

JESUS CHRIST

Our Savior and Lord

Study #10

This is the study about the **ONE** who is the sum and substance, the center and essence of Bible Christianity.

If we remove Buddha from Buddhism, if we take Mohammed out of Islam, if we eliminate Smith from Mormonism, we still are left with systems of belief. But if we separate Jesus Christ from Christianity – we have *nothing!!*

Christianity is **not** a system of beliefs, it is a PERSON. We are not saved through rules and rites, but through a PERSON.

In this study lesson we will look at two particulars concerning Jesus Christ:

1. Who He is
2. What He has done

Jesus considered *whom* men believed Him to be of fundamental importance. He even asked His disciples, “*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*” (Matthew 16:13). Who

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Lesson Overview

- I. Jesus Christ is the Perfect Man.
- II. Jesus Christ is God.
- III. Jesus Christ was Born of a Virgin.
- IV. The Death of the Lord Jesus Christ
- V. The Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ
- VI. The Ascension of Jesus Christ
- VII. The Return of Jesus Christ



Checklist

- This Lesson
- Spiritual Journal
- Gospel Tracts

For Next Session

- Lesson K
- The Trail of Blood

Informal Conversation –
Ask about his week.
Ask about answers to the prayer requests you have shared.

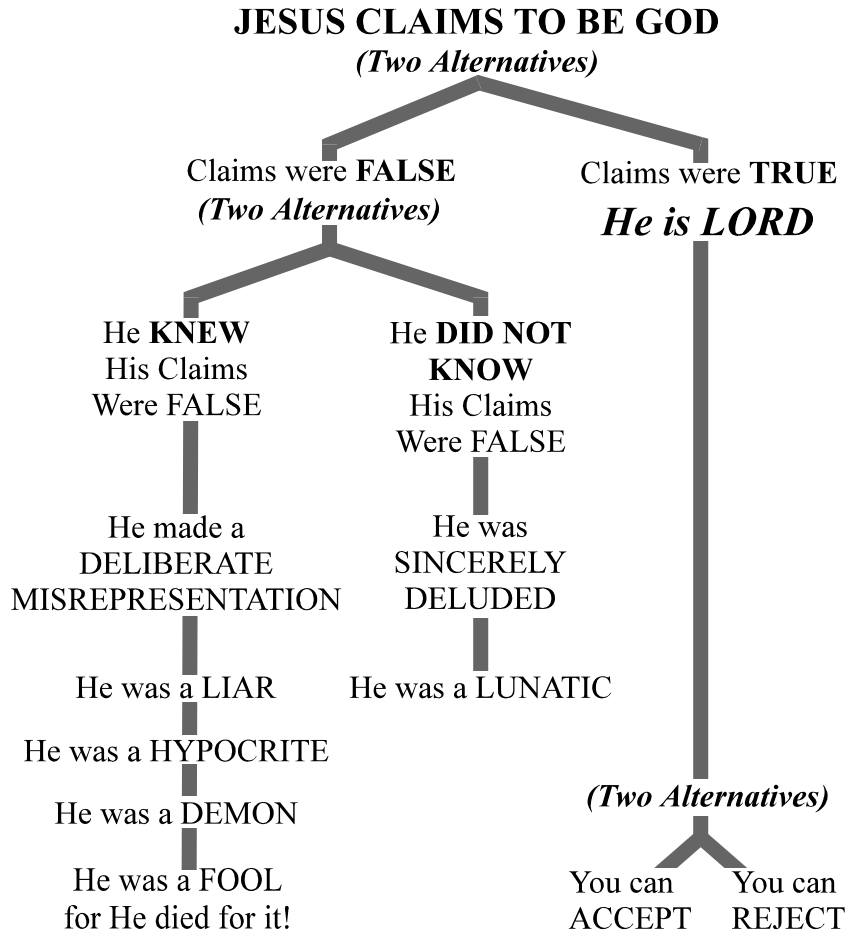
Discuss Last Week's Assignments –

1. Ask him to share his Scriptural insights, prayers, and applications from his Spiritual Journal.
2. Share one of your Quiet Times.
3. Exchange highlights of your sermon notes.
4. Ask him about his effort of handing out a gospel tract.

Read page one with your Timothy.

do you say that Jesus Christ is? What is your conclusion regarding His identity?

Examine the diagram below and consider *who* Jesus really is.



In the words of Kenneth Scott Latourette, the great historian of Christianity at Yale University: “It is not His teachings which make Jesus so remarkable, although these would be enough to give Him distinction. It is a combination of the teachings with the man Himself. The two cannot be separated.”

C. S. Lewis, who was a professor at Cambridge University and once an agnostic, wrote: “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.”

