

# Explanations for the Resurrection Series

## Jesus Was Resurrected Supernaturally (Jn. 10:17-18)

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By  
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### At A Glance:

- I. Introduction
- II. The Explanation of Jesus
- III. Responding to the Resurrection
- IV. Conclusion

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*These sermon study notes are designed to be a tool used after listening to the sermon. This resource is a guide to help deepen understanding regarding the Scriptures and ideas presented in the sermon. Those who use these study notes are encouraged to look up, read through, and think about Scripture references in this guide. There is more information in these notes than what is presented in the sermon. These study notes are designed to be used as an independent study tool to help the formation of Biblical convictions, character, and conduct.*

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# Jesus Was Resurrected Supernaturally

## I. Introduction

### A. Illustration: Encountering the Resurrection

1. J. Warner Wallace, a retired detective, talks about his first exposure to someone who had the personal conviction that Jesus rose from the dead as a real event. Here is how he explains his experience:

I was a committed atheist when I first heard a pastor preach a sermon that described the resurrection of Jesus. This pastor seemed to actually believe Jesus rose from the dead and was still alive today. I assumed it was just another example of “blind faith”; another well-intentioned church leader believing something for which he had no supporting evidence. Worse yet, I suspected he possessed an “unreasonable faith” and trusted something *in spite of* the evidence.<sup>1</sup>

As a detective, I often employ a methodology known as *abductive reasoning* (also known as “inferring to the most reasonable explanation”) in order to determine what I have at a crime scene. I collect all the evidential data and make a mental list of the raw facts. I develop a list of the possible explanations that might account for the scene in general. Finally, I compare the evidence to the potential explanations and determine which explanation is, in fact, the most reasonable inference in light of the evidence.

2. While using his professional training as a detective, J. Warner Wallace investigated the resurrection of Jesus, and what he found surprised him. Eventually, this skeptical detective realized the truth about Jesus by examining the evidence. He became convinced that Jesus was resurrected as a real historical event.
- B. We’ve been on a journey trying to discover the best explanation for the facts we have about the fate of Jesus. What happened to Jesus at the end of His life? So far, we’ve looked at two different ways people try to explain what happened to Jesus. Each of the explanations come from the perspective that Jesus did not rise from the dead. Each of these types of explanations failed to explain the historical evidence we have about Jesus.
- C. The final explanation for what happened to Jesus is offered by Jesus Himself and those who were trained by Jesus to communicate His message. A third explanation for the facts about Jesus is that Jesus died and that He came back to life again as a supernatural act of God. This is the explanation Jesus gives for what was going to happen to Him in John 10:17-18.

## II. The Explanation of Jesus

- A. The Bible accurately describes how people respond to the message of Christianity and the claim of Jesus rising back to life after having been dead. Some people respond to the resurrection of Jesus by laughing with contempt, thinking the message of Jesus is wildly mistaken and an unfounded opinion. The supposed resurrection of Jesus is thought to be an ancient hoax. The

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<sup>1</sup> J. Warner Wallace, [Alive: A Cold-Case Approach to the Resurrection](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2014).

fate of Jesus is explained by thinking Jesus never died and was therefore able to reappear to His disciples claiming to be resurrected. Others think Jesus died, but they come up with other explanations for the experiences of the disciples. Since there was no genuine resurrection of Jesus, the appearances of Jesus didn't happen as a real event involving a physical resurrection. However, we've seen that each of these explanations are not compatible with the historical evidence we have regarding the life of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

