the omission was there because it was true.

There's another witness from another part of the bank, who said, yes, I saw him, he was there, it doesn't mean, Philip didn't say that, but that means it's not true. You just didn't see that part of it.

[58 : 04] The bits that are supposedly contradictory, I take it referring to the bits where sometimes the right person is that one. Yeah, that's the sort of thing.

And sometimes I say there was one angel or one young man there and sometimes there are two. I'm afraid I don't have them catalogued in my mind, but that's the sort of thing that people say. It's so human, isn't it?

I mean, I've also testified that you know that under those situations you don't remember everything necessarily. There isn't necessarily, it doesn't mean, it doesn't undermine the validity of what you saw and the validity that it happened, but it's showing that they are human.

Someone said one went and another says two went, it doesn't mean that because there is slight inconsistency therefore it just couldn't have happened. It's just quite human. Yeah.

That's what I think. I agree. Particularly with Matthew and Mark's gospel, I think Mark wrote his gospel which is probably some time after and then Matthew wrote his based on Mark and adding bits that put people away with perhaps Mark couldn't even hold it.

[59 : 21] one. I suppose sometimes the events aren't always in exactly the same order, so one or the other might have been mistaken about the exact order or the exact number of days between one event and the next.

But there was at least one story, I can't remember which one it was, where it was recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke and what people said and the order things were slightly different.

The words Jesus used were almost identical in everyone and I remember thinking of something Jesus himself said when he said heaven and earth will pass away and the final words will never pass away and the important thing which is what he said are there and always seem to be right at least in that particular story, I can't remember which story it was.

Yes, I think if we're honest there are questions that could legitimately be asked why are things in this order in this gospel and this order in this gospel why is this exact phrasing here not quite the same as that one there, but there are answers to those and I don't think it affects the truth of the records.

You said that apologists come from apologists meaning an argument for defence or something. So looking at the resurrection in this way, it's a way of whipping a Christian to argue the point of resurrection is giving a defence for it.

[60 : 57] Now I'm just thinking of it in terms of them presenting it to someone who doesn't agree with someone who's not a Christian or who first on the street for instance. Of course, many, many people don't even take much consideration of what Christianity is even about, so this may make no difference to them whatsoever because they're not even entertained thoughts.

But if one were to take this to those who oppose Christianity and don't believe and are thinking people, off the top of my head to Richard Dawkins or something, because we're saying this is an argument for defence, it's almost like we're constantly defending ourselves.

Is there not a strength in the presentation of this that would persuade somebody, so it's like an argument for attack as well? So could Richard Dawkins, if we had such a good argument like that, and he's a scientist as well, is it conceivable that someone of his kind get to a point to say actually that doesn't make sense and therefore it could change someone else's mind?

Well, there's a number of things going on there. When I'm saying argument for the defence, I mean to say an argument to propose strongly that Christianity is true, so I suppose it's defending against the accusation that it's untrue.

So, yeah, I don't mean, I don't, I mean to emphasise the strength of the argument rather than any sense of it being apologising for, that's what I was trying to say.

[62 : 45] there is also, in the case of taking something a step further, it could be that we have enough argument here to persuade others that, well, yes, you have a good, you know, you've explained that part of it so we can accept why you think that way, but there's also a next stage of it being so compelling that in fact it persuades others disagreeing.

Yeah, well, that brings in things like worldview, because if people don't necessarily argue with complete rationality, do they, or don't listen to things with complete rationality, because if somebody is saying, well, God doesn't exist anyway, they could be saying in their minds, well, no matter what you tell me, I'm not going to believe it, because God doesn't exist.

And Jesus, I think it is Jesus who refers to this sort of thing when he says it isn't a problem with the evidence, they have Moses and the law, they should believe them, and they won't believe even though somebody should rise from the dead.

So there's a sort of tension here that you can present a strong argument very strongly, and yet people will not believe it.

It isn't that there's a lack, I mean, that's what Jesus is saying, it isn't that there's a lack of evidence, there's a hardness in people's hearts. It isn't that we shouldn't present arguments, and this book does that much better than I've done, and William Lane Craig does much better than I've done, but whoever does it, the raw material is the same, which I've tried to present this evening, and I think that's the strength of this guy, he argues it very carefully, and says, actually, there's no excuse for not believing it, to be honest, you know, whether you call yourself a historian or a theologian or whatever, there's no excuse for not believing it, people will, that.

