

Part Five

Why I Believe in the Resurrection

The Bible is reliable.

“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb.” (John 20:1)

The first reason why I believe in the Resurrection is that I believe in the Bible. While I’m not going to take the time to repeat the case I made in Part Two “*Why I Believe in the Bible*,” it’s critical to establish Scripture’s reliability before we try to make the case for the Resurrection. That’s obvious. If we have questions about Scripture’s historical accuracy and basic integrity, then we’ll never have confidence in the Resurrection of Jesus.

Perhaps one recent example of archaeology confirming the Bible’s presentation of the facts would be helpful. In fact, let’s sharpen the focus a bit more and look Scripture’s reliability with regard to the Resurrection.

Let’s begin with the cistern a team of archaeologists discovered. Digging just beneath the surface in an area immediately outside ancient Jerusalem, archaeologists found what seemed to be the opening to a cistern. In short order, their hunch was confirmed. Now a little simple deduction is in order. Why would you save water in an arid environment? Perhaps to drink—or perhaps to be able to grow crops. The same team of archaeologists continued to dig and found just what you might expect—a beautifully laid out garden dating back to Biblical times. The cistern was the

water reservoir to irrigate this garden during the dry months. Now the Bible records that Jesus was buried in a garden:

“At the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb.” (John 19:41)

Certainly an ancient garden, while interesting, is of no theological consequence. Yet this garden also contained a tomb. In fact, the plot thickens a bit more for this particular tomb was cut out of solid rock. Scripture’s record of Jesus’ tomb is that it not only was in a garden, but that it was also hewn out of rock . . .

“Then he (Joseph of Arimathea) took it down (Jesus’ body), wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock.” (Luke 23:53)

Now a tomb cut out of rock and in a garden is an intriguing coincidence, but certainly you couldn’t build the case for Jesus’ Resurrection on this evidence alone. Yet, there is more evidence to be gathered. Returning to John 19:41, we’re also told that this garden wherein Jesus was buried was just a stone’s throw (or less) from the place where Jesus died, ***“At the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden...”*** “The place” where Jesus was crucified was known as “Golgotha”—an Aramaic word meaning “The Place of the Skull.” Right next to this garden (the one with the tomb in it cut out of solid rock), the archaeologists found a small hill with an exposed limestone cliff. Wouldn’t you know that—when looked at from the proper direction—the limestone cliff looks eerily like a skull.

We also know, according to the norm of the Law of Moses, execution was to take place outside of the city (Leviticus 24:14) just outside of the city gate (Deuteronomy 17:5). The amazing string of coincidences continues. This same garden (the one with tomb in it cut out of rock, right next to small hill that looks like a skull) is located immediately outside one of the city gates of Jerusalem (the Damascus Gate).

By the way, the tomb they found in the garden . . . the one cut out of a rock wall, right next to small hill that looks so much like a skull, that is right outside the city gate where they would execute people—it’s empty.

It’s important for you to know that these archaeological finds are just that—archaeological finds. The cistern, the garden, and the empty tomb cut out of rock are not “ancient sites” that have been preserved since the time of Jesus. Were this the case someone could argue that these “ancient sites” were merely staged in such a way so as to argue for a Resurrection that never really took place. Yet, it is only in the last century that these finds

have been made and the jigsaw puzzle assembled. Even the "Place of the Skull" was not immediately recognized because it was partially covered.

Certainly, these discoveries do not prove that Jesus was raised from the dead. They do, however, make a strong case for Scripture's essential reliability. And if Jesus were raised from the dead, then this is exactly the kind of thing one would expect to find. As Jesus said so many years ago, ***"even the stones cry out."***

I believe in the Resurrection first of all because I believe in the historical reliability of the Bible—with regard to both the death and resurrection of Jesus and the Scriptures as a whole. Nelson Glueck, the renowned Jewish archaeologist wrote, *"It may be categorically stated that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference."* Glueck spoke of *"the almost incredibly accurate historical memory of the Bible, and particularly so when it is fortified by archaeological fact."*¹ Those who have taken the time to study the Bible without bias have been dumbfounded by its accuracy and authenticity. The first reason I believe in the Resurrection is that the Bible is reliable. As one scholar put it, *"As the church is too holy for a foundation of rottenness, so she is too real for a foundation of myth."*²

Jesus was dead.