Jesus claimed to be God. He did not leave any other options. His claim to be God must be either true or false and is something that should be given serious consideration.

I. JESUS CHRIST IS THE PERFECT MAN.

A. **Look up: Galatians 4:4**

Jesus was born of a W _____ .

B. **Look up: Luke 2:5**

Mary underwent a normal human pregnancy – she was G _____ with child.



C. **Look up: Luke 2:40-52**

Throughout childhood, Jesus G _____ in a normal way.

How did Jesus grow?

(Luke 2:52) “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

What words or phrases indicate:

1. Mental growth? _____
2. Spiritual growth? _____
3. Physical growth? _____
4. Social growth? _____

D. **Look up: John 4:7-9**

To the woman of Samaria, Jesus looked like a typical _____ .

Ask:

How could Jesus be God and develop mentally, spiritually, physically, and socially?

Answer – in His humanity Jesus grew and developed like any other person. He was 100% man.

E. Look up: Isaiah 53:2

This prophetic description of the Lord tells us He had no C _____ or attractive B _____. According to Matthew 26:48,49 the Lord Jesus was so plain that Judas needed to kiss His cheek to identify Him to the soldiers.

“Religious art” portrays Christ as having blue eyes, long straight golden hair, and a fair complexion. Nothing could be further from reality. Jesus Christ looked like an average Jew – olive skin, brown eyes, bearded, and short black hair.



Comment:
Jesus was not effeminate as some religious art portrays Him to be. He boldly confronted the leaders of Israel. Read John 2:13-17 how He made a whip and drove the moneychangers out of the Temple and overturned their tables. Pictures of an effeminate Christ are both inaccurate and insulting.

F. Look up: John 4:6

Jesus experienced W _____.

G. Look up: Matthew 8:24

Jesus required S _____.

H. Look up: Matthew 21:18

Jesus got H _____.

I. Look up: Luke 22:44

Jesus suffered painful A _____.

J. Look up: Hebrews 4:15

Jesus was T _____ in all things, just like you and me.

K. Look up: 2 Corinthians 5:21

Jesus knew _____ sin.

L. Look up: John 19:33

Jesus suffered a physical D _____.

Comment:
Jesus did not have a sin nature. His nature was always to do right. Is the sin nature part of human nature? Answer – not originally. Adam and Eve were created with human nature but not with a sin nature. Today people are born with a sinful human nature; but Jesus was not.

II. JESUS CHRIST IS GOD.

- A. Look up: John 1:14**
Who is “The Word”? _____
- B. Look up: John 1:1**
The Word ___ ___ God
- C. Look up: John 5:18**
Why did the Jews try to kill Jesus? _____
- D. Look up: John 10:30**
Jesus said He and the Father were O ___ ___.
- E. Look up: John 10:31-33**
How did the Jews interpret John 10:30?

- F. Look up: John 14:9**
Whom do we see when we see Jesus? _____
- G. Look up: John 20:28**
 1. What did Thomas say concerning Jesus?

 2. Did Jesus rebuke Thomas for this? _____
- H. Look up: Hebrews 1:8**
To whom is the title, “O God” given? The ___ ___
- I. Look up: 1 John 5:20**
Who is the true God and eternal life? _____
- J. Compare: Titus 1:3 with Titus 1:4**
 1. Who is referred to in each verse as “our Savior”? _____
 2. What does this mean? _____
- K. Compare: Genesis 1:1 with John 1:3**

John 1:1 and 1:14 teach us that Jesus is God. Here’s how:
1:1 says the Word pre-existed with God; the Word IS God.
1:14 says this “Word” became flesh and dwelled among mankind – this is Jesus Christ. V.14 refers to Christ as the “only begotten of the Father” and John 3:16 makes it clear that the only begotten son is Jesus Christ.
Jesus Christ becoming man is called the “incarnation” which means *enfleshment*.
Jesus, who pre-existed with God, took on the body of a man.

Comment:
Jesus is not “a god” as the Jehovah’s Witness claim. Their Bible, *The New World Translation of the Scriptures (NWT)*, was translated by a committee of men that the Watchtower Society seeks to keep anonymous. Defectors from the society have identified the alleged members of the committee, revealing that none of them was expert in Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic. (Continued)

What is the inescapable conclusion concerning Jesus Christ? _____

L. After examining the Bible, who do you conclude Jesus Christ to be?

- A god
- God
- Just a good man

(Continued from previous page)
 The NWT was translated to agree with Watchtower doctrine – this practice must result in error.

III. JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN OF A VIRGIN.

From what you have learned above, the Lord Jesus Christ is a man and He is God. He is not 50% human and 50% divine, but 100% perfect in His humanity and 100% perfect in His deity. How can this be?? **He is the God-Man!**
 This is a fact clearly taught in the Word of God, but it is one we cannot fully comprehend.

