

Evidence of the Resurrection

By Tyler Edwards

Christianity stands or falls on the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:17).

His Family

- Jesus's own mother worships Him as God. This is the lady who raised Him and changed His diapers. If anyone would have known that Jesus was a sinner it would be His mother. If Jesus wasn't really God there is no way His mother would have worshiped Him as such.
- Two of Jesus's brothers, who did not believe in Him in John 7, became leaders of the church and each wrote a book of the Bible.¹ They grew up with Jesus. They knew Him better than anyone. They didn't believe in Him because He was family, they would have wanted to disown Him after the crucifixion to protect their family from public shame. They didn't, because they saw the resurrected Jesus. If anyone would have known that Jesus was a fraud, it would have been those closest to Him. Those closest to Him, worshiped Him as God because the more they knew Jesus the more clearly they saw that He was God.

His Disciples

- The disciples traveled with Jesus for 3 ½ years. They were closer to Him during His ministry than anyone else. Jesus was a revolutionary teacher. After His death the world would have concluded He was a failure. Movements don't begin with the death of their founder. Yet the disciples not only continued teaching that Jesus was God and in fact rose from the dead, they died giving that testimony. If there was any inaccuracy in the account of Jesus' resurrection, it's unlikely that twelve men would willingly die a painful death just for claiming it to be true. People don't typically die for something they know is a lie when telling the truth would cost them nothing and save them.
- Transformation of Paul. Paul, then called Saul, was a persecutor of the church. He radically shifted his life 180 degrees because he became convinced of the resurrection of Jesus. Paul killed people for preaching the gospel. Then he encountered the resurrected Jesus. He died preaching the same gospel he had once tried to stop.
- Tomas, refused to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead until he could put he could touch Jesus's physical body. He got his chance and believed.

Witnesses

- After His death, Jesus appeared to a number of people who were all convinced that Jesus had physically risen from the grave:

¹ James and Jude

- to Mary Magdalene, in John 20:10-18
 - to the other women, in Matthew 28:8-10
 - to Cleopas and another disciple on the road to Emmaus, in Luke 24:13-32
 - to eleven disciples and others, in Luke 24:33-49
 - to ten apostles and others, with Thomas absent, in John 20:19-23
 - to Thomas and the other apostles, in John 20:26-30
 - to seven apostles in John 21:1-14
 - to the disciples, in Matthew 28:16-20
 - with the apostles at the Mount of Olives before his ascension, in Luke 24:50-52.²⁸
- “The eyewitness accounts and the empty tomb must be taken together. That is, if there was only an empty tomb and no sightings, no one would have concluded that Jesus had been resurrected; the body may have just been stolen. Or if there were only eyewitnesses and no empty tomb, no one would have concluded that Jesus had been resurrected either; people claim to have seen departed loved ones all the time. The two factors must have occurred in tandem for anyone to have concluded that Jesus was actually raised from the dead.”²
 - Josephus, a non-Christian Jewish apologist writes of Jesus in his *Antiquities of the Jews*. He notes that Jesus was a well-known teacher who had a reputation for performing miracles.³

Pretext for Resurrection

People were not waiting for a resurrection. They didn't believe it was possible to come back from the dead; nor would they have accepted the idea any easier than we would today. Stealing a body and claiming Jesus rose would make little sense as there was no reason for people to believe it. Without a group of people who individually and as a group saw with their own eyes the resurrected Jesus, the story would not have been well accepted in the ancient world.

The Church

Prior to Jesus's crucifixion He had at best, several thousand followers. Then suddenly after His death the church explodes so rapidly it crossed most of the known world and reached even the imperial palace in Rome. Movements typically lose momentum when their founder dies, especially in Jewish culture where there had been so many failed political messiahs that following a failure was considered culturally shameful. Yet Christianity won out over competing ideologies and religious beliefs. Before long it became the dominant faith of the Roman Empire. From a human perspective this is unlikely if not impossible. The church was started by a small group of uneducated guys from an obscure area of the Roman Empire. They lacked talent, wealth, power, and connections. Their message: a crucified carpenter was raised from the dead

² N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2003)

³ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.3.3 and 20.9.1.

and offers new life. The phenomenon that is the church stands as a testament to the resurrection of Jesus. Without that, how could this group have ever grown so far, so fast?

