

IT IS  
**FINISHED**



*Jesus' Death & Resurrection*



**MARK DRISCOLL &  
GERRY BRESHEARS**



**MARK DRISCOLL**  
MINISTRIES

Dear Christian Leader,

You are receiving this research brief because you have signed up for free ministry resources at [markdriscoll.org](http://markdriscoll.org). I want to personally thank you for loving Jesus and serving his people. I also want to thank you for allowing me the honor of helping you lead and feed God's people.

This research brief is a gift from Mark Driscoll Ministries. It was prepared for me a few years ago by a professional research team. I am happy to make it available to you, and I would request that you not post it online. If you know of other Christian leaders who would like to receive it, they can do so by signing up for free leadership resources at [markdriscoll.org](http://markdriscoll.org).

It's a great joy helping people learn about Jesus from the Bible, so thank you for allowing me to serve you. If you would be willing to support our ministry with an ongoing or one-time gift of any amount, we would be grateful for your partnership.

A Nobody Trying to Tell Everybody About Somebody,

Pastor Mark Driscoll

# **It Is Finished!**

**Jesus' Death and Resurrection**

**Mark Driscoll & Gerry Breshears**

## Contents

### Preface

#### Chapter 1. Cross: God Dies

- HOW CAN JESUS' CRUCIFIXION BE GOOD NEWS?
- HOW DOES GOD SATISFY HIMSELF THROUGH THE CROSS?
- HOW DOES GOD REDEEM US THROUGH THE CROSS?
- FOR WHOM DID JESUS CHRIST DIE?
- HOW DOES GOD TRIUMPH THROUGH THE CROSS?
- HOW DOES GOD INSPIRE US THROUGH THE CROSS?
- WHAT DOES THE DOCTRINE OF THE CROSS REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S LOVE?

#### Chapter 2. Resurrection: God Saves

- WHAT IS RESURRECTION?
- WHAT WERE ANCIENT NON-CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF THE AFTERLIFE?
- WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS' RESURRECTION?
- WHAT IS THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS' RESURRECTION?
- WHAT IS THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS' RESURRECTION?
- WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY ANCIENT OBJECTIONS TO JESUS' RESURRECTION?
- WHAT HAS THE RESURRECTION ACCOMPLISHED FOR CHRISTIANS?

# Preface

The content for this e-book was originally published as chapters 8-9 in *Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe* written by Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears. If you would like to obtain more Bible teaching and resources from Mark Driscoll you can visit [markdriscoll.org](http://markdriscoll.org)

# Chapter 1

## Cross: God Dies

*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

ROMANS 5:8

The Bible gives few details about crucifixion. This is likely because the original audience had witnessed them. However, since few people in the modern era have personally witnessed a crucifixion, it is important for us to examine it in detail so as to fully appreciate the suffering of Jesus Christ.

Imagine a long wooden stake being run through a person's midsection, and that stake then being driven into the ground, with the impaled person left to die slowly over the course of many days. It is believed that this kind of barbarous torture may in fact be the earliest form of crucifixion, occurring as early as the ninth century bc.<sup>1</sup>

In the sixth century bc the Persians commonly practiced crucifixion, especially King Darius I, who crucified three thousand Babylonians in 518 bc. In 332 bc Alexander the Great crucified two thousand people whom he conquered in Tyre. The transition from impalement to crucifixion occurred under Alexander, as he was a master of terror and dread. In 71 bc the former gladiator Spartacus and 120,000 prisoners fell in battle to the Romans, which resulted in six thousand men being crucified along the shoulder of the highway for 120 miles.

The Romans perfected crucifixion; they reserved it as the most painful mode of execution for the most despised people, such as slaves, the poor, and Roman citizens guilty of the worst high treason. The crucifixion methods varied with the sadism of the soldiers. They tried to outdo one another and experimented with various forms of torture. They grew learned in ways to prolong the pain and agony.

The Romans are believed to be the first to crucify on an actual cross. The *Tau* was a capital *T* cross and the *Latin* was a lowercase *t* cross. Both had the *stipe* (the vertical post) and *patibulum* (the crossbar). The *stipe* was probably permanent while each man carried his own *patibulum*.

As a young boy, Jesus may have viewed crucifixions in Judea, because there was a Jewish uprising against the Romans that resulted in a mass crucifixion of about two thousand Jews in ad 4 at the time of the death of Herod.

The pain of crucifixion is so horrendous that a word was invented to explain it—*excruciating*—which literally means “from the cross.” The victim was affixed to the cross with either ropes or nails. The pain of crucifixion is due in part to the fact that it is a prolonged and agonizing death by asphyxiation. Crucified people could hang on the cross for anywhere from three to four hours or for as long as nine days, passing in and out of consciousness as their lungs struggled to breathe while laboring under the weight of their body.

In an effort to end the torment, it was not uncommon for those being crucified to slump on the cross to empty their lungs of air and thereby hasten their death. Further, there are debated archaeological reports that suggest sometimes seats were placed underneath the buttocks of those being crucified to prevent slumping, thereby ensuring a lengthy and most painful death.

None of this was done in dignified privacy, but rather in open, public places. It would be like nailing a bloodied, naked man above the front entrance to your local mall. Crowds would gather around the victims to mock them as they sweated in the sun, bled, and became incontinent from the pain. Once dead, some victims were not given a decent burial but rather left on the cross for vultures to pick apart from above while dogs chewed on the bones that fell to the ground, even occasionally taking a hand or foot home as a chew toy, according to ancient reports.<sup>2</sup> Whatever remained of the victim would eventually be thrown in the garbage and taken to the dump unless the family buried it. Furthermore, the wooden crosses and nails were considered more valuable than the bodies of the deceased, and those resources were kept and reused. As a general rule, it was men who were crucified. Occasionally a man was crucified at eye level so that passersby could look him directly in the eye as he died and cuss him out and spit on him in mockery. In the rare event of a woman’s crucifixion, she was made to face the cross. Not even such a barbarous culture was willing to watch the face of a woman in such excruciating agony.

The ancient Jewish historian Josephus called crucifixion “the most wretched of deaths.”<sup>3</sup> The ancient Roman philosopher Cicero asked that decent Roman citizens not even speak of the cross because it was too disgraceful a subject for the ears of decent people.<sup>4</sup> The Jews also considered crucifixion the most horrific mode of death, as Deuteronomy 21:22–23 says: “If a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God.”

The Roman emperor Nero was so cruel to Christians that he had some of them crucified. Their number included Peter, who, it is said, was crucified upside down at his own request because he did not feel worthy of dying exactly as Jesus did.

Roman crucifixion continued until Emperor Constantine reportedly saw the vision of a cross and the next day won a historic battle and overtook the Western Roman Empire. Following his victory, Christianity was no longer outlawed but instead became a state-sponsored religion. Historians have debated whether he experienced a true conversion or simply practiced political expediency. Either way, he abolished crucifixion around ad 300.

In light of all this, perhaps most peculiar is the fact that the symbol for Jesus, which has become the most famous symbol in all of history, is the cross. The church father Tertullian (155–230 ad) tells us of the early practice of believers' making the sign of the cross over their bodies with their hand and adorning their necks and homes with crosses to celebrate the brutal death of Jesus. In so doing, the early Christians turned a symbol of terror and intimidation into a symbol of salvation and hope.

## HOW CAN JESUS' CRUCIFIXION BE GOOD NEWS?

Among the scandals of the cross is the fact that Christians have called it their *gospel*, or good news, and celebrate it every year on Good Friday. To understand the good news of Jesus' death we must first examine how he died. Then we can examine why he died.

In the days leading up to his death, Jesus was a young man in his early thirties. He was in good health due to his job as a carpenter and his constant walking of many miles as an itinerant minister. Jesus began speaking openly of his impending death, including at the Passover meal he ate with his friends as the Last Supper. There, he broke with fifteen centuries of protocol. In so doing, he showed that the Passover meal, which God's people had been eating annually, found its ultimate fulfillment in him. The Passover memorialized the night in Egypt when in faith God's people covered the doorposts of their home with blood so that death would not come to the firstborn son in their home but would rather pass them over.<sup>5</sup> Jesus, the firstborn Son of God, likewise had come to die and cover us with his blood so that God's just wrath would literally pass over us sinners as the essence of the new covenant.<sup>6</sup>

During the Last Supper, Satan entered one of Jesus' disciples, Judas, who had been stealing money from Jesus' ministry fund for some time and had agreed to hand him over to the authorities to be crucified. After Judas left the meal to lead the soldiers to Jesus, Jesus went to the garden of Gethsemane, where he spent a sleepless night in the agony of prayer. Meanwhile, his disciples failed to intercede for him in prayer and instead kept falling asleep. At this point, Jesus was fully aware of his impending crucifixion and was so distressed that, as the Bible records, he sweat drops of blood, a physical condition that doctors report is rare



because it requires an elevated level of stress that few people ever experience.

After an exhausting, sleepless night of distress, Judas arrived with the soldiers and betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Jesus was then arrested. He was forced to walk through a series of false trials where contradicting false witnesses were brought forward to offer false testimony. Despite the absence of any evidence supporting the false charges, Jesus was sentenced to be murdered. He was eventually blindfolded as a mob of cowardly men beat him mercilessly. He was then stripped in great shame, and the Bible simply says that they had him scourged.

Scourging itself was such a painful event that many people died from it without even making it to their cross. Jesus' hands would have been chained above his head to expose his back and legs to an executioner's whip called a cat-o'-nine tails or a *flagrum*. Two men, one on each side, took turns whipping the victim. The whip was a series of long leather straps. At the end of some of the straps were heavy balls of metal intended to tenderize the body of a victim, like a chef tenderizes a steak by beating it. Some of the straps had hooks made of glass, metal, or bone that would have sunk deeply into the shoulders, back, buttocks, and legs of the victim. Once the hooks had lodged into the tenderized flesh, the executioner would rip the skin, muscle, tendons, and even bones off the victim. The victim's skin and muscles would hang off the body like ribbons as the hooks dissected the skin to the nerve layers. The damage could go so deep that even the lungs were bruised, which made breathing difficult. Some doctors have compared the damage of flogging to the results of a shotgun blast.<sup>7</sup> The victim would bleed profusely and would often go into shock, due to severe blood loss and insufficient blood flow near and through the heart.

Jesus' bare back and shoulders, though bloodied and traumatized, were then forced to carry his roughly hewn wooden cross to his place of crucifixion. If Jesus carried the entire cross, it would have weighed a few hundred pounds, and many think it is more likely he carried just the crossbar (*patibulum*), which would have been about one hundred pounds.

Despite his young age and good health, Jesus was so physically devastated from his sleepless night, miles of walking, severe beating, and scourging that he collapsed under the weight of the cross, unable to carry it alone. Doctors have said that the trauma from the heavy crossbar crushing his chest into the ground could have caused a bruised heart, similar to the chest trauma caused by a car accident without a seatbelt where the driver is violently thrown against the steering wheel.<sup>8</sup> Understandably unable to continue carrying his cross on the roughly one-mile journey to his execution, a man named Simon of Cyrene was appointed to carry Jesus' cross. Upon arriving at his place of crucifixion, they pulled Jesus' beard out—an act of ultimate disrespect in ancient cultures—spat on him, and mocked

him in front of his family and friends.

Jesus the carpenter, who had driven many nails into wood with his own hands, then had five- to seven-inch rough metal spikes driven into the most sensitive nerve centers on the human body, through his hands and feet. Jesus was nailed to his wooden cross. His body would have twitched involuntarily, writhing in agony.

In further mockery, a sign was posted above Jesus that said, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”<sup>9</sup> A painting later discovered from a second-century Roman graffito further shows the disrespect of Jesus at his crucifixion. The painting depicts the head of a jackass being crucified, with a man standing alongside it with his arms raised. The caption reads, “Alexamenos worships his god.”

At this point during a crucifixion, the victims labored to breathe as their bodies went into shock. Naked and embarrassed, the victims would often use their remaining strength to seek revenge on the crowd of mockers who had gathered to jeer them. They would curse at their tormentors while urinating and spitting on them. Some victims would become so overwhelmed with pain that they would become incontinent and a pool of sweat, blood, urine, and feces would gather at the base of their cross.

