THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Intro: A major difference in Christianity as opposed to other religious organizations is Christianity is based upon the historicity of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead.

Some in Corinth were denying the resurrection from the dead. Paul shows the consequences of their view by appealing to Christ’s resurrection; 1 Cor. 15:13 “If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen.” He then mentions some of the consequences if Christ was not raised; 1 Cor. 15:14-19 “And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” Paul then affirms the resurrection; 1 Cor. 15:20 “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

God declared Jesus to be His Son; Rom. 1:4 “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:” Christianity and all morality stands or falls upon the basis of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Can we know if Jesus was really raised from the dead? Are these just made-up stories? Is the resurrection a historical event? If it is historical, then all should accept Jesus as Savior and accept the morality that originates with Him.

Rex A. Turner set forth nine facts accepted by both friend and foe.
1. Both grant that a man by the name of Jesus lived.
2. Both grant that he arose to great heights of prominence, particularly among the common people.
3. Both grant that he suffered the crucifixion of the Roman Cross and was thought to be dead when he was taken from the cross.
4. Both grant that his body was buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.
5. Both grant that a great stone was laid at the mouth of the tomb.
6. Both grant that the seal of the Roman Governor was affixed thereto.
7. Both grant that a Roman guard—consisting of from fifteen to sixty men—was stationed about the tomb.
8. Both grant that sometime after the third morning the body of Jesus disappeared.
9. Both grant that his disciples came to believe with unshakable confidence that their lord had been raised from the tomb by the power of God (20-21).

I. PROPHECY
A. Old Testament prophecies (primarily the typology of the Scriptures).
B. Isaac
1. God tempted Abraham (it was not to commit sin); Gen. 22:1 “And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.”
2. Gen. 22:2 “And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”
3. Abraham obeyed God’s instructions.
4. Gen. 22:9-10 “And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.”
5. The angel of Jehovah prevented him from harming Isaac; Gen. 22:12 “And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”
6. God considered Abraham as having offered Isaac; Heb. 11:17-19 “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Abraham shall thy seed be called. Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”
7. Isaac becomes a type of Jesus’ resurrection, foreshadowing it, and teaching us there will be one who will be raised from the dead.

C. Jonah

1. He was to go preach to Ninevah; Jon 1:2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.”

2. Instead he ran away; Jon. 1:3 “But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.”

3. Jon. 1:4 “But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.”

4. Following Jonah’s instructions the mariners cast Jonah into the sea where Jehovah had prepared a great fish to swallow him; Jon. 1:12-17.

5. While in the fish’s belly, Jonah prayed and repented for not doing as God commanded.

6. After three days the fish spit Jonah out so he could fulfill his mission to Ninevah.

7. Jesus references this regarding his death, burial, and resurrection.
   a. Mat. 12:40 “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”
   b. William Hendriksen wrote, “The point is that as Jonah was swallowed up by the sea-monster, so he, Jesus, will be swallowed up by the earth; and as Jonah was delivered from his imprisonment, so also Jonah’s great Antitype would arise from the grave” (533).

D. David

1. Psalm 16
   a. David shows God is always with those who place their trust in Him and He will protect them against all enemies.
   b. This gives them a reason to hope.
   c. Psa. 16:10 “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

2. Peter quotes this in his sermon on Pentecost.
   a. Acts 2:26-27 “Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: 27Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”
   b. Peter explains; Acts 2:29-31 “Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; 31He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.”

(1) Peter shows David’s prophecy was discussing the resurrection of Christ.

(2) David, along with everyone else, will die and his body will remain in the grave (will see corruption) while the spirit will remain in the hadean realm (translated “hell” in the KJV).

