

THE HISTORICAL RELIABILITY OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

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[0 : 00] I actually only met Greg on Friday. I've seen him on Skype type thing for about a year and a half. He looks different in person than he does in a huge television screen with a camera angled up from his chin.

You look better in life, real life, by the way. That's just so you know. Greg was for many years on the staff of Navigators out in the Halifax area.

Now he's with Logos Bible Software, which is both the leading and cutting-edge Bible software provider, I think, in the English-speaking world, maybe in other languages as well.

And he's also finishing his PhD at the University of Bristol in the New Testament. And his PhD dissertation is going to be on the burial of Jesus. Do I have that right?

And so he was one of the speakers at the Apologetics Conference that we just had on Friday and Saturday. And he's going to speak now. But just before he speaks, I'm just going to ask for the anointing of God's Holy Spirit upon him.

[1 : 00] Let's pray. Father, thank you for Greg. Thank you, Father, for the mind you've given him, for his willingness, Father, to develop the mind by study.

We ask, Father, that you help him to speak clearly to us today. Father, we thank you that Jesus really did die upon the cross, that he really did rise from the dead. We thank you, Father, that this is true, that it's not a myth, it's not a fable, but it's true.

And we ask, Father, that at this time that your Holy Spirit would move through Greg and into us so that we might grow in a humble, trusting confidence in the truth of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, it is really, really good to be here. And as George said, I am from Halifax.

Did you say I was from Halifax? Well, I'm from Halifax. And, yeah, look at this. That's right.

Represent. And first off, I just want to welcome my cousin, Kely, who came to hear me preach this morning.

[2 : 05] She's sitting right over there. She's the good-looking blonde. She's already married. So, guys, sorry. But, yeah. So, I grew up in Halifax. But my parents are both from Ottawa originally.

And so I have a lot of family. In fact, I've been staying with family the past few days in Ottawa. And one of the main reasons why I'm a Christian is because of the impact of my life of my grandfather, our grandfather, that he played.

And it was actually an Anglican church where he gave his life to Christ a long, long time ago. He died, must have been what? It has been 12 years.

12 years. And it's my grandfather. His name is Victor Minyon. And he led a lot of people to Christ.

And his favorite verse, I just want to read it before I get started because it impacts the whole story of this.

His favorite verse was in 2 Corinthians 5.17. It was, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they become a new creation. The old has gone. The new has come.

[3 : 14] And that's what this whole event is all about. If Jesus of Nazareth really did rise from the dead, then it does give us hope that there is an afterlife and that Jesus' ministry was vindicated by God.

And Jesus actually is who he said he was, God's son who brought the kingdom of God into this world. If the resurrection didn't happen, then it's wrong. Then we are actually wasting our time this morning sitting here.

It really is that simple. If Jesus rose from the dead, Christianity is true. At least Jesus is true. And if he did not rise from the dead, it's all gone.

It's done. And my grandfather, he put his trust in Jesus that Jesus was raised from the dead. And he shared his faith with a lot of people. And he shared it with me. And the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that I pass on to you what I in turn had received.

And what I'm passing on to you this morning is what I received from my grandfather. And if Jesus rose from the dead, I have hope that I will see my grandfather someday. And if he did not, I don't know where that hope goes.

[4 : 22] It's gone. So let's get started. This morning I want to look at the topic of did Jesus rise from the dead? Because I consider there to be no more important question to the Christian faith than this one. When I was in university, I almost lost my faith.

I took religious studies classes thinking they'd be easy grades. And they turned out to be the hardest courses that I ever took. Because I remember taking intern in New Testament and Old Testament and life of Jesus. And I took them from a secular perspective at a university in Halifax. And it was reading through the textbook written by an agnostic who is a New Testament scholar that I came to really struggle. I had a lot of doubts. And a lot of my questions started to come up. And until that point, I had never taken the time to ask the hard questions relating to my faith. And pretty much any hard question was like a wave knocking me over in the ocean. It was really difficult. But it was my mentor at the time with the navigators. That's why I ended up working with the navigators. His name was Ron.

And Ron's actually from the area here. Some of his family lives here. And Ron came alongside me and gave me a challenge that I don't recommend giving to many people or any university. He said, Greg, I encourage you to do one thing.

[5 : 28] You need to read ten books written by the leading Christian scholars arguing that Jesus rose from the dead. And then you need to read the ten leading books by atheists and skeptics that argue that he didn't.

And then you need to figure it out for yourself whether Jesus rose from the dead. Because you're such a second-guesser. You're such a skeptic. You're such a doubter. You're not going to take easy answers. And unless you get a supernatural blast from God, there are no shortcuts. This is going to be hard. So get to work. And that's what I did. Because my faith was in the balance. I was ready to give up. So I took the time to study the topic of did Jesus rise from the dead. And I can stand here this morning saying with utter confidence that not all of my doubts are gone. But my doubts about Jesus' resurrection have been answered. And I can be a Christian because of that.

And the beautiful thing about the resurrection of Jesus is this. If the resurrection of Jesus happened, then we're allowed to have unanswered questions about a lot of other things relating to our faith as Christians. That's the good news.

[6 : 24] The Apostle Paul said there's only two things you need to believe in order to be made right with God. You need to make Jesus your Lord. You need to confess through the mouth that he's Lord and make him your master of your life.

And you need to believe that God raised him from the dead. That's it. It's not that complicated. It's that it. God doesn't require us to go get PhDs and master's degrees and go to seminary and understand everything about theology and the Bible.

He wants us to love and serve his son and understand that the resurrection really happened. So let's get going. I already said the Apostle Paul echoes the importance, the gravity of the resurrection, whether or not it happened.

He said in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 17, he says, If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. That's pretty straightforward. You know, if it didn't happen, the whole Jesus movement is done.