A. Look up: 1 Timothy 3:16

This verse says that Jesus is _____ manifested in the F_____.

Remember back to the G (God) lesson and the Bible teaching of *one* God manifested in *three* Persons. In studying about the Lord Jesus Christ we must appreciate *one* Person with *two* natures – a divine nature and a human nature. While we will never fully understand this truth, we can see it was accomplished in the miracle of the Virgin Birth of Christ.

1. If Jesus had a human mother **and** a human father, He would be just another man – sinful, needing to be saved, and totally incapable of saving Himself, let alone others.
2. If Jesus had **no** human mother and **no** human father, He would be unapproachable

Comment:
 100% God and 100% man –
 If Jesus was half God and half man then He couldn't meet the demands of a holy God, nor could He identify with the needs of a sinful mankind. As 100% God, Jesus was sinless and completely satisfied God's justice. As 100% man, Jesus understands our struggle:
(Hebrews 4:15) "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

- He is "touched" with our problems.
- He understands.
- He cares.
- He supplies what we need.

as God – holy and dwelling in light
inaccessible.

3. The Bible teaches Jesus to be the *Son of Man* (because Mary was His mother) and the *Son of God*.

B. Look up: Isaiah 7:14

This Old Testament prophecy of Christ said a
V_____ would conceive.

C. Look up: Matthew 1:18

When Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb, she
was E_____ (engaged) to Joseph;
and they had **not** come T_____ in
marriage.

D. Look up Luke 1:35

The conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary was
the miraculous work of the _____
_____.

IV. THE DEATH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

**A. Look up: Luke 19:10 and
Matthew 1:21**

Jesus came to S_____ the
L_____.

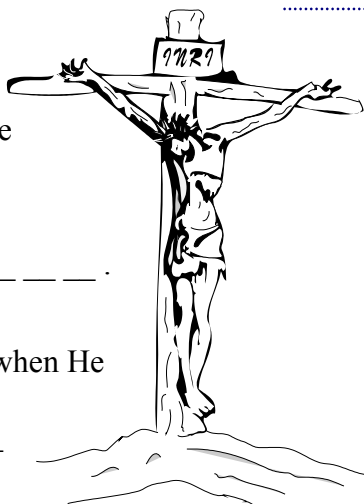
B. Look up: Romans 5:8

Christ died for S_____.

C. Look up: Isaiah 53:6

What was laid upon Jesus when He
died on the cross?

D. Look up: Romans 5:10



Comment:

Jesus' death on the
cross was a fulfillment
of prophecy.
Refer to the table on
page 12 to build your
Timothy's faith.

Through the death of Jesus Christ we are
R_____ to God.



E. Look up: John 3:16

For whom did Christ die?
The W_____ (everyone)

F. Look up: Romans 10:13

Who can benefit from the death of Christ?
W_____ calls upon Him

G. Look up: John 19:30c and Hebrews 10:12

What needs to be added to the death of Christ on the
cross to complete our salvation? _____

H. Look up: Galatians 4:5

By His shed blood, Jesus
is able to R_____
those who trust Him.



Comment:

Being “reconciled to God” means that relationship with God was restored. Friendship is reestablished. Jesus made it possible that we could be friends of God. Prior to salvation God was *against* us. A lost man may say, “I’m not against God.” But the Scriptures teach that God is against man!

- Psalm 7:11
- John 3:36
- Colossians 1:21

V. THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

A. Look up: John 20:1

On what day of the week did Jesus rise? The F____
____ day, or
S_____



B. Look up: Matthew 12:40

How long was Jesus in the tomb?

C. Read: 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

List the appearances of the resurrected Lord as given here:
1. _____

Why do Christians worship on Sunday?

God established in the Law that the Sabbath was to be a day of rest and reverence to God. The Sabbath is Saturday, the seventh day of the week.

Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law through His life and crucifixion. He established a new covenant with man. His new institution, the Church, gathered on the first day of the week (Sunday), the day He resurrected, to worship God. Each Sunday we gather to worship and recognize that Jesus Christ is risen!

- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____

D. Look up: Romans 4:25

Why was Jesus raised from the dead? For our
J _____

E. Look up: 1 Peter 1:3,4

According to this Scripture, because of the
resurrection of Christ, each believer has a “lively”
H_____ for a wonderful inheritance, reserved in
H_____.

Comment:
Justification means
 “declared righteous.”
 The penalty of my sin
 was paid by Christ,
 and I am *not guilty*
 before God!
 “Just if I’d” never
 sinned.

Comment:
 Jesus goes to God on
 our behalf. He takes
 our requests before
 God.
 This provides
 encouragement to
 pray!