Jesus’ crucifixion was a hideously grotesque scene. Hundreds of years in advance, the prophet Isaiah saw it this way:

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.<sup>10</sup>

Crucifixion usually kills by asphyxiation in addition to other factors—the heart is deeply stressed, the body is traumatized, the muscles are devastated, and the blood loss is severe. Doctors have thought that Jesus likely had a chest contusion and possibly a bruised heart from falling with the cross on top of him, which caused an aneurysm.<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, Jesus’ heart would have been unable to pump enough blood and his lungs would have filled up with carbon monoxide. Jesus not only lived through all of this, but he even spoke lucidly and clearly with enough volume to be heard by those present. Likely sensing he was having a heart attack, Jesus used his final moments to declare his victory over sin. In an effort to silence Jesus, the soldiers took a sponge soaked in vinegar—possibly used in the public restroom as the ancient version of both toilet paper and disinfectant—and put it on a stick and tried to shove it in his mouth.<sup>12</sup>

At last, with this foul taste on his lips, Jesus said in a loud voice of triumph, “It is finished.”<sup>13</sup> At this moment, the atonement for sin was made and the holiness,

righteousness, justice, and wrath of God were satisfied in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Jesus then said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!”<sup>14</sup> Jesus reserved his final breath from the cross to shout his triumphant victory to the world by confirming that he had been restored to God the Father after atoning for human sin.

The Bible then simply records that Jesus breathed his last and died.

Jesus hung on the cross for at least six hours—from the third hour to the ninth hour, when the darkness ended.<sup>15</sup> How long thereafter that he breathed his last and died is not clear in Scripture. What is more clear is the fact that if a victim remained alive on the cross for too long so that it interfered with another event like a major holiday, it was customary to break the victim’s legs, disabling him from pushing himself up on his cross to fill his lungs with air and thereby prolong his life. However, in accordance with the promise of Scripture, Jesus died quickly enough that his legs were not broken.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, to ensure Jesus was dead, a professional executioner ran a spear through his side, which punctured his heart sac, and water and blood flowed from his side. This is further evidence that Jesus died of a heart attack; the sac around the heart filled with water until the pressure caused Jesus’ heart to stop beating. Thus, Jesus possibly died with both a literal and metaphorical broken heart.

For many years, the most sacred place on earth had been the temple, where the presence of God dwelled behind a thick curtain. Only one person each year, the high priest, was allowed to pass by that curtain and enter the presence of God on one day, the Day of Atonement. At the death of Jesus, however, the temple curtain was torn from top to bottom, signifying that God had opened his presence to the world through the cross of Jesus.

The most succinct summary of the gospel in Scripture provides insight into this theological meaning: “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.”<sup>17</sup> In this packed section of Scripture, Paul appoints the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as the most important event in all of history and the verification of the truthfulness of all Scripture. He then explains why this is good news with the simple word “for,” showing that Jesus died “for our sins.” The word “for” can mean either “for the benefit of” or “because of.” Jesus did not die “for the benefit of” our sins. He did not help them at all! Rather, he died “because of” our sins. So it was *our* sins but *his* death. From the beginning of sacred Scripture<sup>18</sup> to the end,<sup>19</sup> the penalty for sin is death. Therefore, if we sin, we should die. But it is Jesus, the sinless one, who dies in our place “for our sins.” The good

news of the gospel is that Jesus died to take to himself the penalty for our sin. In theological terms, this means that Jesus' death was substitutionary, or vicarious, and in our place solely for our benefit and without benefit for himself. Therefore, we find the cross of Jesus to be the crux of good news because it was there that Jesus atoned for our sin according to the promises of Scripture.

Jesus' work for us on the cross is called *atonement* (at-one-ment); Jesus our God became a man to restore a relationship between God and humanity. The concept of Jesus' dying in our place to pay our penalty for our sins has been expressed in theological shorthand as *penal substitution*. Scripture repeatedly and clearly declares that Jesus died as our substitute paying our penalty "for" our sins.<sup>20</sup>

One theologian has called the cross the great jewel of the Christian faith, and like every great jewel it has many precious facets that are each worthy of examining for their brilliance and beauty.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, you will be well served to see each side of this jewel shining together for the glory of God in complementary, not contradictory, fashion. Most poor teaching about the cross results from someone denying, ignoring, or overemphasizing one of these facets at the expense of the others, often due to an overreaction to someone else's overreaction.

Many of these facets were foreshadowed in the Old Testament, specifically by the annual celebration of the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) according to the regulations of the book of Leviticus. The Day of Atonement was the most important day of the year and was often referred to simply as "the day." It was intended to deal with the sin problem between humanity and God. Of the many prophetic elements on this special day, one stands out. On that day, two healthy goats without defect were chosen; they were therefore fit to represent sinless perfection.

The first goat was a propitiating sin offering. The high priest slaughtered this innocent goat, which acted as a substitute for the sinners who rightly deserved a violently bloody death for their many sins. He then sprinkled some of its blood on the mercy seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant inside the Most Holy Place. The goat was no longer innocent when it took the guilt of sin; it was a sin offering for the people.<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, its blood represented life given as payment for sin. The dwelling place of God was thus cleansed of the defilement that resulted from all of the transgressions and sins of the people of Israel, and God's just and holy wrath was satisfied.

Then the high priest, acting as the representative and mediator between the sinful people and their holy God, would take the second goat and lay his hands on the

animal while confessing the sins of the people. This goat, called the scapegoat, would then be sent away to run free into the wilderness away from the sinners, symbolically expiating our sins by taking them away.

These great images of the priest, slaughter, and scapegoat are all given by God to help us more fully comprehend Jesus' work for us on the cross, which we will now examine in depth.

## HOW DOES GOD SATISFY HIMSELF THROUGH THE CROSS?

### *New-covenant Sacrifice*

One scholar says that blood is mentioned some 362 times in the Old Testament and some ninety-two times in the New Testament and even more often than the cross or death of Jesus; thus, it is the most common means by which the Scriptures refer to the death of Jesus.

Throughout Scripture, blood is inextricably connected with sin for two primary reasons. First, shed blood reminds us that sin results in death. Second, God is sickened by sin, which causes death, a connection first made in Genesis 2:17 and repeated throughout the Bible. So when God sees blood, it points to the sickening reality of sin and death. Leviticus 17:11 says it this way: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." Blood is sacred, epitomizing the life of the sacrificial victim given as substitute for the sinner's death. Practically every sacrifice included the sprinkling or smearing of blood on an altar, thus teaching that atonement involves the substitution of life for life.

The Old Testament often used the theme of blood to prepare people for the coming of Jesus to die for our sins. In fact, it was God who shed the first blood in human history in response to sin. In Genesis 3 when our first parents, Adam and Eve, committed the original human sin, it was God who slaughtered an animal to make clothes to cover their nakedness. From then on blood sacrifices were the standard way to worship God.<sup>23</sup>

One of the bloodiest books of the Bible is Exodus. The people were given two choices. (1) They could repent of sin and place their faith in God, demonstrated by slaughtering an animal and covering the doorposts of their home in blood. If this was done, then God promised to pass over (hence the related feast of Passover) their house and not kill the firstborn son in the home but rather accept the substitution of the life of the sacrificial animal. (2) They could fail to repent of their sin and not place their faith in God and see death come to their home. On that night in Egypt, much blood was shed and death came to every home as either the

blood of a substitute animal was shed for the sinners, or the firstborn son in each home was put to death by God.

One of the major functions of the Old Testament temple was the slaughtering of animals, as seen by the stream of blood that often flowed out of the temple. Blood is in fact a major aspect of Old Testament religion. There were some eleven different sacrifices that fit into one of four groupings (burnt, peace, sin, or guilt) and sacrifices were made both in the morning and evening, all of which involved blood.

Despite all of this bloodshed, the Old Testament sacrificial system was never meant to be something sufficient in itself. When Israel misunderstood the purpose of the sacrifices, putting their faith in the sacrifices themselves, there were major problems. The first problem was that the bloodshed of a substituted animal did not forgive human sin.<sup>24</sup> The second problem was that it enabled hypocrisy; people could undergo external rituals such as offering a sacrifice without having truly repented of sin and trusted in God internally.<sup>25</sup> The third problem was that it was only preparatory and therefore incomplete until the coming of Jesus, who made the better new covenant possible.<sup>26</sup>

This theme of blood, like every theme of Scripture, finds its fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ into human history. Early in Jesus' life, his cousin John saw Jesus coming and declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"<sup>27</sup> This, of course, would be accomplished when Jesus was slaughtered on the cross where his blood flowed freely.

The results of Jesus' shed blood are staggering. Hebrews 9:22 says, "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." Also 1 Peter 1:18–19 says, "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."

In the Bible the word *covenant* appears more than three hundred times and is therefore essential to our rightly understanding how God relates to us. Both the Old and New Testaments speak of the new covenant.<sup>28</sup> The Bible tells us that a new epoch in human history has arrived with the coming of God into human history as the man Jesus Christ. In the new covenant, all of the prophecies, promises, foreshadowing, and longing of the old covenant are fulfilled. In the new covenant it is Jesus Christ who serves as our covenant head.<sup>29</sup> Jesus went to the cross to shed his blood in our place for our sins so that we can have a new covenant relationship with him.

Today, in the new covenant, we no longer need a priest because we have Jesus,

who is our Great High Priest.<sup>30</sup> We no longer need to offer blood sacrifices because Jesus is our sacrifice for sin.<sup>31</sup> We no longer need to visit the temple to be near to God because Jesus is our temple.<sup>32</sup> We no longer need to celebrate the Passover because Jesus is our passover.<sup>33</sup> Finally, we no longer need to live in habitual sin because through Jesus we have been made holy and have been given new life.<sup>34</sup>

### *Propitiation*

The Bible is filled with examples of God getting angry at sinners and of his anger as hostile, burning, and furious.<sup>35</sup> Because God is holy, good, and just, he not only feels angry about sin but also deals with it in ways that are holy, good, and just. Because God is perfect, his anger is perfect and as such is aroused slowly,<sup>36</sup> sometimes turned away,<sup>37</sup> often delayed,<sup>38</sup> and frequently held back.<sup>39</sup>

God's anger is not limited to the Old Testament. Even Jesus got angry, furious, and enraged.<sup>40</sup> Also, Revelation 19 reveals Jesus coming again as a warrior riding on a white horse to slaughter evildoers until their blood runs through the streets like a river.

Furthermore, God feels angry because God hates sin.<sup>41</sup> Sadly, it is commonly said among Christians that "God hates the sin but loves the sinner." This comes not from divinely inspired Scripture but instead from the Hindu Gandhi who coined the phrase "Love the sinner but hate the sin" in his 1929 autobiography.

The Bible clearly says that God both loves and hates some sinners.<sup>42</sup> People commonly protest that God cannot hate anyone because he is love. But the Bible speaks of God's anger, wrath, and fury more than his love, grace, and mercy. Furthermore, it is precisely because God is love that he must hate evil and all who do evil; it is an assault on who and what he loves.

Additionally, God's anger at sin and hatred of sinners causes him to pour out his wrath on unrepentant sinners. This doctrine is not as popular among professing Christians in our day as it was in past times, but the fact remains that in the Old Testament alone nearly twenty words are used for God's wrath, which is spoken of roughly six hundred times. The wrath of God also appears roughly twenty-five times in the New Testament.<sup>43</sup> Not only does God the Father pour out wrath upon unrepentant sinners, but so does Jesus Christ.<sup>44</sup>

God's wrath is both active and passive. When people think of God's wrath, they generally think of God's active wrath, where people are swiftly punished for their sin with something like a lightning bolt from heaven. God can and does enact his active wrath upon occasion.<sup>45</sup> Still, he seems to also frequently work through his subtler passive wrath. Passive wrath occurs when God simply hands us over to our

evil desires and allows us to do whatever we want.<sup>46</sup>

The truth is that everyone but the sinless Jesus merits the active wrath of God. None of us deserves love, grace, or mercy from God. Demons and sinful people who fail to repent will have God's wrath burning against them forever.<sup>47</sup> The place of God's unending active wrath is hell.

However, God's active wrath is diverted from some people because of the mercy of God. This is made possible because on the cross Jesus substituted himself in our place for our sins and took God's wrath for us. Two sections of Scripture in particular speak to this matter pointedly:

- 1) Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be *saved by him [Jesus] from the wrath of God.*<sup>48</sup>
- 2) You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.*<sup>49</sup>

Scripture also has a single word to designate how Jesus diverts the active wrath of our rightfully angry God from us so that we are loved and not hated. That word is *propitiation*, which summarizes more than six hundred related words and events that explain it. The American Heritage Dictionary defines *propitiation* as something that appeases or conciliates an offended power, especially a sacrificial offering to a god. *Propitiate* is the only English word that carries the idea of pacifying wrath by taking care of the penalty for the offense that caused the wrath.