- B. If all these alternate naturalistic explanations can't adequately explain the evidence, what explanation are we left with? How are we to understand the resurrection of Jesus in a way that sufficiently explains the evidence we have regarding Jesus? The best explanation available for what happened to Jesus has been offered by Jesus Himself. It is toward this explanation that we are going to focus our attention.
- C. Jesus explained to His disciples what was going to happen to Him and why it was going to happen. Here is what He told them:
- <sup>17</sup> For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it back. <sup>18</sup> No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it back. This commandment I received from My Father." (Jn. 10:17-18)
- D. There is a power at work in the life of Jesus that extends beyond human capability. The historical evidence we have regarding Jesus can only be adequately explained with a supernatural agent being involved. Naturalistic theories don't work. Trying to explain the empty tomb and the resurrection appearances without God is like trying to explain a rainbow without colors. Jesus said He is going to lay His life down and take it up again, because this is what God the Father told Him to do ("I lay down My life so that I may take it back", v. 17 and "I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it back", v. 18).<sup>3</sup> Jesus used specific means to accomplish these actions.
- E. How can Jesus say no one is taking His life away from Him when Jesus was put to death by others ("No one has taken it away from Me", v. 18)? Yes, other people were involved in Jesus being killed. However, Jesus could have prevented His own death if He wanted to. It was within Jesus' ability to stop those who wanted Him dead (Mt. 26:47-54, Jn. 18:36). While plenty of people thought Jesus was unable to save Himself, that simply wasn't the case (Mt. 27:40-42, Mk. 15:30-31, Lk. 23:37, 23:39). Jesus intentionally chose not to protect and defend Himself, even though He had the power to do so. This is why Jesus can say no one is overpowering Him to take His life and that He is willingly laying it down of His own choosing. Like a parent allowing themselves to be beaten at arm wrestling by their children, so Jesus allowed others to kill Him.
- F. Jesus willingly laid His life down and took it up again as an act of obedience to God the Father ("This commandment I received from My Father", v. 18). Jesus died an excruciating death on purpose, even when part of Him didn't want to (Mt. 26:36-46, Mk. 14:32-42, Lk. 22:39-46, Jn. 18:1). Jesus willingly suffered to an extreme degree because He knew that is what God the

<sup>2</sup> For those who are unfamiliar with the previous messages in this sermon series, the details can be found on our church's website: [www.witheecac.org](http://www.witheecac.org)

<sup>3</sup> This isn't the only time Jesus made a statement like this, Jesus made this claim on different occasions (Jn. 2:18-22).

Father wanted Him to do. Jesus' suffering and death was part of God's plan to bring about His good purposes.

- G. The apostles agreed with Jesus and gave the same explanation for what happened to Jesus in one of the passages that we looked at earlier:

<sup>32</sup> *It is this Jesus whom God raised up, a fact to which we are all witnesses.* (Ac. 2:32)

- H. God supernaturally raised Jesus from the dead ("Jesus whom God raised up", v. 32).<sup>4</sup> Why did Jesus say He would raise Himself, but the apostles said God the Father raised Jesus? Are they giving different explanations? According to the New Testament, each person within the Godhead was involved with the resurrection of Jesus. God the Father played a role in bringing Jesus back to life in the sense that He planned it, commanded it to be done, gave the authority to do it, and allowed Jesus to use His divine abilities to make it happen. Jesus chose to participate in God the Father's plan, intentionally traveled to Jerusalem knowing He would be killed, stayed the course even when it was difficult, allowed Himself to be arrested, and used His abilities to raise Himself back to life. The Holy Spirit worked in Jesus, helping and empowering Jesus to accomplish everything the Father wanted Jesus to do. The Spirit provided the power Jesus needed to be resurrected to life after having died (Rm. 8:11).
- I. We have very little information about how the Father, Son, and Spirit interact with each other and work with each other. But every person of the Trinity was involved in the event of the resurrection, which follows the general Biblical pattern of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit always working together in harmony to bring about the same outcomes, with each one playing a slightly different role.<sup>5</sup>
- J. The only adequate and the best explanation for the historical evidence we have about Jesus is that Jesus was raised back to life after having been dead as a supernatural act of God. While human beings used all their power and ability to prevent Jesus' tomb from being found empty, they were unable to prevent the empty tomb. There is no naturalistic, solely human-influenced explanation that is sufficient. Jesus explained what He was going to do before He did it. Even the Jewish leadership knew what Jesus claimed and did everything in their power to prevent it from happening. Yet, despite their best attempts to prevent it, Jesus was raised and His tomb was found empty. This is the truth of what happened to Jesus according to the strong historical evidence we have. The only question that remains is, will you accept what the evidence indicates is true? Or are you too closed-minded to consider any other option other than a naturalistic explanation?

### III. Responding to the Resurrection

- A. Even if Jesus was raised from the dead and there is good evidence supporting that's what happened, what does that have to do with me? What does something that happened two thousand years ago have to do with my life today? What difference does Jesus make in my life right now? We are given the answer to these questions in the book of Acts. God wants all people everywhere to respond to the resurrection of Jesus in a very specific way. The

<sup>4</sup> Galatians 1:1, Romans 6:4

<sup>5</sup> Other instances of each person within the Trinity being involved in the same event includes the original creation event, the baptism of Jesus, the relationship disciples have with God, etc.

resurrection of Jesus is relevant and has an impact on every person’s life, whether they realize it or not, and we are going to find out how.