Comment:
 Jesus is our *advocate*,
 that is, he is our
 defense attorney.
 When Satan accuses
 us before God, Jesus
 argues *not guilty* on
 our behalf because He
 paid the debt of our sin
 through His death on
 the cross.
 What an
 encouragement! Why
 would we not want to
 serve Him whole-
 heartedly?

VI. THE ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

A. Look up: Acts 1:3,9

When did Jesus return to Heaven?

B. Look up: Hebrews 10:12

Where is Jesus at this present time?

C. Look up: Hebrews 7:25

Jesus is making I _____
for each believer.

D. Look up: John 14:2

Jesus is preparing a P _____ for each of us
who are saved.

E. Look up: 1 John 2:1

When a Christian sins, Jesus is an
A _____ with the Father.

VII. THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST.

- A. **Look up: John 14:3**
Jesus said, “I will C_____ A_____.”
- B. **Look up: Acts 1:11**
Who promised the return of Christ here?

- C. **Look up: Titus 2:13**
Christ’s return is called the B_____ H_____.
- D. **Look up: 1 Corinthians 15:51,52**
When Jesus Christ returns for His people, how quickly will this event transpire?

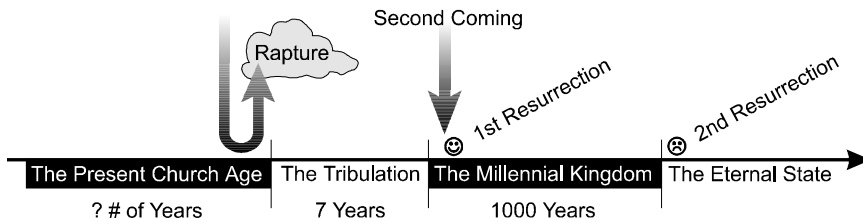
- E. **Look up: 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17**
What will happen to believers (living and dead) when Jesus returns? _____

“In the twinkling of an eye”
The speed that light reflects off of the retina of the eye. That is, the speed of light – 186,000 miles per second! What does this mean as far as “getting ready” when the rapture begins?

Comment:
The truth of 1 Cor. 15: 51-52 demands “preparedness” on our part. An unbeliever will not have time to receive Christ when the rapture begins. And a Christian will not have time to “get right” with God. Follow the admonition of (1 Thessalonians 5:2) “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” (Mat 24:44) Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:18 “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”
Ask:
How is the rapture a comfort to believers? Answer – it is our escape from the evils of this world. No matter how bad it gets on earth, one day we are going up!

WHEN IS JESUS COMING BACK?



Explain the chart to your Timothy.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH ASSIGNMENT

- ❑ Read your K Lesson (**K**inship) and answer all the questions. Look up the lesson's Bible references in God's Word.
- ❑ Read the booklet The Trail of Blood.
- ❑ Continue reading through the New Testament *at your own pace*.
- ❑ Take sermon notes using your *Spiritual Journal* and be prepared to share highlights next week.
- ❑ Give out copies of *The Amazing Story Behind Amazing Grace*.
- ❑ Where would you like to meet for next week's session?
- ❑ Be sure to bring your Bible, pen, **K** Lesson, and *Spiritual Journal*.

Encourage your Timothy and cast a vision for him regarding spiritual growth.

Pray for him and have him pray aloud.

REMEMBER!!!
Turn in the "Discipler Report Back" page by dropping it off at the Hospitality Booth in the church foyer.

THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY	
<i>Old Testament</i>	<i>New Testament</i>
Sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zec 11:12) "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give <i>me</i> my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty <i>pieces</i> of silver."	(Mat 26:15) "And said <i>unto them</i> , What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver."
Nailed to the cross (Psa 22:16) "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet."	(John 20:25) "... Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."
Forsaken by God (Psa 22:1) "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?..."	(Mat 27:46) "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried ... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
His garment parted and lots cast for his vesture (Psa 22:18) "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."	(Mat 27:35) "And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots."
Numbered with the transgressors (Isa 53:12) "...He was numbered with the transgressors;..."	(Mark 15:27-28) "And with him they crucify two thieves;... And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors."
Pierced (Zec 12:10) "...They shall look upon me whom they have pierced,..."	(John 19:34-37) "...One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side,...And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced."
Not a bone of Him broken (Psa 34:20) "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."	(John 19:33-36) "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:...For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken."

Zechariah 11:12 – prophecy given in BC 487.
Isaiah 53:12 – prophecy given in BC 712.