It's a waste of time. So that's why it's so crucial to look into this. Now, in this presentation, it's not really going to be a sermon, and I'm just going to apologize up front. There's going to be a lot of historical quotes coming at you, a lot of information.

[7 : 26] I don't expect you to retain all of it. What I hope it will do is I hope it will encourage you to be able to have confidence in the resurrection. And if you can remember a few key points, wonderful. I'm happy to send my PowerPoint to anybody in PDF format.

I just want people to have confidence in the resurrection. So if you need any help with this, email me, call me. I'll be there for you. But here's what this presentation is going to look like. I'm going to break it up into five chunks.

Number one, we're going to look at five historical criteria that scholars use to examine past events. So if you are sitting here this morning and you have doubts about whether the Bible is inspired by God or you're trying, you know what?

I'm going to assume this morning that the Bible is not even, I'm going to assume it's not even inspired by God, even though I believe it is. I'm just going to treat the gospel text, the New Testament text, as though they're historical, ancient historical documents, just like any scholar on the planet treats them like, even the most skeptical scholars.

They study these ancient documents and they get information from them. How do they do that? How do we know anything about Jesus from the past? Well, scholars use a certain set of criteria that they apply to ancient texts, whether it's the New Testament, whether it's ancient writings like classical authors, like Tacitus or Suetonius or Plutarch's biographies.

[8 : 36] How do we get real information? We apply criteria and I'm going to show you what some of these are. We're going to apply these to the gospel to see what pops to the surface, to see what historians can understand about the resurrection of Jesus historically.

Number two, we're going to discuss the five leading facts held by the vast majority of historians pertaining to the resurrection of Jesus. So once again, whether these, and these aren't just held by evangelical Christian scholars that believe the Bible is the inspired word of God.

These are going to be facts held by agnostics, even Jewish scholars, non-believing scholars, all across the board. And so that's what we're going to look at this morning. I believe we can build the case for the resurrection of Jesus just with the five basic facts about the event in question held by virtually every scholar on the planet who studied this topic.

Okay? Number three, we're going to apply the historical criteria to these facts to show why they're facts. Great. Number four, now it wouldn't be realistic for me to just build the case for the resurrection, and not deal with the leading objections raised by skeptics.

Would it? Of course not. So what I'm going to do is we're going to look at the five leading objections to the resurrection raised by those who criticized the event. And I'm going to show you why they don't stand up. And by the end, my hope is that you will see that the resurrection of Jesus is historically reliable.

[9 : 49] You ready? Okay, rock and roll. Let's get moving. What are the five historical criteria that scholars use to examine past events? Let's go quickly through these. Number one is multiple attestation.

I have ten nephews and nieces. If one of them says, she punched me, I say, are there any other eyewitnesses? Did this really happen? You know, we do this in life.

You know, like, if you're a parent, you know, I'm not yet, but if you're a parent, you really want to know, was there another set of eyeballs in that event to confirm what actually took place? You know, it's not that kids don't make stuff up at all, you know, and neither do adults from time to time.

Number two, friendly and hostile sources. So what does this mean? Well, if there are historical events described in both friendly and hostile sources, it adds more weight to the plausibility of the event having actually happened.

So the hostile source is sometimes more likely to lack a bias. So if you're like a propagandist and you're trying to be like, you know, Caesar Augustus is amazing. Well, what does Caesar's enemy say about Caesar?

[10 : 49] Because if the enemy says the same thing as the person who loves Caesar, then that raises the chance that that really did happen, or that's really true about Caesar. Same thing about Jesus of Nazareth. Number three, embarrassment.

This one always surprises people. Now, this is true. Embarrassing material to the one recording the story is usually thought to be more likely to be historical as people don't tend to create fictional stories that make them look bad.

For instance, the Mormon Church just revealed last week, they just admitted it, Joseph Smith had over 40 wives, and a number of them were polyandry. He married some of his best friend's wives. The Mormon Church just finally admitted this.

They acknowledge it. Go to Brigham Young University. Go to the mormon.org website. They've acknowledged this. Criterion of embarrassment, I don't have any doubts at all that Joseph Smith

had numerous wives. The Mormon Church has admitted it. That's true.

It's a criterion of embarrassment. Let's keep going. Number four, eyewitness testimony. This is pretty logical. Would you rather, if you were studying a biography about Abraham Lincoln, would you rather have sources written within, say, 20 to 30 years of his life to study, or would you rather read sources that were written about 100 years after the fact?

[11 : 53] Well, to ask the question is to answer it. In most cases, you want to go with the earliest sources. And were they composed by eyewitnesses or people that knew eyewitnesses that could get this information from them? So it's the same way with history.

And by the way, with the New Testament, pretty much all of it is connected to eyewitnesses in some way. Number five, closest to the event. It's sort of like eyewitness testimony, but it's slightly different because sometimes we don't have documents composed by eyewitnesses, but we have documents that are written earlier, closer to the event, than later ones.

And we like those ones better. Because oftentimes, the longer, the further away you get from an event having actually happened, we see this throughout history. It's like a snowball going down a hill. It picks up a bunch of loose tradition, and some of it is exaggerated and embellished, and it just turns into something really crazy after a long time.

That doesn't mean it doesn't contain historical information. But the further away you get from an event, the more wild the tales about the event tend to be. So, let's get moving.

What are the five historical facts held by virtually every scholar on the planet who has studied the resurrection of Jesus? Well, let's take a look at the first one. Jesus of Nazareth died by crucifixion.

[13 : 02] Now, you're probably thinking to yourself, well, come on, of course he died by crucifixion. Who would make that up? I agree with you exactly. Why do we have to look at this? Well, because some people don't believe that Jesus was crucified.