- B. As the apostles (who had been personally trained by Jesus to communicate His message to the world) explained, the resurrection of Jesus proved the importance and significance of who Jesus is and the claims He made. In short, the resurrection of Jesus proves that Christianity is true, and it is true for everyone, not just those who believe in it. Even those who do not believe in Jesus will be impacted by the truth of His resurrection.
- C. The apostle Paul explains the message of Jesus and Christianity this way:  
<sup>30</sup> So having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now proclaiming to mankind that all people everywhere are to repent, <sup>31</sup> because He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead. (Ac. 17:30-31)
- D. Everyone begins life in a default spiritual condition in which we naturally live in ways that are contrary to who God is, what God wants, and what is good (“the times of ignorance, v. 30). We live the way we do because we don’t know any better. We are uninformed as to how God wants us to live. We don’t know what God requires of us. We don’t have the desire to live for God. Even though people don’t have accurate information about the true God that exists, everyone has thoughts and ideas about God—this is what it means to live in ignorance. Where do I get my information about God? Are the views and ideas I have about God based in ignorance? Don’t form your personal convictions about God in a passive, casual, or unintentional way. What you think about God are the most important thoughts you will ever consider. Living in ignorance about God is not acceptable.
- E. To live in ignorance means to operate according to how a person thinks God is rather than operating according to a knowledge of God—who God is (Ac. 17:16, 23, 29). People make up their own version of God and live as if the divine being they created is real. In the case of Acts 17, the people of Athens were worshipping other proclaimed gods in ways that were inconsistent with what the true God says. Others were following life philosophies that were incompatible with God and His word. People have a lot of ideas about God, but these ideas are not grounded in an accurate knowledge of God. Some present-day examples of living in ignorance include the following assumptions:
1. God loves and accepts everybody.
  2. God loves me just as I am, so I don’t need to change.
  3. I’m a good person.
  4. All religions are the same and equally valid.
  5. Hell does not exist, and a loving God wouldn’t send anyone there.
  6. God wants to bless me with health, wealth, and a comfortable life.
- F. The message of Jesus and Christianity is that every person needs to be changed so they can be reconciled to God—to receive His favor and be pleasing to Him (“God is now proclaiming to mankind that all people everywhere are to repent”, v. 30). This requirement and command is universal, and it applies to everyone after the resurrection of Jesus. There are no exceptions. Trying to worship God ignorantly is no longer being overlooked. It is not good for us to keep

living by our default setting. Everyone needs to repent. To repent is to be changed to the extent that we abandon our former dispositions and ways of life and grieve over them.<sup>6</sup> We begin moving in a new direction toward God in a knowledge of God and what He wants from us (Ac. 14:15-17). Repentance involves two movements: one is away from that which is immoral, harmful, and selfish, and the second is toward God and what is good (Heb. 6:1). This repentance leads to and brings about the forgiveness that comes from Jesus (Ac. 2:38, 3:19, Lk. 24:47).

- G. Repentance means that we stop pursuing a lot of activities that we want to pursue because God says they are not good for us. Why would a person do this? The motivation for telling ourselves no and striving to do what God says is good comes from a knowledge that a day of divine judgment is coming (“because He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness”, v. 30). God will judge the world through Jesus in a way that is fair, truthful, accurate, and aligned with what is good (Ps. 9:8 96:13, 98:9). We will all stand before God and be accountable to Him for everything that we have ever done (Lk. 10:42, 24:47, 2 Cor. 5:9-10). A day is coming when you will stand before God and give an account of your life.<sup>7</sup> On that day, every thought, motive, intention, desire, word, and action will be evaluated by God’s moral standards—what God says is right and wrong (Jer. 17:10, Mt. 12:36-37, Jn. 12:28):

...<sup>10</sup> For we will all appear before the judgment seat of God. <sup>11</sup> For it is written: “As I live, says the Lord, to me every knee will bow, And every tongue will give praise to God.” <sup>12</sup> So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.  
(Rm. 14:10-12)

- H. Everything you have done wrong will be laid bare for everyone to see. All that you have done will be brought into the light, and the hidden motivations will be made known (1 Cor. 4:5). On this day, one of two things is going to take place: either perfect justice or perfect mercy. Perfect justice is punishment for everything you’ve ever done wrong, and God misses nothing. Perfect mercy is forgiveness for everything you’ve ever done wrong, and God misses nothing.
- I. Since Jesus rose from the dead, we all have a choice to make. We can decide to stand before Jesus as our Judge using the moral merits of our own life. If we decide to take this route, we will find perfect justice in the end. God is morally perfect; He always does what is good. He keeps track of everything we have ever done that wasn’t right, and He will punish us appropriately for every violation of His moral standards. Jesus misses nothing. He tracks everything. The record of our life is kept in His heavenly books. As Psalm 130:3 says, “If You, LORD, were to keep account of guilty deeds, Lord, who could stand?”. The rhetorical answer is no one, because every person does wrong.
- J. The way this judgment of God is going to play out for some is that the books will be opened and they will be punished according to what their actions deserve:

<sup>6</sup> C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 154.

