

1 Corinthians 15:1-11, “Jesus, The Way in the Manger”

12.13.20

“The word became flesh and made His dwelling among us... He was crushed, He was pierced, and He rose again...” Those guys were right! Jesus had to live so that He could die...He is the Christmas Jesus so that He could be the Easter Jesus. He had to live so that He could die, so that He could rise again...so that He could prove that He was the Son of the Living God.

You see, Jesus Christ didn't come just to be a baby. He didn't come just to heal a few people and start a religion. Jesus came to die. He came to die for your sins and for mine and for the sins of all of the people who would ever live! Indeed, He rose again and because of that fact, by surrendering our lives to Him, when we die, we can rise again too...to eternal life. Now church, if that doesn't bring you hope and peace this Christmas season, then I don't know what else will.

Turn in your Bibles this morning to 1 Corinthians 15. This morning and next week we're going to be talking about:



“Jesus, The Way in a Manger.” Church, Jesus, is the ONLY way to eternal life...we all know that... we know He is THE WAY, the truth and the life...and the way to God was made possible because Jesus was born of a virgin at Christmas and then died and rose again at Easter! As we read this passage...I want you to see how PERSONAL the Apostle Paul makes it by saying “you” over and over again. He came for YOU!

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

¹ Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you— unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

The Gospel is personal...Jesus came for you and Paul is reminding the Corinthian church of this fact. What kind of church is this church? Well, they're a mess, right? Big-time! They are a church that's fussing and fighting and arguing over all kinds of things...like food offered to idols, spiritual gifts, how they run their church services. Bottom line: they were NOT showing love...everything they were doing in their meetings was out of order and a chaotic mess. So, the Apostle Paul is seeking to refocus their attention on the basic fundamentals of the faith...that which is most important!!

Think about the Corinthians and what we know about them through our study. Remember what we learned in chapter 6. Paul reminded them of who can enter the Kingdom of heaven...

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous^[b] will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,^[c] ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Think of it...all of a sudden, the Corinthians were transformed by Christ. Jesus changed them...they went from being sexually immoral, drunks, adulterers, liars, homosexuals and thieves to men and women who were totally transformed. He's reminding them of this in verses 1 and 2. See it again:

1 Corinthians 15:1-2

¹Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ²and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

You see, this is not a new message to the Corinthians! From the time Paul wrote this letter it's been ONLY around 20 years since Jesus ascended into heaven; therefore, many of the Corinthians were still alive when this letter was written to them. And so, Paul is being very point-blank with them...in essence asking them if they are still believing...perhaps accusing some of not being a follower of Christ at all. That phrase "unless you believed in vain," is calling into question how they could be saved and still act the way they were to one another.

Listen, it's like Paul is saying, "Guys, don't you remember where you've come from...you were transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and yet you are arguing, fussing and fighting and you've forgotten what's most important! THE GOSPEL! Watch it..."

1 Corinthians 15:3

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.

It's at this point that the Apostle Paul goes into a full-throated defense of the Gospel which really becomes almost like a courtroom defense of the resurrection...because CHURCH FAMILY, without the resurrection, Jesus Christ would have been a liar, right? Jesus said He was going to rise again, right? But if He didn't...if He hadn't, then He would have been a liar and someone NOT to be trusted or believed about anything! But Church, He did rise from the dead and this passage from 1 Corinthians teaches us that VERY fact and it's this fact that's foundational for all of our faith.

And I to show that to you by way of the 7 Evidences of the Resurrection we get from this passage:

7 Evidences of the Resurrection

1. Fulfilled Prophecies
2. The Lethalness of Roman Crucifixion
3. The Empty Tomb
4. Eyewitness Testimony
5. Historical Evidence
6. Evidence of Personal Experience
7. Today's Date

The first one is Fulfilled Prophecies. What did we just read? "According to the Scriptures." See it again...

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

#1 Fulfilled Prophecies:

Church, quite simply, the Bible, is a book of fulfilled prophecies. No other "holy book" can make that claim. Jesus fulfilled over 300 OT Prophecies about being the Messiah, the Savior of the world. For instance, 4 examples:

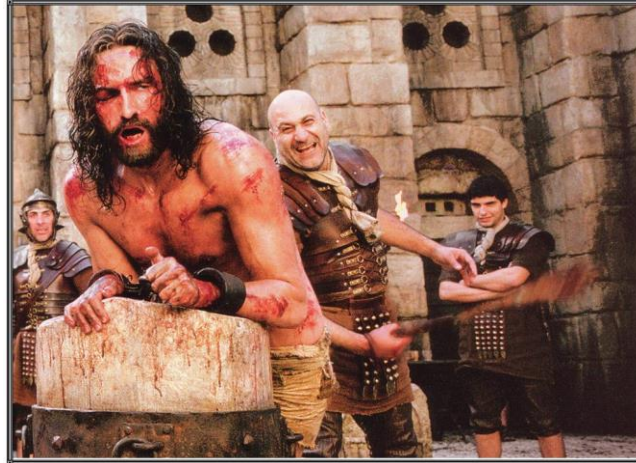
1. Micah, the prophet, recorded in Micah 5:2, 700 years before Jesus was born, that He would be born in Bethlehem and He was.
2. The prophet Isaiah recorded 750 years before Jesus' birth the exact details of His crucifixion, right down to the description of the crucifixion itself (and that form of punishment hadn't even been invented yet).
3. David, the Psalmist, prophesied in Psalm 22 the very words Jesus would say from the cross, 1000 years before they were spoken...and Jesus cried out on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" David recorded in the same Psalm, in verse 18, how the soldiers would gamble for Jesus' garments.
4. The prophet Zechariah records in Zechariah 11:12 the exact amount of money Judas would take for betraying Jesus (500 years before it happened)... 30 pieces of silver.