Many Christians are not familiar with this word, though, because various Bible translations use different words in an effort to capture its meaning. For example, the New International and New Revised translations use "sacrifice of atonement," and the New Living Translation uses "sacrifice for sin" in such places as Romans 3:23–25, Hebrews 2:17, 1 John 2:2, and 1 John 4:10 where the original word was "propitiate."

Worse still are the Revised Standard Version and The New English Bible, which use "expiation" instead of "propitiation." These latter two translations change the entire meaning of the verse, because propitiation deals with the penalty for sin whereas expiation deals with the cleansing from sin. The English Standard Version has thankfully retained the original word "propitiation" from the Greek text of the New Testament. There are four primary occurrences of the word *propitiation* in the New Testament:

- 1) For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his



grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness.<sup>50</sup>

2) Therefore he [Jesus] had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.<sup>51</sup>

3) He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.<sup>52</sup>

4) In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.<sup>53</sup>

At the cross, justice and mercy kiss; Jesus substituted himself for sinners and suffered and died in their place to forgive them, love them, and embrace them, not in spite of their sins, but because their sins were propitiated and diverted from them to Jesus. Jesus did this not by demanding our blood but rather by giving his own.

### *Justification*

God deserves justice. Because of our sinful condition and ensuing sinful actions, though, our impending day in God's proverbial courtroom seems utterly hopeless for anything other than a guilty verdict and a sentence to eternity in the torments of hell. In light of our obvious guilt, if God were to declare us anything but guilty, he would cease to be a just and good God. God himself says that he "will not acquit the wicked."<sup>54</sup>

Guilty sinners would likely prefer that God simply overlook their offenses against him. To do so, however, would by definition render God unjust, unholy, and unrighteous, which is impossible because he is always just, holy, and righteous. Clearly, God does not owe us anything. If we were to spend forever in the torments of hell as guilty and condemned sinners, we would have simply gotten what we deserved. Pondering this same point, Job asks, "But how can a man be in the right before God?"<sup>55</sup>

Thankfully, God is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, loving, faithful, and willing to forgive.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the dilemma is this: how could God justify us and remain just?

The answer is the doctrine of justification: guilty sinners can be declared righteous before God by grace alone through faith alone because of the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. Justification is mentioned more than two hundred times in various ways throughout the New Testament alone.

The penalty of sin is death. God warned Adam in the garden that “in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”<sup>57</sup> Paul confirms this: “they know God’s decree that those who practice such things deserve to die.”<sup>58</sup> The amazing truth is that God himself, the second person of the Trinity, paid our debt of death in our place.

Additionally, not only did Jesus take all our sins (past, present, and future) on the cross, but he also gave to us his perfect righteousness as a faultless and sinless person.<sup>59</sup> This is why Paul says that Jesus alone is our righteousness.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, justification through the work of Jesus Christ in our place for our sins on the cross is only possible by grace from Jesus Christ alone, through faith in Jesus Christ alone, because of Jesus Christ alone.

There is absolutely nothing we can do to contribute to our justification. When Jesus said, “It is finished” on the cross, he was declaring that all that needed to be done for our justification was completed in him. For this reason, Titus 3:7 speaks of “being justified by his *grace*.” Furthermore, Romans 5:16–17 says:

The *free gift* is not like the result of that one man’s [Adam’s] sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the *free gift* following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of *grace* and the *free gift* of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

To be justified means to trust only in the person and work of Jesus and no one and nothing else as the object of our faith, righteousness, and justification before God.<sup>61</sup>

### *Gift Righteousness*

Because we were created for righteousness, people continue to yearn for righteousness. However, we sinfully pursue it through self-righteousness.<sup>62</sup> Self-righteousness exists in both irreligious and religious forms.

Irreligious self-righteousness includes the attempts to justify one’s decency through everything from social causes to political involvement and being a good steward of the planet. Religious self-righteousness is the pursuit of personal righteousness through our own attempts to live by God’s laws in addition to our own rules.

Regarding such vain attempts at self-righteousness, Jesus said, “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>63</sup> No one has been more religiously devoted than the Pharisees who, for example, actually tithed out of their spice rack in an effort to be

certain that they gave God a tenth of literally all they had. Still, our attempts at self-righteousness are simply repugnant to God.<sup>64</sup>

On the cross what Martin Luther liked to call the “great exchange” occurred. Jesus took our sin and gave us his righteousness. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, “For our sake he [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Unlike the self-righteousness of religion, gift righteousness is passive; it is not something we do, but rather something that Jesus does and we receive as a gift by personal faith in him alone.

The gifted righteousness of Jesus is imparted to us at the time of faith, simultaneous with our justification. Not only does God give us family status, but he also gives us new power and a new heart through the indwelling Holy Spirit. This is what theologians call *regeneration*. Therefore, we not only have a new status by virtue of being justified, but we also have a new heart from which new desires for holiness flow and a new power through God the Holy Spirit to live like, for, and with Jesus.

Finally, in saying that righteousness comes from Jesus alone and by virtue of none of our good works, we are not advocating a kind of lawless Christianity where we are permitted to live in unrepentant and ongoing sin, unconcerned about whether we are living righteously. Rather, we are saying that only by understanding the righteousness of Jesus Christ in us can we live holy lives out of his righteousness as our new status as Christians.

### *Ransom*

God made us to love, honor, and obey him in thought, word, and deed. Every time we fail to do that perfectly, we accrue a debt to God. Every person has sinned against God, and hell is the eternal prison for spiritual debtors who have stolen from God by living sinful lives.

First, we need a mediator to stand between us and God to establish our total debt and come up with a resolution that God the Father, to whom we are indebted, will find acceptable. The Bible repeatedly speaks of Jesus as our only mediator: “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”<sup>65</sup> Our spiritual debt is to God, and there is only one possible mediator between God and us to work out the dangerous mess we are in.

Second, we need a redeemer willing to intercede for us and pay our debt to God the Father. A redeemer is a person who pays the debt of some- one else. Paul speaks of “our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”<sup>66</sup> He also says that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed

is everyone who is hanged on a tree [Deut. 21:23].”<sup>67</sup> Because our sins are against God, only God can forgive our debt of sin. Jesus is God who paid our debt on the cross in order to forgive our sin.<sup>68</sup>

Third, we need a ransom, which is a repayment sufficient enough to erase our debt to God the Father. The problem, though, is that our sins are against a completely holy and perfect God and therefore require a perfect payment. Since all human beings are sinful, we cannot be a ransom for another. There is no way that any other sinful human can ever repay God for our spiritual debt. Psalm 49:7–8 says it this way: “Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice.” Referring to himself in Mark 10:45, Jesus said, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Paul also speaks of “the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom.”<sup>69</sup>

## HOW DOES GOD REDEEM US THROUGH THE CROSS?

### *Redemption*

To use a very biblical word, sinners are slaves. Second Peter 2:19b explains it this way: “For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.” Like a prisoner locked in a cell who cannot escape, so sinners too are locked in a prison of sin and cannot get free. This includes self-selected slavery, such as addictions and sin patterns that are habitual.

In the book of Exodus, God’s people were enslaved to a king named Pharaoh who ruled over the most powerful nation on the earth, Egypt. He was worshiped as a god and brutally mistreated the people whom he enslaved. God raised up a man named Moses to speak on his behalf to the pharaoh, demanding that the slaves be set free in order to live new lives in worship to the real God. God graciously, but authoritatively, called him to righteousness. Pharaoh became hardhearted under God’s provocation, just as God said he would, and he refused to release the people from their brutal slavery. As a result, God sent a succession of plagues as judgments and warnings upon the pharaoh, kindly giving him many opportunities to repent and do what God demanded.

The pharaoh repeatedly refused to repent of his ways and release the people, so God sent a terrible series of judgments upon the entire nation. The wrath of God was eventually poured out on the firstborn son of every household, each killed in one night. As we have noted, the only households spared from death to their firstborn son were those families who, in faith, took a young, healthy lamb without blemish or defect and slaughtered it as a substitute and then took its blood and covered the doorposts around the entry to their home with it. As a result, the wrath

of God passed over them and was diverted because of the lamb.

Like the people in Moses' day, we sinners are completely unable to free ourselves from slavery. As slaves we need to be redeemed from our slavery. *Redemption* is synonymous with being liberated, freed, or rescued from bondage and slavery to a person or thing. The word and its derivatives (e.g., *redeemer*, *redeem*) appear roughly 150 times in the English Bible, with only roughly twenty occurrences in the New Testament.

Sadly, it has been commonly taught by some Christian theologians since the early days of the church (e.g., Origen) that the concept of redemption was adopted from the pagan slave market where a price was paid to free a slave. This led to wild speculation that Jesus died to pay off Satan, which is preposterous because Jesus owes Satan nothing.

The prototype for redemption is not the pagan slave market but rather the exodus. There, God liberated his people but in no way paid off the satanic pharaoh. God simply crushed him. Exodus 6:6 is one of many Bible verses that present the exodus as the prototype of redemption: "Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.'"<sup>70</sup>

The theme of God the Redeemer echoes throughout the Old Testament.<sup>71</sup> Even before Jesus' birth it was prophesied that he was God coming into human history to redeem sinners from slavery.<sup>72</sup> At the birth of Jesus, it was prophesied that he is God the Redeemer.<sup>73</sup> Paul often spoke of Jesus as our redeemer: "Jesus Christ . . . gave himself for us to redeem us" and "Redemption . . . is in Christ Jesus."<sup>74</sup> Many more examples of Jesus' being offered as the redeemer of slaves are scattered throughout the New Testament.<sup>75</sup>

When Jesus was crucified and his blood was shed, he suffered and died in our place for our sins so that we could be redeemed.<sup>76</sup> Jesus has redeemed us from and to many things. Jesus has redeemed us from the curse of the law,<sup>77</sup> Satan and demons,<sup>78</sup> our sinful flesh,<sup>79</sup> and sin.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, Jesus has redeemed us to eternal life with God,<sup>81</sup> the return of Jesus,<sup>82</sup> and a glorified resurrection body.<sup>83</sup>

## FOR WHOM DID JESUS CHRIST DIE?

### *Unlimited Limited Atonement*

The question, for whom did Jesus Christ die? has generated some of the most heated and varied answers in church history. To help you understand the different answers to this question, we offer this chart:

	<b>Heresy of "Christian" Universalism</b>	<b>Heresy of Contemporary Pelagianism</b>	<b>Unlimited Atonement</b>	<b>Limited Atonement</b>	<b>Unlimited Limited Atonement</b>
<b>View of Sin</b>	We are born sinful but guilty for our sins, not Adam's.	We are born sinless like Adam but follow his bad example.	We are born sinful but guilty for our sins, not Adam's.	We are born sinners guilty in Adam.	We are born sinners guilty in Adam.
<b>Who Jesus Died For</b>	Jesus took all the sin and pain of the world onto himself.	Jesus lived and died only as an example for sinners.	Jesus died to provide payment for the sin of all people.	Jesus died to achieve full atonement for the elect.	Jesus died to provide payment for all, but only in a saving way for the elect.
<b>How Atonement is Applied</b>	God's powerful love in Jesus will overcome all sin.	Anyone can follow the example of Jesus by living a good life.	God will apply the payment to those who believe in Christ.	God designed the atonement precisely for the elect.	While God desires the salvation of all, he applies the payment to the elect, those whom he chose for salvation.
<b>Heaven &amp; Hell</b>	Everyone will be saved and will go to heaven. There is no eternal hell.	Those who live a Christlike life will be saved and go to heaven. Those who reject goodness will go to hell.	All who accept the gift go to heaven. Everyone else gets to follow their free will and choose to go to hell.	God does not need to save anyone from hell, but chooses to save some.	God does not need to save anyone from hell, but chooses to save some.

The first two answers (universalism and Pelagianism) are unbiblical and therefore

unacceptable. Universalism erroneously contradicts the clear teachings of Scripture on human sinfulness and hell.<sup>84</sup> Pelagius denied human sinfulness and taught that people begin their life morally good (like Adam), and through the decision of their own will can live a holy life that would obligate God to take them to heaven upon death. Pelagius was condemned as a heretic at the Council of Carthage in ad 418.

We are left with three options for Christians regarding the question of who Jesus died for. All three positions are within the bounds of evangelical orthodoxy.