Muslims don't believe that Jesus was crucified. The Koran says, if we're going to look at the passage, says that Jesus never died. So, it's important for us to deal with this. Because if Islam is true and Jesus never died, it was just assumed into heaven, well, that sort of dismantles Christianity, doesn't it?

There's no atoning death on the cross, and Jesus didn't subsequently raise from the dead, beating death, the great enemy. So, we've got to look at this. Also, a handful of biblical scholars who don't even think Jesus existed.

I'm not even going to deal with that this morning. That is just totally bizarre. So, if there's no crucifixion and death of Jesus, there can be no historical resurrection either. So, let's take a look at the case for the crucifixion of Jesus.

Well, first off, crucifixion was a common form of Roman execution. I've studied the topic. I went and visited the leading crucifixion expert. That sounds really funny. The leading crucifixion expert at the University of Tel Aviv in Israel.

[14 : 05] And this is going to sound really gruesome. If you have a weak stomach, plug your ears. But they actually crucified cadavers, so we actually know how they did it now. And we know that where the sweet spots were in the ankles, so it didn't rip through the foot.

Okay, we'll keep going. Crucifixion involved flogging and nailing a person to a cross. Hardly ever did it involve tying. We have only one quote that says the person was tied.

It was way outside, way far away from Israel in some part of the Roman Empire. So, nailing was the preferred method. And we actually have archaeological evidence for crucifixion.

Scholars discovered a few decades ago the heel bone of a man who was crucified. The nail was still lodged in it. His name was Yehohanan because of the bone box, the ossuary that the heel bone was found inside.

And it was carved on the side of the box. I've seen the box, taken pictures of it. And I've actually seen this heel bone. This is at Tel Aviv University. And the reason why we have it is because when the nail went in, it hooked into the wood, hit it not in the wood, and they couldn't get the nail out of the wood because the Romans were green.

[15 : 08] They liked to reduce, reuse, recycle nails. They would use them again for the next crucifixion victim. And they weren't worried about sanitary practices, so they just extract those suckers and pound them in the next victim. And so they couldn't get this one out.

So they decided, let's just chop the guy's leg off and fire it in the box. That's what they did. And that's why we have the nail stuck in the bone. So that's crucifixion. Now, what does the Quran say

about Jesus' crucifixion?

Well, it says it didn't happen. Surah 4, 157, 158 says this, that they said and boast, we killed Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of Allah. But they killed him not, nor crucified him. But so it was made to appear to be so. Now, Muslims don't believe Jesus died, but rather he ascended to heaven and only appeared to die. But it's important to keep in mind that the Quran was composed six centuries after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

There's no eyewitness testimony. It's not based on, there's not a thread of evidence to support what the Quran says here. In fact, every historical source that we have, inside and outside the Bible, says Jesus was crucified.

[16:09] Let's take a look at them. First off, all four New Testament Gospels record that Jesus was crucified. The Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus was crucified. And historians prefer the first century Gospels over the seventh century Quran, no contest.

But what about sources, what about non-Christian hostile sources that are not friends of Christianity? Well, let's take a look. The first century Jewish historian Josephus says that when Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing amongst us, had condemned him, that is Jesus, to be crucified.

Thank you, Josephus. The next quote is from Tacitus, a Roman historian who did not like Christianity at all. He tells us that Jesus experienced the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of the procurators, Pontius Pilatus.

And the extreme penalty was Roman crucifixion. It was the word, by the way, the word that we get excruciating in English, do you know what that word means? Out of the cross, excrucio, out excruciating.

That's excruciating pain. It means it's the equivalent of crucifixion. That's what it means. So next time you say that, think of crucifixion. Lucian of Samasata, who's in the mid-second century, said the Christians, you know, worshipped a man to this day who was crucified.

[17:23] I highlighted the word. Now, he's not a Christian. Marbar Serapion, who most likely wrote in the first century, he said, or what advantage came to the Jews by the murder of their wise king?

So referring to the death of Jesus. So we have numerous sources, even the Jewish Talmud, not written by Christians. These are Orthodox, these are rabbinic Jews. He said on the eve of Passover, Yeshu, the Hebrew for Jesus, was hanged, which is interchangeable for crucifixion, a death by suspension of some sort.

So we have all these sources inside and outside the Bible that tell us that Jesus was crucified. And it makes sense. So when we apply the historical criteria, all four Gospels and the Apostle Paul report that crucifixion, as well as a number of non-Christian sources that have no dog in the fight. In fact, they want to stop with the Jesus movement. And we have friendly and hostile sources. And embarrassment. It is extremely unlikely that the early church would have created a fictional story about the Messiah, who does not actually beat the Romans, but he gets killed by them.

Why would you make that up? The first century Jewish belief in the Messiah was that he was going to rise up, conquer the Romans, take back Israel, and rule. And the Romans wouldn't be ruling over them anymore.

[18:36] They would not have made this up at all. So much so that even the most skeptical New Testament scholar, Professor John Dominic Crossan, one of the founders of the famous Jesus Seminar, who the group voted that only 18% of the sayings and deeds of Jesus in the Bible actually go back to Jesus.

The other 82% are totally fictional. He says this, that Jesus was crucified as sure as anything historical can ever be. Thank you. The next fact is this.

Let's go to fact number two. So first off, we've nailed down the crucifixion of Jesus. Pardon the pun. I did that on purpose. Yeah.

I'm not smart enough to come up with puns on the spot, so I've got to think about them ahead of time. Fact number two, Jesus' disciples believed that he rose from the dead and appeared to them. This is held by virtually every scholar on the planet.

And why is this a big deal? Well, because this doesn't prove that they saw him alive, but that they genuinely believed it. Okay? First off, let's take a look once again at 1 Corinthians 15, 3-8.

[19:39] This is, now Paul in this first line, he says this, For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received. So just like I told you this morning, the reason why I'm a Christian is because it was passed on to me by my grandfather.