Listen church, this is overwhelming and amazing evidence! So much so that statisticians tell us it's statistically impossible that over 300 OT prophecies could be fulfilled by one man and that man NOT be the Son of God, the Messiah. In fact, statistician Peter Stoner, in his book, *Science Speaks*, says the odds of Jesus not being the Son of God, were the same odds as this...



imagine a man, blindfolded, hanging out of a helicopter flying over the state of Texas, reaching down at the exact right spot and picking out the single/solitary black, painted, silver dollar out of a

This thing typically had a 6-10" handle with 18" leather straps with bone, metal and shrapnel attached to the ends of the straps and two soldiers would alternate whipping you at a post...



Sometimes the criminals wouldn't even make it past this part of the punishment because of the profuse bleeding and pain. But, if they did, they were THEN nailed to a cross with these...



Roman Crucifixion Spikes from the 1st or 2nd Century

5"-7" spikes... in the feet and hands...and remember...contrary to most pictures and artist's depictions...these spikes were nailed through the wrists...not the palms...between the radius and the ulna... And Jesus would hang on the cross until He ultimately suffocated, as His lungs filled up with fluid... Medically, Jesus would die from asphyxiation...or suffocation... And here's what the Romans did to make sure you were dead...a Roman soldier was assigned the job of driving a spear into the heart's pericardial sac, where blood and water would flow, to make certain death had occurred.



Because if they weren't dead...and somehow lived through all of that...that soldier could be killed. He was the one who signed the death certificate...guaranteeing death had occurred. Oh, they made sure He was dead! Roman crucifixion was absolutely LETHAL!

So, He's dead...but, He can't stay dead and be the Son of God, so there must be an:

7 Evidences of the Resurrection

- 1. Fulfilled Prophecies**
 - 2. The Lethalness of Roman Crucifixion**
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Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 28.

#3 The Empty Tomb

Scholars tell us the tomb of Jesus, which was actually the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea was only about a 10-15-minute walk from the city walls of Jerusalem. That's true. I've been there twice!

Now, we know that Jesus was crucified outside the city walls of Jerusalem on a hillside called Golgotha (aka: the Place of the Skull, Calvary) and He was then taken by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus to Joseph's tomb...because you see...Jesus didn't have a tomb...and if Joseph hadn't taken the body...Jesus would have been thrown into the town landfill called Gehenna. A place that was kept burning to keep down the stench. The point is: anyone could have walked to the tomb and seen that it was empty. And the Apostle Matthew records what the Sanhedrin and the Elders came up with to excuse away the resurrection. So, they called the soldiers to them...watch...

[Matthew 28:11-15](#)

¹¹ While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. ¹² And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers ¹³ and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' ¹⁴ And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

Church, No historian with any genuineness of integrity denies the empty tomb. You could walk to the tomb and see for yourself...and even this account of bribery seals the deal. He's alive... Now what? Appearances. People saw Him!

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Go back to 1 Corinthians and we'll see all the #4 Eyewitness Testimony

1 Corinthians 15:5-7

⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Folks, that's a lot of people!!! That's a LOT OF **Eyewitness Testimony.** I want you to take a look at this picture and tell me where this is:



That's a courtroom, right? It's in a courtroom that testimonies are given, right? People place their hand on a Bible like this:



and they're asked, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God." And then they sit down on the witness stand and do what? Give testimony.

Now think with me... the Apostle Paul said Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at one time. Let's say that those 500 people were brought into a courtroom and asked to testify for just 6 minutes each. Do the math: $500 \times 6 = 3,000$ minutes, or 50 hours of courtroom testimony. Church, that's a gargantuan amount of evidence! In fact, any attorney would tell you if they had that many hours of courtroom testimony from eyewitnesses in their favor...they could guarantee a win!

