

SLIDE 1

I. Intro

- The Resurrection
- Reality
 - It's Easter morning - and what this means is that - we've gathered together in order to celebrate the Resurrection of our Redeemer - Jesus.
 - It was back in 1995 - when I first considered - and was convinced by the evidence - surrounding our Savior's resurrection.
 - And while I have no doubt about the historical reality of our Savior's resurrection...
 - ...I also realize that there are many skeptics who are quick to reject the resurrection of our Redeemer.
 - And one reason why is because - extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.
 - That being the case - there are many who insist that the resurrection of Jesus was nothing more than a work of fiction.

II. Faked?

- Many Critics
 - Opposed
 - Now - when it comes to the question concerning Jesus' resurrection...
 - ...there are many critics out there - who are quick to argue for an alternative theory.

- And rather than accepting the Biblical account - - these critics of the cross will insist that...
- ...there are more plausible positions that the rational person should embrace.
- And so - let's take a few minutes to consider 4 arguments that the skeptics have offered us...
 - ...beginning with the Conspiracy theory.

SLIDE 2

● 4 Arguments

- The Conspiracy Theory
- The Conspiracy Theory usually goes something like this:
 - After Jesus died upon the cross - the disciples were completely shocked - and wondering what they should do.
 - That's when they cooked up the story of the Resurrection around the campfire.
 - Then - in order to convince people that Christ Jesus rose up from the dead...
 - ...they went to the tomb - and overpowered the Roman guard - in order to steal the lifeless body of Christ.
 - They carried it away and hid it in an unknown location - so that they could convince everyone...
 - ...that Jesus had risen up from the grave just like He promised.

SLIDE 3

- The Swoon Theory
- The second argument that has been offered by the skeptics is commonly called the swoon theory.

- Just to be clear - the swoon theory usually goes something like this:
 - Jesus didn't really die upon the cross - but instead - He swooned - meaning that He passed out.
 - And since He appeared to be dead - they took Him down - off of the cross - and placed Him in the tomb.
 - And over the course of three days - His health began to improve - and He was able to get up - roll away the stone...
 - ...and then - according to these skeptics - Jesus was able to present Himself risen from the grave...
 - ...simply because - - He never really died.

SLIDE 4

- The Hallucination Theory
 - The third theory that skeptics are quick to present - is known as the Hallucination Theory.
 - And as you might've guessed - the Hallucination Theory is exactly as it sounds.
 - The skeptics who use this argument try to convince us that the disciples didn't really see the risen Lord and Savior...
 - ...but instead - they were merely seeing a desire-driven hallucination.
 - And though the disciples went out and told everyone that they had seen the resurrection of Jesus Christ...
 - ...these skeptics are certain that they had only seen a hallucination.

SLIDE 5

- The Myth Theory
 - Finally - there's the Myth Theory - which again - is fairly self explanatory.

- The skeptics who present the Myth Theory will describe the greatest story every told...
 - ...as a mythology that was altered - and added to over time.
 - And while these skeptics will confess that there's a kernel of truth...
 - ...they will also insist that - the facts of the story were turned in fiction...
 - ...as the historic Jesus slowly but surely became the supernatural Jesus that we worship today.
 - And it's for this reason that they assure us that the resurrection of Jesus never actually happened..

● Transition

• Best Theories

- Now - there are more theories out there which have been suggested by other skeptics
 - However - I believe that these are the best arguments presented by those skeptics...
 - ...who would have us to believe that the resurrection of Jesus was faked in one way or another.
 - And now that we have a pretty good understanding of these alternative theories...
 - ...let's spend some time - examining the facts surrounding the story of Christ's crucifixion...
 - ...beginning with the fact that Jesus Christ was a historical person who actually existed.

SLIDE 6
IV. Fact?

● The Facts

• Fact 1 - Jesus Existed

- Now - as we consider the question about Jesus' existence - let's take some time to consider some extra-biblical sources...

- ...which provide us with proof that Jesus Christ is a historical person.

SLIDE 7 (FAST)

- For example - the first-century Roman historian named - Tacitus mentioned Jesus in his writings.

SLIDE 8

- And the first-century Jewish historian named Josephus also mentioned Jesus in his writings.

- The Babylonian Talmud confirmed Jesus' crucifixion on the eve of Passover - - AND...

SLIDE 9

- ...a first century lawyer named Pliny the Younger recorded the beliefs of early Christians...

- ...who worshiped Jesus as God - and even included a reference to the love feast and the Lord's Supper.

