

“Evidently Jesus Rose From The Dead”

Introduction

1. Two men on a bridge joke – Are you a...?
(Northern Conservative Fundamental Baptist Great Lakes Region Council of 1912?)
 - a. Die Heretic!
 - b. We’re willing to DIE over the smaller issues, but we should be focused on the essential issues, like the resurrection of Jesus!
2. Today we’re gonna blow up some stereotypes.
 - a. Christians aren’t the unscientific, blind-faith type people that you may think.
 - b. Let me give you 3 reasons why a thinking person should check into Christianity *first*.
 - i. It’s virtually free
 1. It doesn’t cost much time or money
 2. You need to devote your life to many religions before you know “if it worked” or not.

ii. It's testable

1. It's based on the resurrection of Jesus
2. If that didn't happen, chalk it up as a fraud and move on.

iii. If you live in America; it's easy to check out

1. Minimal to no persecution to you while you test its accuracy.
2. Lots of resources to check

a. www.4truth.net

b. www.ccchambersburg.org

3. It's not generally accepted that people rise from the dead, yet there's overwhelming evidence that it happened once.

4. Entirety of Christianity is based on the *objective, verifiable evidence* that Jesus rose from the dead.

a. I Cor 15:12-19 – Paul said, If Christ didn't rise, then our preaching is in vain.

b. Matt 12:38-40 – Jesus said, I'll give you a sign, As Jonah was counted dead for 3 days, so will I.

5. The goal: give you excellent reasons to believe that Jesus' resurrection is the explanation that best fits all the facts.
 - a. All the alternate theories of what happened that day fail to account for all the accepted facts.
6. So is it true that no one outside of the NT writers knew about Jesus?
 - a. Charles Templeton said as much; "The church bases its claims mostly on the teachings of an obscure young Jew with messianic pretensions who, let's face it, didn't make much of an impression in his lifetime. There isn't a single word about him in secular history. Not a word. No mention of him by the Romans. Not so much as a reference by Josephus."
 - b. Yet there are 17 early non-Christian sources within 150 yrs that speak of Jesus.
 - i. List included Senator Tacitus & Governor Pliny the Younger

- ii. This is more sources than those that speak of Emperor Trajan.
- iii. 12 of these sources deal with His death
- iv. 6 call Jesus deity
- c. We know more than 60 facts from 130 total sources, outside the NT, about Jesus' life.

Tonight, we'll use the "minimal facts" approach, developed by WL Craig and G Habermas. This takes the 12 facts that even the greatest scoffers will accept and we'll generate the best conclusion based on them

If you write down anything, write down these 12 facts, b/c we'll use them at the end of this message!

#1 – Jesus died by Crucifixion

1. 4 non-Christian sources attest to this: Josephus, Tacitus, Lucian and Mara bar Serapion.
2. Chances of surviving...slim.
 - a. Stabbed in the heart
 - b. English *excruciating* is from the Latin ‘out of the cross’.
 - c. Seneca, a 1st century Roman, spoke of its torture.
3. If He was just very badly wounded, then showed up to His disciples, He would never have convinced them that He was risen from the dead.
4. Even the co-founder of the Jesus Seminar, John Dominic Crossan, says that, “[Jesus] was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be.”

#2 – Jesus was buried

1. Initially established in I Cor 15:4
 - a. This passage is accepted even by sceptics
 - b. It dates between 5-25 yrs after crucifixion
2. All 4 gospels report Joseph of Arimathea and the burial, especially the early Gospel of Mark.
 - a. Joseph can't be just legend.
 - b. As a member of the Sanhedrin, it would have been very easy to check him out

#3 – Jesus death caused disciples to despair & lose hope believing His life has ended.

1. Read Luke 24:21
2. This is important later as you consider their turnaround.

#4 – Jesus tomb was found empty just a few days later

1. Who would have taken the body?
 - a. The Romans – just wanted peace – a risen Messiah would not bring peace
 - b. The Jews – wanted Jesus dead & gone to protect their position / authority
 - c. The Disciples
 - i. They were scared stiff at this point
 - ii. They had no access to the tomb
 - iii. Nobody would product a lie and then knowingly, willfully die for it.

#5 – Disciples had experiences they actually believed to be literal appearances of the risen Jesus

1. Liars don't make good martyrs.
2. Their later actions were not based on a lie

#6 – Disciples were transformed from doubters afraid to identify w/ Jesus to bold proclaimers of His death & resurrection...and they're willing to die for it.

1. You say, “So what! Through the ages, many people of many faiths have gone to their deaths for their beliefs”
 - a. Yes but the disciples **KNEW** whether or not what they believed was true.
 - b. They have all the 1st hand evidence to know
 - c. No one goes to their death for what they **KNOW** to be a lie.

#7 – The resurrection was the central teaching of the early church

1. It was widely known and accepted
2. These people could and would have check into it themselves.

#8 – The Jerusalem Factor – The resurrection was proclaimed in Jerusalem where He died & was buried only a short time before.

1. How could the resurrection take root there, if it was a lie?
2. A.N. Sherman White, classical historian from Oxford, says, “the development of legend takes more than 2 generations to wipe out the solid core of historical truth.”
3. There’s nothing in history of a “legend” growing up this quick & wiping out all the historical proof around it.

