

June 4th — Mountaintops of Faith: Creation, Exodus, Resurrection

There are three mountaintops of faith:

1. **Creation** = Proof that there is a _____. See Psalm 19:1-6, Romans 1:18-25
2. **Exodus** = Proof that _____ is God. See Exodus 7:4-5, 8:10, 9:14-16, 10:1-2, 12:12, 14:4, 30-31; Joshua 2:9-11
3. **Resurrection** = Proof that Jesus is the _____, the _____. See John 20:24-31, Acts 2:22-36, Romans 1:4

Note: if the resurrection is true, then the creation and the exodus are true.

1. Jesus regarded Genesis 1-11 as a historical record — Matthew 19:3-6, John 8:44, Luke 17:26-27 ... see also Luke 3:35-38
2. Jesus accepted the Exodus as a historical event and the foundation of His nation — John 5:45-47, 6:30-32, Mark 14:12-16.

A mountaintop of faith is to a skeptic what Mt. Everest is to most people: unconquerable and unyielding. They can't get around it. Conversely, mountaintops of faith lift believers high above the sin and doubt of this world to a closer walk with God. They are objective, historical foundations of faith, bedrocks of certainty in an age of doubt. See Habakkuk 3:16-19.

Our study for this quarter is concerned with the evidence that substantiates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. There is no subject of greater significance to the Christian or the unbeliever than this (see next lesson).

Key Takeaways:

1. The resurrection is *the* proof that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
2. The resurrection is a matter of historical record, of objective fact.
3. The truth of the resurrection confirms the truth of the entire Bible.
4. The resurrection is a peak of certainty in valleys of doubt. This study will help your faith reach its summit!

June 7th — The Significance of the Resurrection to the Christian and the Unbeliever

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 = the kernel of the gospel. The death, burial, resurrection, and appearances of Christ are of **FIRST IMPORTANCE** to the Christian. They are the foundation of our faith, the guarantor of our hope.

The plan of salvation. Morality. The family. Bible authority. The work of the church. Marriage and divorce. The importance of **ALL** of these subjects pales in comparison to the significance of the resurrection. Indeed, these subjects only matter **BECAUSE** the resurrection is true! Observe:

1. Read Peter's sermon in **Acts 2:22-36**. Pay attention to his conclusion in v36 and his response in v38. Would his response in v38 be true if what he said in v32 was false? Also note **1 John 2:1-2, 3:4**.
2. Read **Ephesians 5:22-27**. What weight does this pattern for marriage carry if Jesus' body is still in the tomb?
3. Read **Matthew 28:18-20**. First, would Jesus have even been around to say this if His body was still in the tomb? Second, would He have the right to rule over salvation if His body was still in the tomb?
4. Read **1 Timothy 3:14-16**. Do the divisions in the brotherhood over the work of the local church even **MATTER** if Christ's body is still in the tomb?
5. The point: if the resurrection happened, then these doctrines and so many more are worthy of our allegiance and practice. If it didn't... **1 Corinthians 15:12-19**.

If the resurrection happened, then...

1. We have the advantage in evangelism: **Acts 17:1-3**.
2. We have access to a moral/spiritual power that can make us more righteous than we would've thought possible or conceived of: **John 18:10-11, 1 Peter 2:21-24**.
3. We can endure with joyful confidence: **Hebrews 10:32-39...12:1-2**.
4. Heaven is for real: **1 Peter 1:3-4**.

Note the significance of the resurrection for unbelievers in **Acts 17:22-31** as...

1. A light to absolute truth.
2. An evangelistic tool.
3. A guarantee of judgment.

Key Takeaways: The resurrection undergirds every doctrine of Christianity, makes the Christian life possible and joyful, and can rescue the world from its unbelief.

June 11th, 14th — Concepts & Worldviews

1. **Gospel** = The good news of the atoning death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. Mark 1:1, 16:15-16, 19-20; John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.
2. **Atonement** = Christ's death was a substitutionary sacrifice in order to bear away the guilt of man's sin by satisfying God's wrath. This is what makes forgiveness possible, thus freeing man from his greatest bondage: sin. Upon His ascension He became King of redemption and High Priest of atonement, where He continually ministers to provide for man's forgiveness. A synonym for this concept is "propitiation." Leviticus 1:4, 4:20...26...31...35, 10:17; Isaiah 53:4-5... 10-11; Romans 3:21-25; Hebrews 2:14-17...4:14-5:1...9:22; 1 John 2:2.
3. **The Theme of the Bible as expressed in Genesis 3:15** = Christ's complete and total victory over the dominion of Satan and the curse of sin and death that he lured man under. This is the first promise of a redeemer, spoken after man fell under the bondage of sin. The Bible slowly unveils the fulfillment of this promise until it reaches its culmination in the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. John 12:31, 16:11; Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 54-57; Hebrews 2:14-17; Revelation 12:9, 20:2.
4. **Resurrection** = "Resurrection" refers to more than one type of resurrection in the Bible, but for our purposes we will limit our concept to Christ's resurrection and the resurrection of all men. Jesus' mortal flesh died on the cross and then three days later was restored to life when it was reunited with His divine spirit (James 2:26). He was seen in His resurrected body for a period of forty days (Acts 1:3). Unlike everyone else that experienced a resurrection, Jesus did not die again but ascended to heaven in order to reign for man's redemption (Acts 1:1-8). His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension served to confirm His identity, atone for man's sin, and break the curse of death for all men, thus guaranteeing a resurrection for all at the end of time (1 Corinthians 15). These concepts are the focus of our study.
5. **Faith** = A rational belief in the gospel based on objective evidence. This is not the only way the Bible uses the word "faith," but it's a key concept for the purposes of our study. The Bible does NOT encourage blind faith, as we'll see in the next lesson.