(3) When Christ died:
   a. His body was buried.
   b. His spirit went into the hadean realm, but hades could not hold Him.
   c. His spirit returned to His body that was raised from the dead (it did not have time to return to the dust from which it was taken).
   d. Thus, God did not leave Christ’s soul in hades and His body did not see corruption.
E. A Recovery
   1. Psalm 22
      a. A Messianic psalm and discusses the death of Christ.
      b. The Roman’s putting Him to death; Ps. 22:16 “For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.”
      c. A recovery is implied: Ps. 22:22-24 “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. 23Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. 24For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.”
   2. Isaiah 53 and the Suffering Servant.
      a. His death:
         1) He was bruised for our sins; Isa. 53:5 “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”
         2) Jehovah laid on Him our iniquity; Isa. 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”
         3) He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; Isa. 53:7 “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearsers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”
         4) He was cut off from the living; Isa. 53:8 “He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”
         5) His grave and death; Isa. 53:9 “And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.”
      b. But then life:
         1) Isa. 53:12 “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare not the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”
         2) This is only understood with a resurrection from the dead.
      c. Philip’s teaching the Ethiopian shows this refers to Jesus; Acts 8:35 “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.”
   F. Christ
   1. In the temple:
      a. There were those making merchandise of the temple; John 2:15-16 “And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; 16And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise.”
      b. The Jews asked; John 2:18 “Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?”
      c. Jesus responded with a prophecy of His resurrection; John 2:19 “Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”
      d. Jews did not understand:
         1) John 2:20 “Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?”
         2) John explains; John 2:21 “But he spake of the temple of his body.”
   2. At Caesarea Philippi.
      a. Jesus asked His apostles who men were saying he was.
      b. He then asked them who they thought He was.
      c. Peter’s response; Mat. 16:16 “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
d. Jesus’ response; Mat. 16:17-19 “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

c. Jesus then warns them not to tell anyone He was the Christ; Mat. 16:21 “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”

3. Several times Jesus taught His disciples that He would be put to death (by the hands of wicked men) and raised from the grave.
   a. Returning from the transfiguration; Mat. 17:9 “And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.”
   b. After healing the epileptic boy; Mat. 17:22-23 “And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: 23And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.”
   c. Prior to going to Jerusalem; Mat. 20:17-19 “And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, 18Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, 19And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.”
   d. After the Lord instituted the communion, Jesus and the disciples went to the mount of Olives; Mat. 26:31-32 “Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. 32But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.”

4. His teachings were so well known, after His death His enemies asked for a guard at His tomb; Mat. 27:62-63 “Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, 63Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.”

II. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BODY?

A. The empty tomb.
   1. Jesus was crucified and died on Friday.
   2. Joseph of Arimathaea took the body and along with Nicodemus prepared the body and put it in Joseph’s own new tomb.
   3. On Sunday, some women went to the tomb but it was empty.
   4. What happened to the body of Jesus?

B. Jesus burial.
   1. Would it have been possible for the burial place to be confused with another burial place?
      a. This was a time devout Jews from the world would be in Jerusalem because of the Passover.
      b. They knew Jesus and His prophecies and were intently interested in Jesus.
         (1) Simply consider all the events which took place during the Passion Week.
         (2) Two of Jesus disciples on the road to Emmaus said to Jesus; Luke 24:18 “And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?”
      c. Everyone knew where Jesus was buried, it was not some hidden place, and people would not confuse the tomb with another one.
   2. It was a new tomb.
      a. There would be no other bones in the tomb.
b. John 19:41 “Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.”

c. Importance: If others had been buried there, when Jesus arose there could be no argument His body was still there.

3. A huge rock rolled in front of the opening.
   a. Sufficient size to make 3 women wonder who would move the stone for them.
   b. Mark 16:1-3 “And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. 2And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. 3And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”

4. The guard.
   a. The chief priest and Pharisees go to Pilate; Mat. 27:63-64 “Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. 64Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.”
   b. Pilate gives them the watch; Mat. 27:65 “Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.”
      (1) Was Pilate indicating his belief Jesus would be raised?
      (2) Was Pilate simply telling them to take any precautions they thought necessary to keep the tomb secure?
   c. There is no way the guards would have guarded the wrong tomb, nor would they be guarding an empty tomb.
   d. Their lives were on the line if they lost the body.
   e. Vincent wrote, “The idea is that they sealed the stone in the presence of the guard, and then left them to keep watch. It would be important that the guard should witness the sealing. The sealing was performed by stretching a cord across the stone and fastening it to the rock at either end by means of sealing clay. Or, if the stone at the door happened to be fastened with a cross beam, this latter was sealed to the rock” (1:147).