What I know today is not stuff that I came up with on my own. I've pillaged books and articles and spoken with people. Paul's saying here that what I'm passing on to you, I received.

Okay? And Paul, we know from Galatians, that he knew Peter, James, and John, the disciples of Jesus. James, Jesus' own brother. And about three years after Paul's conversion, which happened about 18 months, 24 months, a year and a half to two years after Jesus' death and resurrection, Paul's conversion happened.

And then three years after that, he went to Jerusalem and he met with Peter, James, and John. And Paul's saying is here, For I delivered to you what I also received. So what we're about to read here is early tradition, most scholars' date was likely composed within six months to a year of the resurrection of Jesus.

Okay? This is really, really early. So when skeptics say, How can you trust the New Testament? It was written so much longer after the fact. Well, really? Corinthians was written 20 years after the resurrection of Jesus? And Paul received this information about five years after the resurrection of Jesus?

[20 : 51] But he didn't make it up. The tradition itself was composed by the early church within six months to a year after the fact, after the event in question. That's pretty early tradition. That's not a snowball going down a hill, picking up all this loose tradition piled on.

And I'll show you, when you read this right here, it is so tight and there's no, it's not elaborate at all. It's like boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. It's like bullet notes. And there's nothing else.

It's not like a gospel narrative in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, where it's a long expanded version of what took place. This is the earliest information we have about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

So Paul says, Really straightforward.

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. The core of this information, if you remove Jesus appearing to Paul and I pass on you what I received, the rest of it goes back to within six months to a year is when scholars date that this was likely composed by the early church.

[21 : 59] So this is really, really early tradition. So Paul is saying that Paul is an eyewitness of the risen Jesus. And this tradition we're reading here is composed by eyewitnesses who knew Jesus and saw him alive.

I have a chart here presented that shows all the named people that Jesus appeared to after the resurrection, where it took place, the time of day, and which sources it took place in.

Some of them, we have multiple independent sources tell us that this happened. A number of them are independent. But when we're dealing with the resurrection of Jesus, we're not dealing with like one story and only one text.

It's not like all we had was the gospel of John. And it said Jesus was raised from the dead. And when we look at Mark and Matthew and Luke, there's no resurrection account. And Paul never talks about it. If that happened, we would be very skeptical that the resurrection actually happened.

The resurrection is repeated throughout the entire New Testament. It's repeated all throughout the gospel. It's repeated in all four gospels, in Paul's writings, and in Acts numerous times. All the preaching sermons that Peter and Paul do in Acts, it's this Jesus whom you crucified, God raised him from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this.

[23 : 06] And these guys were willing to go to their deaths proclaiming Jesus was raised from the dead. The resurrection is the thing that kick-started the Jesus movement. And all these guys and women believed that Jesus rose from the dead, genuinely believed it.

So much so that they were willing to experience bodily harm and even death proclaiming that it took place. Acts chapter 4 tells us that Peter and John were arrested and imprisoned. Acts 5 tells us the apostles were arrested, imprisoned, and flogged.

These guys wouldn't shut up. They kept saying, this Jesus Nazareth is raised from the dead. They said, stop bowing the knee before Caesar. Bow before the real Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth. And they wouldn't stop. So they kept firing them in jail, kept flogging them, kept beating them, stoning them.

And they were like, okay, tell us you're going to stop preaching about Jesus and we'll let you out of prison. We're not going to stop. Okay, we're going to let you out of prison. But if we hear you do that, we're going to beat you again and throw you in prison again. Okay.

They get right back in the street. They do it again and get thrown right back into prison. They wouldn't stop. Acts 12, James, the brother of John, is killed and Peter is thrown in prison. We have

early church fathers that tell us about the deaths of Paul and Peter.

[24 : 10] Tertullian wrote in 200 AD, tells us that Paul was beheaded and Peter was made fast to the cross. Peter died by crucifixion, just like Jesus. But we're told that from the church father origin that Peter was crucified upside down because he didn't feel that he was worthy to die in the same way as his Lord.

So we say, can you crucify me upside down? Kind of an interesting request. And they said, sure, why not? You're going to get crucified anyways. We'll give you one last nice thing, I guess.

We also know about the martyrdoms of Jesus' own brother, James, from numerous sources. Not just Christian sources, but even non-Christian sources. The first century historian Josephus tells us that James was put to death.

Also, the Christian sources, Hegesippus and Clement of Alexandria, both second century sources, tell us about the martyrdom of Jesus' brother, James. They wouldn't stop saying Jesus was raised from the dead and they went to their deaths.

Early church tradition tells us that at least some of Jesus' disciples chose to die rather than recant that they saw him alive, resurrected. Charles Coulson, Chuck Coulson, who was one of Richard Nixon's right-hand men.

[25 : 18] He got in trouble and went to prison during the Watergate scandal. Here's what he said. He became a Christian while he was in prison. And he says it was reading the resurrection narratives that did it.

And here's what he said. He said, He said,

Not just scripture, but even inside and outside. With the martyrdom of Jesus' brother, James, and the apostle, Peter, this was multiply attested in the ancient literature. We have eyewitness testimony.

We actually have a document for sure in the New Testament written by an eyewitness who saw Jesus alive. Paul. And the Gospels may have been composed by eyewitnesses.

We don't know for sure who wrote the Gospels. But we're pretty sure that they contain eyewitness testimony. So let's keep looking. Gerard Ludmann. He's an atheist. He's one of the leading.

[27 : 03] He's one of the. I read his book when I was going through my doubts with the resurrection. And this really jumped off the page at me. He said, It may be taken as historically certain that Peter and the disciples had experiences after Jesus' death in which he appeared to them as the risen Christ.

Now, the reason why he, how he can hold to this and still be an atheist is he believes they all had a mass hallucination numerous different times in different places.