"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him." (John 20:2)

The second reason why I believe in the Resurrection is that Jesus was dead. Did you know that the first thing you have to have in a Resurrection is a dead person? That's pretty obvious. But there have been those who have argued against the Resurrection on the grounds that Jesus never really died. Sometimes known as "the swoon theory," the thought is that Jesus *almost* died on the cross and only appeared to be dead. Placed in the tomb for three days, He regained his strength and then reappeared to the disciples. They misinterpreted His sudden re-arrival as a resurrection when in reality He simply came out of unconsciousness.

Is it credible to believe that such a thing could have happened? Let's begin with Jesus' manner of death. Crucifixion. The cruelty of this Roman death is legendary. The spikes driven into the victim's body were typically ½-inch thick. They were positioned in the wrist so as to burst the arteries. Let's also remember that Jesus' crucifixion came on the heels of being whipped 39 times with the Roman lash. Containing bits of bone, glass, and

¹ Nelson Glueck as quoted by Josh McDowell, *"Evidence That Demands a Verdict,"* p. 65.

² McDowell. *"Evidence That Demands a Verdict,"* Kevan, p. 188.

metal, the whip would slice open the skin and tear away chunks of flesh. Quickly the muscles would be exposed and torn apart as well. People died under the Roman whip. Some people never made it to the cross. Jesus would have arrived at Golgotha already suffering from severe loss of blood.

When Jesus first appeared to the disciples, they were afraid and thought He was a ghost. Not only were they not expecting the Resurrection, they were so sure that Jesus was dead they were confused by His first appearances.

It also seems that the Bible goes out of its way to confirm Jesus' actual death. We're told that His legs were not broken on the cross. This was a departure from the norms of execution. A victim could prolong his life so long as he could gain some leverage with his legs. If individuals were dying too slowly, the guards would hasten the process by breaking the legs. When they came to break Jesus' legs, they were surprised to find He was already dead. Scripture's record that Jesus' legs weren't broken is a statement that He had died before it became necessary to do so.

We're also told that Jesus was speared in the side. This was another part of the death process. Just to make sure that the victim was dead before the body was turned over to the family, he was speared in the heart. Is it reasonable to assume that Jesus would have survived whipping, crucifixion, and then being stabbed in the heart?

There is the testimony of the centurion who oversaw Jesus' death. Mark 15:44-45 tells us that he sent word to Pilate confirming Jesus' death. Could the centurion have been mistaken? Possibly, but the Roman soldiers were experienced executioners. On one day Pontius Pilate crucified 500 Jews. Israelite blood was cheap and the soldiers were well rehearsed in death. The best assumption is that Roman guards knew a dead man when they saw one.

Still further, the body was personally handled by Joseph of Arimathea and those who assisted him. Could they have missed it if Jesus was still alive? Particularly given their deep love for Him? And finally, if Jesus did merely lapse into unconsciousness, how could He have gained the strength to roll back the stone? Several healthy men were required to move it. And then Jesus seems so very healthy in His Resurrection appearances in the garden on that Easter morning.

No. Jesus was dead. Literally. Bodily. Completely. In fact, the reactions of Jesus' followers make it clear that they were convinced He was dead. When they found the empty tomb, the women were convinced that someone had stolen the body as a cruel joke. When Jesus first appeared to

the disciples, they were afraid and thought He was a ghost. Not only were they not expecting the Resurrection, they were so sure that Jesus was dead they were confused by His first appearances.

Now why does any of this matter? It matters first of all because it thoroughly discredits “the swoon theory.” Jesus actually died. The evidence supports the claim. Secondly, it matters for—if the Bible is to be believed—Jesus’ death is essential to the forgiveness of sin. Thirdly, it matters because Jesus’ bodily death sets the stage for His bodily resurrection—which, by the way, sets the stage for our bodily resurrection as well.³

The tomb was empty.