Test of Time

For 2000 years Christianity has had many enemies. They have labored and toiled to disprove or discredit the claims of Christianity and in 2000 years no one has. The message of the resurrection was circulated during the lives of the people who killed Jesus. If it were a hoax they would have torn it apart for its inaccuracies.

- Frank Morrison set out to write a book debunking Christianity, proving that it was not true. As he began to do research he ended up proving Christianity to himself. His book *Who Moved the Stone* is still in print today.
- Lee Strobel was an atheist and award winning legal editor of the Chicago Tribune. He began looking into the truth claims of historic Christianity in efforts to disprove it. His investigation examining the facts of the historical accuracy of Jesus took him two years but his conclusion was that: The historical evidence proves the truth claims of Scripture beyond a reasonable doubt and it would in fact take more faith to be an atheist than to become a Christian. He is now one of the leading apologists in the world. He has written a number of bestselling books like *The Case for Christ*, and *The Case for Faith*.
- William Ramsay lived in the early 1900's and was knighted for his contribution to the scholarly world. He was the greatest living expert on Greco-Roman culture in Asia Minor. His knowledge of ancient cultures was unparalleled. He held three fellowships from Oxford, and was a professor at Manchester University. He was awarded nine doctorates from prestigious British, Continental, and United States Universities. He began his life as a skeptic. As he investigated the book of Acts he found that every fact and every location that Luke mentions were exactly right. In his study he concluded that Luke was the greatest historian of his time. He reasoned that Luke was too good of a historian to get all the minute details of geography in his narrative right and miss the primary focus of his message; which is the resurrected Jesus. So Ramsey became a Christian and one of the leading apologists of his day because he could not deny the accuracy of scripture and he could not disprove the resurrected Christ.⁴

Historical Reliability

If you had a friend who told you a story ten days after an event, or ten years after an event, which story would you trust more?

- The historical accuracy of any document is based on the proximity of the document circulation to the life of the person or the events it describes. If a document was circulated hundreds of years after a person died, it was less reliable because there was no one to verify the accuracy of the document.
 - For example, the life of Cesar was in 100-44B.C. The earliest copy describing the events of his life is from 900A.D. This is a THOUSAND years after he lived. There

⁴ http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ramsay/ramsay_gasque.pdf

would have been no one around to affirm the claims and very few, if any, who would even be familiar even the significant events of his life.

- Aristotle lived from 384-322B.C. The earliest manuscripts describing his life are recorded in 1100A.D., 1400 years after he lived.
 - The New Testament describes events that happened between 50 and 90A.D. The earliest copy we have is from 125A.D. ...only 35 years after the events it describes. This means that by the time the New Testament was being circulated, people who would have been able to refute any falsities found in the Bible would have been alive to do so. Therefore, based on the timeframe alone, the NT is significantly more reliable than Aristotle, Cesar, Plato, or many other historical figure.
- Another step to discovering the historical accuracy is based on the number of copies circulated after it was written. The greater number of copies, the more reliable a document. The account of Caesar's life had 10 copies distributed. Aristotle's life had 49 distributed. The New Testament had 24,000 copies distributed. When the New Testament was distributed, there would have been more chances of the reliability being verified because there were more opportunities to find inconsistencies and call a historical document a sham.⁵

The Common Misconception

Thanks to Dan Brown's *The DaVinci Code* many have come to believe that Jesus was deified in 325 ad. In 325 ad, Emperor Constantine created a council in Rome called the Council of Nicaea. Here he called Christianity the national religion of Rome. Some people thought that in this Council, Constantine rewrote the New Testament manuscripts so that Jesus became more of a deity. Some people also believe that Constantine created Christianity to unite the Roman Empire. In 1947, however, archaeologists found something to disprove these ideas. The Dead Sea Scrolls. There were around 600 manuscripts found together all dating to between 168 BC and 233 AD. This is 120 years before the Council of Nicaea ever met.