- And so - when we examine the writings of the Jews - like Josephus...

- ...and the writings of the Gentile historians and officials, coupled with the writings found in the New Testament...

- ...we end up with persuasive historical proof - that Jesus truly existed.

- And so - fact #1 - Jesus is without debate - a historical person who really lived in the promised land - during the early first-century.

- But now - just because Jesus existed - doesn't automatically prove the Biblical account of Christ's resurrection.

- As a matter of fact - there are many scholars who believe that Jesus was a literal historical person...
- ...but then - at the same time - they reject the resurrection story for a few reasons.
 - And one of those reasons is based on the belief that Jesus didn't really die on the cross.
 - And so - with that - let's explore the facts surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

SLIDE 10

- Fact 2

- And the first thing that I should point out is that...
 - ...the authors of the New Testament were quite clear about the crucifixion.
 - For example - in Matthew chapter 27 where Matthew tells us that...

SLIDE 11-12

Mat 27:35 ...they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots."

Mat 27:36 Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there.

Mat 27:37 And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

- Here in these verses - Matthew tells us that Jesus was crucified...

SLIDE 13

- ...which also tells us that He must've died upon the cross...
 - ...because the fact is - no one ever survived a Roman crucifixion.

- And not only did Matthew report the crucifixion of Jesus - but in Acts chapter 2 - Peter also declared...

SLIDE 14

Act 2:36 "...let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

- From this - we see that both Matthew and Peter believed that Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross.

SLIDE 15

- And so - according to these two apostles - Jesus not only existed...

- ...but he also died upon that Roman cross.

- Furthermore - in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 - Paul confirmed this fact by declaring...

SLIDE 16-18

1Cr 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,

1Cr 15:2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

1Cr 15:3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

- From this - we see that Paul confirmed the existence and the death of Jesus...

SLIDE 19

- ...by telling us that Jesus died - exactly the way that the scriptures had foretold.

- And according to the Old Testament scriptures - the Messiah would die - having his hands and feet pierced.

- As a matter of fact - in Psalms 22 - where king David declared...

SLIDE 20-21

Psa 22:16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;

Psa 22:17 I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me.

Psa 22:18 They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.

- Here in these verses - we find David - prophetically pointing to the death of the Messiah - one thousand years prior.

SLIDE 22

- And whole it's true that death by crucifixion wasn't even invented yet...
 - ...David tells us that the Messiah would die - with pierced hands and feet.
- And according to Paul - Jesus died - according to the scriptures...
 - ...having His hands and feet pierced through with nails - as He hung upon that Roman cross.
- And so we see that the writers of the New Testament were clear in reporting that Jesus Christ was crucified.
 - And not only do we find Biblical evidence to support this fact - but we also find extra-biblical evidence - pointing to the same event.
 - For example - the first-century Jewish historian named Josephus tells us that...

SLIDE 23

" (the disciples) reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion, and that he was alive; accordingly he was perhaps the Messiah, concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders."

- From this first-century report - we see that Josephus certainly knew about the crucifixion of Jesus...

SLIDE 24

- ...and not only Josephus - but so did the Jewish leaders who compiled the writings of the Talmud.
- As a matter of fact - the Jewish writings in the Babylonian Talmud confirm that...

- ...Jesus' crucifixion occurred "on the eve of the Feast of the Passover."
- And so we see that Jesus's crucifixion was known to the Jews and Christians alike.
- And not only that - there were also Greek and Roman historians who mentioned the crucifixion of Christ...
 - ...like the second century - Greek writer named Lucian of Samosata who tells us that...

SLIDE 25

- ...Jesus was worshiped by Christians, introduced new teachings, and was crucified for them.

- And so - Fact #1 - Jesus actually existed...

SLIDE 26

- ...and Fact #2 - He really did die upon the cross.
- This brings us to Fact # 3 - which raises the question about Jesus burial.

- Fact 3 - The Burial

SLIDE 27

- Let's take a moment to ask - was Jesus buried in a secured tomb - or was He thrown into a common grave for criminals?
- The reason why this question is so important is based on the belief that...
 - ...the Jews had a criminal's graveyard - in an area far outside the city of Jerusalem.
 - And since Jesus was crucified as a criminal - then He could've been buried with the rest of the criminals...
 - ...in a common grave which was located beyond the walls of the city of Jerusalem.