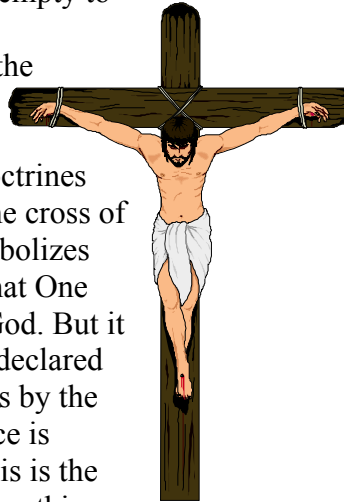
Why I Believe in the Resurrection¹

*To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.
Acts 1:3*

Since the beginning of time, men and women have responded to the death of loved ones with a cry like that of Job: “If a man die, shall he live again?” (14:14). Human philosophy and pagan religions have been able to answer with no more than a question mark, a wish or a vague hope.

The great genius of Greek philosophy, Plato, was asked: “Shall we live again?” His response: “I hope so, but no man may know.” The tombs of Mohammed or Buddha or Confucius are occupied, but the tomb of Christ is empty to this day.

Why then do we believe in the resurrection of Christ, this most important of all Christian doctrines, beside which all other doctrines are relatively insignificant? Even the cross of Christ without the resurrection symbolizes simply that One rejected by men, that One who was hanged and accursed by God. But it is by the resurrection that Christ is declared the Son of God with power, and it is by the resurrection that his atoning sacrifice is declared to be accepted by God. This is the center of Christian faith. With it everything stands or falls. Therefore all skeptics through nineteen centuries have aimed their largest guns at the resurrection of Jesus Christ.



¹ Excerpted from *Why I Believe*, by D. James Kennedy, WORD PUBLISHING, Nashville, Tennessee. All rights reserved.

The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ has been examined more carefully than the evidence for any other fact of history! It has been weighed and considered by the greatest of scholars, among them Simon Greenleaf, the Royal Professor of Law at Harvard from 1833-48 who helped bring Harvard Law School to preeminence and who has been called the greatest authority on legal evidences in the history of the world. When Greenleaf turned his mind upon the resurrection of Christ and focused upon it the light of all the laws of evidence, he concluded that the resurrection of Christ was a reality, that it was a historical event, and that anyone who examined the evidence for it honestly would be convinced this was the case. So it was with Frank Morison, a British lawyer who set out to write a book repudiating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He wrote his book, but it was not the book he set out to write. As he examined the evidence for the resurrection of Christ, this skeptical lawyer found it so overwhelming he was forced to accept it and become a believer. The book he did write, entitled *Who Moved the Stone?*, sets forth the evidence for the resurrection of Christ, and its first chapter is called “The Book That Refused To Be Written.” Lew Wallace also set out to write a book disproving the deity of Christ and his resurrection and ended up writing a famous book defending it. That book was entitled *Ben Hur*.

The evidence for the resurrection of Christ, in the minds of those who have taken time to examine it, is very, very significant. I have met many people who do not believe in the resurrection of Christ, but I have never met one person who has read even a single book on the evidences for the resurrection who did not believe it.

Let us consider what some of these evidences are. There is that fact of the Lord’s Day. For thousands of years the Hebrew people held their Sabbath doctrine. Then we find a group of early Christians who were Jews changing the day of worship from the seventh day to the first day! What could account for their abandoning something to which they had held so tenaciously? Nothing other than such a monumental event as the resurrection of Christ from the dead, which took place on the first day of the

week; his appearance to his disciples on the first day of the week; and the outpouring of his Spirit upon the Church at Pentecost on the first day of the week. So we read that it was on the first day of the week that the disciples of Jesus Christ met to worship him.

Then there is the fact of Easter. This was a replacement of the Jewish festival of the Passover. Why did the Jews who held the Passover to be the most significant event in the history of their nation abandon it in favor of the celebration of Easter, which was the festival of festivals among the Christians? The greeting was: “Christ is risen!” And the response: “Christ is risen indeed!” What other fact than that of the resurrection can explain the existence of the festival of Easter, which traces itself all the way back to the time of the early church?

There is the fact of the Christian sacraments, which not only point to the death and suffering of Christ, but also to his resurrection in power. These can be traced back in unbroken succession to the very time of the death of Jesus Christ.

There is the fact of Christian Art. In the catacombs of Rome, from the time of the persecutions, we find carved into the walls representations of the resurrection of Christ as a part of the very earliest beliefs of the Christians.

There is also the fact of Christian hymnody. In the earliest days of the Christian church, hymns were sung to the resurrected Jesus Christ.

Then there is the undeniable fact of the Christian Church. Many people do not make the connection between the Church and the resurrection, but all the scholars have. The Christian church is the largest institution that exists or has ever existed in the history of the world. The Christian Church is five times larger than the Roman Empire at its greatest extent. More than one billion three hundred million people this day profess to worship Jesus Christ as the living and risen Son of God. How did such an institution come into existence? As someone said: “The Grand Canyon was not formed by an Indian dragging a stick.” Neither was an institution the size of the Christian Church brought to pass by the daydreams of idle dreamers in days gone by. It is known by all historians that

the Christian Church can be traced back to the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 30, the time of the death and resurrection of Christ.