#9 – The Church was born in face of eyewitnesses

1. F.F. Bruce, “If there was any tendency by disciples to depart from material facts in any way, the possible presence of hostile witnesses in the audience would serve as a corrective.”
2. It was even embraced daily. (Act 2:31-32)

#10 – Sunday became the primary day of worship

1. This is powerful considering that most early Christians were Jewish by nation. (Acts 20:7)
2. This was the first day of their work week, yet they still came together, at night to worship & learn.

#11 – James, half-brother of Jesus & former skeptic, was converted

1. He saw what he believed was the risen Jesus
2. You can trace the history of James
 - a. He was Jesus unbelieving brother mentioned in Mar 6:3 and John 7:5
 - b. Jesus appeared to him in I Cor 15:3-7
 - c. He became a Christian and led the Jerusalem Church in Act 15 & Gal 1:19
 - d. He was martyred as a Christian as recorded by Josephus, Hegesippus & Clement of Alexandria.
3. How could someone as intimate w/ Jesus as James become a Christian unless he knew 1sthand?

#12 – Paul, former skeptic & persecutor of Christians, converted after what he believed was a personal appearance of the risen Jesus

1. This is testified to by:
 - a. Luke – in the Book of Acts
 - b. Paul Himself – in books of I Cor, Gal & Phi
 - c. The story was already being circulated in Jerusalem as recorded in Gal 1:21-24
2. So an enemy of Jesus is proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus?
 - a. Enemies proclamations are strong evidence.
 - i. Exp: Jesus' sinlessness attested to
 1. Pilate – I find no fault in Him
 2. Judas – I've betrayed innocent blood
 3. Thief on cross – this man has done nothing amiss.

WHAT ABOUT ALTERNATE THEORIES AS TO WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY?

1. We can test these theories like Cinderella's glass slipper and see if they 'fit' ALL the facts.
2. The resurrection fits ALL the facts
 - a. Once you know $2+2=4$ you don't continue checking 5 or 7.
 - b. But we'll check NINE other theories to show that you have to be willfully ignorant to come to another answer to the evidence.

#1 – The Unknown Tomb Theory

1. Body thrown in common pit grave unknown to disciples
2. Accounts for some facts like #2, #4
3. Doesn't account for #6-12

#2 – The Wrong Tomb Theory

1. The women got confused & went to wrong place
2. Accounts for some facts like #2, #4
3. Doesn't account for #6-12

#3 – The Legend Theory

1. Resurrection was simply a fabrication that evolved over long periods of time to immortalize a leader long since dead.
2. Misses on all 12 points
3. Remember these are eyewitnesses that knew

#4 – The Twin Theory

1. Jesus died & was buried, but shortly after His long-lost identical twin brother emerged on scene and was worshipped as the risen Christ.
2. Answers a lot, but not #4 – empty tomb
3. Not #11 – Would involve conspiracy w/ James

#5 – The Hallucination Theory

1. They didn't really see Jesus, they just thought they saw Him.
2. People don't hallucinate the same thing like James and Paul. Hallucinations are personal
3. Doesn't account for #4, 5, 11 or 12

#6 – The Authorities Hid The Body Theory

1. Romans just wanted peace & a risen Messiah doesn't give them that.
 - a. Doesn't account for #5-12
2. Jews wouldn't want to lose their power,
 - a. Doesn't account for #5-12

#7 – The Swoon Theory

1. Jesus fainted (cold air & spices resuscitated Him), unwraps Himself, somehow moves the stone, then overpowers or sneaks by guards
2. Study Crucifixion and Roman scourging to know that HE DIED
 - a. Mar 21, 1986 edition of Journal of the American Medical Association
 - b. Doesn't account for #1
3. He wouldn't have looked anything like a risen Messiah to the disciples.
 - a. Doesn't account for #5-6 or #12

#8 – The Jesus Was An Alien Theory

1. This is the Star Trek type Theory
2. Well yes, if you mean He wasn't naturally from earth. Ha
3. Once they go this far to believe in the supernatural, just tell them Who that supernatural One is! God

#9 – The Multiple Theories Theory

1. The improbability of one theory just went exponentially higher!
 - a. Flip a coin – chances of heads? 50%
 - b. Flip 5 coins – chances of 5 heads? 3.1%
2. Have to have some evidence to state a theory, can't just make up a story.

Conclusion

1. The facts lead to the supernatural? Most people won't allow for supernatural - Period.
 - a. They think science is the only way to know things.
 - b. They think miracle don't happen, so even if the facts point to a miracle, it can't be true.
 - c. It takes more faith to say that Jesus didn't rise from the dead!
 - d. Sir Lionel Luckhoo – Most successful lawyer in history
 - i. Won 245 consecutive murder trials as a defense attorney
 - ii. 64 yr old Atheist, he took his incredible mind & started investigating Jesus' resurrection
 - iii. Quote, “I say unequivocally that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt.

2. The resurrection is meaningful
 - a. Jesus physically rising from the dead is the best fit answer for ALL the evidence
 - i. Ask the skeptics – “What 1st century evidence do you have to support your theory?”
 - b. We’ve seen 12 excellent reasons to believe that Jesus rose.
 - c. This is meaningful in light of Jesus’ claim to be God and the only way for us to get to heaven and eternal life.
 - d. The resurrection confirms his claims...ALL OF THEM.
 - i. What He says about Himself is true.
 - ii. What He says about me is true.
 - iii. Read I Peter 1:3-5