First, some Christians believe that Jesus died for the sins of all people. This position is commonly referred to as Arminianism (after James Arminius), Wesleyanism (after John Wesley), or unlimited atonement. Arminians appeal to those Scriptures that speak of Jesus dying for all people,<sup>85</sup> the whole world,<sup>86</sup> everyone,<sup>87</sup> and not wanting anyone to perish.<sup>88</sup> Arminians then teach that to be saved, one must make the decision to accept Jesus' atoning death and become a follower of Jesus. Furthermore, it is said that anyone can make that choice either by inherent free will (Arminians) or by God's universal enabling, so-called prevenient, or first, grace (Wesleyans). Subsequently, election is understood as God choosing those he foreknew would choose him, and since people choose to be saved they can also lose their salvation.

Second, some Christians believe that Jesus died only for the sins of the elect. Election means that before the foundation of the world, God chose certain individuals to be recipients of eternal life solely on the basis of his gracious purpose apart from any human merit or action. He calls them effectually, doing whatever is necessary to bring them to repentance and faith.<sup>89</sup> This position is commonly referred to as five-point Calvinism (after John Calvin), Reformed theology, or limited atonement, which is also sometimes called particular redemption. These Calvinists commonly appeal to those Scriptures that speak of Jesus' dying only for some people but not all people,<sup>90</sup> his sheep,<sup>91</sup> his church,<sup>92</sup> the elect,<sup>93</sup> his people,<sup>94</sup> his friends,<sup>95</sup> and all Christians.<sup>96</sup> They disagree with unlimited atonement, pointing out that if Jesus died for everyone, then everyone would be saved, which is the heresy of universalism. They also teach that people are so sinful that they cannot choose God, and so God regenerates people before their conversion and ensures they will be preserved until the end because salvation cannot be lost.

One vital point of debate is the intent of Jesus when he died on the cross. Did Jesus intend to provide payment for all sins of all people, opening the doorway to salvation for all? That would be unlimited atonement, or what the Wesleyans and the Arminians believe. Do we accept it at face value when Paul said that Christ Jesus "gave himself as a ransom for all" in 1 Timothy 2:6? Or did Jesus die to

complete the purchase of our pardon on the cross? That is limited atonement, or what five-point Calvinists believe. Do we accept it at face value when Jesus said, “It is finished” in John 19:30?

At first glance, unlimited and limited atonement appear to be in opposition. But that dilemma is resolved by noting two things. First, the two categories are not mutually exclusive; since Jesus died for the sins of everyone, this means that he also died for the sins of the elect. Second, Jesus’ death for all people does not accomplish the same thing as his death for the elect. This point is complicated, but is in fact taught in Scripture. For example, 1 Timothy 4:10 makes a distinction between Jesus’ dying as the savior of all people in a general way and the Christian elect in a particular way, saying, “For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.” Additionally, 2 Peter 2:1 speaks of people for whom Jesus died as not being saved from heresy and damnation by Jesus: “False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.”

Simply, by dying for everyone, Jesus purchased everyone as his possession, and he then applies his forgiveness to the elect—those in Christ—by grace, and applies his wrath to the non-elect—those who reject Christ. Objectively, Jesus’ death was sufficient to save anyone, and, subjectively, only efficient to save those who repent of their sin and trust in him. This position is called unlimited limited atonement, or modified Calvinism, and arguably is the position that John Calvin himself held as a very able Bible teacher.<sup>97</sup>

Christ died for the purpose of securing the sure and certain salvation of his own, his elect. This is the intentionality the five-point Calvinists rightly stress. Christ died for all people. This is the universality the Arminians rightly stress. If the five-point Calvinist is right and no payment has been made for the non-elect, then how can God genuinely love the world and desire the salvation of all people? There is a genuine open door for salvation for anyone who believes in Jesus, and this makes the rejection of Jesus completely inexcusable. Jesus’ death reconciles “all things” to God.<sup>98</sup> God will overcome all rebellion through Jesus’ blood. In this sense, all those in hell will stand reconciled to God but not in a saving way, as the universalists falsely teach. In hell unrepentant and unforgiven sinners are no longer rebels, and their sinful disregard for God has been crushed and ended.<sup>99</sup>

## HOW DOES GOD TRIUMPH THROUGH THE CROSS?

*Christus Victor*



Scripture clearly says that there is a very real war between Jesus and the angels and Satan and the demons; sinners have been taken as captives in war.<sup>100</sup> Jesus himself confirmed this fact at the beginning of his earthly ministry when he said he had come to set captives free.<sup>101</sup> Jesus said this because there is no way that Satan would release us from his captivity and no way that we could liberate ourselves. Therefore, Jesus came as our triumphant warrior and liberator.

The first promise of Jesus as our victor over Satan came to our first parents. In Genesis 3:15, God preached the first good news (or gospel) of Jesus to our sinful first mother, Eve. God promised that Jesus would be born of a woman and would grow to be a man who would battle with Satan and stomp his head, defeat him, and liberate people from their captivity to Satan, sin, death, and hell.

Leading up to the cross, Satan entered one of Jesus' own disciples, Judas Iscariot, and conspired with him to betray Jesus and hand him over to be crucified. Through the cross, Satan and his demons thought that they had finally defeated Jesus. However, crucifying Jesus was the biggest mistake the Devil ever made. Had he understood what was happening, he would never have killed Jesus.<sup>102</sup>

An essential portion of Scripture on the victory of Jesus over Satan, sin, and death is Colossians 2:13–15:

You, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Thus, the authority of the Devil and his demons has already ended. Matthew 28:18 makes it very clear that Jesus has *all* authority now, which means that Satan has no authority over Christians. As a result, we can now live in accordance with Colossians 1:10–14 and “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. . . . He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” The Bible uses the word *grace* to explain the victory Jesus achieved for us on the cross because there is no logical reason that God would love us and die in our place to liberate us from captivity to Satan, sin, and death, other than his wonderful nature.

### *Expiation*

The typical gospel presentation is that we are all sinners and that if we confess our

sins to Jesus he will forgive our sins through his sinless life, substitutionary death, and bodily resurrection. This is clearly true according to Scripture. However, this gospel only addresses the sins that you have committed (as a sinner) and neglects to deal with the sins that have been committed against you (as a victim).

Throughout the Bible, some dozen words are used frequently to speak of sin in terms of staining our soul, defiling us, and causing us to be filthy or unclean.<sup>103</sup> The effect of sin, particularly sins committed against us, is that we feel dirty. The Bible mentions a number of causes for our defilement, such as any sin at all, as well as involvement with false religions and/or the occult,<sup>104</sup> violence,<sup>105</sup> and sexual sin.<sup>106</sup>

Thus, souls are stained and defiled by the filth of sins that people commit and that are committed against them. In Scripture, places,<sup>107</sup> objects (such as the marriage bed),<sup>108</sup> and people are defiled by sin. Subsequently, the Old Testament and the Gospels are filled with people who were ritually unclean and not to be touched or associated with. The commandments for ceremonial washings and such foreshadow the cleansing power of the death of Jesus.

The predictable result of defilement is shame, including the fear of being found out and known, and our deep, dark secret getting revealed. This pattern was firmly established with our first parents, who covered themselves in shame and hid from God and one another after they sinned. Shame exists where there is sin, and so feeling ashamed, particularly when we sin, is natural and healthy. Therefore, shame is not bad, but unless the underlying sin that causes the shame is properly dealt with through the gospel, then the shame will remain, with devastating implications.

Jesus forgave our sins at the cross and cleanses us from all sins that we have committed and that have been committed against us. Through the cross, Jesus Christ has taken our sin away forever, as was foreshadowed by the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement. This goat was sent away to run free into the wilderness, symbolically taking the people's sins with it. Theologically, we call this the doctrine of *expiation*, whereby our sin is expiated or taken away so that we are made clean through Jesus, who is our scapegoat.

The Bible uses words such as *atonement*, *cleansing*, and *purifying fountain* that washes away our defilement and shame to explain that our identity must be marked only by what Jesus Christ has done for us and no longer by what has been done by or to us. The Bible clearly teaches that dirty sinners can be cleansed.

For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the Lord from all your sins.<sup>109</sup>

I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.<sup>110</sup>

On that day there shall be a fountain opened . . . to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.<sup>111</sup>

Jesus not only went to the cross to die for our sin, but also to scorn our shame. As Hebrews 12:1–2 says, “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the *shame*, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

As a result, we can walk in the light with others who love us in authentic community. On this point, 1 John 1:7–9 says:

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Jesus does “cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” This means that because of Jesus’ cross we can be cleansed and made pure. The beauty of this truth of the expiating or cleansing work of Jesus is poetically shown in symbolic acts throughout Scripture, including ceremonial washings,<sup>112</sup> baptism,<sup>113</sup> and the wearing of white in eternity as a continual reminder of the expiating work of Jesus.<sup>114</sup>

## HOW DOES GOD INSPIRE US THROUGH THE CROSS?

### *Christus Exemplar*

Jesus died for our sins, thereby enabling us to experience new life. Jesus lived as our example showing us what it means to live a truly holy human life.

Throughout Jesus’ life he repeatedly stated that the purpose of his life on earth was to glorify God the Father, or to make the Father’s character visible. Jesus’ glorifying God the Father included dying on the cross.<sup>115</sup> Practically, this means that there is joy not only in our comfort and success, but also in our suffering and hardship, just as there was for Jesus.<sup>116</sup>

At the cross of Jesus, we learn that to be like Jesus means that we pick up our cross and follow him as he commanded.<sup>117</sup> Practically, this means that we glorify God by allowing hardship, pain, and loss to make us more and more like Jesus and

give us a more credible witness for Jesus. As Christians we should neither run to suffering as the early Christian ascetics did, nor run from it as some modern Christians do. Instead, we receive suffering when it comes as an opportunity for God to do something good in us and through us. We rejoice not in the pain but rather in what it can accomplish for the gospel so that something as costly as suffering is not wasted but used for God's glory, our joy, and others' good. In order to suffer well—that is, in a way that is purposeful for the progress of the gospel both in and through us—we must continually remember Jesus' cross. Peter says:

What credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.<sup>118</sup>

## WHAT DOES THE DOCTRINE OF THE CROSS REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S LOVE?

On the cross, Jesus revealed to us the love of God. The following verses state how the love of God is most clearly revealed at the cross of Jesus:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.<sup>119</sup>

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.<sup>120</sup>

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.<sup>121</sup>

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.<sup>122</sup>

At the cross we see that the love of God is not merely sentimental but also efficacious. When people speak of love, they usually mean an emotional love that feels affectionate but may not do anything to help the beloved. Thankfully, God

does not merely feel loving toward us; his love actually compels him to act on our behalf so that we can be changed by his love.

God has lovingly worked out a way for our friendship with him to be reconciled. Through the cross, Jesus took away our sin so that we could be reconciled to God.<sup>123</sup> Thankfully, God not only graciously takes away our sin, but mercifully extends himself to us, knowing that we desperately need him.<sup>124</sup>

The cross is something done by you. You murdered God incarnate.

The cross is something done for you. God loves you and died to forgive you.

# Chapter 2

## Resurrection: God Saves

*Jesus said . . . “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”*

JOHN 11:25–26

If Jesus is dead, then Christianity is dead. If Jesus is alive, then Christianity is alive. Paul himself declared as much in 1 Corinthians 15:17: “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.”

Apart from the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is no savior, no salvation, no forgiveness of sin, and no hope of resurrected eternal life. Apart from the resurrection, Jesus is reduced to yet another good but dead man and therefore is of no considerable help to us in this life or at its end. Plainly stated, without the resurrection of Jesus, the few billion people today who worship Jesus as God are gullible; their hope for a resurrection life after this life is the hope of silly fools who trust in a dead man to give them life. Subsequently, the doctrine of Jesus’ resurrection is, without question, profoundly significant and worthy of the most careful consideration and examination.

### WHAT IS RESURRECTION?

Defining what resurrection does and does not mean is incredibly important. Resurrection does not mean revivification. *Revivification* occurs when someone who dies comes back to life only to die again; revivification happens throughout Scripture.<sup>1</sup> Unlike revivification, *resurrection* teaches that someone dies and returns to physical life forever, or what the Bible calls eternal life,<sup>2</sup> patterned after Jesus’ death and resurrection.<sup>3</sup>

Resurrection does not mean there is a second chance for salvation after death, as both reincarnation and purgatory wrongly purport. *Reincarnation* is the belief that the human soul individually migrates from one body to another through a succession of lives in pursuit of complete purification where the soul is finally joined to the ultimate reality of the divine. *Purgatory* wrongly teaches that following death there is an extended period of potential maturation and purification that allows someone to then enjoy heaven as an unbeliever. Hebrews 9:27 refutes both errors: “It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.”