The Universal Law

We've all heard things like: "That's not fair" — "It's my turn" --- "Why should I?" --- "You promised" --- "How would you like it if..." — "It's not my business" --- "That's mine." People of every age, demographic, background, and education say these things. It's almost as if there is a certain standard of behavior or code of conduct that we naturally expect each other to follow. Most of these things were not trained into us. They don't teach them as courses in school. There is no need to do so. As human beings we believe on some level that certain things are right and certain things are wrong. Where did these ideas come from?

⁵ <http://www.ankerberg.com/Articles/editors-choice/EC1205W1.htm>

A man who slaughters innocent people is not a hero. He is a monster. He may believe some sort of special right or excuse justifies his actions, but even in his own mind he is rationalizing why his own actions do not have to be subjected to the traditional standard of human behavior.

We are hard wired with a sense of right and wrong. If you look through the different cultures of the world throughout human history from the Babylonians, to the Egyptians to the Romans, to the Chinese, to our own you will begin to notice there are a great number of similar values or moralities;⁶ despite the fact that these cultures are separated by time, location, background, and quality of life. Most major civilizations throughout history have shared laws and values.

Societies across the world regardless of their religious system or location in history also tend to value the same things. A courageous warrior is honored where a coward is hated. Wisdom is prized where foolishness is scorned. Strength is considered better than weakness. Beauty is prized over unattractiveness. Talent is favored more than mediocrity. This is known as the universal law.

Countering Scientific Arguments

- Big Bang. The big bang theory supposes that long ago there was a great explosion from which the universe and all life came into being. The law of entropy, which states that life moves from order to disorder, fells this theory. Order is not created from chaos. You can drop billions upon billions of bombs over the desert but at no point will they create a shopping mall. Things don't fall together. They fall apart. So the idea that a random explosion or expansion created everything without any external aid seems implausible. Even if there were some great explosion, where did the original singularity that exploded or expanded to create the universe come from? Their answer: we don't know. This will be a recurring theme in many of the scientific theories for the origin of man.
- Evolution. Evolution talks about how over time one thing can change into something else. Life starts with a single celled amoeba and over billions of years evolves into the diverse life that we see all around us. There are two types of evolution; microevolution and macroevolution.
 - Microevolution is the adaptation that occurs within a species between generations. This is the evolution that Darwin noticed during his stay on the Galapagos Islands. This form of evolution is observable science.
 - Macroevolution is when a species changes or develops entirely new traits. One problem: this has never been observed. Additionally we have found no information to support this could ever actually happen. There is no reason to believe this even could happen even once not to mention that this could serve as a suitable answer for the origin of man. That is of course also to ignore the traits that exist in humans that have no evolutionary precedent; such as hospitality, charity, morality, and

⁶ C.S Lewis, Mere Christianity, pg 12.

selflessness. These characteristics shared by so many people do not enhance our ability to survive and therefore have no evolutionary benefits.

- Support. There is no history to support the theory of evolution. No eye witnesses who can vouch for its accuracy. It is a theory that despite wide support in the scientific field has turned up no evidence to support its claims. Every “missing link” has been debunked. Belief in evolution requires far more faith than Christianity as there isn’t a shred of evidence to validate it.

Knowledge

The temptation here is for Christians to try and learn all this information so they can win arguments with their friends. The early church didn’t grow because of what the disciples knew. The disciples were a bunch of uneducated dummies from the middle of nowhere. They didn’t change the world because of what they knew, but because of who they knew. Equipping ourselves with tools to support the claims of Christianity is wise, but nothing compares to knowing Christ.

For further information on this subject read the following:

Historical Evidence:

The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel

Mere Christianity by C.S Lewis

Who Moved the Stone by Frank Morison

The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable? By F.F Bruce

Scientific Evidence:

The Case for Creation by Lee Strobel

Mere Christianity by C.S Lewis

What is Creation Science? by Henry Madison Morris, Gary Parker

Or check out the following websites:

<http://www.bestbiblescience.org/evoldef.htm>

http://www.forerunner.com/forerunner/X0737_Macro_vs._Micro_Evol.html

<http://www.trueauthority.com/cvse/micromacro.htm>

<http://www.creationtoday.org/the-big-bang-theory/>