“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put Him!” So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus’ head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.” (John 20:5-7)

Scripture’s account is that the tomb was empty. Is this merely a fable meant to set the stage for a false Resurrection claim? Certainly, this is what many have assumed. Behind this belief is the conviction that the disciples stole the body of Jesus and staged the Resurrection event.

Yet, the followers of Jesus responded to the empty tomb with a combination of fear, misunderstanding, and bewilderment. If the Resurrection was a hoax, why tell the story in such a way so as to make the disciples look as if they completely lacked faith or the ability to grasp any of Jesus’ promises? While other religious books around the world paint their authors in heroic fashion, the Bible consistently pictures those “on the

³ The conclusion I draw is that God has His hand in human affairs in a far more literal fashion than we may recognize. It’s important not to “spiritualize” God’s work too much. Jesus’ death and resurrection were literal events and thus we can expect that our forgiveness is certain and our resurrection will be actual.

scene” (and thus those who told the stories) as inconsistent, hard-hearted, or slow-witted.

Scripture’s record of a less-than-heroic group of followers further argues for the reality of an empty tomb. Yet, among the strongest evidence for an empty tomb comes from the priests and elders of Israel. The reaction of Jesus’ enemies particularly forces us to ponder what really happened on Easter morning:

“While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, ‘You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole Him away while we were asleep.’ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.” (Matthew 28:11-15)

This seems like a reasonable story, doesn’t it? In fact, this is the belief held by many even today. Yet there are two things about this story that capture my attention. First of all, I’m struck by what’s *in* this story and then I’m struck by what’s *missing* in this story.

What’s *in* the story the priests and elders concoct? Notice that they agreed with the followers of Jesus. The tomb was empty. Even Jesus’ enemies confirmed that fact. I find that quite interesting.

What’s *missing* from the story? Jesus’ body. Think of it this way . . . if you were the priests (or the Romans) and you wanted to end this pesky Jesus movement, there would be one ironclad method of doing so. Produce the body. Take Jesus’ body and nail it to the city wall and all this Resurrection business ends.

Given the resources and the willpower of the Jewish leadership, don’t you find it surprising that they couldn’t produce the body? After all, consider the cunning manipulation, financial resources, and ruthlessness the Jewish ruling council exhibited in the arrest and death of Jesus. Is there any doubt that these same leaders would have done anything—legal or otherwise—to produce the body of Jesus? Even another body with a reasonable likeness would have sufficed.

Furthermore, time was on their side. Even if they couldn’t *immediately* produce the body of Jesus, finding it six months later would have shut down the movement. Bodies in the arid Middle East preserve very well. Rather than decomposing, they mummify. Even 50 years later, bodies are

clearly recognizable. But they never found that body and you can bet they looked very, very hard.

As there was no body, they were reduced to a story that had to recognize the empty tomb. Had they claimed otherwise, anyone in Jerusalem could have confirmed the tomb was empty (or inhabited) by just taking a 15-minute walk. Everyone knew where Jesus was crucified, and it is only reasonable to assume that the place of His burial was common knowledge.

Furthermore, the story itself had some fairly glaring holes in it. Is it reasonable to believe that a group of disciples who had just

run for cover in the face of Jesus' death would turn around and put themselves in the midst of a Roman detachment sent to guard the grave? These Roman soldiers had just crucified Jesus. What would they do to the disciples if they were caught? Furthermore, is it really reasonable to believe that the guards would have slept through the unsealing of the tomb and the movement of a large stone? It's possible but unlikely that the disciples would have taken such a chance.

Furthermore, the story contains an enormous inconsistency. The guards were to tell others that the disciples stole the body while they were asleep. Incredible! If someone did steal the body, then how would the guards know it was the disciples? —after all, they were asleep at the time . . . or so the story goes.

Finally, is it likely that the disciples would have stolen the body and built their testimony on a lie? The entire relationship with Jesus had transformed their characters. Basing their new religion on intentional deception seems unthinkable. Even if they could have gone through with it, one of the disciples would eventually have cracked and told the truth. No. It simply doesn't add up to suggest that the disciples stole the body.