<sup>7</sup> The following explanation comes from and is inspired by Greg Koukl’s recommended method of explaining the gospel from his March 11, 2026 podcast *Just Tell Them the Truth* (<https://www.str.org/w/just-tell-them-the-truth>).

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

(Rev. 20:11-12)

- K. The other choice we can make is to rely on and trust in Jesus to stand with us and allow His moral performance to be what we are evaluated on (1 Jn. 2:1). Yes, we are guilty, but Jesus was already punished for our moral failings, so we don't have to suffer the consequences we deserve (2 Cor. 5:21). The morally perfect life of Jesus is the substance of what those who trust and love Jesus will be evaluated on—the righteousness of Jesus is given to us. If we decide to take this route of trusting in and relying on Jesus, we will find perfect mercy in the end. Jesus, who happens to be the Judge, is also our defense lawyer.<sup>8</sup>
- L. We are given a good reason to take this warning seriously—the resurrection of Jesus (“having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead”, v. 31). Clearly this is a reference to Jesus (Ac. 17:18). The message of Jesus and Christianity is demonstrated to be true through the fact that Jesus was resurrected. The resurrection is the proof that the message of Jesus is the true message of God. The resurrection of Jesus demonstrates Jesus' authority to be the Judge of humanity and guarantees the Day of Judgment is a fixed reality. A divine day of judgment is the destiny of humanity. Just as Jesus said He had authority to lay His life down and raise it up again and demonstrated the reality of that authority through the resurrection, so too Jesus claims to have authority to be the Judge of humanity and every person who has ever lived (Jn. 5:18-23, 25-30). Jesus, as the representative for God, will be the judge on God the Father's behalf on the last day.<sup>9</sup>
- M. Do not to make the major mistake that many people make by thinking they are getting away with the sin in which they're involved because God is not stopping or punishing them right now.<sup>10</sup> Since it seems as if they are getting away with what they are doing without negative consequences, people assume God does not notice what they are doing. Or they think God approves of what they are doing even when their actions violate what God says in His word. This is a fatal mistake. People who think this way are storing up wrath for themselves on the Day of Judgment (Rm. 2:5). God is being patient with them to give them time to repent (Rm. 2:4, Rev. 2:21). If you are doing wrong and think you are getting away with it, don't deceive yourself by thinking God isn't paying attention.
- N. For anyone who wants to stand before God and find perfect mercy, here is what I recommend you do. If you are ready to trust Jesus and ask Him for His forgiveness so that you will be protected from being punished on the day of judgment, turn Psalm 51:1-10 into your own personal prayer to God. Ask God to forgive, cleanse, and change you. You need the Holy Spirit inside you to change and empower you. Then, consider getting baptized and connect to a Bible-

<sup>8</sup> 1 John 2:1, Romans 8:33

<sup>9</sup> Jesus described what this will look like on many occasions including Matthew 7:21-23, 10:27-33, 25:31-46, John 8:24-26

<sup>10</sup> Jon Courson, [Jon Courson's Application Commentary](#) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 751.

teaching church. Even better, find a mentor who can help you learn what it means to follow Jesus.

#### **IV.** Conclusion

- A. The resurrection validates the identity and message of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus guarantees God has set a day on which all of humanity will be judged by Jesus according to His message. Ever since the resurrection of Jesus, God the Father expects, requires, and commands every person to repent and believe in Jesus. This is the message of Christianity that is demonstrated to be true based on the evidence for the life of Jesus.
- B. I care for you with the love God has poured into my heart. I appeal to you on behalf of Jesus to be reconciled to God the Father through Jesus. Be open to allowing God to change the person you are so that you can become the type of person God requires you to be. Don't face Jesus on the day of judgment relying on your own life performance—it will not go well for you. Be humble enough to ask Jesus to forgive and transform you.