
Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 15, verse 12.

Jesus is Alive!!! April Fools! April Fools! That's not true, say the skeptics!

You know, for centuries people have tried to claim that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is nothing more than a fairy tale...a myth that's only believed by fools. Those people might say today that it's rather appropriate that Easter Sunday falls on April Fool's Day, for only fools would believe Jesus is alive.

Well, I'm here to tell you on this resurrection Sunday morning, April 1st 2018...Jesus IS ALIVE and He is as alive at this moment as you are! In fact, He's seated on His throne in heaven and He's looking down into this room and He sees you and me and He knows everything about us and He's even got the hairs on our heads numbered! Jesus is alive! Do you believe that?

You see, on this Easter Sunday, we're confronted with the question: Is Jesus really alive? Well, the answer is YES and we're going to look at the Evidences for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and by the time we're done, I believe there will be ample evidence for any reasonable person to conclude that INDEED Jesus Christ is alive! But, I want you to know something...

There will always be skeptics and doubters and those who say that Jesus didn't rise from the dead. Their distrust and their animus comes by way Satan, who wants to deceive people and doom their souls to Hell to be with Him for all eternity and there were skeptics in the Apostle Paul's day as well.

A few moments ago, I asked you to turn to 1 Corinthians 15, verse 12, and it's from here we'll see the words which were penned under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by the Apostle Paul around 20 years after the resurrection of Jesus. Yet already, there were those who were doubting. Watch how Paul addressed this skepticism.

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

¹²Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Indeed, we would be a pitiful bunch of Fools on this April 1st to even be here today, if Jesus were not alive. Do you see this man...



That's Dr. Bart Ehrman, who is a Professor of Religious Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill. He has for years said that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was totally impossible. He has taught with that slant literally hundreds of students Carolina for several years. It's interesting though... he was trained in fantastic Bible colleges...at Moody Bible Institute and Wheaton College (the same college as Billy Graham attended).

However, everything changed for Bart Ehrman when he went to Princeton from which he got his doctorate...at the Princeton Theological Seminary. That did it. You see, Princeton's Theological Seminary is one of the most liberal, left-wing Seminaries in the world. So, I say all of that to say this...even the well known and often quoted skeptic...Bart Ehrman, who has written over 2 dozen books refuting the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **NOW says that even he can't deny an empty tomb**...even he must admit that it is possible...but, he says, "You would have to accept the resurrection as a miracle!"

Well, duh Dr. Ehrman! Of course it's a miracle! No normal human being can rise from the dead naturally! Are you kidding me! Surely Dr. Ehrman is smart enough to know that what Jesus did 2000 years ago, when He got up from the dead, was ABSOLUTELY A MIRACLE! And I would argue that it was AND IS the most important event in human history. In fact, Paul calls the events of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection "as of first importance."

Look back up in 1 Corinthians 15 to verse 3...

1 Corinthians 15:3-7

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

This morning I'm going to show you evidences of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which should give us supreme confidence and comfort as followers of Christ. Because you see, it's the resurrection of Jesus Christ that is the key to our faith. Without the resurrection, we're fools for even being here. We are the April Fools indeed! But, if Jesus did rise from the dead...then we have the confidence that He was who He said He was...the Son of God. He was indeed the WAY, the TRUTH and THE LIFE...because He CONQUERED Death!

You see, what we just read in 1 Corinthians is the first proof or evidence of the resurrection of Jesus and we're going to see six more this morning. Here are the 7 Evidences of the Resurrection:

- 1. Eyewitness Testimony**
- 2. The Empty Tomb**
- 3. The Lethal Roman Scourging and Crucifixion**
- 4. Fulfilled Prophecies**
- 5. Evidence Outside of the Bible**

6. Today's Date

7. The Evidence of Personal Experience

#1 Eyewitness Testimony

I want you to take a look at this picture and tell me where this is:



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



...and are asked, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God." And then they give testimony. Now think with me... the Apostle Paul said Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at one time after His resurrection. Let's say that those 500 people were brought into a courtroom and asked to testify for just 6 minutes each. Do the math: $500 \times 6 = 3,000$ hours or 50 hours of courtroom testimony. That's a gargantuan amount of evidence! In fact any attorney would tell you that if they had that many hours of courtroom testimony from eyewitnesses in their favor...they would guarantee you they'd win the case!