5. Yet, the third day the body was missing.
   a. What happened to the body?
   b. Only 4 somewhat plausible explanations.

C. Swoon Theory.
   1. Some infidels do not believe Jesus died on the cross.
      a. Karl Friedrich Bahrdt around 1780 suggested Jesus deliberately feigned His death using drugs provided by the physician Luke and later was resuscitated by Joseph of Arimathea.
      b. Around 1800 Karl Venturini claimed:
         (1) A group of supporters were with Jesus and while not expecting Him to survive the crucifixion, yet they heard groaning from inside the tomb where Jesus had regained consciousness in the cool damp air of the sepulcher.
         (2) They then scared the guards away and rescued Him from the tomb.
      c. Heinrich Paulus advocated Jesus had fallen into a temporary coma and then revived while in the tomb.
      d. In the early 1830s Friedrich Schleiermacher endorsed a form of Paulus’ theory.
      e. While having its supporters through the years, almost no serious scholar gives it any credence.
   2. Rex Turner noted: “The soldiers declared Jesus to be dead, and they break not his legs because he was dead (Jn. 19:31,37). The testimony of those soldiers would stand in court,
and the testimony of a carping infidel who lived two thousand years later would be laughed out of court. The Roman law did not permit the removal of a body from the cross until the death of that individual was obvious and certain, and Roman soldiers removed the body from the cross. They were certain that Jesus was dead when his body was taken down from the cross. One of those very soldiers ‘with a spear pierced his (Christ’s) side, and straightway there came out blood and water’ (Jn. 19:34)” (21).

3. The condition of Jesus’ body would disprove this theory.
   a. In the Garden he probably endured a state of hematidrosis (also called hemohidrosis).
      (1) It is when one is in such agony and stress it causes him to sweats drops of blood.
      (2) Blood loss is minimal, the skin becomes tender and sensitive.
   b. After His arrest He endures five trials.
      (1) He is slapped and beaten.
      (2) He endures a Roman scourging which often produced death in the victim.
      (3) After the scourging, the soldiers placed a robe on Him along with a crown of thorns.
         (a) The crown of thorns, the thorns would be about an inch in length.
         (b) The crown would be more like a helmet covering the entire scalp.
         (c) They took rods and beat the thorns into His head (the rods would have also contacted the head).
         (d) The result would not only be great pain but also large amount of bleeding.
      (4) He would have been made to carry His cross
         (a) Probably just the crossbeam or patibulum which would weight from 75 to 125 pounds.
         (b) The Bible does not state that Jesus fell under the load of the cross.
            i) The Roman’s made the condemned man carry his own cross.
            ii) Yet, Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry Jesus’ cross.
            iii) Falling under the weight of the crossbeam would probably cause blunt chest trauma and a contused (bruised) heart.
   c. No one who had endured these things prior to crucifixion would have been able to survive the ordeal of the cross.

4. When the guards came to break the legs of Jesus:
   a. This was going to be done so they would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath.
   b. They found Jesus to already be dead.
   c. To make sure of His death a soldier thrust a spear into His side
      (1) John 19:34 “But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.”
      (2) This gave assurance to all that Jesus was actually dead.

5. Pilate is surprised by such an early death when Joseph of Arimathaea asked for the body of Jesus.
   a. Mark 15:44-45 “And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. 45And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.”
   b. The centurion would not make a mistake about His death.

D. Stolen by Enemies
   1. They had no motive for stealing the body.
      a. They wanted Jesus dead, not alive.
b. With the body in the grave, His enemies were victorious.
c. Thus, the body was exactly where they wanted it to be.

2. They had no intention of removing the body.
   a. They intended it to stay in the grave.
   b. They remembered Jesus saying He would be raised so they requested Pilate to put a guard at the tomb.
   c. Mat. 27:62-66 “Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, 63Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. 64Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. 65Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. 66So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.”