You can peruse H. G. Wells's *Outline of History* or other secular history books and find that generally they tell the story of the life and death of Jesus Christ. Then a new chapter begins telling of the rise of the Christian Church and the disciples' preaching, and somehow there is a connection between those two chapters. It is an indisputable fact of history that the largest institution in the history of the world began in Jerusalem A. D. 30 when the Apostles began to preach that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. The very heart and substance of the message of the early Christians was that Christ was risen from the dead. The first message delivered at Pentecost was entirely about the resurrection of Christ; about the prophecies that went before it in the Old Testament; about the fact that they had crucified the Lord of glory and God had raised him from the dead; about the fact that they were witnesses of these things; about the fact that the risen Christ has now poured out his spirit; and about the fact that because he was risen, he could grant the remission of the sins to those who would believe in him.

All the Scripture and the testimony of unbelievers and hostile enemies of Christianity as well declare that the Church was spread everywhere because of this teaching that Christ had risen from the dead. It is a fact that the Church of Jesus Christ came into being because the Apostles declared that he rose from the dead.

Three alternatives are possible: (1) this was fraud, and the Apostles lied; (2) they were deluded, deceived, and in error; (3) Christ did rise from the dead. Let us consider the efforts that have been made by skeptics to deny the fact of the resurrection.

In over twenty years of studying the resurrection, I have found that it is an island guarded by all sorts of reefs positioned around it in concentric circles. Any ship that attempts to get through to destroy that island will be grounded on one or another of those reefs. Only a handful of theories have been propounded by skeptics, atheists, and unbelievers who have turned their greatest guns upon the resurrection. All one has to do to be even more

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convinced about the resurrection of Christ is to examine these theories to see how vain they are. *The Cause and Cure of Infidelity* by Dr. David Nelson records that as a young man in college and graduate school he lost his faith but was still upset by an uneasy conscience. In order to bolster himself in his unbelief, he read the writings of all the great atheists. He had enough mental acumen to see that their arguments were so fatuous and empty that they would not hold water. This led to his conversion to Jesus Christ.

We are confronted with the fulfillment of the prophecies of the resurrection of Christ in the Old Testament; of the predictions of Christ himself that he would be taken and scourged and would be crucified, and on the third day would rise again from the dead. If we suppose that he was involved in some conspiracy, we are confronted with the character of Jesus Christ himself—this man whom the whole world joins together to declare to be the greatest, the most ethical, the most pure, the most honest man the world has ever known. We are confronted with the empty tomb—that rock upon which many a theory has gone aground. We are confronted with the grave clothes, with the testimony of the witnesses; with the twelve different occasions when Christ appeared to people, with over five hundred people who saw him risen; with the nature of these appearances in the morning and afternoon and evening, inside and outside, in which they handled and touched him; with the tremendous transformation of the Apostles from fearful, timid cowards to bold proclaimers of the Gospel. The Apostle Peter, who one day was afraid of a little maiden, was a few days later confronting the whole Sanhedrin, affirming to them that he could not but declare that which he had seen and heard. Then we have the faithfulness, the character, the suffering and the death of these witnesses, most of whom sealed their testimony with their blood.

This is a vitally important fact. In the history of psychology it has never been known that a person was willing to give his life for what he knew to be a lie. I used to wonder why it was that God allowed the Apostles and all the early Christians to go through such suffering, such tremendous unbelievable tortures. The foundations of Christianity are so established that they are

absolutely unshakable today. Paul Little said, “men will die for what they believe to be true, though it may actually be false. They do not, however, die for what they know is a lie.”

There are the fact and the testimony of Christ’s ascension. There is the undeniable fact of the tremendous conversion and transformation of the Apostle Paul—from Saul, the persecutor and murderer of Christians, to Paul, the greatest apostle in the history of Christianity.

Let us consider some of the various theories which try to explain away the resurrection. In the area of fraud, there is the idea that either the disciples themselves, or the disciples in conjunction with Jesus Christ, conspired to deceive the world into believing that he had risen from the dead. This was the earliest theory to be set forth. It is found even in the Bible when the guards came in Jerusalem and reported to the Sanhedrin (the ruling body of the Jews) that the tomb was empty and all the things that had transpired. The Sanhedrin gave the guards large sums of money and said: “Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him, and secure you” (Matt. 28:13-14). In the entire history of jurisprudence there has never under any circumstances been a witness who has been allowed to testify to what transpired while he was asleep. “While we were asleep, the apostles came.” For a Roman soldier to fall asleep on guard duty meant inevitably the death penalty. And this was rigorously applied.