Yet, if the disciples didn't steal the body, then who would have? Certainly not the Jews. Certainly not the Romans. And certainly not a passing grave robber. Why steal a body? And why take a chance on a grave guarded by Roman soldiers? Could the body have been somehow lost? We've just seen that the Garden tomb and the Place of the Skull were within a few hundred yards of each other. Furthermore, the body was personally handled by those who loved Jesus. They knew where He was buried. The Romans knew where He was buried. Everyone was paying very close attention to anything that had to do with Jesus of Nazareth.

Even looking backwards over two thousand years, modern scholars have come to the conclusion that at a minimum the tomb was empty. Something had happened.

Even looking backwards over two thousand years, modern scholars have come to the conclusion that at a minimum the tomb was empty. Something had happened. Oxford University church historian William Wand writes, “*All the strictly historical evidence we have is in favor of (the empty tomb), and those scholars who reject it ought to recognize that they do so on some other ground than that of scientific history.*”⁴ The only reasonable assumption is that the tomb was empty and there is no easy explanation as to why.

The Apostles were changed.

I still remember my childhood science class and learning the laws of physics. Time and again we repeated, “For every action there is an opposite and equal reaction.” What’s true in physics is true in life. There is a cause to events and the greater the event the greater the cause. That’s obvious, isn’t it? If I push you gently, you’ll move just a little. If I push you hard, you’re likely to move quite a bit.

We can take that same truth and apply it to the lives of the Apostles. When Jesus died, the eleven apostles were anything but an example of courage and faith. Peter, for example, denied Jesus and was conspicuously absent at the crucifixion. In fact, even three days later—after Jesus had been resurrected—the disciples were still living in fear, “***On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews . . .***” (John 20:19)

Yet just a short time later we find a very different Peter—and a very different set of Apostles, “***Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd.***” (Acts 2:14) In Acts 2 we find Peter and the Eleven in the middle of Jerusalem with Peter preaching openly about the Lord Jesus and His Resurrection. The last person to speak like this had been Jesus Himself. And He’d gotten a crucifixion sandwich for His efforts. Furthermore, nothing much had changed in Jerusalem. Caiaphas was still the high priest. Pilate was still the governor. The message of Jesus as Messiah was still considered open rebellion and punishable by death.

Now let’s remember our basic law of physics and human behavior, “For every action there is an opposite and equal reaction.” What could cause someone who denied Christ to preach Christ? What could cause someone who had run for fear of his life to confront those who had put Jesus to death with the very same message? Something “big” had leaned on Peter. Something had pushed him hard.

⁴ William Wand, “*Christianity: A Historical Religion?*” pp. 93-94 (Judson 1972)

Furthermore, Peter’s change turned out to be permanent. In Acts 2 his preaching resulted in 3,000 people trusting Christ. In Acts 3 Peter healed a lame man—in the Temple. Later in that same passage he went toe to toe with the priests who had manipulated events so as to crucify Jesus. In Acts 10 Peter extended the gospel to the Gentiles. For the rest of his life Peter took risks and wouldn’t back down. As I said, something significant had changed a coward into a fearless man.

The ending was sadly predictable. Jerome, an early church historian, tells us Peter was crucified for his faith in AD 64. Nero was the one who did him in. According to Jerome, Peter was crucified head down outside of Rome. (It seems likely that Paul was beheaded during the same persecution.)

And what of the other Eleven who were hiding with Peter in John 20 and who then stood up with Peter in Acts 2? They followed the same path as Peter, relentlessly identifying themselves with Jesus Christ regardless of the consequences:

- **James, the brother of John** (one of the two “Sons of Thunder”): Clement (the early historian) tells us, *“When this James was brought to the tribunal seat, his accuser, who saw that he was condemned to death, was moved within his heart and conscience. He went to the execution of James and there he confessed also to be a Christian. And so were Clement and his accuser led forth together to death. The accuser desired of James to forgive him for what he had done. After James had a little paused, turning to him he said, ‘Peace be to thee brother;’ and kissed him. And both were beheaded together, AD 36.”*
- **Bartholomew:** Beaten, crucified, and beheaded in Armenia.
- **Andrew,** Peter’s brother: crucified.
- **Matthew:** preached in Ethiopia and Egypt, Hircanus the king sent someone to kill him with a spear.
- **Thomas** (the doubter): Thomas headed east to preach the gospel. He was killed in Calamina, India.
- **Philip:** stoned and crucified in Hierapolis, Phrygia and buried there with his daughter.
- **Simon** (the zealot) preached in Africa and Britain. He was crucified.