Resurrection does not mean that everyone, believers and unbelievers alike, avoid hellish punishment in the end. Universalism wrongly teaches that everyone is eventually saved and goes to heaven. Annihilationism wrongly teaches that at some point following death unbelievers simply cease to exist rather than going to an eternal hell. Instead, Daniel 12:2 declares that both believers and unbelievers will rise, and some will go to everlasting heaven and others to everlasting hell, which refutes both errors: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Resurrection does not mean what is called “soul sleep,” where both the body and the spirit lie at rest until the resurrection, as is taught by some Seventh-Day Adventists. When the New Testament speaks of believers as “asleep,” it does so as a metaphor to distinguish the death of believers from the death of unbelievers. The *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* says:

The Bible also uses sleep as a metaphor for the death of the righteous. “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:20). In Christ, death is nothing more than a nap from which the righteous will awaken to endless day.<sup>4</sup>

This is why Paul speaks of his death as gain, because it means his soul goes to be with Jesus: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”<sup>5</sup>

Neither does resurrection simply mean life after death. This is because life after death does not initially include the physical body; rather, the body lies in the ground while the spiritual soul goes to be with God. Paul speaks of believers being “away from the body and at home with the Lord.”<sup>6</sup>

The Bible teaches that we are both a material body and an immaterial soul. Upon death these two parts are separated. Our body goes into the ground, and as believers our soul goes to be with God. For unbelievers, their soul goes to a place called by such names in the Bible as a “prison”<sup>7</sup> and “Hades.”<sup>8</sup> That place is a place of just suffering for unbelievers until they stand before Jesus and are sentenced to the conscious eternal torments of hell.<sup>9</sup>

Resurrection refers to the eventual reuniting of our body and soul. In his impressive seven-hundred-page tome *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, notable New Testament scholar N. T. Wright provides a most helpful definition of resurrection, which he repeats throughout the book as one of his main points. Wright proposes that in the first century, *resurrection* did not mean “life after death” in the sense of “the life that follows immediately after bodily death.”<sup>10</sup> According to Wright:

Here there is no difference between pagans, Jews and Christians. They all

understood the Greek word *anastasis* and its cognates, and the other related terms we shall meet, to mean . . . new life after a period of being dead. Pagans denied this possibility; some Jews affirmed it as a long-term future hope; virtually all Christians claimed that it had happened to Jesus and would happen to them in the future.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, *resurrection* was a way of “speaking of a new life *after* ‘life after death’ in the popular sense, a fresh living embodiment *following* a period of death-as-a-state.”<sup>12</sup>

According to Wright, the meaning of resurrection as “life after ‘life after death’” cannot be overemphasized. This is due in large part to the fact that much modern writing continues to use “resurrection” as a synonym for “life after death.” In contrast, belief in “resurrection” for the ancients meant belief in what Wright calls a “two-step story”:<sup>13</sup>

Resurrection itself would be preceded . . . by an interim period of death-as-a-state. Where we find a single-step story—death-as-event being followed at once by a final state, for instance of disembodied bliss—the texts are not talking about resurrection. Resurrection involves a definite *content* (some sort of re-embodiment) and a definite *narrative shape* (a two-step story, not a single-step one). This meaning is constant throughout the ancient world.<sup>14</sup>

Wright reiterates what resurrection is and what it is not:

“Resurrection” denoted a new embodied life which would *follow* whatever “life after death” there might be. “Resurrection” was, by definition, not the existence into which someone might (or might not) go immediately upon death; it was not a disembodied “heavenly” life; it was a further stage, out beyond all that. It was not a redescription or redefinition of death. It was death’s reversal.<sup>15</sup>

## WHAT WERE ANCIENT NON-CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF THE AFTERLIFE?

It is commonly purported by some that the entire idea of a bodily resurrection was in fact not a novel idea but one borrowed from other ancient philosophies and spiritualities. Wright has done a painstakingly exhaustive and revolutionary study of ancient beliefs regarding resurrection that is incredibly helpful. Most books on the resurrection of Jesus begin by studying the Gospel narratives and then work outwardly from this vantage point to an analysis of the appropriate pagan and Jewish sources found in antiquity. Wright takes the exact opposite approach. He begins with a study on resurrection (or, better, the lack thereof) in ancient pagan-



ism and then narrows the scope of his investigation tighter and tighter, concluding with a study of the resurrection as recorded by the writers of the canonical Gospels. Wright concludes, “In so far as the ancient non-Jewish world had a Bible, its Old Testament was Homer. And in so far as Homer has anything to say about resurrection, he is quite blunt: it doesn’t happen.”<sup>16</sup>

The idea of resurrection is denied in ancient paganism from Homer all the way to the Athenian dramatist Aeschylus, who wrote, “Once a man has died, and the dust has soaked up his blood, there is no resurrection.”<sup>17</sup> Wright provides a helpful summary: “Christianity was born into a world where its central claim was known to be false. Many believed that the dead were non-existent; outside Judaism, nobody believed in resurrection.”<sup>18</sup>

One of the most influential writers in antiquity was Plato. Wright summarizes Plato’s views on the soul and body as follows:

The soul is the non-material aspect of a human being, and is the aspect that really matters. Bodily life is full of delusion and danger; the soul is to be cultivated in the present both for its own sake and because its future happiness will depend upon such cultivation. The soul, being immortal, existed before the body, and will continue to exist after the body is gone.<sup>19</sup>

This dualistic view promoted a tendency to see the body as a prison of the soul that made death something to be desired. According to Wright, “in Greek philosophy, care for and cure of the soul became a central preoccupation.”<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, “neither in Plato nor in the major alternatives just mentioned [e.g., Aristotle] do we find any suggestion that resurrection, the return to bodily life of the dead person, was either desirable or possible.”<sup>21</sup>

This view is also evident in the writings of Cicero:

Cicero is quite clear, and completely in the mainstream of greco-roman thought: the body is a prison-house. A necessary one for the moment; but nobody in their right mind, having got rid of it, would want it or something like it back again. At no point in the spectrum of options about life after death did the ancient pagan world envisage that the denials of Homer, Aeschylus and the rest would be overthrown. Resurrection was not an option. Those who followed Plato or Cicero did not want a body again; those who followed Homer knew they would not get one.<sup>22</sup>

After surveying several other ancient pagan writers and philosophers, Wright concludes: “Nobody in the pagan world of Jesus’ day and thereafter actually claimed that somebody had been truly dead and had then come to be truly, and bodily, alive once more.”<sup>23</sup>

Death, in ancient paganism, was a one-way street. According to Wright:

The road to the underworld ran only one way. Throughout the ancient world, from its 'bible' of Homer and Plato, through its practices (funerals, memorial feasts), its stories (plays, novels, legends), its symbols (graves, amulets, grave-goods) and its grand theories, we can trace a good deal of variety about the road to Hades, and about what one might find upon arrival. As with all one-way streets, there is bound to be someone who attempts to drive in the opposite direction. One hears of a Protesilaus, an Alcestis or a Nero *redivivus*, once or twice in a thousand years. But the road was well policed. Would-be traffic violators (Sisyphus, Eurydice and the like) were turned back or punished. And even they occurred in what everybody knew to be myth.<sup>24</sup>

Wright notes:

We cannot stress too strongly that from Homer onwards the language of 'resurrection' was not used to denote 'life after death' in general, or any of the phenomena supposed to occur within such a life. The great majority of the ancients believed in life after death; many of them developed . . . complex and fascinating beliefs about it and practices in relation to it; but, other than within Judaism and Christianity, they did not believe in resurrection.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, not even Judaism believed in the resurrection of an individual from death in the middle of history. Rather, their understanding was that their entire nation alone would rise from death together at the end of history. William Lane Craig's lengthy studies of the resurrection of Jesus Christ culminated in the publishing of two scholarly books on the issue.<sup>26</sup> Craig asserts:

*Jewish belief always concerned a resurrection at the end of the world, not a resurrection in the middle of history. . . . The resurrection to glory and immortality did not occur until after God had terminated world history. This traditional Jewish conception was the prepossession of Jesus' own disciples (Mark 9:9–13; John 11:24). The notion of a genuine resurrection occurring prior to God's bringing about the world's end would have been foreign to them. . . . Jewish belief always concerned a general resurrection of the people, not the resurrection of an isolated individual.*<sup>27</sup>

Finally, noted historian and professor Edwin Yamauchi has spoken to this matter with great clarity based upon his lifetime of scholarly research.<sup>28</sup> Yamauchi has said that there is no possibility that the idea of a resurrection was borrowed because there is no definitive evidence for the teaching of a deity resurrection in any of the mystery religions prior to the second century.<sup>29</sup> In fact, it seems that

other religions and spiritualities stole the idea of a resurrection from Christians! For example, the resurrection of Adonis is not spoken of until the second to fourth centuries.<sup>30</sup> Attis, the consort of Cybele, is not referred to as a resurrected god until after ad 150.<sup>31</sup>

Some have postulated that the *taurobolium* ritual of Attis and Mithra, the Persian god, is the source of the biblical doctrine of the resurrection. In this ritual, the initiate was put in a pit, and a bull was slaughtered on a grating over him, drenching him with blood. However, the earliest this ritual is mentioned is ad 160, and the belief that it led to rebirth is not mentioned until the fourth century. In fact, Princeton scholar Bruce Metzger has argued that the *taurobolium* was said to have the power to confer eternal life only after it encountered Christianity.<sup>32</sup>

The myths of pagans are admittedly fictitious events centered on the annual death and rebirth of vegetation and harvest cycles. Conversely, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is put forth as a historical fact in a place, at a time, with eyewitnesses and numerable lines of compelling evidence. Furthermore, not only is the theory that Christianity borrowed the concept of resurrection untrue, but it also completely ignores the historical facts of the empty tomb and post-resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ.

## WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS' RESURRECTION?

The biblical evidence for Jesus' resurrection is compelling and can be briefly summarized in ten points. Each of these points is consistent, and together they reveal that the Bible is emphatically and repeatedly clear on the fact of Jesus' resurrection.

1) Jesus' resurrection was prophesied in advance. Roughly seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah promised that Jesus would be born into humble circumstances to live a simple life, die a brutal death, and then rise to take away our sin.<sup>33</sup>

2) Jesus predicted his resurrection. On numerous occasions Jesus plainly promised that he would die and rise three days later.<sup>34</sup>

3) Jesus died. Before Jesus died, he underwent a sleepless night of trials and beatings that left him exhausted. He was then scourged—a punishment so horrendous that many men died from it before even making it to their crucifixion. Jesus was crucified, and a professional executioner declared him dead. To ensure Jesus was dead, a spear was thrust through his side and a mixture of blood and water poured out of his side because the spear burst his heart sac.<sup>35</sup> Jesus' dead

body was wrapped in upwards of one hundred pounds of linens and spices, which, even if he was able to somehow survive the beatings, floggings, crucifixion, and a pierced heart, would have killed him by asphyxiation. Even if through all of this Jesus somehow survived (which would in itself be a miracle), he could not have endured three days without food, water, or medical attention in a cold tomb carved out of rock. In summary, Jesus died.

4) Jesus was buried in a tomb that was easy to find. Some seven hundred years before Jesus was even born, God promised through Isaiah that Jesus would be assigned a grave “with a rich man in his death.”<sup>36</sup> This was incredibly unlikely, because Jesus was a very poor man who could not have afforded an expensive burial plot. Following Jesus’ death, though, a wealthy and well-known man named Joseph of Arimathea gifted his expensive tomb for the burial of Jesus.<sup>37</sup> As a result, the place of Jesus’ burial was easy to confirm. Joseph who owned the tomb, governmental leaders and their soldiers who were assigned to guard the tomb, and the disciples and women who visited the tomb and found it empty all knew exactly where Jesus’ dead body was laid to rest. Had Jesus truly not risen from death, it would have been very easy to prove it by opening the tomb and presenting Jesus’ dead body as evidence.