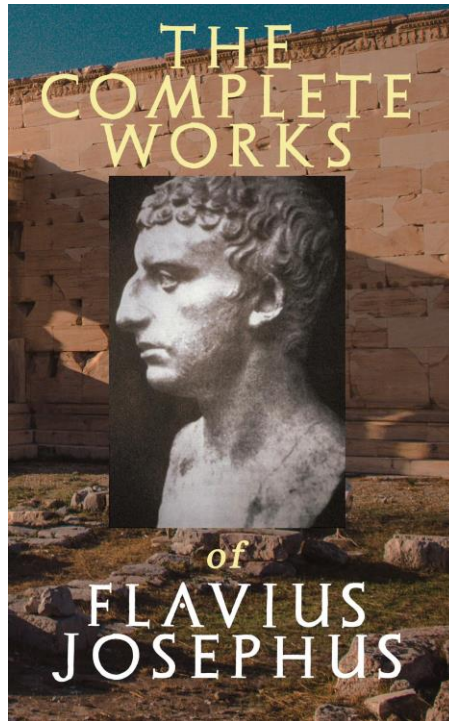
Jesus appeared to hundreds of people over a period of 40 days that stretched from Jerusalem to Galilee. #5 Once you move beyond eye-witness testimony, what is the BEST kind of evidence? Corroborating evidence. We have that! #5...

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#5 Historical Evidence

Did you know that Jesus' Resurrection was recorded in the writings of historians and early church fathers like: Gaius Suetonius Tranquillas, Thallus, Pliny the Younger, Justin Martyr, Ignatius, Tertullian and many, many others including this man...



Flavius Josephus, who was a first century Jewish Historian. He was not a believer or follower of Christ, but He said this around 94 AD:

“About this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was the achiever of extraordinary deeds and was a teacher of those who accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks... When he was indicted by the principal men among us and Pilate condemned him to be crucified, those who had come to love him originally did not cease to do so; for he appeared to them on the third day restored to life, as the prophets of the Deity had foretold these and countless other marvelous things about him. And the tribe of Christians, so named after him, has not disappeared to this day.”

Jewish Historian, Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities XVIII (circa 94 A.D.)*

Yes, historians even outside of the Bible chronicle His resurrection...and that's amazing evidence in a courtroom, or a human heart! Do you believe in Jesus, that He rose again for you, born to rise!

#6

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#6 Evidence of Personal Experience

I want you to see again how Paul listed himself last as one of those eye witnesses...and I want us to try to grasp and understand his personal experience.

1 Corinthians 15:8-10a

⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain.

In essence Paul said, “I didn’t deserve it. I’m the least of all. I was killing Christians, and the next thing I know, Jesus appeared to me, and He changed me, saved me, and made me one of His Apostles. And I can’t believe it. Because I was scum of the earth.” Paul personally experienced Jesus. Let me fast forward almost 1900 years to this man...



That’s Mel Trotter, who was a drunken bum. His little daughter, who was only three years old, died of malnutrition, because he never bought food for her, but instead, spent all his money on booze. At her death, he took the clothes off her body and took them to a hock shop. His wife had put the clothes on her for the funeral, and he stole the clothes and hocked them so he could buy more alcohol. He left his dead daughter naked. Mel Trotter, on his way to buy booze, stumbled into a mission and was introduced to Jesus Christ and became one of the greatest evangelists America has ever known. He started a mission and it still operates today in Grand Rapids, Michigan:



Aren’t you glad that Jesus can save anybody... He can save you and save me... I’m so grateful that He can save the scum of the earth! And why does He does that? GRACE!

1 Corinthians 15:10a

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain.

I like how professor, Dr. William Lane Craig of the Talbot School of Theology puts it:

“...Jesus is not just some ancient figure in history or a picture on a stained-glass window. He is alive today and can be known experientially. For me, Christianity ceased to be just a

religion or a code to live by when I gave my life to Christ and experienced a spiritual rebirth in my own life. God became a living reality to me. The light went on, where before there was only darkness, and God became an experiential reality, along with an overwhelming joy and peace and meaning that He imparted to my life. And I would simply say to you that if you're looking for that sort of meaning and purpose in life, then look not only at the historical evidence, but also to what can be known by faith when you call on the name of Jesus. Pick up the New Testament and begin to read it and ask yourself whether or not this could be the truth. For me, I know it is, because Jesus changed my life." Dr. William Lane Craig, Research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology

Has Jesus changed your life? He changed Paul's life, Mel Trotter's life, Professor Craig's life...and He has changed my life. How about you? Jesus said:

John 6:40

⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

How will He raise us up? Because Jesus got up from the dead...we'll get up from the dead... He was born to die and then rise, so that we would too.

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#7 Today's Date:

December 13, 2020 A.D. (Anno Domini: "in the year of our Lord.")

Church, do you actually think we would be keeping time by a lying, dead man? If that were the case...that would be the greatest hoax ever perpetrated upon humankind. Today's date gives proof what the world has known for 2020 years...Jesus Christ was born...in Bethlehem and He died on hill outside of Jerusalem and rose again from garden tomb! "The word who became flesh and made his dwelling among us... He was crushed, he was pierced, and he rose again..." Jesus is the "Christmas Jesus" so He could be the "Easter Jesus"... Jesus, the way in the manger.