3. His enemies never claimed to have the body.
   a. They spread the rumor the disciples stole the body.
   b. When the apostles accused them of murdering Jesus but God raised Him up, His enemies would have produced the body.
   c. The Jewish leaders.
      (1) They charged the apostles not to preach or teach in the name of Jesus, but the apostles continued.
      (2) The Jewish leaders correctly stated; Acts 5:28 “Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.”
      (3) If they knew where the body was, they would have produced it and shown the error of the apostles and destroyed Christianity.

4. Rex Turner added: “For a fourth reason, the disciples did not claim that the enemies removed the body from the tomb. The disciples claimed that there was a great earthquake and that Jesus arose; that ‘for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men’; that some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests; that the council assembled and those of the guard met before them; that the council gave the members of the guard much money to testify that the disciples came by night and stole the body while they slept; and that should the matter come to the governor’s ears the council would persuade him and rid the guard of care. (Mt. 28:1,15)” (21).

E. Stolen by Friends
1. This is what Jesus’ enemies spread; Mat 28:11-15 “Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. 12And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, 13Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. 14And if this come to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. 15So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.”

2. There is the admission the tomb was empty.
3. Absurdities in the report from the soldiers.
   a. Roman soldiers would not sleep on guard.
   b. If they were asleep, how did they know the body was stolen?
   c. If they were asleep, how would they know who stole the body?
   d. If the guards had been asleep would the activities awaken trained soldiers?
      (1) unsealing the tomb.
      (2) moving the large stone door (4 women wondered who would move it for them).
      (3) commotion of dragging the body away.

4. What did the disciples do with the body? Why was it never found?
5. Why would the chief priest and elders pay the guards if they fell asleep at their duty?
   a. Considering the chief priest and elders are the ones who went to Pilate to request the guard, why would they pay the ones who so utterly failed in performing their work?
   b. Why would the guards have to be bribed to tell the truth if Jesus’ friends stole the body?

6. Rex Turner notes the impossibility of this when he writes: “the stealing of the body by the disciples would have been a physical impossibility. The Roman guard was changed every six hours, and for one to suppose that a guard of at least fifteen men could all fall so soundly asleep at the same time so that a small band of unarmed disciples could creep in, break the Roman seal, roll away the great stone, and bear the body away without awakening a single one of the guard, is certainly preposterous” (22).

7. If the disciples stole the body:
   a. They would have to invent the resurrection story and be consistent between all of them.
   b. What motive and advantage would they have to invent it?
      (1) They have no motive and no advantage.
      (2) It was a disadvantage.
      (3) They are persecuted, tortured, and put to death all because of what they know is a lie if they stole the body.
      (4) Reasonable men do not act this way.

8. The disciples after Christ’s death.
   a. They did not expect Him to rise from the dead (until the general resurrection of all).
   b. They were a beat, defeated, demoralized group.
   c. Peter along with others said he was going fishing.
      (1) John 21:2-3 “There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.”
      (2) It is possible Peter was saying he was going back to his former occupation.
   d. They hid for fear of the Jews; John 20:19 “Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.”
   e. Joseph and Nicodemus prepared the body against corruption, not resurrection; John 19:38-40 “And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. 39And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. 40Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.”
   f. On resurrection day the women came to the tomb to anoint the body with spices; Mark 16:1-2 “And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. 2And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.”
   g. When the women tell the apostles about the empty tomb their words seemed as idle tales; Luke 24:11 “And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.”
   h. Mary’s responses:
      (1) to the angel; John 20:13 “And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.”
(2) To Jesus; John 20:15 “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.”

i. They had no idea of an immediate resurrection and the apostles did not intend to preach a resurrected Gospel.

(1) Even at the ascension the apostles still believed in an earthly kingdom; Acts 1:6 “When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”

(2) Rex Turner notes: “The idea of a resurrection gospel had not occurred to them at the time the body of Jesus came to be missing from the tomb” (22).

9. The change in the apostles:
   a. There is no way to account for the change in them apart from seeing the resurrected Christ.
   b. There is a marked change from what we have just noticed.
   c. These men become men of courage and strength.
   d. When persecuted and threatened, they remained faithful to their testimony that Jesus was raised.
   e. All except John suffered martyrdom for the cause of Christ.
   f. Men are not willing to suffer and die for a fraud of their own perpetration especially if there is nothing to be gained from continuing the fraud.
   g. The apostles condition; 1 Cor. 4:9-13 “For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. 11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; 12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: 13 Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.”