- And if so - then the testimony of the empty tomb would be nothing more than a work of fiction.
- Now - there are many skeptics who insist that Jesus was buried in one of these criminal graveyards.
 - However - the Bible assures us that Jesus was buried in the tomb of a man known as Joseph of Arimathea.
 - As a matter of fact - look with me - here at Matthew chapter 27 - where Matthew tells us that...

SLIDE 28-30

Mat 27:57 ...when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.

Mat 27:58 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him.

Mat 27:59 When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

Mat 27:60 and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed.

- Here in these verses - we find a man named Joseph - asking Pilate for the body of Jesus.

SLIDE 31

- And so - while the Jewish leaders might've sent the body of Jesus to a criminal's graveyard...
 - ...Joseph of Arimathea claimed the body of Christ - and buried Jesus in his own tomb.
- And not only was the location of this tomb known to Joseph of Arimathea - but it was also known to the Jews and the Romans.
 - As a matter of fact - according to Matthew - the Jewish leaders asked Pilate to place a company of military men - outside the tomb.
 - Look with me again - there at Matthew 27 - where Matthew writes...

SLIDE 32-34

Mat 27:62 On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate,

Mat 27:63 saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.'

Mat 27:64 "Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first."

Mat 27:65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how."

Mat 27:66 So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.

- That's right - the Chief Priests and the Pharisees asked Pilate to send soldiers - who could guard the tomb.

SLIDE 35

- Now - why would these men guard a tomb - if Jesus was placed in a common criminals grave?
 - Clearly - Jesus' lifeless body had been placed in a tomb - the location of which was known to all.
- And so - when it comes to the skeptics who argue against Matthew's account...
 - ...I would simply ask them to produce one credible source from the first or second century...
 - ...to show that the body of Jesus was buried in an unmarked grave for criminals.
 - And since there is no such account - and since there are no competing burial stories from the 1st and 2nd century...
 - ...I find it reasonable to believe that Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph from Arimathea.
- This brings us to our 4th fact.

- Because - while it's a fact that Jesus existed - that He was crucified - and that He was buried in a known tomb...
 - ...it's also a fact that the same tomb was found as empty on the third day.

SLIDE 36

- Fact 4

- Now - as we begin to talk about the empty tomb - I realize that there are many explanations for where the body went.
- Remember - we've already considered 4 of the best explanations which have been offered by the skeptics.
- Therefore - I think that it would be important for us to spend a few minutes examining the evidence for the empty tomb...
 - ...so that we can determine whether or not the empty tomb is a historical fact.
 - With this as our focus - let's examine the testimony John...
 - ...which is found here in John chapter 20.
 - Look with me - there at verse 1 - where John writes...

SLIDE 37- 43

Jhn 20:1 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

Jhn 20:2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

Jhn 20:3 Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb.

Jhn 20:4 So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first.

Jhn 20:5 And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in.

Jhn 20:6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there,
Jhn 20:7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself.
Jhn 20:8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed.
Jhn 20:9 For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.

- Here in these verses - John helps us to see that the tomb where the body of Jesus was placed...

SLIDE 44

- ...was found empty on the first day of the week.
 - And so - despite the presence of a Roman guard - the tomb still ended up completely empty.
- And not only did the Disciples of Christ find an empty tomb - but so did the Romans and the Jews.
 - Matthew tells us that the Roman guard conspired with the chief priests - in order to accuse the disciples of stealing the body.
 - With this in mind - look with me - there at Matthew 28 - verse 11 - where Matthew writes...

SLIDE 45- 48

Mat 28:11 Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened.

Mat 28:12 When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers,

Mat 28:13 saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.'

Mat 28:14 "And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure."

Mat 28:15 So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

- Here in these verses - we find the Romans - and the Jews - falsely accusing the disciples of stealing the body of Jesus.

SLIDE 49

- And from this - it's only reasonable to conclude that the tomb must've been empty...
 - ...otherwise - there would've been no reason for them to lie about it.
- Think about it - IF the Romans and the Jews could've produced the lifeless body of Christ...
 - ...THEN the Christian faith would've been dead at conception. (parade the body around)
 - Therefore - the birth of the church proves without a doubt - that the tomb was in fact - empty.
- Well – this brings us to our 5th fact - because listen - according to the facts...
 - ...Jesus existed - He was crucified - He was buried in a known tomb - which was then found empty on the third day.
 - And yet - these facts still don't prove that Jesus actually rose from the grave.
 - However the fifth fact that we're going to consider – helps us to see that...
 - ...Jesus somehow managed to meet with his disciples - after His death - and burial.

