

Review

- Session 1 The Problem of Evil 1
- Session 2 The Problem of Evil 2
- Session 3 Why Believe

The Problem of Evil 1 If God is so good and all-powerful, why is the world full of so much evil? The question itself points to the reality of God since something had to set the standard of what is good and what is evil. We focus on this world too much. Love requires a free will. Our mind is not God's mind. When you are God you get to set the rules. It doesn't have to make complete sense to us.

The Problem of Evil 2 Overlooked perspective. We fail to understand how bad sin is and how good God is. Frances Chan dot on a rope

Why Believe – What is your why and your why can't be a result such as I get to go to heaven or I want a better life on earth. My why is that I believe Jesus is the Son of God and He proved this by the life He lived on this earth, but primarily through one event which was His resurrection.

Summary

- Session 1 The Problem of Evil 1
- Session 2 The Problem of Evil 2
- Session 3 Why Believe
- **Session 4 Evidence for the Resurrection**

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Foundation

- The lynchpin of the Christian faith is the resurrection

Many of us have never really been challenged intellectually about our faith. But almost everyone will be severely challenged in the future, especially our kids.

There is so much information out there that the challenge of Christianity in America is becoming a head problem more than a heart problem. This is why the fastest growing religious group is the Nones (not NUNS) but NONES. And many of the NONES were raised in the Christian faith and even professed at one time in their lives to be Christians. This is serious, very serious. We must be able to think and respond rationally about Christianity.

I believe that understanding the supreme importance of the resurrection and being absolutely convinced of the reality of the resurrection is essential to our faith.

So, I want us to spend some time tonight exploring the resurrection. We are just scratching the surface tonight.

We are just scratching the surface tonight. My goal for tonight is to give you the basic argument for defended the Christian faith. We will use the next few sessions to go deeper.

I Corinthians 15:3-7

- ³ For I delivered to you as of **first importance** what I also received: that **Christ died** for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was **buried**, that he was **raised** on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he **appeared** to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, **most of whom are still alive**, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

This passage outlines the Gospel!

What is the Gospel?

- Jesus lived
- Jesus died
- Jesus was buried
- Jesus rose from the dead
- Jesus appeared to many

Paul is making the assumption that his audience know that Jesus lived and died if He was buried. He lived and died. This was not even a question with his audience. This is important because you only bury dead people.

Paul is saying Jesus rose from the dead, but don't just take my word for it. There are more than 500 who saw Him at the same time, most of whom are still alive. Go talk to them. Ask them if Jesus rose from the dead.

This is the Gospel. This is what Paul says is of first importance.

He died on the cross for your sins, and he was buried, and he was raised, and he appeared. If you're going to wrestle with Christianity, if you are going to wrestle with the truth of the gospel, wrestle with this one thing: Did Christ die for your sins, and was he buried, and was he raised from the dead, and was he seen? That's it. That's the starting point,, that's the gospel, that's the foundation, that's what it's all about. Have you ever embraced that personally?

What is the Gospel?