10. This accusation lacks any credibility.

F. Raised from the dead.
   1. This is the only other alternative and only reasonable one.
   2. The apostles affirmed and testified and eventually gave their lives for it.
   3. God had the power to raise Him from the dead. Paul says to King Agrippa; Acts 26:8 “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”

III. WITNESSES

A. The testimony of witnesses:
   1. We cannot establish historical events as we can scientific facts.
   2. With science we take it to the laboratory and put it to the test.
   3. With historical events, the testimony of witnesses take priority.
      a. The witnesses write down their testimony.
      b. The witnesses tell others who write it down.
   4. We consider Jesus resurrection based upon the testimony of witnesses.

B. Chart of the number of witnesses and places our Lord appeared after His death and resurrection.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>To Whom</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>Record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Sunday morning</td>
<td>Mary Magdalene</td>
<td>Near tomb at Jerusalem</td>
<td>Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday morning</td>
<td>Women returning from tomb</td>
<td>Near Jerusalem</td>
<td>Mat. 28:9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Simon Peter</td>
<td>Near Jerusalem</td>
<td>Luke 24:34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday afternoon</td>
<td>Two disciples going to Emmaus</td>
<td>Between Jerusalem and Emmaus</td>
<td>Luke 24:13-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday evening</td>
<td>Apostles, minus Thomas</td>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>John 20:19-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday evening of next week</td>
<td>Apostles, with Thomas present</td>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>John 20:26-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Seven disciples fishing</td>
<td>Sea of Galilee</td>
<td>John 21:1-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Eleven disciples on a mountain</td>
<td>Galilee</td>
<td>Mat. 28:16-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Above 500 brethren</td>
<td>Galilee</td>
<td>1 Cor. 15:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Jerusalem, probably</td>
<td>1 Cor. 15:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>All the apostles at ascension</td>
<td>Mount of Olives near Bethany</td>
<td>Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:6-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After His ascension</td>
<td>Saul (Paul)</td>
<td>Near Damascus</td>
<td>Acts 9:4-6; 1 Cor. 15:8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. The credibility of witnesses.
   1. Some are not credible but will lie.
   2. Norman Geisler and David Hume:
      a. Norman Geisler points out David Hume’s criteria for credibility when Geisler writes: “He outlines the basic criteria that he believed necessary for testing the credibility of witnesses. In his own words: ‘We entertain suspicion concerning any matter of fact when the witnesses contradict each other, when they are but few or of a doubtful character, when they have an interest in what they affirm, when they deliver their testimony with hesitation, or with too violent asseverations [declarations].’”
      b. Geisler then sums up Hume’s credibility basis, by writing, “These concerns can be framed as four questions: 1. Do the witnesses contradict each other? 2. Are there a sufficient number of witnesses? 3. Were the witnesses truthful? 4. Were they nonprejudicial? Hume’s tests can be readily applied to the New Testament witnesses for the resurrection of Christ” (779)
3. Discuss each of these 4 concerns as they relate to the witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection.
   a. Do they contradict each other?
      (1) There are some discrepancies.
      (2) Discrepancies do not mean they contradict.
      (3) We would expect independent witnesses to have differences.
      (4) If their testimony was identical then it would tend to lend itself to their collaborating beforehand.
   b. There are more than a sufficient number of witnesses.
   c. Honesty of the witnesses.
      (1) The New Testament sets a high standard of morality which includes honesty and truthfulness.
      (2) God:
         (a) Is true
            i) John 3:33 “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.
            ii) 1 John 5:20 “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”
         (b) Cannot lie:
            i) Tit. 1:2 “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;”
            ii) Heb. 6:18 “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:”
            iii) Lies are of the devil; John 8:44 “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”
      (3) We are instructed not to lie
         (a) Eph. 4:25 “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.”
         (b) Col. 3:9 “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;”
      (4) Rex Turner noted: “In consideration of the honesty and integrity of witnesses, the field of evidence recognizes that there are essentially only three circumstances that will prompt a witness to lie on the witness stand or to give false testimony. Those circumstances are: 1. A witness will lie through fear. 2. A witness will lie through avarice. 3. A witness will lie through ambition” (22).
         (a) Fear:
            i) Fear would have caused them to say Jesus had not been raised from the grave.
            ii) They remained resolute in spite of the fear.
            iii) Their lives were endangered for their testimony resulting in all but one suffering martyrdom.
         (b) Money or gain.
            i) They proclaimed the resurrection in the face of hardship, deprivations, and loss of earthly goods.
            ii) No material gain in affirming the resurrection.
c) Ambition