5) Jesus appeared physically, not just spiritually, alive three days after his death. Following Jesus’ resurrection, many people touched his physical body: his disciples clung to his feet,<sup>38</sup> Mary clung to him,<sup>39</sup> and Thomas the doubter put his hand into the open spear hole in Jesus’ side.<sup>40</sup> Jesus also appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, but they were uncertain if he had truly physically risen from death. Still, Jesus was emphatic about his bodily resurrection and went out of his way to prove it:

As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, Jesus appeared physically alive over the course of forty days<sup>42</sup> to crowds as large as five hundred people at a time.<sup>43</sup> It is also significant to note that no credible historical evidence from that period exists to validate any alternative explanation for Jesus’ resurrection other than his literal bodily resurrection.<sup>44</sup>

6) Jesus’ resurrected body was the same as his pre-resurrection body. His disciples recognized him as the same person who had been crucified,<sup>45</sup> and Mary

Magdalene recognized him by the sound of his voice.<sup>46</sup> While Jesus' resurrection body was the same, it was transformed. This explains why Jesus was not always immediately recognized after his resurrection,<sup>47</sup> and seemed to appear and reappear mysteriously.<sup>48</sup> As James Orr noted, "[In] the narratives . . . it is implied that there was something strange— something unfamiliar or mysterious—in His aspect, which prevented His immediate recognition . . . which held them in awe."<sup>49</sup> Paul explains this phenomenon in the lengthiest treatment of the nature of a resurrection body in all of Scripture (1 Corinthians 15): "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body."<sup>50</sup> This "spiritual body" refers to a resurrected body that has been perfected to its glorious state by the power of the Holy Spirit.

7) Jesus' resurrection was recorded as Scripture shortly after it occurred. Mark's Gospel account of the days leading up to Jesus' crucifixion mentions the high priest without naming him.<sup>51</sup> It can logically be inferred that Mark did not mention the high priest by name because he expected his readers to know who he was speaking of. Since Caiaphas was high priest from ad 18–37, the latest possible date for the tradition is ad 37.<sup>52</sup> This date is so close to the death of Jesus that there would not have been sufficient time for a "legend" of his resurrection to have developed. This proves that the biblical record of Jesus' resurrection was penned while the eyewitnesses were still alive to verify the facts. Thus, his resurrection is not a mythical legend that developed long after the time of Jesus. In fact, John Rodgers, former dean of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, says, "This is the sort of data that historians of antiquity drool over."<sup>53</sup>

8) Jesus' resurrection was celebrated in the earliest church creeds. In 1 Corinthians 15:3–4, Paul says, "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." This statement is widely accepted as the earliest church creed, which began circulating as early as ad 30–36, shortly after Jesus' resurrection. Considering the early age of this creed, there was not sufficient time between the crucifixion and the creed for any legend about Jesus' resurrection to accrue. In addition, the witnesses mentioned were still alive and available to be questioned about the facts surrounding the resurrection. The early date of this creed also proves that the church did not corrupt the truth about Jesus with fables and folklores. Rather, the early church simply clung to the plain and incontrovertible facts of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

9) Jesus' resurrection convinced his family to worship him as God. James, Jesus' half-brother, was originally opposed to the claims of deity by his brother.<sup>54</sup> A transformation occurred in James, though, after he saw his brother resurrected from death.<sup>55</sup> James went on to pastor the church in Jerusalem and authored the New Testament epistle bearing his name.<sup>56</sup> He was also actively involved in

shaping the early church, which suffered and died to proclaim to everyone that Jesus is the one true God.<sup>57</sup> Also, Jesus' mother Mary was part of the early church that prayed to and worshiped her son as God,<sup>58</sup> as was Jesus' other brother Jude, who wrote a book of the

New Testament bearing his name.<sup>59</sup> While it is not impossible to imagine Jesus convincing some people that he was God if he were not, it is impossible to conceive of Jesus convincing his own mother and brothers to suffer persecution in this life and risk the torments of hell in eternal life for worshiping him as the one true God unless he truly was.

10) Jesus' resurrection was confirmed by his most bitter enemies, such as Paul. Paul was a devout Jewish Pharisee who routinely persecuted and killed Christians.<sup>60</sup> After an encounter with the risen Christ, Paul was converted and became the most dynamic defender and expander of the church.<sup>61</sup> Had Jesus not truly risen from death, it is absurd to assume that Paul would ever have worshiped him as God, particularly when Paul rightly believed that worshiping a false God would send one into the eternal flames of hell. Simply, Paul hated Jesus and would never have changed his religious practice unless Jesus had risen from death to prove him wrong. Furthermore, Paul insisted that Jesus had risen in almost all of his letters that are saved for us in the New Testament.

## WHAT IS THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS' RESURRECTION?

Effects have causes. Jesus' resurrection is no exception, as is evident by eight effects caused by it. Together, they are compelling circumstantial evidence for Jesus' resurrection. Further, for those wanting to deny Jesus' resurrection, the burden of proof remains on them to account for these multiple effects with a reasonable cause. Craig explains, "Anyone who denies this explanation is rationally obligated to produce a more plausible cause of Jesus' resurrection and to explain how it happened."<sup>62</sup> He goes on to assert, "The conclusion that God raised Him up is virtually inescapable. Only a sterile, academic skepticism resists this inevitable inference."<sup>63</sup>

1) Jesus' disciples were transformed. Prior to the resurrection, his disciples were timid and fearful, even hiding when Jesus appeared to them.<sup>64</sup> Following the resurrection, however, they were all transformed into bold witnesses to what they had seen and heard, even to the point of dying in shame and poverty for their convictions, including Peter.

Regarding the apostles' eyewitness testimony to Jesus' resurrection, Simon

Greenleaf, professor of law at Harvard University and a world- renowned scholar on the rules of legal evidence, said that it was “impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.”<sup>65</sup>

2) Jesus’ disciples remained loyal to Jesus as their victorious Messiah. Modern-day “messiahs” include, for example, politicians who propose to save and deliver us from a terrible fate such as terrorism, poverty, or unreasonable taxation. Supporters flock around their messiah in hopes that he will deliver on his promise to make their dreams come true. However, when a messiah fails to deliver as promised, his followers either abandon both the cause and the messiah, or they retain the cause and abandon the messiah to instead pursue another messiah. Either way, a failed messiah is a forgotten messiah.

However, Jesus’ disciples did not abandon their cause of forgiven sin and life with God or their devotion to Jesus as their victorious Messiah. Furthermore, their devotion to both their cause and Messiah grew in numbers and passionate devotion. They endured widespread persecution and even martyrdom, which would have been unthinkable had Jesus merely died and failed to rise as he promised he would. On this point, the historian Kenneth Scott Latourette has said:

It was the conviction of the resurrection of Jesus which lifted his followers out of the despair into which his death had cast them and which led to the perpetuation of the movement begun by him. But for their profound belief that the crucified had risen from the dead and that they had seen him and talked with him, the death of Jesus and even Jesus himself would probably have been all but forgotten.<sup>66</sup>

3) The disciples had exemplary character. To claim that the disciples preached obvious lies and deluded people into dying for the world’s greatest farce, one would have to first find credible evidence to challenge the character of the disciples. Also, these men were devout Jews who knew that if they worshiped a false god and encouraged others to do the same, they would be sentenced by God to the fires of eternal hell for violating the first two commandments. Lastly, does not such egregious lying conflict with the character of men and women who gave their lives to feeding the poor, caring for widows and orphans, and helping the hurting and needy?

4) Worship changed. The early church stopped worshiping on Saturday, as Jews had for thousands of years, and suddenly began worshiping on Sunday in memory of Jesus’ Sunday resurrection.<sup>67</sup> The Sabbath was so sacred to the Jews that they would not have ceased to obey one of the Ten Commandments unless Jesus had resurrected in fulfillment of their Old Testament Scriptures. Yet, by the end of the

first century, Sunday was called “the Lord’s Day.”<sup>68</sup>

Not only did the day of worship change after the resurrection of Jesus, but so did the object of worship. Considering that one of the Ten Commandments also forbids the worship of false gods, it is impossible to conceive of devout Jews simply worshipping Jesus as the one true God without the proof of Jesus’ resurrection.

According to even non-Christian historians, multitudes began worshipping Jesus as the one true God after his resurrection. For example, Lucian of Samosata was a non-Christian Assyrian-Roman satirist who, around ad 170, wrote:

The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day—the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account. . . . You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains their contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. <sup>69</sup>

Additionally, the early church rejected the observances of the law because they saw it as having been fulfilled in Jesus; thus, the law was no longer binding upon them in the same way as it had been for over a thousand years. This was a cataclysmic shift in belief that was only considered possible because a new epoch had been ushered in by the resurrection of Jesus.

Lastly, God’s people welcomed the sacraments of Communion and baptism into their worship of Jesus as God. In Communion the early Christians remembered Jesus’ death in their place for their sins. In baptism they remembered Jesus’ resurrection in their place for their salvation and anticipated their personal future resurrection.

5) Women discovered the empty tomb. The women who discovered the tomb were mentioned by name, were well known in the early church, and could have easily been questioned to confirm their findings if they were untrue.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, since the testimony of women was not respected in that culture, it would have been more likely for men to report discovering the empty tomb if the account was fictitious and an attempt were being made to concoct a credible lie about Jesus’ resurrection. Therefore, the fact that women are said to have been the first to arrive at Jesus’ empty tomb is confirmation that the account of Scripture is factual, not contrived.



6) The entirety of early church preaching was centered on the historical fact of Jesus' resurrection. If the empty tomb were not a widely accepted fact, the disciples would have reasoned with the skeptics of their day to defend the central issue of their faith. Instead, we see the debate occurring not about whether the tomb was empty, but why it was empty.<sup>71</sup> Also, nowhere in the preaching of the early church was the empty tomb explicitly defended, for the simple reason that it was widely known as an agreed-upon fact. Furthermore, a reading of the book of Acts shows that on virtually every occasion that preaching and teaching occurred, the resurrection of Jesus from death was the central truth being communicated because it had changed human history and could not be ignored. Jesus' resurrection appears in twelve of the twenty-eight chapters in Acts, which records the history of the early church.

7) Jesus' tomb was not enshrined. Craig says, "It was customary in Judaism for the tomb of a prophet or holy man to be preserved or venerated as a shrine. This was so because the bones of the prophet lay in the tomb and imparted to the site its religious values. If the remains were not there, then the grave would lose its significance as a shrine."<sup>72</sup>

Of the four major world religions based upon a founder as opposed to a system of ideas, only Christianity claims that the tomb of its founder is empty. Judaism looks back to Abraham, who died almost four thousand years ago, and still cares for his grave as a holy site at Hebron. Thousands visit Buddha's tomb in India every year. Islam founder Mohammed died on June 8, 632, and his tomb in Medina is visited by millions of people every year.

Additionally, Yamauchi has discovered evidence that the tombs of at least fifty prophets or other religious figures were enshrined as places of worship and veneration in Palestine around the same time as Jesus' death.<sup>73</sup> Yet, according to James D. G. Dunn, there is "absolutely no trace" of any veneration at Jesus' tomb.<sup>74</sup> The obvious reason for this lack of veneration is that Jesus was not buried but instead resurrected.

8) Christianity exploded on the earth and a few billion people today claim to be Christians. On the same day, in the same place, and in the same way, two other men died, one on Jesus' left and one on his right. Despite the similarities, we do not know the names of these men, and billions of people do not worship them as God. Why? Because they remained dead and Jesus alone rose from death and ascended into heaven, leaving the Christian church in his wake. On this point, C. F. D. Moule of Cambridge University says, "The birth and rapid rise of the Christian Church . . . remain an unsolved enigma for any historian who refuses to take seriously the only explanation offered by the Church itself."<sup>75</sup>

## WHAT IS THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS' RESURRECTION?

Because Jesus' death is a historical fact, the corroborating evidence of non-Christian sources in addition to the Bible helps to confirm the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The following testimony of Romans, Greeks, and Jews is helpful because these men are simply telling the facts without any religious devotion to them.

*Josephus (ad 37–100)* Josephus was a Jewish historian born just a few years after Jesus died. His most celebrated passage, called the “Testimonium Flavianum,” says:

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 among 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.<sup>76</sup>

*Suetonius (ad 70–160)* Suetonius was a Roman historian and annalist of the Imperial House. In his biography of Nero (Nero ruled ad 54–68), Suetonius mentions the persecution of Christians by indirectly referring to the resurrection: “Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to *a new and mischievous superstition* [the resurrection].”<sup>77</sup>

*Pliny the Younger (ad 61 or 62–113)* Pliny the Younger wrote a letter to the emperor Trajan around ad 111 describing early Christian worship gatherings that met early on Sunday mornings in memory of Jesus' resurrection day:

I have never been present at an examination of Christians. Consequently, I do not know the nature of the extent of the punishments usually meted out to them, nor the grounds for starting an investigation and how far it should be pressed. . . . They also declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this: they had met regularly *before dawn on a fixed day* [Sunday in remembrance of Jesus' resurrection] to chant verses alternately amongst themselves in honor of Christ as if to a god.<sup>78</sup>

*The Jewish Explanation*

The earliest attempt to provide an alternative explanation for the resurrection of Jesus did not deny that the tomb was empty.<sup>79</sup> Instead, Jewish opponents claimed that the body had been stolen, thus admitting the fact of the empty tomb. But this explanation is untenable for the following reasons. (1) The tomb was closed with an enormous rock and sealed by the government, and there is no explanation for how the rock was moved while being guarded by armed Roman soldiers. (2) If the body had been stolen, a large ransom could have been offered to the thieves, and they could have been coerced to produce the body. Or if it had been taken by the disciples, then the torture and death they suffered should have been sufficient to return the body. (3) Even if the body was stolen, how are we to account for the fact that Jesus appeared to multiple crowds of people, proving that he was alive? In conclusion, the theft of the body is unlikely and still fails to account for it returning back to life.