Other eyewitnesses of Jesus’ Resurrection followed similar paths:

- **John Mark,** the first Bishop of Alexandria: preached the Gospel in Egypt, was burned alive, and then buried in a place named Bucolus during Trajan’s reign.

- **James**, the brother of the Lord: pushed off the Temple Mount to his death in the Kidron Valley by the Pharisees.
- **Stephen**: stoned to death outside the temple. (Acts 7)
- **Simon**, the brother of Jude and James the Younger (who were all sons of Mary Cleophas, Bishop of Jerusalem after James): crucified in Egypt during the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan.

Certainly, you may object by saying that people die for their beliefs all the time. Muslims and Buddhists do so as well as Christians. Yet the Apostles were in a completely different category than any of us. We *believe*. They *knew*. Let me explain.

There is a marked difference between dying for what one believes to be true and dying for what one *knows* to be a lie. Present-day Moslems willingly die for their belief that Mohammed's teachings are true. Likewise, Christians today also die for their belief that Jesus rose from the dead. These people might be deceived and die today for what they only believe to be true. The disciples, however, *knew* whether or not Jesus had appeared to them. And they endured brutal treatment and martyrdom as a result of their testimony that Jesus rose from the dead. It is nonsensical to argue that the disciples preached the resurrection of Christ but knew that Jesus did not appear to them. Liars do not make good martyrs.⁵

Why do I believe in the Resurrection? I do so, in part, because I cannot think of another reasonable explanation for the change in the Apostles—or for their willingness to die for the Resurrection that they preached. In case you try to write them off as deluded, it's clear from their writing, their lives, and the impact they had on so many people for good that these men were anything but deluded. They are the picture of sanity. Simon Greenleaf, former professor of Law at Harvard University put it this way:

“The great truths which the apostles declared, were that Christ had risen from the dead, and that only through repentance from sin, and faith in Him, could men hope for salvation. This doctrine they asserted with one voice, everywhere, not only under the greatest discouragements, but in the face of the most appalling errors that can be presented to the mind of man. Their master had recently perished as a malefactor, by the sentence of a public tribunal. His religion sought to overthrow the religions of the whole world. The laws of every country were against the teachings of His disciples. The interests and passions of all the rulers and great men in the world were against them. The fashion of the world was against them. Propagating this new faith, even in the most inoffensive and peaceful manner, they could expect nothing but contempt, opposition,

⁵ T. Patrick Monaghan, Esquire. *The Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.* pp. 3-4.

revilings, bitter persecutions, stripes, imprisonments, torments, and cruel deaths. Yet this faith they zealously did propagate: and all these miseries they endured undismayed, nay rejoicing. As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors only prosecuted their work with increased vigor and resolution. The annals of military warfare scarcely afford an example of the like heroic constancy, patience, and unblanching courage. They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith, and the evidences of the great facts and truths which they asserted; and these motives were pressed upon their attention with the most melancholy and terrific frequency. It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact. If it were morally possible for them to have been deceived in this matter, every human motive operated to lead them to discover and avow their error. To have persisted in so gross a falsehood after it was known to them was not only to encounter for life all the evils which man could inflict from without but to endure also the pangs of inward and conscious guilt, with no hope of future peace, no testimony of a good conscience, no expectation of honor or esteem among men, no hope of happiness in this life, or in the world to come.”⁶

I believe in the Resurrection because I believe that for “every action there is an opposite and equal reaction.” Something very significant “leaned upon” the Apostles. They were changed men. Radically changed. What would it take to transform a scattered group of cowards into a faithful group of martyrs? A Resurrection would do very nicely.