i) If ambition drove them, they did the opposite of what they needed to do.

ii) Phi. 3:4-8 “Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,”

(d) These men were honest and would not lie.

d. Not prejudiced.

(1) At first the apostles did not believe the reports of the resurrection.

(2) Mark 16:11-13 “And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.”

(3) After they saw Jesus:

(a) Luke 24:25 “Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:”

(b) When he shows them His hands and feet; Luke 24:41 “And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?”

(4) If anything, they would have been prejudiced against the resurrection.

(5) They became prejudiced for the resurrection only after seeing Jesus die and then raised from the grave.

(6) Should someone’s testimony be discounted because they are prejudiced?

(a) Would we discount the testimony of someone who witnesses a murder because he is not prejudiced against the murderer?

(b) To dispose of the apostles’ testimony based upon the apostles’ prejudice is simply to show the prejudice of those who reject that testimony.

(c) Norman Geisler points out: “To reject a witness simply because they have some kind of bias is groundless. Everyone has a bias or set of beliefs. No one’s testimony could be accepted on anything if every bias were a disqualification” (781).

D. Based upon the testimony of the witnesses; the resurrection more than meets the criteria for acceptance of a historical fact.

IV. Bribing the Guards

A. Jewish leaders put Christ to death and did everything they could to keep Him in the grave.

B. They asked for a guard; Mat. 27:62-66 “Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.”

C. They could not prevent the resurrection of Jesus.

1. When the angel moved the stone from the door of the tomb, the guards were terrified.

2. Some went into the city to the Jews.
3. Mat. 28:11-15 “Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. 12And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, 13Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. 14And if this come to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. 15So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.”

D. When confronted with the testimony of the guards.
1. They would be independent witnesses.
2. They did not investigate the claims.
3. They simply refused to accept the fact of the resurrection.
4. What to do with their testimony.
   a. They could have appealed to Pilate about their incompetence.
      (1) He might have sided with the guards.
      (2) There is the possibility he thought Jesus would be raised from the dead.
      (3) If he believed the guards, their cause would be defeated.
   b. They planned a coverup.
      (1) They bribed the guards to make the claim the apostles came by night and stole the body.
      (2) The guards went along with the Jewish leaders.
      (3) Their report became the common explanation of that day and continues to this day.
5. The lie the Jewish leaders set in motion became a testament to the resurrection of Jesus.
   a. The testimony from the enemies of Jesus that the tomb was empty.
   b. They could not escape this fact.

V. TESTIMONY OF SECULAR HISTORY
A. Secular historians.
1. Would not expect them to emphasize Christ and the resurrection with the same vigor as Bible writers.
2. It would be wrong to expect them to give a detailed account of His life, death, resurrection, and ascension.
3. It is also wrong to think there is no record of Jesus outside of Biblical history.
4. Gary Habermas adds these points as to why we do not find more details of Christ’s life outside of the Biblical record: “The first century was certainly not characterized by advanced communications, at least by any modern standards. Any number of events, persons, or situations could be newsworthy in a regional setting and get hardly any attention on the international scene. Furthermore, there were very few ancient writers, comparatively speaking. Consequently, they would have plenty to write about and often confined themselves to situations that were ‘official’ or of international interest. At the beginning, we cannot be sure that Jesus or the earliest Christians made any such international commotion. Lastly, Jesus’ background as a peasant from a humble family would mitigate against him receiving any great amount of attention. Even the Christian teaching of his messiahship might look to an outsider to be a Jewish sectarian dogma, making Jesus just another ‘pretender’ to be the king of the Jews” (66).
5. Understanding the limitations of secular history Habermas still points out: “it is incorrect to assert that the ancient non-Christian world knew nothing of Jesus. It may even be the case that he is one of the most-mentioned figures of the ancient world!” (66).
B. Historical references:

