

THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

When we look at the evidence, the truth of the resurrection emerges very clearly as the best explanation. There is no other theory that even come close to accounting for the evidence. Therefore, there is solid historical grounds for the truth that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

It is worth pointing out that in establishing the historicity of the resurrection, we do not need to assume that the New Testament is inspired by God or even trustworthy. While I do believe these things, we are going to focus here on three truths that even critical scholars admit. In other words, these three truths are so strong that they are accepted by serious historians of all stripes. Therefore, any theory must be able to adequately account for these data.

The three truths are:

1. The tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered empty by a group of women on the Sunday following the crucifixion.
2. Jesus' disciples had real experiences with one whom they believed was the risen Christ.
3. As a result of the preaching of these disciples (which had the resurrection at its center) the Christian church was established and grew.

Virtually all scholars who deal with the resurrection, whatever their school of thought, assent to these three truths. We see that the resurrection of Christ is the best explanation for each of them individually. But then we see, even more significantly, that when these facts are taken together we have an even more powerful case for the resurrection—because the skeptic will not have to explain away just one historical fact, but three. These three truths create a strongly woven, three chord rope that cannot be broken.

THE PROPHETIC NARRATIVE

John 14:29 “I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.”

Luke 24:13-27 “That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said



to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." ²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

One of the great realities of Scripture is the prophetic nature of the Bible. There are predictions made in Scripture that have already come true, and there are many that we are waiting to come true — for example the second coming of Jesus Christ. Yet, before he comes the second time he had to come the first time. The prediction of Jesus' first coming was foretold all throughout the Old Testament.

WHAT ARE THE ODDS?

A number of years ago, Peter W. Stoner and Robert C. Newman wrote a book entitled *Science Speaks*. The book was based on the science of probability and vouched for by the American Scientific Affiliation. It set out the odds of any one man in all of history fulfilling even only eight of the 60 major prophecies (and 270 ramifications) fulfilled by the life of Christ. The probability that Jesus of Nazareth could have fulfilled even eight such prophecies would be only **1 in 10¹⁷ = 1 in 100,000,000,000,000 (One Hundred Quadrillion)!**

Peter W. Stoner claims that that many silver dollars would be enough to cover the face of the entire state of Texas two feet deep. Texas is a very big state. Who in his right mind would suppose that a blindfolded man, heading out of Dallas by foot in any direction, would be able, on his very first attempt, to pick up one specifically marked silver dollar



out of 100,000,000,000,000,000? Yet Jesus did not fulfill eight prophecies, He fulfilled over 300! Sixty major prophecies and 270 ramifications. This is astounding!

- Did you know that the Old Testament prophet Micah, writing 700 B.C., out of the hundreds and hundreds of cities in the scores and scores of nations in existence all over the world even in those days, designated Bethlehem of Judea as the birthplace of the Messiah (**Micah 5:2**)?
- And that at about the same time, **Isaiah (7:14)** said that the Christ would be born of a virgin?
- Or that a prophecy made in 1012 B.C. specified that the Messiah's hands and feet would eventually be pierced—a clear reference to death by crucifixion—*800 years before the Romans ever even instituted crucifixion as a form of capital punishment!*

A FEW PROPHECIES FULFILLED BY JESUS

1. **Genesis 3:15** “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”
 - ▶ From the very beginning, right after Adam and Eve disobeyed God, He gave indication that a savior was needed.
2. **Genesis 12:3** “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”
 - ▶ This blessing of all mankind points to the one who would redeem peoples from every tribe and tongue on the face of the earth.
3. **Isaiah 7:14** “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”
4. **Psalm 22:1** “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
 - ▶ Jesus cried out “My God, my God why have you forsaken me?” (**Matthew 27:46**)
5. **Psalm 22:7-8** “All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. ‘He trusts in the Lord,’ they say, ‘let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.’”
 - ▶ They shouted “He trusts in the Lord, let the Lord save him” (**Matthew 27:41-43**)



6. **Psalm 22:16-18** "Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment."
 - ▶ They nailed him to a cross piercing his hand and feet (**Matthew 27:35**)
 - ▶ They divided his clothes and cast lots for them (**Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34**)
7. **Isaiah 53:5** "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."
8. **Isaiah 53:7** "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."
9. **Isaiah 53:9** "He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth."
10. **Zechariah 9:9** "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."
11. **Zechariah 11:12** "Then I said to them, 'If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.' And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver."

John 10:36-38 "Do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? ³⁷ If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸ but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

John 14:29 "I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe."

Jesus Christ hands down is the greatest figure in the history of the world. He is greater than any president, any king, any emperor, any pharaoh, any prime minister or any other so-called god. The historical evidence is overwhelming. The prophetic narrative is undeniable. So here's the question, where do you stand with Christ today?