He has a lot more faith than I do. So let's take a look at fact number three. Christian killer Paul becomes killer evangelist for Christ. Once again, I'm not really a wordsmith.

So I do the best I can. So Paul was known as Saul of Tarsus before his conversion. That's probably his Jewish name, Shaul. Back when he was in Jewish circles, he was probably still called Shaul.

And he hung out with Gentiles in a Greek setting. They probably called him Paulos, which is Paul. Sounds like Paul, Shaul. Sounds pretty close. He's a former persecutor of the Christian church. He tells us this, and other texts tell us this.

[28 : 11] And then we're told that Jesus appeared to Paul, and Paul became a believer in Jesus. And the reason why is because Jesus appeared to Paul. And Paul, Jesus was the last person on earth that Paul wanted to have appear to him alive.

Because Paul persecuted the Jesus movement, was trying to stamp it out. And the Jewish world, religious leaders at the time, gave Paul the authority to go and do this. To go and try to stop with the Jesus movement, which was causing havoc and leading people.

He was messing up synagogues. And all these people were believing that Jesus was the Messiah, the Savior of the world. And Paul wrote one-third of the New Testament. So when you open up your New Testament, one-third of it was written by Paul.

The question is this. This is a really fast one. What would it have taken for Osama bin Laden to have changed his mind, become a Christian, and then run a school for children, teaching girls?

Let's apply the historical criteria to this one.

I don't want to spend too much time on Paul, but multiple attestation. Paul's conversion is described in Acts, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, and Philipians. He was also a hostile source. He didn't like the Jesus movement, and he became one.

[29 : 15] And he's also an eyewitness. Paul claimed to have seen the risen Jesus himself, and Paul also consulted with other eyewitnesses. So Paul is both a firsthand and a secondhand eyewitness in his documents.

Now, Acts, not written by Paul, written by Dr. Luke, confirms that Jesus appeared to Paul, and Paul also knew the disciples. So that helps confirm what Paul said. Other Christian authors from the early first century said the same thing as Paul.

It was basically like giving the right hand of fellowship to Paul or the fist bump, saying, good job, Paul. Keep up the good work. You're doing a great job. So let's move on to the next fact. And this one always surprises people because they're always like, what?

Well, yeah, Jesus' skeptical brother James became the head of the Jerusalem church. What do you mean, his skeptical brother James? Well, when you take a look at the New Testament, the New Testament evidence was that James was a skeptic, and so were all of Jesus' siblings prior to Jesus' death and resurrection.

Now, this is weird. You mean Jesus' brothers and sisters did not believe he was the Messiah during his ministry? No, they thought he was nuts. This is something that they would not create.

[30 : 18] The church would not have made this up. This is the criterion of embarrassment to play. First off, Jesus' brothers did not believe in him during his ministry. Take a look at Mark chapter 3, also chapter 6, and John chapter 7.

Most scholars believe Mark and John's gospels were written independent of one another. So we have two independent sources that confirm that Jesus' siblings thought he was crazy. Jesus' brothers taunted him, and his brothers were apparently absent at his crucifixion because Jesus entrusted the care of his mother to one of his disciples, not to one of his family members, suggesting that his brothers were non-believers at the time and nowhere to be found.

So right up to the crucifixion, Jesus' family members, his brothers and sisters, are nowhere to be seen. And then what happens? Right after the death and resurrection of Jesus, there's a massive change.

We're told in Acts 1.14, really shortly after the resurrection accounts of Jesus, that Jesus' brothers were in the upper room with the disciples and Jesus' mother after the resurrection.

We're also told all throughout the early church fathers, Josephus and the New Testament, that who was the head of the Jerusalem church? Who was basically the pope in Jerusalem? It wasn't Peter.

[31 : 29] It wasn't the top. It was James, Jesus' brother. How do you go from being a skeptic to becoming the head of the Jerusalem church? And also, Paul reported his activities to James, not to Peter.

It would appear that at least some of Jesus' other brothers became believers. If we read 1 Corinthians 9, verse 5, it talks about the brothers of Jesus, of the Lord, who were doing ministry. And we also have two letters written.

We have James, who wrote a letter in the New Testament, but Jesus' other brother Jude wrote a letter in our New Testament. So you can read them when you go home today. Really interesting letters. James' transformation from a skeptic to a believer is plausibly explained by his belief that Jesus had been raised from the dead and he had a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to him. In other words, Jesus appeared to him alive. Paul only names two people that Jesus appeared to in 1 Corinthians 15 by name. Only two. And those two are the exact people that he met in Galatians in chapter 1, about three years after his conversion, five years after the resurrection of Jesus.

Do you know who those people are? Number one is Peter and number two is... That's not a fluke. That's probably the moment that transformed James' entire life and changed the course of history.

[32 : 41] Dr. Mike Lacona, who spoke this past weekend at the Dig and Delft conference, I consider him to be the leading expert on the resurrection on the planet. I mean that.

He said in his major monograph, 718 pages by Intervary to Press, he said, The best explanation for this change of heart is that James came to believe that his brother had risen from the dead.

Lacona looked at all the arguments for and against why James became a believer. And the only evidence that makes sense is that Jesus appeared to James alive. That changed his entire life.

So we apply the historical criteria to this. We have embarrassment. James didn't believe in Jesus before Jesus' death and resurrection. Why would the church invent this as a fictional tale? Why would you invent that Jesus' own brother said he was nuts?

You wouldn't. Multiple attestation is confirmed in multiple sources. And we can apply it again because we're told that James became the leader of the Jerusalem church. When you put it all together, you can do what you want in your own mind.

[33 : 38] But I think the evidence in favor of James became a believer because something massive happened in his life to change his mind. I mean, really, what would it take for you to believe? Now, I ask this question for myself.

