

The Resurrection of Jesus

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

The Text

15 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ **died** for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was **buried**, that he was **raised** on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

(English Standard Version)

Introduction

The resurrection of Jesus changes everything. In Timothy Keller's book, *The Reason for God*, Keller shows how a new

world view exploded upon the scene at the resurrection. The disciples' lives were transformed and the church bloomed—not without an empty tomb and eyewitness encounters. This worldview changes our view of reality—if Jesus rose from the dead, then God is *real* and every competing theory and worldview is patently *unreal*.

We see this in one of the earliest Christian creedal statements, *The Apostle's Creed*. There are approximately 11-12 *credo* statements; such as, "I believe he [Jesus]... Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, **dead**, and **buried** [...] the third day He **rose** again from the dead."

Main Body

I. The Foundation of the Gospel

- A. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11
 - 1. Arrival: 51 AD - Acts 18
 - 2. Delphi Latin Gallio Inscription (term 51-53 AD)¹
 - 3. Written: cir. 55 AD
- B. Paul's Argument
 - 1. Death/Burial Fulfillment of Scripture
 - 2. Resurrection Appearances
 - 3. Paul's Experiences
 - 4. From Earlier Sources (30's)

II. The Death of Jesus as Recorded by Outsiders

- A. Blaiklock's List of Extant 1st Century Sources²
 - 1. Not the sort of documents/records (poetry, satire, literary concerns, Greek history,

¹ Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 206.

² Edward M. Blaiklock, *Jesus Christ: Man or Myth?* (1974; repr., Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 12-18.

agriculture history, etc.) which would have focused on biblical events.

2. Except: Pilate inscription, Josephus, Tacitus

B. Roman and Greek Sources

1. Tacitus (c. AD 56-121)
 - a) "Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus" (*Annals* 15.44 [AD 116]).
2. Pliny the Younger
 - a) Describes an early secret worship assembly (*Letters* 10.96-97).
 - b) Worship Christ like a god; Jews never worshipped a man.
3. Mara bar Serapion (c. 74 AD*/sometimes date 3rd century)
 - a) "What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished. ... the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. ... Nor did the wise King die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given."

C. Jewish Sources

1. Josephus (c. AD 37-100)

- a) Estimation, Pilate, execution, resurrection (*Ant* 18.3.3)

- b) Famous slain brother of James (*Ant* 20.9.1)

2. Talmud (250-500 AD)

- a) "On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged" (*Sanhedrin* 43a)

D. Conclusions

1. *Christus* (latin)/ *Christos* (greek)
2. Jesus/*Iesou*/*Yeshu* (abbr.)
3. Jewish involvement in death
4. King (Christos)/Wise King
5. Extreme penalty
6. Tiberius Caesar
7. Pontius Pilate, Procurator
8. Resurrection
9. Worship of Christ

E. A Medical Review to Death

1. In 1986, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* released a special communication—the first of its kind in the 20th century.³
2. Edwards and company write: "it remains unsettled whether Jesus died of cardiac rupture or of cardiorespiratory failure. However, the important feature may be not *how* he died but rather *whether* he died..." (63).

III. The Witnesses of the

Resurrection (1 Cor 15:5-8)

A. Paul outlines a list of Witnesses

1. Cephas and the Twelve
2. 500+ brethren at once who were still alive in 55 AD
3. James and the Apostles

³ William D. Edwards, et al., "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," *JAMA* 255 (1986): 1455-63.

4. Paul himself
 - B. Why Paul's Appearance is Important
 1. Persecutor of the church
 2. Grace of God
 3. It is virtually unexplainable.
 - C. The earliest belief "that they had actually seen Jesus after his death led to a radical transformation in their lives, even to the point of being willing to die for their faith."⁴
 - D. Their conversion and capacity to endure sufferings as eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus are unexplainable otherwise.
2. 55 AD - Approximate Date, writing of 1 Corinthians.
 3. 51 AD - Paul in Corinth.
 4. 35 AD - Paul's Early Visit to Jerusalem (Acts 9:23-30; Gal 1:18 *historeo*) for meeting and consultation.
 5. 48 AD - Paul's Later Visit to Jerusalem. (Acts 15?)
 6. 30-35 AD - The Apostolic Message before Paul, According to Skeptics.
 7. 30 AD - Tracing the Resurrection Message to the Time of the Crucifixion.
- IV. The "Minimal Facts" Approach**
- A. Habermas' approach: If we could only use the data and evidence allowed by **Skeptics**.
 1. Accepted Pauline letters:
 - a) Romans
 - b) 1-2 Corinthians
 - c) Philippians
 - d) 1 Thessalonians
 - e) Galatians
 - f) Philemon
 - B. Time-Lines
 1. 70-100 AD - The Gospels and Ancient Classical Texts.
- C. The Link from Paul to Peter
 1. Galatians 1:18 (*historeo*)⁶
 2. "Whenever these early sources are also derived from eyewitnesses who actually participated in some of the events, this provides one of the strongest evidences possible" (Habermas)
 3. Paul's Gospel = Peter's Gospel
- V. The Resurrection Changes Everything**
- A. The Skeptic cannot *simply* deny the resurrection happened.
 - B. The Skeptic's *Problemo*

⁴ Gary Habermas, *To Everyone an Answer*, eds. Francis J. Beckwith, et al. (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 189.

⁵ Gary Habermas, "The Resurrection of Jesus Timeline," Lecture Handout for "The Resurrection Evidence that Changed a Generation of Scholarship," Evangelical Philosophical Society Apologetics Conference (Berkeley: November 2011).

⁶ This verb means "to visit, with the purpose of obtaining information—"to visit and get information." (*L&N* 34.52). Low and Nida go on to observe that *historeo* "is a typical example of a meaning which overlaps two domains" *both* association (visit) and communication (information).

1. They have to admit they know everything in order to disqualify the resurrection.
 2. They have to provide an adequate alternative explanation for belief in the resurrection of Jesus.
 3. They have to explain the burst of origin, there is no development.
- C. In fact, if the Resurrection is True
1. You follow and listen to Jesus.
 2. You have hope for the world that now is and that goodness will outlast evil.
 3. There is another realm.