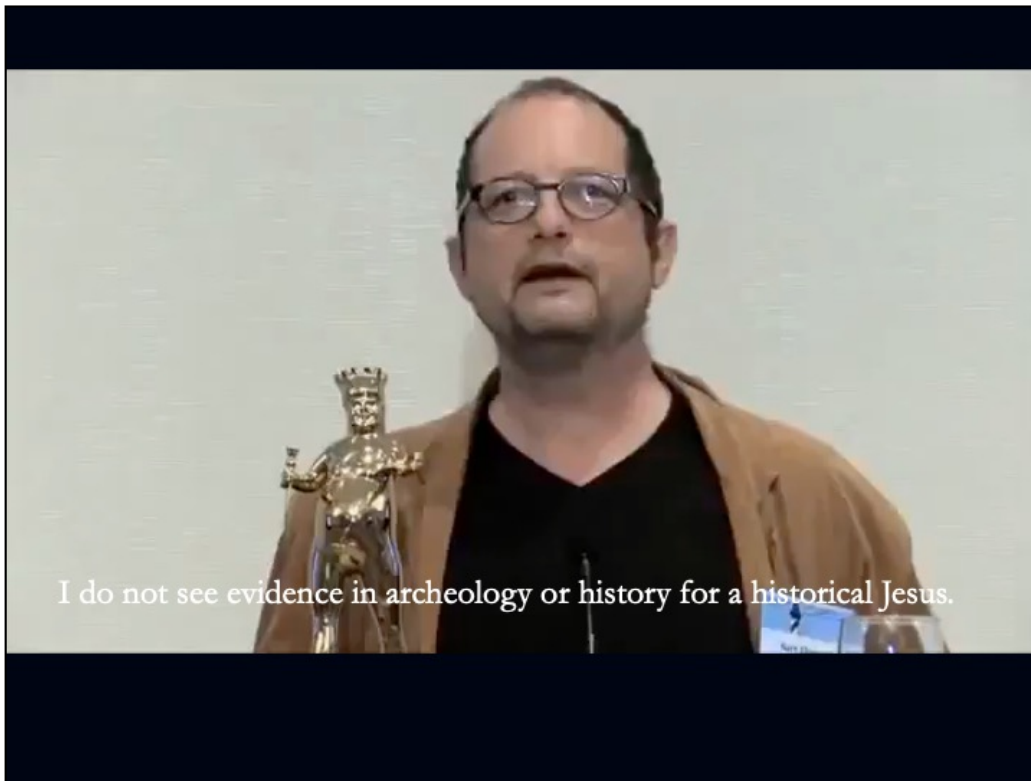
- Jesus lived

Who can tell me who Bart Ehrman is? American New Testament scholar Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill

Despite calling himself a devout conservative evangelical for much of his early life, he rejected God and Christianity and considers himself now to be both an agnostic (What you know. I can't prove God exists, but I don't think He does, I just can't prove it) and an atheist (What you believe. I don't believe the God of the Bible exists). He is one of the most talented and well-known agnostic and atheist debaters.

He also calls himself a Christian atheist because he does try to follow most of the moral teachings in the Bible. He ultimately said that he could not believe in the God of the Bible who answered prayers and intervened in daily life because of the reality of pain and suffering.

His main argument against the resurrection is that a historical approach requires him to determine what was most likely to have happened. By definition he cannot use a miracle (that which is most unlikely) to be the most likely scenario. But his real issue goes back to the problem of evil and suffering.



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I Corinthians 15:13-22

- ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is **in vain**. ¹⁵ We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is **futile** and you are still in your sins.

Did you hear what Paul said? I cannot find another place in Scripture with such strong language. Paul says that if the resurrection did not happen, then our faith is in vain. In other words, if the resurrection did not happen we are living a lie!! Our faith is futile and we are still in our sins.

Keep reading

I Corinthians 15:13-22

- ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ **But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead**, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also **in Christ** shall all be made **alive**.

According to the Bible, the only thing worth basing your life upon is the resurrection of Jesus, which is what validates the Word of God.

Christianity began based on what people saw., which is why they believed. They saw a risen Christ. Keep in mind that the Bible was not written to create Christianity, or to prove Christianity. The Bible was written to document Christianity.

So what evidence do we have of the resurrection that is not solely dependent on the Bible?

Nearly All Credible Historians Agree...

- Jesus existed and died by crucifixion
- His disciples were convinced they experienced the risen Jesus
- The disciples were transformed by believing they had seen the risen Jesus
- Paul had a conversion experience where he believed he encountered the risen Jesus

These are all facts that are documented by secular historians using evidence outside of the Bible. Almost all credible historians (both Christian and secular) agree on these four facts regarding Jesus.

The existence of Jesus is the most documented fact in the entire 1st century. To be honest, this is not a question today because all historical scholars agree that Jesus lived and died.

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Historians agree about the following regarding Paul:

He had a conversion experience where he believed he encountered the risen Jesus

He was not a liar because his life validated his belief

He was not crazy because his writings were too sophisticated

He wrote 7 undisputed letters, one of which was I Corinthians

Most Credible Historians Agree...