1. Josephus:
   a. Written in the early to mid 90s.
   b. “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 principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day” (Ant. 18.63-64).
   c. Some have claimed this section is a forgery, yet parts of this are quoted in ancient documents going back to 250.

2. Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (55-120).
   a. Writing about the Christian’s persecution under Nero wrote: “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, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome” (16:44).
   b. Christus would be Jesus Christ (from the Latin), and extreme penalty would be death of crucifixion.
   c. What would the “most mischievous superstition” having broken out refer if not the disciples’ belief of the resurrection of Christ from the grave?

3. Summarizing the evidence for Christ (including His life, death, and resurrection), Haberma and Licona write, “What we have concerning Jesus actually is impressive. We can start with approximately nine traditional authors of the New Testament.... Another twenty early Christian authors and four heretical writings mention Jesus within 150 years of his death on the cross. Moreover, nine secular, non-Christian sources mention Jesus within the 150 years: Joseph, the Jewish historian; Tacitus, the Roman historian; Pliny the Younger, a politician of Rome; Phlegon, a freed slave who wrote histories; Suetonius and Thallus, as well as the prisoner Mara Bar-Serapion. In all, at least forty-two authors, nine of them secular, mention Jesus within 150 years of his death. In comparison, let’s take a look at Julius Caesar, one of Rome’s most prominent figures. Caesar is well known for his military conquests. After his Gallic Wars, he made the famous statement, ‘I came, I saw, I conquered.’ Only five sources report his military conquests... If Julius Caesar really made a profound impact on Roman society, why didn’t more writers of antiquity mention great military accomplishments?... In those 150 years after his death, more non-Christian authors alone comment on Jesus than all the sources who mentioned Julius Caesar’s great military conquests within 150 years of his death. Let’s look at an even better example, a contemporary of Jesus. Tiberius Caesar was the Roman emperor at the time of Jesus’ ministry and execution. Tiberius is mentioned by ten sources within 150 years of his death: Tacitus, Suetonius, Velleius Paterculus, Plutarch, Pliny the Elder, Strabo, Seneca, Valerius Maximus, Josephus, and Luke. Compare that to Jesus’ forty-two total sources in the same length of time. That’s more than four times the number of total sources who mention the Roman emperor during roughly the same period. If we only
considered the number of secular non-Christian sources who mention Jesus and Tiberius within 150 years of their lives, we arrive at a tie of nine each” (127-28).

C. “Apostolic Fathers” (writers who lived and wrote in the later part of the first century and first half of the second century who are thought to have had personal contact with the apostles).

1. Morgan points out: “In addition to the secular historians, we have the writings of the Apostolic Fathers—Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Hermas, Barnabas of Alexandria, Papias, and Polycarp—all of them living in the first century and attesting to the historicity of the risen Christ. All this combined with the clear accounts in the Gospels leaves us with more information about the life of Jesus Christ than of any other figure in the ancient world. No competent, objective historian today denies the existence of Jesus of Nazareth. And no one can deny that something of an extraordinary nature happened in the garden tomb of Joseph of Arimathea that profoundly changed the history of the world” (23).

2. While not considered secular historians, yet it would be an injustice to those writing during those years to simply disregard their testimony of Christ’s life and resurrection.

Conclusion: There is no other historical event so completely attested to as the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the grave. There is no other possible explanation for the empty tomb.

Since Jesus was raised it proves Him to be God. 1 Tim. 3:16 “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” Rom. 1:4 “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:”

Since He is God, His Word will judge us in the last day; John 12:48 “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”

Since His Word will judge us, we must subject ourselves to the morality He declared and is recorded for us in the New Testament.
WORKS CITED