Summarily, the historical testimony of those who were not Christians stands in agreement with Scripture that Jesus died and rose because those are the historical facts.

## WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY ANCIENT OBJECTIONS TO JESUS' RESURRECTION?

*Jesus did not die on the cross but merely swooned.* Some have argued that Jesus did not in fact die on the cross but rather swooned or basically passed out and therefore appeared dead. This is also what the Muslim Koran teaches as fact. Regarding this claim, theologian John Stott has asked if we are to believe

that after the rigours and pains of trial, mockery, flogging and crucifixion he could survive thirty-six hours in a stone sepulchre with neither warmth nor food nor medical care? That he could then rally sufficiently to perform the superhuman feat of shifting the boulder which secured the mouth of the tomb, and this without disturbing the Roman guard? That then, weak and sickly and hungry, he could appear to the disciples in such a way as to give them the impression that he had vanquished death? That he could go on to claim that he had died and risen, could send them into all the world and promise to be with them unto the end of time? That he could live somewhere in hiding for forty days, making occasional surprise appearances, and then finally disappear without explanations? Such credulity is more incredible than Thomas' unbelief.<sup>80</sup>

Also, as we've noted, crucifixion is essentially death by asphyxiation, because the prisoner grows too tired to lift himself up and fill his lungs with air. This explains why the Romans would often break a prisoner's legs, thus preventing him from continuing to fill his lungs with air. Since the professional executioners did not

break Jesus' legs, these professional executioners must have been convinced of his death. The only way Jesus could have deceived the executioners would have been to stop breathing, which in itself would have killed him.

Lastly, John 19:34–35 tells us that the Roman soldier thrust a spear into Jesus' heart to confirm his death. The water that poured out was probably from the sac surrounding his heart, and the blood most likely came from the right side of his heart. Even if he had been alive, this would have killed him.<sup>81</sup>

*Jesus did not rise and his body was stolen.* The original explanation given for the empty tomb by those Jews who did not choose to worship Jesus as God was that the tomb was indeed empty, but not because of a resurrection but because of a theft of Jesus' dead body.<sup>82</sup> For this to be true, a number of impossibilities would have had to occur. (1) Despite the fact that it would have cost them their lives, all the guards positioned at the tomb would have had to fall asleep at the same time. (2) Each of the guards would have had to not only fall asleep but also remain asleep and not be awakened by the breaking of the Roman seal on the tomb, the rolling away of the enormous stone which blocked the entrance, or the carrying off of the dead body. (3) Even if Jesus' body was stolen, there is no way to account for its returning to vibrant and triumphant life.

The issue of motive is also a key factor in refuting this hypothesis. What benefit would there be for the disciples to risk their lives to steal a corpse and die for a lie as a result? What motive would there be for the Jews, Romans, or anyone else to steal the body? And, if the body were truly stolen, could not a bounty have been offered and someone enticed to provide the body in exchange for a handsome cash reward?

*A twin brother, or a look-alike, died in Jesus' place.* It has been suggested by some Muslim scholars along with various other people that Jesus was not the one crucified but rather a brother or other man who looked like him. However, there is not a shred of evidence to prove that someone who looked like Jesus existed at that time. Additionally, Jesus' mother was present at his crucifixion, and the likelihood of fooling his mother is minimal. Also, the physical wounds he suffered during the crucifixion were visible on Jesus' resurrection body and carefully inspected by the disciple Thomas, who was very doubtful that Jesus had risen until he touched scars from the crucifixion evident on Jesus' body.<sup>83</sup> In addition, the tomb was empty and the burial cloths were left behind.

*Jesus' followers hallucinated his resurrection.* Some people have suggested that the disciples did not actually see Jesus risen from death but rather hallucinated, or projected, their desires for his resurrection into a hallucination. One example is John Dominic Crossan, cochairman of the Jesus Seminar. He told *Time* magazine that after the crucifixion, Jesus' corpse was probably laid in a shallow grave,

barely covered with dirt, and eaten by wild dogs. The subsequent story of Jesus' resurrection, he says, was merely the result of "wishful thinking."<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, fellow Jesus Seminar member John Shelby Spong, an Episcopal bishop, denies the resurrection and believes Jesus' body was thrown in a common grave along with other crucifixion victims. Subsequently, he says the "Easter moment" happened to Peter, not to Jesus. Peter saw Jesus alive in "the heart of God" and began to open the eyes of the other disciples to this reality.<sup>85</sup> Spong writes, "That was the dawn of Easter in human history. It would be fair to say that in that moment *Simon felt resurrected*."<sup>86</sup>

This thesis is unbelievable for five reasons. (1) A hallucination is a private, not public, experience. Yet Paul clearly states that Jesus appeared to more than five hundred people at one time.<sup>87</sup> (2) Jesus appeared in a variety of times at a variety of locations, whereas hallucinations are generally restricted to individual times and places. (3) Certain types of people tend to be more prone to hallucination than others. Yet Jesus appeared to a great variety of personalities, including his brothers and mother. (4) After forty days Jesus' appearances suddenly stopped for everyone simultaneously. Hallucinations tend to continue over longer periods of time and do not stop abruptly. (5) A hallucination is a projection of a thought that preexists in the mind. However, the Jews had a conception of resurrection that applied to the raising of all people at the end of history,<sup>88</sup> not the raising of any particular individual in the middle of history.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, it is inconceivable that the witnesses to the resurrection could have hallucinated Jesus' resurrection.

In considering the objections to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, C. S. Lewis's charge of "chronological snobbery" begins to make sense.<sup>90</sup> Each of the objections is predicated upon the assumption that people in Jesus' day were less intelligent and more gullible than we are today. However, it can be argued persuasively that in their world with fewer hospitals, medicines, and hospices to care for dying people, they were more personally aware of the finality of death than we moderns are. Additionally, as we have already surveyed, they did not even believe in resurrection, and because of the influence of Greek dualism upon them, which considered the body an unwanted husk to be discarded so the soul could truly live, the entire idea of resurrection was undesirable. Taken together, it is apparent that such chronological snobbery reveals more about the character of those moderns who appeal to it than those ancients who are dismissed by it.

## WHAT HAS THE RESURRECTION ACCOMPLISHED FOR CHRISTIANS?

Jesus' resurrection reveals him as our messiah king. In the Davidic covenant,<sup>91</sup> God the Father promised that his Son, Jesus Christ, would be raised up from David's lineage to rule over an everlasting kingdom. Paul reveals that this was

fulfilled at the resurrection of Jesus: “Concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.”<sup>92</sup> Now that the risen Christ has been installed as our messiah king, we can rest assured that one day Jesus will return to establish his throne on the earth and rule over his kingdom, which extends to all of creation.

Furthermore, following Jesus’ resurrection, an angel declared, “He is not here, for he has risen, as he said.”<sup>93</sup> Therefore, the resurrection is proof that Jesus’ teaching was and is truth that we can trust. Practically, Jesus’ resurrection gives us confidence in his other promises that we are waiting to see fulfilled, such as his returning one day to judge sinners<sup>94</sup> and reward saints.<sup>95</sup>

The Bible often speaks of our being united with Christ by his resurrection,<sup>96</sup> being raised with Christ,<sup>97</sup> and enjoying the same powerful Holy Spirit that raised Christ.<sup>98</sup> In so doing, the Bible is stressing the innumerable blessings and benefits conferred on believers because of Jesus’ resurrection.

Paul stresses the fact that through Jesus’ death and resurrection we have forgiveness of sins.<sup>99</sup> Because of Jesus, those with faith in him can live with the great joy of knowing that all their sins—past, present, and future—have been forgiven once and for all by Jesus Christ. Furthermore, as the power of Jesus’ resurrection works itself out in our sanctification, we grow in holiness, learning to live in victory over sin, until one day upon our own resurrection we will live forever, free from the presence, power, and practice of all sin. Elsewhere, Jesus’ resurrection is spoken of as the source of our justification, thereby enabling us, though sinners, to be declared righteous in the sight of God. Paul explicitly states that Jesus was “raised for our justification.”<sup>100</sup>

Regarding our future, Jesus’ resurrection is the precedent and pattern of our own: “Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”<sup>101</sup> As his body was resurrected in complete health, so too will we rise and never experience pain, injury, or death ever again. This is because through the resurrection, Jesus has put death to death.

Additionally, Wright makes the insightful observation that “the message of the resurrection is that this present world matters.”<sup>102</sup> Because Jesus rose from death physically, we learn that God through Christ intends to reclaim and restore all that he made in creation and saw corrupted through the fall. Our eternity will be spent in a world much like the one enjoyed by our first parents in Eden, because the earth has been reclaimed and restored by God through Jesus’ resurrection.

The full effects of Jesus’ resurrection will be seen one day, following Jesus’ return. The time between Jesus’ resurrection and our resurrection is a lengthy

season of love, grace, and mercy as news of the gospel goes forth, inviting sinners to repent of sin and enjoy the present and future salvation of Jesus Christ. Paul preached just this fact and the urgent need for sinners to repent: “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”<sup>103</sup>

In closing, no one can remain neutral regarding Jesus’ resurrection. The claim is too staggering, the event is too earthshaking, the implications are too significant, and the matter is too serious. We must each either receive or reject it as truth for us, and to remain indifferent or undecided is to reject it.

# Notes

## Chapter 1 Cross: God Dies

<sup>1</sup>Much of the following historical overview of crucifixion is from A&E Television and The History Channel's two-hour special called *Crucifixion* (March 23, 2008).

<sup>2</sup>Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, Vesp. 5.4.

<sup>3</sup>Josephus, *J.W.* 7.203.

<sup>4</sup>Cicero, *Pro Rabirio Perduellionis Reo* 5.16.

<sup>5</sup>Exodus 6–12.

<sup>6</sup>Luke 22:19–21.

<sup>7</sup>*Crucifixion*, A&E Television and The History Channel.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>John 19:19.

<sup>10</sup>Isa. 53:3–4.

<sup>11</sup>*Crucifixion*, A&E Television and The History Channel.

<sup>12</sup>Matt. 27:48; Mark 15:36; John 19:29.

<sup>13</sup>John 19:30.

<sup>14</sup>Luke 23:46.

<sup>15</sup>Mark 15:25, 33.

<sup>16</sup>Ps. 34:20; John 19:36.

<sup>17</sup>1 Cor. 15:3b–4.

<sup>18</sup>Gen. 2:17.

<sup>19</sup>Rev. 21:8.

<sup>20</sup>Isa. 53:5, 12; Rom. 4:25; 5:8; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 2:2.

<sup>21</sup>To learn more about each facet of the cross, see our book *Death by Love: Letters from the Cross* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

<sup>22</sup>Lev. 16:15.

<sup>23</sup>Gen. 8:20; 12:7–8; 13:4, 8; Job 1:5; 42:7–9.

<sup>24</sup>Ps. 51:16; Mic. 6:6–8; Heb. 10:4.

<sup>25</sup>1 Sam. 15:22; Prov. 15:8; Hos. 6:6.

<sup>26</sup>Heb. 7:22; 8:5–7, 13.

<sup>27</sup>John 1:29.

<sup>28</sup>E.g., Jer. 31:31–34; Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20; Rom. 11:27; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 7:22; 8:8–13; 9:15; 12:24.

<sup>29</sup>Eph. 1:10, 22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:10, 19.

<sup>30</sup>Heb. 2:17; 4:14–15.

<sup>31</sup>John 1:29.

<sup>32</sup>Rev. 21:22.

<sup>33</sup>1 Cor. 5:7.

<sup>34</sup>Heb. 9:26; 10:10.

<sup>35</sup>Lev. 26:27–30; Num. 11:1; Deut. 29:24.

<sup>36</sup>Ex. 34:6–8.