SLIDE 50

- Fact 5

- Now - as we begin to consider this 5th fact - I should first point out that...

- ...there are many people who think that they've seen someone - who has died.
- For example there are scores of people who think that they've seen Elvis Presley...
 - ...while others are certain that they've seen Tupac or Michael Jackson.
 - However – these postmortem sightings are more than likely nothing more than a case of mistaken identity.
 - But this is certainly not the case when it comes to the postmortem appearances of Jesus Christ.
- In order to prove my point – look with me here at 1 Corinthians 15 beginning at verse 3 - where Paul declared...

SLIDE 51- 53

1Cr 15:3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
 1Cr 15:4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,
 1Cr 15:5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.
 1Cr 15:6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.
 1Cr 15:7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

- Here in these verses – Paul helps us to see that there were more than just a few eyewitnesses...

SLIDE 54

- ...who claim to've seen the risen Lord and Savior – Jesus Christ.
 - As a matter of fact – Paul tells us that there were over 500 eyewitnesses who saw Jesus – after he died on the cross.

- And listen – these eyewitnesses weren't saying that they saw Jesus from afar – walking through the marketplace.
 - No - instead – they were insisting that they had walked with Him and talked with Him...
 - ...and they we're certain that it was in fact - the Lord who had risen from the grave.
- With this in mind – look with me here at John chapter 20 – beginning there at verse 24 – where John writes...

SLIDE 55 - 60

Jhn 20:24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

Jhn 20:25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Jhn 20:26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

Jhn 20:27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

Jhn 20:28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jhn 20:29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

- Here in these verses – John helps us to see how Jesus proved Himself to be the risen Lord and Savior...

SLIDE 61

- ...by allowing the disciple named Thomas to examine the nail prints that were found in his hands and feet...
 - ...and the spear wound that was still scaring His left side.
- Not only that – but Luke also revealed how Jesus had presented himself alive - with many infallible proofs - for over a month.

- As a matter of fact - look with me there at Acts chapter 1 - beginning at verse 1 - where Luke writes...

SLIDE 62- 64

Act 1:1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,
 Act 1:2 until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,
 Act 1:3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

- Here in these verses – Luke assures us that Jesus presented himself with many infallible proofs...

SLIDE 65

- ...and he did this over the course of 40 days after his resurrection.
 - And during this time - over 500 eyewitnesses saw the risen Lord and Savior – Jesus Christ.

- And so - with all of this in mind - let's quickly recap the facts that we've considered so far.

SLIDE 66 - 70 (FAST)

- Fact #1 - Jesus existed - - Fact #2 - He was crucified...
 - ...Fact #3 - He was buried in a known tomb - - Fact #4 - His tomb was found empty on the third day...
 - ...and Fact #5 - He was seen by hundreds of people after His death
 - This brings us to our 6th fact - which points us to the firmly held convictions of those who saw Him.
 - And so – let's take a moment to consider the testimonies of those who claimed to have seen the risen Lord.

SLIDE 71

- Fact 6

- And as we begin to consider this 6th fact - I should point out that the disciples not only believed in the resurrection of Jesus...

- ...but they were also willing to suffer and die for this belief.

- As a matter of fact - look with me here at Acts chapter 4 - where Luke tells us that the Religious leaders...

SLIDE 72- 75

Act 4:18 ...called (the disciples) and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

Act 4:19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.

Act 4:20 "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Act 4:21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.

- Here in these verses – we find the apostle Peter - - who had denied Jesus three times on the night of his crucifixion...

SLIDE 76

- ...boldly defying the religious rulers - who had called for the crucifixion of Jesus.
 - And he was willing to suffer the same fate - and the reason why was because...
 -Peter was certain that Jesus was risen from the dead.

- With this in mind – look with me there at Acts chapter 5 – beginning at verse 27 – where Luke tells us that...

SLIDE 77- 81

Act 5:27 ...when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them,

Act 5:28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

Act 5:29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.

Act 5:30 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.

Act 5:31 "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Act 5:32 "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

- Here in these verses - we find Peter and the rest of the apostles - testifying in a Jewish court of law...

SLIDE 82

- ...that they were witnesses of Christ's resurrection - as well as His ascension into Heaven.
 - And as a result - the threats of this court could not persuade these men to change their testimony.
- Now - as we consider the boldness of these disciples - some skeptics might assume that this was just part of the hoax.
 - And some might even argue that these men were willing to face the possible punishment of a Jewish court...
 - ...in order to perpetuate the myth that Jesus had risen from the grave.
 - But then - the question that we should be asking is this - how much punishment will a person endure...
 - ...in order to maintain a story that they know is a lie?
 - And the reason why I ask this is due to the fact that these disciples were tortured and killed for their faith.
 - As a matter of fact - according to the historic traditions which have been passed down throughout the church age...