I have three brothers and a sister. What would it take for you to believe that one of your siblings was the Lord of the universe? More for them to think that about you.

Fact number five, the empty tomb. That is a first century tomb. And, yeah, that's a younger me with more hair. Fact number five, the empty tomb.

Now, unlike the first four facts, the fifth is not held by over 95% of scholars. This one's held by only 75% of scholars. Why? Well, historians don't believe that Paul, our earliest source, even though all the Gospels tell us that Jesus was, that the tomb was empty, that Paul, because Paul doesn't specifically say it, they don't think that the tomb was empty.

This is one of the dumbest objections I've ever heard in my life. But just read 1 Corinthians 15, 3-4, written by Paul, and just think it in your mind. Okay. That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

[34 : 51] So, yeah, Jesus is on the cross. He's died. And that he was buried. Okay. So he's taken down from the cross. His body is placed into the grave. And that he was raised on the third day.

Okay. He's raised from the dead. The empty tomb is implied. What these scholars wish Paul would have said is Christ died, was buried, and then somehow he exited out of the tomb, and then he was raised.

No, he was raised. That implies that the tomb is empty. As a Pharisaic Jew, which Paul was, there was no concept of resurrection that didn't include using the body. The resurrection means using the body.

These aren't ghost stories. The early Christians knew what ghost stories were. When Peter gets out of prison, he goes to the door, and Rhoda answers the door. And what do they say? Oh, it can't be Peter.

He's probably dead. It must be his ghost. They knew the difference between a ghost and a body. There's a difference. And Pharisees believed that the resurrection meant the entire, the corpse of the person would be transformed, would be raised from the dead.

[35 : 49] That's what resurrection means. Otherwise, we have ghost stories. Being raised from the dead means being raised from the dead. Paul believes the tomb is empty. Now, why else should we believe that the tomb was actually empty?

Well, because the testimony of women. The four Gospels tell us that it was women that went to the tomb and found it empty. All four of them tell us this. And the New Testament authors would most likely not have fabricated the story of women as the first witnesses of the empty tomb.

Why? Because in the ancient world, women were not considered to be reliable sources as giving testimony. In fact, yeah, I'll show you. Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, says this.

But let not the testimony of women be admitted on account of the levity and boldness of their sex. Nor let servants be admitted to give testimony on account of the ignobility of their soul, since it is probable that they may not speak truth, either out of hope of gain or fear of punishment.

The Talmud, the Jewish Talmud says this in Rosh Hashanah 1.8. Any evidence which a woman gives is not valid to offer. This is equivalent to saying the one who is rabbinically accounted robbers qualified to give the same evidence as a woman. This guy's comparing the evidence of a woman to a robber.

[36 : 58] This is so weird. The Talmud said this. Sooner let the words of the law be burnt than delivered to women. I think these guys died celibate and old and lonely.

Pagan attitude towards women. So let's not just beat up on the Jewish guys. This is the view of the ancient Roman Near East, the whole area. Democritus says this. I love this one.

This is great. A woman must not practice argument. This is dreadful. To be ruled by a woman is the ultimate outrage for a man. Now, I can tell you from personal experience that this is true.

No. Your wife can hear this on the web. It's true. Sophocles. Oh, man, this is good.

He's trying to make it sound so nice. Oh, woman. Woman's best jewel is silence. For as leaves decorate trees, wool is the beauty of the sheep.

[38 : 05] The mane, the glory of horses. And the beard, the pride of man. So silence is the jewel of the women. Did you know that in the second century, the leading critics against Christianity, that one of the main reasons why they said we should not trust the resurrection accounts is because it was women that discovered the tomb empty?

Celsus, in the year 180 A.D., said this. After death, he rose again, showed the marks of his punishment. I know his hands had been pierced. But who saw this? A hysterical female, as you say. And perhaps some other one of those were deluded by the same sorcery.

That's why we shouldn't trust it. Because you're telling us it was women passed the message on to you? Please. When we apply the historical criteria, embarrassment is all over this one.

Women were not considered to be reliable witnesses in antiquity, and this would have been embarrassing for the early church. But you know what? Why did they include this in all four Gospels? This is a crucial part of the story, and they didn't make it up.

The early Christians had integrity, and they told the story the right way. It was the women that went to the tomb and discovered it empty. If they airbrushed that out, the whole resurrection narrative would sound extremely weird if nobody went to the tomb to make sure that it was empty.

[39 : 19] All four Gospels include that because it's exactly what happened. And we also have multiple attestations because this was recorded in all four Gospels that women were the first witnesses. Now, the interesting thing is that Paul, in his early creed, where he lists Jesus died, buried, was raised, then he appeared to so, so, so, so, so, he airbrushes out women.

Why? Some scholars think it was so that it would seem more credible to outsiders that were skeptical about the event question. I don't know. It's a good question. D.H. van Dahlen, the famous Dutch New Testament scholar, said this, It is extremely difficult to object to the empty tomb on historical grounds.

Those who deny it do so on the basis of theological or philosophical assumptions. So, the case for the resurrection. Now, I'm going to quickly look at maybe just three of the objections because I think I can hear the Sunday School kids.

Am I going too long? Maybe? What time did I start at? If you guys are bored, just flail your arms and I'll know it's over. So, the case for the resurrection.

Fact number one, the crucifixion of Jesus is historically solid. Fact number two, the disciples claimed that he appeared to them individually in groups. Fact number three, Paul went from persecuting the church, becoming one of the most famous Christians of all time, authoring a third of the New Testament because of his belief that Jesus appeared to him alive.

[40 : 38] And fact number four, Jesus' brother James became the head of the Jerusalem church. Why? Because 1 Corinthians 15, 7 tells us that Jesus appeared to James, totally freaked him out and changed his life. And number five, the tomb was discovered empty by women.