The Scottish theologian Dr. Principal Hill commented on this idea of falsehood in what I think is a classic quote. He said, after examining all the evidence, “But if not withstanding every appearance of truth, you suppose their testimony to be false, then inexplicable circumstances of glaring absurdity crowd upon you. You must suppose that twelve men of mean birth, of no education, living in that humble station which placed ambitious views out of their reach and far from their thoughts, without any aid from the state, formed the noblest scheme which ever entered into the mind of man, adopted the most daring means of executing that scheme, and conducted it with such address as to conceal the imposture

under the semblance of simplicity and virtue. You must suppose that men guilty of blasphemy and falsehood, united in an attempt the best contrived, and which has in fact proved the most successful, for making the world virtuous; that they formed this singular enterprise without seeking any advantage to themselves, with an avowed contempt of loss and profit, and with the certain expectation of scorn and persecution; that although conscious of one's villainy, none of them ever thought of providing for his own security by disclosing the fraud, but that amidst sufferings the most grievous to flesh and blood they persevered in their conspiracy to cheat the world into piety, honesty, and benevolence. Truly, they who can swallow such suppositions have no title to object to miracles.”

Lawyer Frank Morison says: “We have to account not merely for the enthusiasm of its friends (of the church), but for the paralysis of its enemies and for the ever-growing stream of new converts which came over to it. When we remember what certain highly placed personages in Jerusalem would almost certainly have given to have strangled this movement at its birth but could not—how one desperate expedient after another was adopted to silence the apostles, until that veritable bow of Ulysses, the Great Persecution, was tried and broke in pieces in their hands—we begin to realize that behind all these subterfuges and makeshifts there must have stood a silent, unanswerable fact, a fact which geography and the very fates themselves had made immovable. We realize also why it was that throughout the four years when Christianity was growing to really formidable dimensions in Jerusalem, neither Caiaphas nor Annas, nor any recognized member of the Sadducean camarilla, whose prestige and personal repute was so deeply affronted and outraged by the new doctrine, ever took the obvious shortcut out of their difficulties.” If the body of Jesus still lay in the tomb in which Joseph had deposited it, or if they themselves had taken it and placed it somewhere else, why did they not say so? No, they were paralyzed and totally incapable of doing anything about it. Their only expedient was the Great Persecution.

Some have said that the resurrection was a legend that just gradually grew up. This was a popular theory in the last century when the higher critics said that the Gospels were written a hundred or two hundred years after the events, but the advance of archaeology has silenced this criticism. Now we know that the Gospels go right back to the authors whose names they bear, and that testimony of the resurrection goes back to the very decade in which it took place. Therefore, there was no possible time for legend to develop. Furthermore, the legend had already developed at least sixteen years before Paul could say that there were five hundred people, most of whom were alive at that time, who had seen the resurrected Christ.

Still less tenable, perhaps, is the vision theory. This speculates that the appearances of the resurrected Christ were simply visions or hallucinations brought about by the great expectations these people had that Jesus would rise from the dead. If that were the case, how do we account for the fact that the women came to the tomb bearing spices? How do we account for the fact that Mary sat outside the tomb weeping because her Lord was dead and the corpse had been stolen? How do we account for the fact that the two on the road to Emmaus were totally disconsolate and dejected because they had thought the crucified Christ was the Messiah who should have delivered Israel, but now were convinced everything was lost? How do we account for the unbelief of the disciples in the Upper Room where Jesus rebuked them for their disbelief? No, they were not expecting a resurrected Christ!

In the history of hallucinations there is no incident in which five hundred people from different backgrounds, of different temperaments, ever saw the same vision at the same time! Furthermore, there are innumerable other reefs upon which that ship will go aground. If these were simply hallucinations that they were seeing, did none of the disciples think about going to the tomb to see if the body was still there? When they proclaimed their “hallucinations,” did none of their enemies ever consider taking a few steps over to examine the tomb? When Peter preached at

Pentecost about his “great hallucination,” he was only ten minutes away from the tomb. Thousands of people believed; other thousands heard and did not believe. Did no one think of walking down the street to check it out? Hardly! Certainly those sophisticated, conspiring Sadducces would have taken every opportunity to show that this was simply a hallucination.

Lastly, there is the “swoon” theory. This has been set forth by Venturini; it is found in the writings of Mary Baker Eddy; it is found in the writings of Hugh Schonfield in *The Passover Plot*. It is interesting, however, that for over eighteen hundred years there was never a whisper from the friends of the most implacable enemies of Christianity that Jesus Christ had not died. Some of these recent writers have now conceived the idea that Jesus has simply swooned, was taken down from the cross and thought to be dead; then, in the coolness of the tomb, he revived and came out and convinced his disciples that he had risen from the dead. That ship would never have gotten within a hundred miles of our resurrection island.