SLIDE 83

- The apostle James was put to death with the sword - by the command of King Herod

SLIDE 84

- The apostle Peter was crucified upside-down on an x-shaped cross in Rome.

SLIDE 85

- The apostle Matthew suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia - being killed by a sword wound.

SLIDE 86

- The apostle John faced martyrdom when he was boiled in a huge basin of oil during a wave of persecution in Rome.
 - However, he was miraculously delivered from death and exiled to the Island Patmos.

SLIDE 87

- The apostle Bartholomew was flayed to death by a whip - for his preaching in Armenia

SLIDE 88

- The apostle Andrew was whipped severely by seven soldiers and then crucified on an x-shaped cross in Greece.
 - His followers reported that when he was led toward the cross, Andrew declared:

SLIDE 89

- “I have long desired and expected this happy hour. The cross has been consecrated by the body of Christ hanging on it.”

SLIDE 90

- The apostle Thomas was stabbed with a spear in India during one of his missionary trips to establish the church there.

SLIDE 91

- The apostle Matthias was stoned and then beheaded.

SLIDE 92

- The apostle Paul was tortured and then beheaded by the evil Emperor Nero in Rome.

SLIDE 93

- And James, the brother of Jesus was thrown from the southeast pinnacle of the temple because he refused to deny his faith in Christ.
 - And when they discovered that he survived the fall, his enemies beat him to death with a club.

- Now - I could go on and on - with stories of the 1st and 2nd century Christians...
 - ...who were persecuted and killed for their faith in Jesus Christ.
 - But for now - let's take a moment to consider why these men - most of whom ran away on the night of Jesus arrest...
 - ...had the boldness to go back into the world - preaching the physical resurrection of Christ...
 - ...until they day when they were killed for that message.
 - From this - we can be certain that these disciples of Christ - truly believed that they saw Jesus rise up from the grave.
 - Because listen - they were all willing to suffer a martyrs death - preaching the gospel message of the risen Lord.
 - And not only them - but it seems as if there were some outside of the church who also believed

SLIDE 94- 96

- As a matter of fact - consider the words of the 1st century Jewish historian named Josephus - who declared...

"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principle men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him."

- Here in this historic document - the Jewish historian named Josephus assures us that...

- ...Jesus appeared to His disciples - alive - on the third day after His crucifixion.
 - And what this means is that - the believers weren't the only people who knew about this supernatural event.

SLIDE 97

- Now as we consider all 6 of these facts...
 - ...we should spend some time - reexamining the best theories which have been offered by the skeptics.
 - And so - let's begin with the conspiracy theory.

V. Verdict!

- Theories challenged

SLIDE 98

- The Conspiracy Theory
 - Remember - the Conspiracy Theory tells us that the disciples hid the body...
 - ...and then they attempted to convince everyone that Jesus had physically risen from the dead.
 - However - if that were the case - then most - if not all of these men would've come clean - the very minute their life was on the line.
 - Or in other words - they would've told the truth - in order to avoid the terrible deaths that they faced.
 - And while it's possible that men will lie - in order to spare their lives...
 - ...it's extremely unlikely that these men would choose to die for something that they knew to be a lie.
 - That being the case - the conspiracy theory is debunked - because it raises more questions - than it answers...

- ...namely - WHY would these men die for something that they would've known wasn't true.

SLIDE 99

- The Swoon Theory
 - What about the swoon theory - which suggests that Jesus didn't really die upon the cross...
 - ...but instead - He passed out on the cross - and after his body was placed in the tomb - he regained consciousness.
 - With this theory in mind - we must remember that - no one ever survived a Roman crucifixion.
 - And seeing how a Roman soldier stabbed Jesus in the heart with a spear...
 - ...we can be certain that the swoon theory has been completely debunked.

SLIDE 100

- The Hallucination Theory
 - Well - how about the Hallucination Theory which tells us that...
 - ...the disciples were merely seeing a desire-driven hallucination.
 - The first thing that I should point out about this – is that hallucinations occur in the brain...
 - ...which means that hallucinations happen within an individual - and not corporately - amongst many people.
 - Therefore – whenever you have 500 people witnessing the same exact thing...
 - ...it's not a hallucination – but instead – it's an actual sighting of something.
 - And according to the facts – there were over 500 eyewitnesses who saw Jesus - after His death.