And here's something else when speaking of the personal Testimonies and eyewitness accounts... Who did Jesus appear to first?



Mary Magdalene. Remember. She had come to the tomb with the other women and she lingered and then Jesus appeared to her and told her to go and tell the disciples that He was alive. The Apostle John recorded this in...

John 20:18

¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

You say, "What's significant about that?" Well, the testimony of women in that day was considered unreliable. Yet, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, a woman, first and that makes that fact even more astounding... You see, in the patriarchal Jewish society the testimony of women was not highly regarded. In fact, the Jewish historian Josephus says that women weren't even permitted to serve as witnesses in a Jewish court of law. **How remarkable is it, then**, that it is to a woman that Jesus appeared to first, to carry the news of His resurrection. You can't make this stuff up! Any fake or false legendary account would certainly have made the male disciples like Peter or John to have discovered the empty tomb first. The fact that it was to women, rather than men, who are the discoverers of the empty tomb shows that the Gospel writers faithfully recorded exactly what happened...even though it seemed ridiculous at the time. Evidence #2

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#2 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. I've made that walk and it is true.

Of course we know that Jesus was crucified outside the city walls of Jerusalem on a hillside called Golgotha (AKA: the Place of the Skull) 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 burning town landfill called Gehenna.

Now let me say this about Joseph of Arimathea. We know he was a Pharisee and possibly, a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish council, and the fact that a man from this group, who hated Jesus...in fact...the Sanhedrin, led by the High Priest Caiaphas, was the group that went to Pilate to make sure that Jesus was crucified... the fact that two members of this group (Joseph and Nicodemus) came and buried the body of Jesus is once again, one of the most improbable things you could imagine. You can't make this stuff up. It's truly inexplicable!

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 how to come up with an excuse. 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.

The truth is: no one disputes that the Tomb is Empty! Indeed it is! Why? Because Jesus is alive! Yet, there are some absurd claims as to why He isn't. One claim says that Jesus never made it to the tomb and the reason the tomb is empty is because He never died. They say that Jesus just "Swooned" on the cross...kind of passed out and never really died... This is preposterous. Anyone who knows anything about Roman execution knows better.

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#3 The Lethal Roman Scourging and Crucifixion

The Romans were some of the most adept in making certain that death occurred to their criminals of any group of people in human history. The Roman form of execution known as crucifixion often started with the scourging (or beating) with what is called a cat-of-nine-tails...



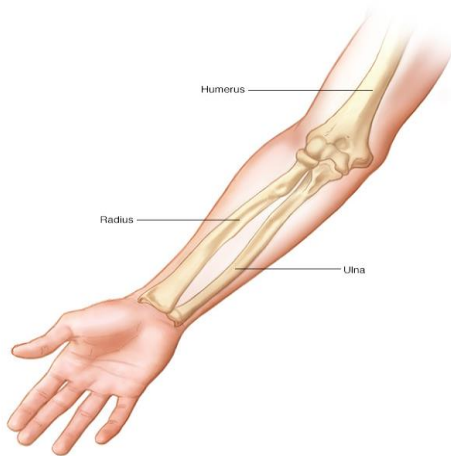
This was typically an 8-12" stick with 18" leather straps with bone, metal and shrapnel attached to the ends of the thongs and two soldiers would alternate whipping you at a post...



Sometimes the criminals wouldn't even make it past this part of the punishment. But, if they did, they were then nailed to a cross with these...

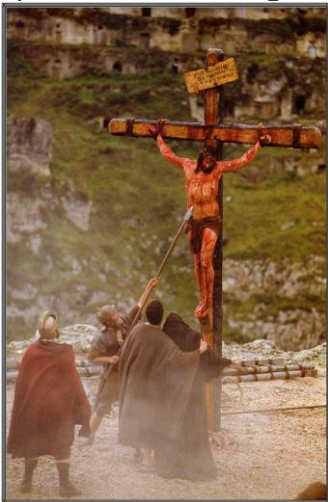


5-7" spikes... in the feet and hands...and remember...contrary to most pictures and artist's depictions...these spikes were nailed through the wrists...not the palms...between the radius and the ulna...see the screens...