Consider these facts: Ignored is the wound of the centurion—delivered into the side with a Roman spear, producing both blood and water—empirical evidence that life had ceased, because the blood had separated into its constituent elements. There is the testimony of the centurion who was sent by Pilate, a man who dealt and trafficked in death, whose business it was as an executioner to know that Jesus was dead. Then there was the fact of the grave clothes. The Jews wrapped bodies in these grave clothes and used a hundred pounds of spices between the folds, sealing those clothes around the corpse, mummylike. The head was also wrapped. Medical authorities state that if Jesus had swooned, open air was needed, not a closed tomb. Certainly what was not needed were grave clothes wrapped around his head and spices covering nose and mouth. Furthermore, to place a person in such a swoon in a cold grave would bring about a syncope or cessation of his heartbeat, if he had been alive.

Suppose he did extricate himself from these grave clothes, without in any way disturbing them, and then go to the huge stone

which sealed the tomb. He would have had to move it with hands that had been pierced with the large Roman spikes used for crucifixions. He would have had to place them on the flat side of this enormous stone and simply roll it away. Greek terms in the Gospels indicate that it was rolled uphill. Indeed, that is a miraculous feat in itself! He then would have had to overcome a Roman armed guard and walk fourteen miles that afternoon to Emmaus and back. That was to loosen up his feet after the spikes had pierced them, to get in shape for his walk all the way to the north of Palestine to Galilee where he climbed a mountain!

The famous critic David Strauss, who did not believe in the resurrection but also did not believe in such nonsense as the “swoon” theory, said: “It is impossible that one who had just come forth from the grave, half dead who crept about weak and ill, who stood in need of medical treatment, of bandaging, strengthening and tender care, and who at last succumbed to suffering, could ever have given to the disciples the impression that He was a conqueror over death and the grave—that He was the Prince of Life—an impression) which lay at the bottom of their future ministry. Such a resuscitation could only have weakened the impression which He had made upon them in life and in death.”

Consider the ascension of Jesus Christ. Did this One who had managed to resuscitate himself and get out of the tomb also fly up in the sky? This is what the disciples affirmed. Or are we to involve the disciples in this fraud? Remember, they subsequently gave their lives in horrible deaths. No. All the theories that have been propounded fall into the dust as we examine the facts so evident that no one has ever been able to refute them.

The empty tomb is admitted not only by the friends but also by the foes of Christianity. The Roman guard admitted it; the Sanhedrin tacitly admitted it by telling the soldiers to say that his disciples had stolen him.

Trypho, one of the earliest and greatest Jewish apologists, in a dialogue with Justin Martyr speaks of “one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver, whom we crucified; but his disciples stole him by night from the tomb, where he was laid when unfastened from the cross,

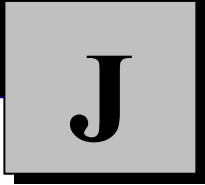
and now deceive men by asserting that he had arisen from the dead and ascended into heaven.” So even Trypho admits the tomb was empty, setting forth the theory that the disciples stole the body, a theory nobody believes today.

There is the final fact of Christian experience: that this risen Jesus Christ has gone throughout all the world and that he has reached down and transformed human beings in every nation, tongue, and tribe of this earth, that countless millions of people have come to know that he is alive from the dead and has come to enter their lives and transform them. He is the One who says: “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore... Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (Rev. 1:18, John 11:26).

Even now Christ stands knocking at the doors of our hearts and he says, “If any man hears my voice and opens the door I will come in to him and have intimate communion with him” (Rev. 3:20). Unless we have come to know him experientially in the laboratory of our own souls, we are without hope in this world and the world to come. For Jesus and his resurrection are the only hope of mankind. Without that, we have nothing to look forward to but a black hole in the ground.

Christ is risen, indeed! He is alive, as he said, and he is willing to come and live in our hearts if we are willing to repent of our sins and place our trust in him who died for us and rose again.

Discipler Report Back



I met with _____ on
____/____/____ and reviewed the contents of this
lesson. My comments regarding the discipleship time
together are:

*(make comments only if they are needed to help the Pastoral
staff assist you in ministering to this person)*

Discipler's Name _____

*Please drop this off at the Hospitality Booth in the
church foyer on the first service after conducting
this session. This will help the Pastoral staff stay
current with the status of our new converts and
new members being disciplined.*

Thank You

**This is a
sample of
the
“Discipler
Report
Back” page
that you
removed
from the
back of your
Timothy’s
lesson.**

**Return that
sheet to the
Hospitality
Booth in the
church foyer.**