- Therefore – we must conclude that the hallucination theory is completely debunked.

SLIDE 101

• The Myth Theory

- Finally - we should reexamine the Myth Theory - which again suggests that...
 - ...the whole story about Jesus' resurrection was slowly transformed from history - into mythology.
 - I should remind you that the earliest manuscripts of both biblical and extraBiblical accounts...
 - ...present us with a Jesus who not only worked miracles...
 - ...but who was also crucified - and rose from the grave on the third day.
 - Furthermore – this theory is unable to account for the fact that...
 - ...the first century Disciples were all willing to suffer a martyrs death for the message of Christ's resurrection.
 - And based on this fact – it's only reasonable to conclude that the myth theory has been debunked...
 - ...because it is unable to explain why these men were willing to die for a myth which had yet to be created.

● Probability

- Most probable
 - And so we see that the best theories offered by the skeptics...
 - ...have all failed to provide us with a reasonable explanation of the six facts surrounding the story of Christ's resurrection.

- Therefore - based on the facts – it's only reasonable to conclude that...
- ...Jesus Christ must've risen from the grave on the third day after He died on a Roman cross.
 - And those who refuse to believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus are simply saying...
 - ...don't confuse me with the facts – because I've already made up my mind.

VI. Conclusion

- Prediction

- Response

SLIDE 102

- Now - if this is news to you – and you've realized for the very first time – that Jesus Christ Is in fact the risen Redeemer...
- ...then - it's my prayer that you will respond to this evidence - in the only reasonable way.
 - And IF you're wondering what to do with this information - then - it's important to understand that...
 - ...Jesus pointed to His death - burial - AND resurrection from the dead - as proof that He is the promised Messiah.
 - As a matter of fact – this is exactly what Jesus told a group of religious leaders...
 - ...who asked him to prove that he is the Messiah.
- Sign of Jonah
 - With this in mind – look with me here at Matthew chapter 12 – beginning at verse 38 – where Matthew tells us that...

SLIDE 103- 105

Mat 12:38 ...some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

Mat 12:39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Mat 12:40 "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

- Here in these verses – we find Jesus helping the religious leaders of Israel to understand that...

SLIDE 106

- ...He was going to prove his messianic claims – by rising from the grave on the third day.
- And since Jesus has in fact risen from the grave – then He has also proven himself to be the savior of mankind.
- And just to be clear - Jesus is the Son of God - Who has demonstrated His almighty power...
 - ...by rising up from the dead - on the third day.

● The Cross

- The reason

SLIDE 107

- I should also point out that - when Jesus died on the cross – He was offering Himself as a substitutionary sacrifice.
- What this means is that when Jesus died upon the cross...
 - ...He was receiving the punishment that we deserve...
 - ...so that we can receive the free gift of forgiveness that we don't deserve.
 - And so – if you believe - for the very first time - that Jesus is risen from the grave - then I would also encourage you...

SLIDE 108

- ...to receive the free gift of forgiveness that He offers to every single person – no matter what we've done.

- Call to action

- Please understand that there's coming a day – when we will all stand before a holy God.

- And on that day – we will either stand before God in our own unrighteousness – and receive the punishment we deserve...

- ...or we will stand before God in the righteousness of Jesus Christ – and receive the everlasting blessings that we don't deserve.

- The choice is ours to make - and since there is a choice to make - we should also understand that...

- ...those who choose to avoid making this choice - are simultaneously choosing...

- ... to reject the free gift of forgiveness that Jesus is offering to every single sinner.

SLIDE 109

- And so - this morning - I'm encouraging you to make the conscious choice...

- ...to receive the gracious gift of forgiveness that Jesus is offering you...

- ...by simply trusting in the death - burial and resurrection of the risen Lord and Savior.

- Repent

- We do this by changing our mind about Who's work will get us into heaven.

- Trust me when I tell you that - we can't work our way to heaven - - nor do we need to.

- Jesus accomplished all of the work necessary for our salvation...
- ...so that those who trust in Him - receive the free gift of grace - by which we are saved.
- And knowing that Jesus has risen from the grave - - then - we can also be confident that those who trust in Him...
- ...will also rise up from the grave - and enjoy everlasting life with the savior who gave His life for us.
- That being the case - I encourage everyone to trust in the Lord...
- ...so that you can enjoy the blessings of Christ's resurrection - here on this Easter Sunday.