[64 : 46] it just goes to show, at the end of the day, you can have a wonderfully formed argument with evidence, but again, if it's not a hard conviction, you know, the doctrines of this world, unless the spirit of God touches it, whatever, there's never going to be a change of mind.

Yes, yes. I think often people just tend to assume that people in the past are stupid, because they were, and one of the great evidence, one of the great evidence in the resurrection is the extraordinary impact it had to time.

And there were any number of messiahs and sects and cults and rabbis and teachers around, many of whom claimed to be the messiahs, I think, some of God.

And why is it that one took over the empire and the others didn't? Because they had this believable claim, which authenticates, and that in the sense is the meaning of the resurrection, which authenticates Christ's own claim to be the resurrection.

Just as when the man lowered through the roof, he says, you know, your sins are forgiven. And then people object, well, how do I know that that's true? And Jesus says, okay, you want to know that that's true, get up and walk.

[66 : 00] And the same thing happens, at least part of the meaning of the resurrection, is that authenticates Jesus' claim to be the resurrection himself. I mean, anybody could say that. I could stand up on a sofa and say, oh, the resurrection and the life, you know, why would anybody believe me?

So, it's because there was this authentic claim that the Christian gospel had such an impact. There were violent people that were to stand up and say, look, I'm sorry, I saw it happen.

So, we like, it's actually possible that I was there. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, that sort of, all historians are faced with this issue. You've got Judaism going along as it does, and you suddenly have Christianity saying these things.

What on earth made the difference? And, like you said, the only explanation that's going to fit is that it actually happened, that this resurrection, this thing, I mean, they knew it was impossible, isn't it? They were, you know, more gullible in those days. They knew that doesn't happen. The only reason they believed it was that it did. Of course, there's just the strength of time, isn't it?

[67 : 15] If everything is hanging on the resurrection, I think there'd be many more people out to completely disprove it than there have been. I mean, the whole faith is hanging on this one thing.

It still stood the test of time. That's true, yes. That's true. It would have been more easy to disapprove if they had to put a guard on the tomb. I mean, the priests went to guard on the tomb. Specifically said that the disciples wouldn't come and steal his body off. There was much danger there because they were terrified behind the shores anyway. But that's what they thought anyway. And then by an Easter morning, the tomb was empty and the stone was rolled away. Now, if those guards had been posted on the tomb, they would willingly let that happen.

No way would they let that happen. I mean, you look what happened to the guards who guarded Peter when he was imprisoned in Herod. And if Peter got out of Herod, flipped. he went after the guards, he did an other search for Peter when he had good to know a name.

[68 : 19] He said he cross his own guards, nor did there be executed. So you get the impression this is a day when people guarded prisoners and their products became dead. They were to let Jesus wanted to go to the people.

By any natural pains anyway. And yet by Easter morning He still had to despite the God! the disciples were terrified and hiding up doors and suddenly they were out on the streets and going out and they could tell the world that Jesus was dead.

It's sort of psychologically unbelievable isn't it that people who were so terrified would suddenly become so bold. Okay well let's draw to a what's in this event is a promise of what's yet to come and I think that we do sometimes forget that we talk about Christianity we're going to go to heaven and go to be with the Lord which is far better but the promises of a whole new world that this is the first indication of the whole of creation being restored and like the book of Revelation says there will be a new heaven and a new earth no more sorrow or sighing or mourning there will be human life on a level that none of us have ever experienced it that's what's being foreshadowed not foreshadowed the down payment of it that's just amazing it really is just amazing if only we could grasp what is linked up with this what is actually saying is in store for us well let's stop there

I think perhaps we could pray let's do that we thank you Lord for these things that we've been able to think about this evening we we thank you that our faith is on a sure foundation and we pray that we may each be strengthened in our thinking and in our living we pray that even when we feel at our very lowest that this may be something which is as bedrock for us we thank you for the great hope that the spirit who now lives within us will give life to our mortal bodies we thank you for the great hope that when he comes we shall see him for we shall be like him we thank you for that promise that you make all things new so help us we pray to believe these things and to live in them and to!

rejoice! in them and we thank you now in Jesus name Amen