- The tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered to be empty a few days after His death (there is no uniformity on how it became empty)
- The church was born and grew after the death of Jesus
- The brother of Jesus, James, was converted after seeing what he believed was the resurrected Jesus

75% believe the empty tomb

Does anyone know who this James is that he appeared to? This is Jesus's half brother. Now, here is what you may not know. Up until this point, James and his other brothers did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God (John 7:2-5). Is it not true that our toughest critics are often our family members. Who grew up with siblings? It was not always easy, was it? Did your parents ever say those dreaded words, "Why can't you be more like your brother or your sister?" We would usually think or say, "He is not as perfect as you think!" Can you imagine James when Joseph or Mary might have said, "Why can't you be more like Jesus?" His brother really was perfect!!

Do you know what happened to James after the resurrection when Jesus appeared to him? He became a devoted follower of Christ. He became a pillar in the early church. He most likely wrote the book of James. He ended up dying for his faith. This may have actually been one of the greatest miracles of Jesus. He converted his own brother! And, how did He convert His brother? Through the power of His resurrection.

I Corinthians 15:14,20 ESV

- ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.
- ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead

Paul is writing about 30 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, which is important. If the resurrection was a hoax or did not happen, it would have faded by now. He then emphasizes what he is going to say by stating that this is of first importance. In other words, this is it. This is the balance point.

How powerful is this?

Our faith is not in vain because Jesus did rise from the dead.

Some have fallen asleep. They refer to death as falling asleep. Why?

Because people who fall asleep eventually wake up. Their confidence in the resurrection was so strong that they would talk about Christians who had died as fallen asleep.

Everything in Christianity rises and falls with the resurrection.

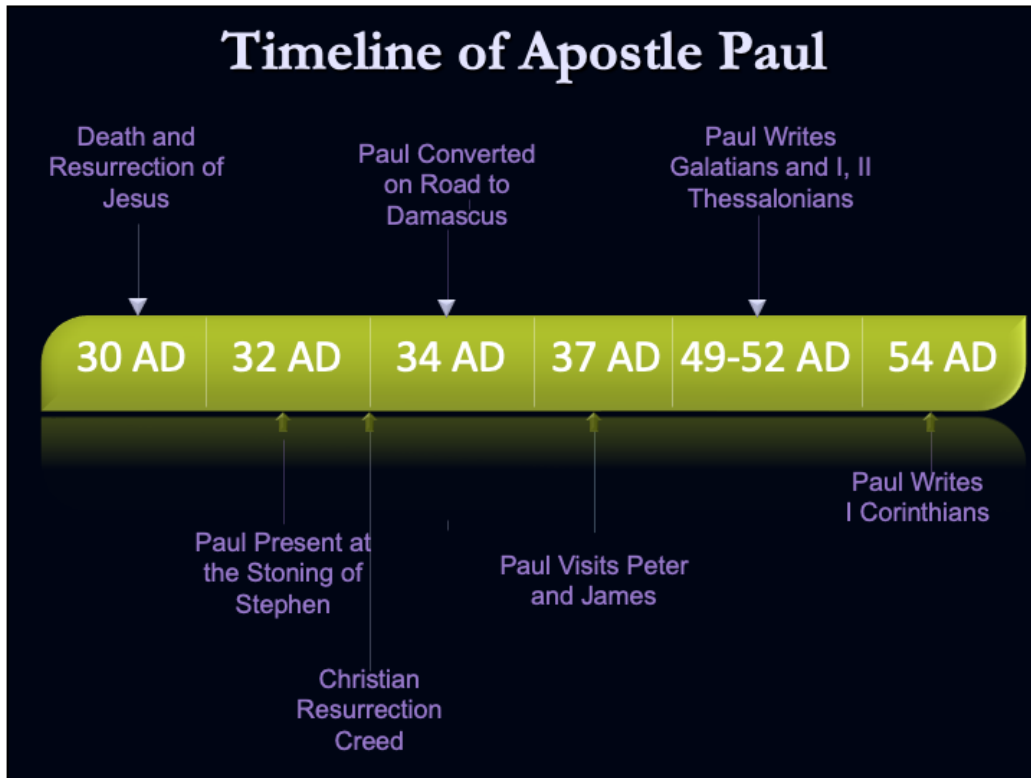
I Corinthians 15:3-6 ESV

- For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that *Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.*