When you put these five facts together, if these are facts, as I've shown, you've got to do something with them. And now, I've asked some of the leading agnostic scholars on the planet, one of them teaches here in Ottawa, actually, and teaches New Testament, and he told, I said, do you believe all these five facts?

Because I went through and he said, yes. I said, what do you do with those? He said, I don't know. I said, do you believe Jesus was raised from the dead? He said, no. I said, then how do you explain it? He says, I don't know.

Okay. So, I do know Jesus was raised from the dead. That's what I really believe, and that's what I think I hopefully have shown this morning. Now, what are the five leading objections to the resurrection?

I'm going to try to go through this pretty quick. Fact number one is the conspiracy hypothesis. Once again, not every person believes Jesus was raised from the dead. Some of them don't think it happened, but the conspiracy hypothesis is this.

[41 : 43] Jesus' disciples stole the body, lied about his appearances, thus faking the resurrection. The problems with this are numerous. Many of the disciples went to their deaths proclaiming the resurrection, and if they fake the story, why did they invent women as the first to discover the empty tomb?

I can just picture this happening, like all the guys are gathered together. Okay, boys, here's the plan. We get the body out of the tomb, and then we stash us somewhere. Then we come back, and we're going to tell a story that's probably going to get us all killed.

So, who's with me? Objection number two. Objection number two.

He had nails through the ankles. No problem. Upright. Looking great. And he was able to walk down the street and convince his disciples that he'd been raised from the dead. Problem. If you saw a man who had been crucified, there is no way you would have mistaken him as gloriously raised from the dead and start worshiping that guy as a deity.

I mean, if a crucified man shows up at your door, how would you respond? Unlikely. Look at this guy. He's a mess. Covered with blood and nails. It's obvious he's been raised from the dead. You know, more likely, hey, get this poor man a doctor.

[43 : 18] He's going to die. He needs some serious help. Objection number three. Displaced body hypothesis. So, this theory is that Joseph Arimathea, the guy who buried Jesus in his own tomb, buried Jesus only temporarily, and then he moved the body to another one after the fact.

The woman went to the empty tomb on Easter Sunday and thought, you just naturally, if there's a tomb empty, that means only one thing. The person's been raised from the dead. That happens all the time, doesn't it?

You know, the problems with this are just legion. First off, this theory does not take into account the post-mortem of Jesus to his disciples, to skeptics like James and to Paul. And also, Jesus' disciples didn't know he was going to rise from the dead, even though he kept telling them.

Because Jews, which all Jesus' disciples were, only believed in the resurrection of all people at the end of time. The general resurrection. Which, by the way, is the Christian belief, too. If you think that heaven is your final destination, it's not.

It's the resurrection. Heaven is only a holding tank with Jesus until the resurrection happens. Right? God didn't create these bodies for no reason. This isn't some sort of like, I'm going to give these guys bodies for a few years, and they'll be a floating ethereal in space playing harps, singing with wings.

[44 : 28] This is plan A, and it's going to remain that way. And when we get raised from the dead, our bodies are going to be transformed like Jesus' which was still a body. Okay? Just wanted you to know that. And the empty tomb alone would have proved absolutely nothing.

So if the tomb's empty, all you have is an empty tomb. So what? You know, you need to have both an empty tomb and post-mortem appearances for the resurrection to make sense. Otherwise, you have ghost stories or you just have an empty tomb, which means nothing.

And the Jewish and Roman authorities could have easily squashed the Jesus movement by going to Joseph of Arimathea, going to the real tomb, getting the actual body of Jesus, and parading it up and down the street in Jerusalem, and that would have ended the Jesus movement immediately. That never happened. I can just picture the woman at the empty tomb. Well, we know this is the same tomb as on Friday night, but the body's not here. Let's not bother to check if the body was moved.

Let's just assume resurrection. It wouldn't happen. Objection number four. This is really weird. Some of you can shut off your brain at this point. I don't blame you at all because this is held by nobody that's a serious scholar.

[45 : 30] But this is sort of the Internet skeptic when you Google it online. It's like the person that thinks that all we know about Jesus is stolen from all these other pagan religions and all over the world through history and piled together.

We have this composite figure named Jesus of Nazareth. So here's the theory. The stories of Jesus' death and resurrection are fabricated to model the supposed tales of dying and rising gods of the pagan world.

Well, the problems with this is a lot. The ancient Near Eastern figures were said to have died and come back to life. They're mostly fertility gods who would die every single year and they would return in springtime. So why do the leaves fall off the trees?

Well, the gods must be dying. Why are the leaves coming back on the trees? Oh, the gods must be waking up again. It was more of a going to sleep, waking up thing. It had nothing to do with resurrection involving a body. And the language of resurrection used in the New Testament echoes that from the Old Testament, which is Jewish language, which means you die once, you're raised from the dead.

That's what resurrection means. It's not a cycle thing based on the calendar of the seasons. And Jesus' earliest followers were Jewish. None of them were pagan.

[46 : 32] In fact, they were so finicky about making sure that they didn't compromise with pagans, that they wouldn't even eat food sacrificed to idols that they could cook up later, which would mean almost nothing. They wanted to distance themselves from anything to do with paganism.

So why would they all of a sudden adopt a pagan view of the dying and rising? It just wouldn't make sense. It's based on the Old Testament belief that God will raise everybody from the dead. But in this case, Jesus is the first person and only person yet to have been truly raised from the dead, resurrected, not resuscitated.

And there is no evidence that any pagan deities were known or worshipped in rural Palestine or in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus. So much so that even one of the most skeptical New Testament scholars on the planet, Professor Bart Ehrman, he said this on dying and rising deities in pagan religions, The idea of Jesus' resurrection did not derive from pagan notions of a God simply being reanimated.