Jerusalem

The impact of the Resurrection reached even the enemies of Jesus and those who had played a part in His death. We try to determine the truth claims of the Resurrection at a distance of 2000 years and a completely different cultural perspective. It seems to me that the most reliable judgment would be rendered by those closest to the event itself—the residents of Jerusalem (after all, they had seen Jesus’ death). They could visit Golgotha and the tomb. They could talk to the eyewitnesses as well as the skeptics and even the elders and priests who opposed Jesus. In short, they had access to information we could never dream of. Furthermore, the bias of their culture was against Jesus’ Resurrection. After all, their own leaders had done everything possible to discredit Jesus and undermine His movement. Given the strong sense of authority that was a part of Jewish

⁶ McDowell, *Evidence*, pp. 191-192.

culture, one wouldn't expect the Jewish population to easily dismiss the message of their leaders.

What happened in Jerusalem in the days and weeks following the Resurrection?

Sitting by a campfire and eating fish with the Apostles, Jesus makes it clear that He is Himself (this is no reincarnation), that He is bodily present (He is no angel), and that this is not merely a “spiritual event” (He is no vision).

The book of Acts tells us the Jesus movement moved into the Temple itself. Many priests and Pharisees were being converted—they became convinced of Jesus' Resurrection! *The Jewish brass was losing their own leaders.* Furthermore, large numbers of ordinary citizens were being converted. Acts 2 records that 3000 were converted as a response to only one of Peter's sermons. The same city that had seen firsthand all the events leading up to Jesus' death was being compelled towards faith in His Resurrection.

If the Apostles were the defense attorneys and the priests the prosecuting attorneys, then residents of Jerusalem were the jury. The case for the Resurrection was being tried in the streets. Those closest to the action were making up their minds in favor of Christ's Resurrection. Shouldn't we pay attention to what those with the front row seats decided? They believed. Even Jesus' enemies began to believe.

Jesus Himself

Jesus Himself was focused upon the reality and certainty of His own Resurrection. Is it permissible to let Jesus Himself make the case? I think so. B.B. Warfield points out that “*Christ Himself deliberately staked His whole claim to the credit of men upon His Resurrection. When asked for a sign He pointed to this sign as His single and sufficient credential.*”⁷ In the Resurrection accounts in John's Gospel, Jesus Himself seeks to persuade the Apostles of literal, bodily Resurrection. Inviting Thomas to put his hands in His wounds, Jesus tells the Apostles that He is no ghost. Sitting by a campfire and eating fish with the Apostles, Jesus makes it clear that He is Himself (this is no reincarnation), that He is bodily present (He is no angel), and that this is not merely a “spiritual event” (He is no vision).

⁷ Anderson, J.N.D., *Christianity: The Witness of History*, copyright Tyndale Press, 1970. p. 103

Paul the Apostle points to the essential and literal nature of the Resurrection in his simple statement,

“If Christ is not risen from the dead, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead.”

(1 Corinthians 15:14-15)

Jesus argues for His Resurrection and places it as central. The Apostles do so as well. We have already seen that the Bible more than meets the tests of reliability—and this Book unequivocally points to Jesus’ Resurrection. No wonder I believe.

The skeptics now believe.

The myth in our culture is that nobody seriously believes in the Bible—or at least no serious person believes the Bible. As I said, that’s a myth of our culture. The truth is that skeptic after skeptic with solid scholarly roots has studied the Bible (as a whole) and the Resurrection (in particular) and come away convinced that Jesus actually did rise from the dead.

Frank Morrison, a lawyer, set about the task of disproving the Resurrection. Before it was all over he was converted—*by the evidence*. The first chapter of his book *Who Moved the Stone* was entitled “The Book That Refused To Be Written.” Another lawyer, this time British, Sir Edward Clarke wrote to a personal friend regarding his investigation of the Resurrection:

“As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidences for the events of the first Easter Day. To me the evidence is conclusive, and over and over again in the High Court I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling.”