Creeds – best way to communicate with people who could not read and write. Christian creeds were often used to promote truth and counteract heresy. How we teach little children. Paul quotes a creed that had already existed. “Christ died for our sins and was buried He rose from the dead and was seen.” The resurrection was already widely accepted. The Creed pre-dated Paul’s writings.

Going with consensus of scholars

The strong majority of historians acknowledge that the creed dates back to AD 30-35



Paul is writing about 34 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, which is important. If the resurrection was a hoax or did not happen, it would have faded by now.

There is much historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. We won't get into a lot of this today, but understand that Paul is even making this case. Paul is telling his readers that most of these 500 who saw the resurrected Jesus are still alive. Go talk to them. Ask them what they saw. Other evidence for the resurrection: Why did they go from timid unbelievers to bold evangelists willing to be tortured and die for their faith? Why would the disciples be willing to die for a known lie? Why did Saul convert to Paul after the resurrection?

Is the resurrection just a story that has been made up over time? The documentation about the resurrection was written so far after the events that it loses all credibility. Legends develop after eye witnesses are gone.

This is why you can have extraordinary confidence in the resurrection.

Evidence for the Resurrection

- The resurrection was not a legend that developed many years after Christ's death
- Many that saw Jesus after His death were absolutely convinced that they encountered the risen Jesus
- Many were willing to die for Jesus because of the resurrection, some of whom were previously His greatest skeptics
- The resurrection created Christianity

The Bible was assembled about 300 years after Christ died.

Paul's letter is evidence that people who saw Jesus die believed that He rose from the dead!! It proves that the resurrection was not a product of a legend that developed 50 or 100 years after it supposedly happened. Paul's letter proves that the resurrection was documented while eyewitnesses were still living.



Conclusion

- Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross
- First empty tomb eyewitnesses were women
- Resurrection appearances
- Conversion and transformation of skeptics
- Willingness to die for what was known
- The explosion of the early church
- Fulfilled prophecy

Lots of evidence for the resurrection but five historical facts:

1. Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross
2. His tomb was found empty (woman would not have been witnesses if this was made up)
3. Resurrection appearances (appeared to more than 500. Eyewitnesses were still alive when much of the New Testament was written)
4. Conversion of skeptics (Paul and James his brother) You don't die for something **you** made up.
5. The explosion of the early church. Disciples went from denying Christ and being scared for their lives to dying for their faith.

The minimal facts are those things that are accepted by nearly all New Testament scholars. The minimal facts are "1. *Jesus died by crucifixion.* 2. *Jesus' disciples believed that he rose and appeared to them.* 3. *The church persecutor Paul was suddenly changed.* 4. *The skeptic James, brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed.* 5. *The tomb was empty.*" [2] These facts are nearly universally accepted by New Testament scholars, including liberals.

Summary

- We only have two choices:
 - Jesus was the Son of God and rose from the dead. Therefore, I am **all in** as His devoted follower.
 - Jesus did not rise from the dead. Therefore I am **all out** regarding Christianity.
 - There is no middle ground (lukewarm)
- We must understand what we believe and why we believe it. (I Peter 3:15-16)

I believe this is critical to our faith journey because of the response that the resurrection demands from everyone who claims to be a Christian.

Paul was not trying to convince people that Jesus rose from the dead. That was well known. He was trying to convince people how to live as a result of the resurrection.

If the resurrection is true, what does it demand of us? Everything! Absolutely everything!!

The Bible did not create Christianity. Christians did not create Christianity. What created Christianity was the resurrection. It is the resurrection that gave early Christians to face death. And it should be the same today for us.

Therefore, live with purpose. Live the Gospel. Live with a sense of urgency.