It derived from Jewish notions of resurrection as an end times event in which God would reassert his control over this world. Thank you very much, Dr. Ehrman. Also, the leading expert on dying and rising deities in the ancient pagan world, his name is Triget Mettinger from Lund University in Sweden.

He said, There is, as far as I am aware, no evidence that the death and resurrection of Jesus is a mythological construct, drawing on the myths and rites of the dying and rising gods of the shrouded in the world. This guy is for a living.

[47 : 49] He studied ancient Near Eastern pagan texts. He's like, there is no parallels at all to be found. The Christians did not rip this off. That's totally bizarre. So that's what the leading experts say, and I've read their work, and it all makes sense.

Now, this is the leading objection on the planet to the resurrection of Jesus. This is the one that even my relative the other day raises an objection. Maybe they're just hallucinating like people do. Maybe they just hallucinated. So this theory is basically this. They just hallucinate. That's the theory, both individually and in groups. Well, first off, this theory takes no account of the empty tomb.

But then let's really take a look at the science on hallucinations. According to the Dictionary of Psychology published by the American Psychological Association in 2009, we're told that 15% of people under the age of, I think it's under the age of 50, experience hallucinations.

But then 50% of senior citizens experience hallucinations of their deceased loved ones. But only 7% of these are visual hallucinations, because you probably all thought hallucinations were just visual nature, didn't you?

[48 : 55] No. Hallucinations come in multiple forms. Some hallucinations are visual. Some of them are auditory. So you swear you hear something that's not really there, even though you don't see it. Some of them are perceptory, where you just sense like, I think somebody's in the room with me right now.

I've had that before. It's kind of weird. I don't think that's hallucination. I think that's just me after I watch a scary movie, you know. Some of them are even tactile, where you swear you've touched something that's there that's not really there.

That's another form of hallucination. Some of them are gustatory and olfactory, where you swear that you smell or taste something that's not there. That's a form of hallucination, believe it or not. Now, I just thought I'd throw this one in, that women are more likely to hallucinate than men.

Now, let's put this in perspective, shall we? Not 15%, not 50%, but 100% of Jesus' disciples would have had to have had visual hallucinations and tactile hallucinations and auditory hallucinations and perceptory all at the exact same time.

This is impossible. Individually and in group settings. What about group hallucinations? What do we know about these?

[50 : 10] Well, according to the Bible on hallucinations, it's called Hallucinations, The Science of Idiosyncratic Perceptions by Andre Illman and Frank Lerati. This is what every psychiatrist has on their shelf to deal with the topic.

According to the authors of this book, they did not include anything in group hallucinations. Why? Well, Mike Lacona, the expert in resurrection who presented this past weekend, he emailed them and asked them, like, look, I was writing my book on the resurrection of Jesus and I wanted to deal with group hallucinations.

And your book is the Bible in hallucinations. How come you don't have anything on group hallucinations in your book? Because I really want to know about this. And they wrote back and said, because they couldn't find anything to include in all the scholarly literature.

These are the experts in hallucinations. If you think about it, two individuals cannot share the same subconscious state as one another. You can't. You know? According to clinical psychologist Gary Sibsey, he couldn't find anything whatsoever in group hallucinations in the professional literature for 20 years up to around 2005.

So, it's scientifically, at this point, it's impossible for everybody to include hallucinations. There can be grouped illusions, where you can convince somebody to believe something that's not there, but that's not the same thing as hallucination.

[51 : 20] Because hallucination is when everybody, in their subconscious state, believes that they're seeing the exact same thing. Now, I want you to think about this. You know, I just... Actually, I think I have a... No, I don't.

Picture this. It would be like the disciples in the room. And, you know, because hallucinations in your subconscious mind, it's like, you know, I can picture Peter being like, hey, do you see that? I think I see Jesus. He's floating up there in the top right in the room, but he's not saying anything to me. And then John's like, I see Jesus too, but he's not up there. He's over there, but he's talking to me.

The other guy's like, you know, Philip's like, I don't see Jesus, but I can smell something. Do you think I'm smelling Jesus? Like, that's what would have happened, because hallucinations are all in different forms. But to put it all together, from having all the exact same experience at the exact same time, it doesn't work.

So, in conclusion, after all of this, the resurrection of Jesus, is the only hypothesis that takes account of all of the historical facts, and not a single objection stands up to scrutiny.

[52 : 21] They all have serious weaknesses, and they should be dismissed. Those who reject the resurrection of Jesus do so not because of historical reasons, but because of philosophical or theological assumptions.

Why does all of this matter at the end of the day? Because how do you know there's an afterlife? How do you know that you're going to see your deceased loved ones and put their faith in Christ? If Jesus has risen, then nothing else matters. And if Jesus has not risen, then nothing else matters. Let's pray. Lord, I want to thank you for this day.

Thank you for this wonderful body of believers. And I just want to bless everyone here. Church of the Messiah. Thank you for this church. Thank you that we can come here and we can examine our faith and we don't have to be afraid of looking under any rock.

Nothing should fear us about the truth. Thank you that you are the God of truth. And when we search for truth, we will find you. Thank you, Lord, that you encourage us to do inquiry and to look into things.

[53 : 27] That we are to love you with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. I pray that more people here, that you would help more of us to love you with the whole encompass of our lives, including our mind, and to look for answers for our hard questions and not push our doubts into the corner of our mind and our soul.

Help us to tackle them head on. Thank you, Lord, for Ottawa. Thank you for all the people that live here, that love you, and that serve you. I want to pray a blessing over this city, that more people would come to know your son, Jesus, and experience the freedom of feeling their sins forgiven, washed away, knowing that they are right with you and get to be part of your kingdom, of turning earth into an image of heaven now, instead of waiting down the road for the afterlife.

Pray all this in the name of the only person who's been truly raised from the dead, resurrected, who right now sits in the right hand of the Father. Pray it in His name. Amen.