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And Jesus would hang there and ultimately suffocate, as His lungs filled up with fluid... Medically, Jesus would die from asphyxiation...suffocation... And here's the thing...to make sure the person was dead...a Roman soldier was assigned the job of driving a spear into them to guarantee it...



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. No! Jesus didn't swoon on the cross! He died! In fact, according to Lee Strobel in his book, "The Case for Christ," Strobel records evidence from the American Medical Association that studied 1st century Roman Crucifixion, and concluded, "it's irrefutable...without doubt...that Christ died on the cross."

In fact Lee Strobel, who was once an atheist, and recently had a movie made about his conversion, went through a 2-year investigation as a reporter for the Chicago Tribune...



He said when he studied all the evidence (like we are this morning) that after 2 years of investigation, that he eventually had what he called, “not a rush of emotion...but a rush of reason...” He said, quote: “There was no way I could deny the evidence...Jesus Christ was alive!” Evidence #4...

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#4 Fulfilled Prophecies:

I speak of this often and it’s absolutely CRITICAL. This book, (the Bible), is a book of fulfilled prophecies! Jesus fulfilled over 300 Old Testament Prophecies about being the Messiah.

- Micah, the prophet, recorded in Micah 5:2, 700 years before Jesus was born, that He would be born in Bethlehem and He was.
 - Isaiah recorded 750 years before Jesus’ birth the details of His crucifixion in Isaiah 53 and it happened exactly as the prophet recorded.
 - 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,” verbatim the words of Psalm 22:1. That same Psalm records in Psalm 22:18, how the soldiers would gamble for Jesus’ garments. And it happened. When those soldiers were throwing dice and gambling for His undergarment, they were fulfilling prophecy from 1000 years earlier!
 - The Bible even 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.
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Listen church, statisticians tell us it’s statistically impossible with 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, the Messiah were the same odds that a blindfolded man could pick out a black painted silver dollar out of a stack of silver dollars, spread 2’ deep across the entire state of Texas on his first try.

In fact, the odds of that happening are: 1 in 10 to the 157th power. **Take a look at what that looks like...**

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: Evidence #6: Today's Date...

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Here's today's Date

April 1, 2018 A.D. (Anno Domini: “in the year of our Lord.”)

Church, do you actually think the world would be keeping time by a lying, dead man? If that were the case...that would be the greatest hoax perpetrated upon mankind. Today's date gives proof what the world has known for 2018 years...Jesus Christ did rise from the dead...because if He hadn't He would have been exposed as a fake immediately and we certainly wouldn't be keeping time by Him.

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#7 The Evidence of Personal Experience

What does this mean? I talked to Jesus this morning. Have you? We've been worshipping today.

**Jesus, Jesus how I trust Him,
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er
Jesus, Jesus precious Jesus,
Oh for grace to trust Him more**

Are we actually worshipping someone who doesn't exist? Are you kidding? That would make us fools. I'm not a fool. I talked to Him this morning. In fact, I talk to Him every day and He speaks to me. I know that bothers Joy Behar of The View, but it's true. Jesus said:

John 10:27-28

²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

I have the evidence of personal experience. Jesus lives inside of me through His Spirit that came to dwell within me when I prayed to receive Him by faith into my life many years ago. I like how professor, Dr. William Lane Craig of Talbot School of Theology says it:

“You see, if Christ is really risen from the dead as the evidence indicates, then that means that Jesus is not just some ancient figure in history or a picture on a stained glass window. It means that 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

Church family, Jesus said this:

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.

Will you believe in Him today? I close with this thought... Imagine you’re the judge in the courtroom...



...and you’re walking to the Judge’s seat. You will pick up your gavel and you will have to render a verdict based on the evidence of what you’ve seen today...:

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So, what will be your verdict? Will you trust the evidence that Jesus is alive? Will you believe on Him and receive eternal life? You see, if you do and if you will... one day you will rise from the dead and enter into His presence.

But, if you don’t...it won’t be for lack of evidence...for there is ample...it will simply be because of a lack of faith in the evidence. Don’t let that be you. Believe the evidence on this April Fool’s day...for if you do...you will be NO FOOL!