Professor Thomas Arnold, chair of Modern History at Oxford and certainly a man well acquainted with the value of evidence in determining historical facts, wrote of the Resurrection:

“I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer . . . that Christ died and rose again from the dead.”⁸

⁸ McDowell, p. 91.

I realize that I cannot argue you into accepting the Resurrection. But I can undermine the myth that only less than serious people believe in it. Perhaps I can get you to thinking, “Maybe it isn’t a fairy tale after all.” Thousands upon thousands of serious, scholarly people—many who began as skeptics—have come to believe in the bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Bodies coming back from the grave are difficult for the modern mind to accept. I understand that all too well. Yet, there is still one more aspect of the Resurrection that makes the Resurrection more than believable. What if Jesus Christ really was God’s Son? If Jesus Christ were truly God in the flesh—as the Bible consistently teaches—then His Resurrection would only be logical and necessary. After all, who is God? He is the Ancient of Days. The One Who has forever been and been forever. He said simply to Moses, **“I Am.”** How could we keep the Eternal One in the grave? If you know Who this Crucified One is, then the surprise is not that He would be resurrected. The surprise is that He tasted death in the first place.

Moses said, **“The Lord is your Life.”** But even more so, He *is* Life—capital L. He is the Life behind every newborn’s cry. He is the Life behind every spring flower that pushes its way up through the soil. He is the Life behind the song of every bird—every flash of insight—every act of love. He is the Life behind every supernova that explodes with light and energy in some distant reach of the universe. Isn’t this necessarily true of God? Mustn’t He be the Life behind all things? And Jesus said it quite simply, **“I am the Life.”** Capital L. If this is true, how would it be possible to keep this Life in the tomb?

I believe the Resurrection is not only credible, I believe it simply makes sense. It all comes down to the identity of the One who was in the grave. He is the Eternal One for John the Baptist said, **“He is before me.”** And the Eternal One can no more be pinned in the grave than He can be boxed in by time. He is the Life, and He can no more be trapped in the grave than Spring can be stopped or the morning sun kept beneath the eastern horizon—or you could stop a young man or woman from falling in love—or stop the universe from exploding with light and energy.

Christ could no more be kept in the grave than God could be forbidden from forgiving sin. Or giving the gift of Eternal Life. Or building a city with alabaster walls—beyond our eyes. A city with twelve gates so that people from every direction—east, west, north, and south—and every race, tribe, tongue, and nation can gather around His throne to worship the Lamb forever. Christ could not be kept in the grave because man (though he has tried time and again) cannot stop God. Despite our attempts to

embrace death, God says “**Life.**” And Life will not be stopped. Life will triumph. Not death.

If you are identified by faith with Jesus Christ you will be forgiven. And you can be healed. And you can start again—no, even more so, you can be *born again*.

I am here to say that the themes of life are greater than the themes of death. Sin is swallowed up and so is the grave. If you look to Christ, you will rise with Christ. Even your decayed bones—long after they are lifeless—will fly through the sky to the Son when He returns with the angel’s shout. You too will rise from the grave. You too will live forever in Paradise.

Yes, I believe in the bodily Resurrection of Jesus. It is God’s proof positive that our sins are forgiven and that we too will be resurrected. I believe, in part, because of the evidence. But I also believe because my faith comes from deep within me. You see, I have personally met Jesus of Nazareth. The Apostles were right—He is alive! And thus, I have no choices left. I must believe.

Questions for Reflection

1. What about you? Have you thought of the Resurrection simply as a religious story rather than a real event?
2. Is the evidence for the Resurrection stronger than you had thought? If so, does this have any impact upon your belief system? What about the possibility of reaching out in prayer to Jesus Christ—the Living Savior?
3. If you want to learn more, I suggest that you read and thoroughly digest 1 Corinthians 15.
4. Paul the Apostle tells us that the Resurrection of Jesus is a present reality as well as a historic event—the Resurrection power of Jesus Christ is at work in believers. (Ephesians 1:19-20) How have you seen God’s Resurrection power at work in your life or in the lives of others? Where are you in need of God applying the Resurrection power of Jesus (that is, where do you sense death and, therefore, where is the need for Life)?