<sup>37</sup>Deut. 13:17.

<sup>38</sup>Isa. 48:9.

<sup>39</sup>Ps. 78:38.

<sup>40</sup>Mark 3:5.

<sup>41</sup>Prov. 6:16–19; Zech. 8:17.

<sup>42</sup>Ps. 5:5; 11:4–5; Hos. 9:15; Rom. 9:13 cf. Mal. 1:2–3.

<sup>43</sup>John 3:36; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:9–10.

<sup>44</sup>Rev. 6:16–17.

<sup>45</sup>Genesis 38; 1 Cor. 11:28–29.

<sup>46</sup>Rom. 1:18, 24, 26.

<sup>47</sup>Deut. 32:21–22; John 3:36; Eph. 5:6; 2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 14:9–11.

<sup>48</sup>Rom. 5:9.

<sup>49</sup>1 Thess. 1:9–10.

<sup>50</sup>Rom. 3:23–25.

<sup>51</sup>Heb. 2:17.



<sup>52</sup>1 John 2:2.  
<sup>53</sup>1 John 4:10.  
<sup>54</sup>Ex. 23:7.  
<sup>55</sup>Job 9:2.  
<sup>56</sup>Ex. 34:6–7.  
<sup>57</sup>Gen. 2:17.  
<sup>58</sup>Rom. 1:32.  
<sup>59</sup>2 Cor. 5:21.  
<sup>60</sup>1 Cor. 1:30.  
<sup>61</sup>Acts 13:38; Rom. 4:3–5; 5:1.  
<sup>62</sup>Rom. 10:3.  
<sup>63</sup>Matt. 5:20.  
<sup>64</sup>Isa. 64:6.  
<sup>65</sup>1 Tim. 2:5; see also Heb. 9:15; 12:24.  
<sup>66</sup>Titus 2:13–14.  
<sup>67</sup>Gal. 3:13.  
<sup>68</sup>Matt. 26:63–65; Mark 2:5; John 6:41–58; 8:46, 58–59; 10:30–33; 11:25; 14:6, 8–9; 16:28.  
<sup>69</sup>1 Tim. 2:5–6.  
<sup>70</sup>See also Ex. 15:1–18; Deut. 7:8; 15:15; 2 Sam. 7:23; 1 Chron. 17:21; Isa. 51:10; Mic. 6:4.  
<sup>71</sup>Ps. 78:35; Isa. 44:24; 47:4; 48:17; 63:16; Jer. 50:34; Hos. 7:13; 13:14.  
<sup>72</sup>Luke 1:68; 2:38.  
<sup>73</sup>Ibid.  
<sup>74</sup>Rom. 3:24; Titus 2:13–14; see also 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 3:13–14; 4:4–5; Eph. 1:7.  
<sup>75</sup>1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 3:13–14; 4:4–5; Eph. 1:7.  
<sup>76</sup>1 Pet. 1:18–19.  
<sup>77</sup>Gal. 3:13.  
<sup>78</sup>Col. 1:13–14.  
<sup>79</sup>Rom. 6:6–12.  
<sup>80</sup>Gal. 6:14–15.  
<sup>81</sup>Ps. 49:15.  
<sup>82</sup>Job 19:25.  
<sup>83</sup>Rom. 8:23.  
<sup>84</sup>E.g., Dan. 12:2; Matt. 5:29–30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:23; 25:46.  
<sup>85</sup>2 Cor. 5:14–15; 1 Tim. 2:1–6; 4:10; Titus 2:11.  
<sup>86</sup>John 1:29; 3:16–17; 1 John 2:2; 4:14; Rev. 5:9.  
<sup>87</sup>Isa. 53:6; Heb. 2:9.  
<sup>88</sup>1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9.  
<sup>89</sup>Isa. 55:11; John 6:44; Rom. 8:30; 11:29; 1 Cor. 1:23–29; 2 Tim. 1:9.  
<sup>90</sup>Matt. 1:21; 20:28; 26:28; Rom. 5:12–19.  
<sup>91</sup>John 10:11, 15, 26–27.  
<sup>92</sup>Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25.  
<sup>93</sup>Rom. 8:32–35.  
<sup>94</sup>Matt. 1:21.  
<sup>95</sup>John 15:3.  
<sup>96</sup>2 Cor. 5:15; Titus 2:14.  
<sup>97</sup>E.g., see his commentaries on Romans 5, Galatians 5, Colossians 1, and Hebrews.  
<sup>98</sup>Col. 1:18–20.  
<sup>99</sup>On this point, a friend named Bruce Ware has been very helpful to both Gerry and me as we studied this doctrine together.  
<sup>100</sup>Col. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:25–26.  
<sup>101</sup>Luke 4:18.  
<sup>102</sup>1 Cor. 2:6–9.  
<sup>103</sup>E.g., Ps. 106:39; Prov. 30:11–12; Mark 7:20.  
<sup>104</sup>Lev. 19:31; Ezek. 14:11.  
<sup>105</sup>E.g., Lam. 4:14.  
<sup>106</sup>Gen. 34:5; Lev. 21:14; Num. 5:27; 1 Chron. 5:1.  
<sup>107</sup>Lev. 18:24–30; Num. 35:34.  
<sup>108</sup>Heb. 13:4.

<sup>109</sup>Lev. 16:30.  
<sup>110</sup>Jer. 33:8.  
<sup>111</sup>Zech. 13:1.  
<sup>112</sup>Ex. 19:10.  
<sup>113</sup>Acts 22:16.  
<sup>114</sup>Rev. 19:7–8.  
<sup>115</sup>John 12:23, 27–28; 13:30–32; 17:1.  
<sup>116</sup>Heb. 12:1–6.  
<sup>117</sup>Matt. 16:24.  
<sup>118</sup>1 Pet. 2:20–24.  
<sup>119</sup>John 3:16.  
<sup>120</sup>John 15:13.  
<sup>121</sup>Rom. 5:8.  
<sup>122</sup>1 John 4:9–10.  
<sup>123</sup>Isa. 59:2; Hos. 5:6.  
<sup>124</sup>1 Tim. 1:15–16; Titus 3:4–5.

## Chapter 2 Resurrection: God Saves

<sup>1</sup>E.g., 2 Kings 4:18–37; Matt. 9:18–26; 27:52–53; Mark 5:22–43; Luke 8:40–56; John 11:1–44; Acts 9:36–42; 20:9–12.

<sup>2</sup>E.g., John 5:24.

<sup>3</sup>1 Corinthians 15.

<sup>4</sup>“Sleep,” in Leland Ryken, Jim Wilhoit, et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 799.

<sup>5</sup>Phil. 1:21.

<sup>6</sup>2 Cor. 5:8.

<sup>7</sup>1 Pet. 3:19.

<sup>8</sup>Luke 16:19–31.

<sup>9</sup>Rev. 20:13–14.

<sup>10</sup>See N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 30–31.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>17</sup>Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 647–48, quoted in Wright, *Resurrection*, 32.

<sup>18</sup>Wright, *Resurrection*, 35.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 81–82.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 82–83.

<sup>26</sup>Craig spent two years as a fellow of the Humboldt Foundation studying the resurrection of Jesus Christ at the University of Munich. See William Lane Craig, *The Historical Argument for the Resurrection of Jesus During the Deist Controversy* (Lewiston, ID: Edwin Mellen, 1985), and *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus* (Lewiston, ID: Edwin Mellen, 1989).

<sup>27</sup>William Lane Craig, “Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?” in *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 160, emphases in original.

<sup>28</sup>Yamauchi has immersed himself in no less than twenty-two languages and is an expert in ancient history, including Old Testament history and biblical archaeology, with an emphasis on the interrelationship between ancient near Eastern cultures and the Bible. He is widely regarded as an expert in ancient history, early church history, and Gnosticism. He has published over eighty articles in more than three dozen scholarly journals and has been awarded eight fellowships. His writing includes contributing chapters to multiple books as well as books on Greece, Babylon, Persia, and ancient

Africa.

<sup>29</sup>Edwin Yamauchi, "Easter: Myth, Hallucination, or History?" *Christianity Today*, March 15, 1974 and March 29, 1974, 4–7, 12–16.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>See Lee Strobel, *The Case for the Real Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 174–75; and Bruce M. Metzger, *Historical and Literary Studies: Pagan, Jewish, and Christian* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1968), 11.

<sup>33</sup>Isa. 53:8–12.

<sup>34</sup>Matt. 12:38–40; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34; John 2:18–22.

<sup>35</sup>John 19:34–35.

<sup>36</sup>Isa. 53:9.

<sup>37</sup>Matt. 27:57–60.

<sup>38</sup>Matt. 28:9.

<sup>39</sup>John 20:17.

<sup>40</sup>John 20:20–28.

<sup>41</sup>Luke 24:36–43.

<sup>42</sup>Acts 1:3.

<sup>43</sup>1 Cor. 15:6.

<sup>44</sup>See Craig, "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?"

<sup>45</sup>Luke 24:31; cf. John 21:7, 12;

<sup>46</sup>John 20:16.

<sup>47</sup>John 20:14, 15; 21:4; Luke 24:15–16.

<sup>48</sup>John 20:19; Luke 24:31, 36.

<sup>49</sup>James Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), 198.

<sup>50</sup>1 Cor. 15:44.

<sup>51</sup>Mark 14:53, 54, 60, 61, 63.

<sup>52</sup>J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987), 172.

<sup>53</sup>Quoted in Richard N. Ostling, "Who Was Jesus?" *Time*, August 15, 1988, 41.

<sup>54</sup>John 7:5.

<sup>55</sup>1 Cor. 15:7.

<sup>56</sup>James 1:1.

<sup>57</sup>Acts 12:17; 15:12–21; 21:18; Gal. 2:9.

<sup>58</sup>Acts 1:14.

<sup>59</sup>Acts 1:14; Jude 1.

<sup>60</sup>Phil. 3:4–6; Acts 7:54–60.

<sup>61</sup>Acts 9.

<sup>62</sup>William Lane Craig, *The Son Rises: The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 134.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>John 20:19.

<sup>65</sup>Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists: The Gospels Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1995), 32.

<sup>66</sup>Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 7 vols., *The First Five Centuries* (New York: Harper, 1937), 1:59.

<sup>67</sup>Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1–2.

<sup>68</sup>Rev. 1:10.

<sup>69</sup>Lucian, "The Death of Peregrine," in *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, trans. H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), 11–13. Also see Pliny, *Letters*, trans. William Melmoth, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 10.96.

<sup>70</sup>Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1.

<sup>71</sup>Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 40.

<sup>72</sup>Craig, "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?" 152.

<sup>73</sup>Yamauchi, "Easter: Myth, Hallucination, or History?" 4–7.

<sup>74</sup>James D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 67–68.

<sup>75</sup>C. F. D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1967), 13, emphasis in original.

<sup>76</sup>Flavius Josephus, "Jewish Antiquities," in *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1999), 18.63–64, emphasis added.

<sup>77</sup>Suetonius, *Vita Nero* 16.11–13.

<sup>78</sup>Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10.96.1–7.

<sup>79</sup>Matt. 28:13–15.

<sup>80</sup>John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity, 1971), 49.

<sup>81</sup>C. Truman Davis, “The Crucifixion of Jesus: The Passion of Christ from a Medical Point of View,” *Arizona Medicine* (March 1965): 183–87.

<sup>82</sup>Matt. 28:11–15.

<sup>83</sup>John 20:24–28.

<sup>84</sup>Richard N. Ostling, “Jesus Christ, Plain and Simple,” *Time*, January 10, 1994, 32–33.

<sup>85</sup>John Shelby Spong, *Resurrection: Myth or Reality?* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 143.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, 255, emphasis added.

<sup>87</sup>1 Cor. 15:1–6.

<sup>88</sup>E.g., Dan. 12:2.

<sup>89</sup>See Craig, “Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?” 159–60.

<sup>90</sup>C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 1955), 201.

<sup>91</sup>2 Sam. 7:7–16.

<sup>92</sup>Rom. 1:3–4.

<sup>93</sup>Matt. 28:6.

<sup>94</sup>John 3:16, 18, 36; 5:25–29.

<sup>95</sup>John 14:3.

<sup>96</sup>Rom. 6:5.

<sup>97</sup>Col. 2:12; 3:1.

<sup>98</sup>1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 5:15.

<sup>99</sup>1 Cor. 15:3–58.

<sup>100</sup>Rom. 4:25.

<sup>101</sup>1 Cor. 15:20.

<sup>102</sup>N. T. Wright, *For All God’s Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 65.

<sup>103</sup>Acts 17:30–31.