6. **Evidence** = Reasons to believe in the gospel. The gospel lays out “many convincing proofs” that give people a reason to put their faith in it. The proofs that we have are not demonstrable, like solving a math problem or conducting a scientific experiment, nor are they sensory (based in personal experience). Nor are they subjective (existing in the mind, as in Mormonism). The proofs that we have are the testimony of men that either witnessed the resurrected Jesus or interviewed people that did. If we can judge their testimony to be credible, then we have proof. With any other figure or event, such testimony is considered objective, historical proof. Yet, we have no evidence at our disposal that can convince someone of the resurrection of Jesus against their will. What each person must decide is if they have enough evidence to believe. Further thoughts to consider:

“In historical inquiry, the historian combs through the data, considers all the possibilities, and seeks to determine which scenario best explains the data... The standards of evidence do not require that the case for something is irrefutable. Such 100 percent certainty is only possible in the rarest of circumstances. Rather, the standard requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt in criminal cases and proof that makes the truth of an accusation more probable than not in civil cases... the standard for belief that something was really said or truly happened [is] at the point when the reasons for accepting it significantly outweigh the reasons for rejecting it... Therefore, when it comes to proving any historical event, we must remember that we are looking for whether we can ascertain with a reasonable amount of certainty that the event occurred.” Gary R. Habermas & Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, pages 32-33.

“Scientific proof is based on showing that something is a fact by repeating the event in the presence of the person questioning the fact. It is done in a controlled environment where observations can be made, data collected, and hypotheses empirically verified... Testing the truth of a hypothesis by the use of controlled experiments is one of the key techniques of the modern scientific method... If the scientific method were the only method we had for proving facts, you couldn't prove you had lunch today. There's no way you could repeat that event in a controlled situation. Thankfully, the other method of proof, the *legal-historical method*, is based on showing that something is a fact beyond reasonable doubt. In other words, we reach a verdict on the weight of the evidence and have no rational basis for doubting the decision.

Legal-historical proof depends on three kinds of testimony: oral testimony, written testimony, and exhibits (such as a gun, a bullet, or a notebook). Using the legal-historical method to determine the facts, you could prove beyond a reasonable doubt that you went to lunch today. Your friends saw you there, the waiter remembers seeing you, you have the restaurant receipt, and there's a stain on your shirt... [The] scientific method can be used to prove only repeatable things. It isn't adequate for proving or disproving questions about persons or events in history. The scientific method isn't appropriate for answering such questions as, *Did Abraham Lincoln live? Was Martin Luther King Jr. a civil rights leader? Who was Jesus of Nazareth? Was Christopher Columbus a real person? Was Jesus Christ raised from the dead?* These questions are outside the realm of scientific proof, and we must place them in the realm of legal-historical proof." Josh McDowell & Dave Sterrett, *Who Is Jesus... Really?*, pages 120-122.

7. **Miracles** = Supernatural events that reveal God's existence, nature, and purpose. These events are God's direct intervention in the natural world that often suspend or overturn nature's laws. Supernatural events by definition cannot be explained by the laws of nature. Miracles serve to give man an objective reason to trust and obey God and His Son. The resurrection of Jesus has been called the chief miracle. Miracles will be covered in future lessons.
8. **Naturalism** = A philosophy that holds that everything that happens is naturally occurring. Supernatural occurrences such as miracles are denied, and anything that either seems to be or is claimed to be miraculous either never happened or is actually a naturally occurring phenomenon. The fallacies of naturalism will be dealt with in a later class.
9. **Atheism** = The philosophy that God does not exist. Paul taught that sinful attitudes and sinful behavior motivate man to deny God's existence. This philosophy is illogical and ahistorical, and has dire moral and eternal consequences. Romans 1:4, 18-32.
10. **Agnosticism** = The philosophy that absolute truth (specifically absolute religious truth) cannot be known or discovered. The agnostic believes he cannot be certain whether or not God exists. Some people may arrive at this philosophy because they're genuinely uncertain, but others get here because of intellectual cowardice—they just want to dodge the truth. John 18:33-38.

11. **Deism** = The deist believes in God, but only because his reason and the natural world lead him to that conclusion. The deist might be convinced of intelligent design in nature, but he rejects the inspiration of the Bible and supernatural events like the resurrection of Jesus. He doesn't believe he needs these things in order to know that God exists. The God of deism set the world in motion and then afterward never directly intervened in his creation. In recent years, sociologists have coined the term "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" to describe the religious views of young Americans. The key tenets (taken verbatim from Wikipedia) are:
- a. A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
 - b. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
 - c. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
 - d. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
 - e. Good people go to heaven when they die.
12. **Paganism** = The belief that many gods exist. Pagans consider the religions and practices of all cultures as being equally valid. In practical terms, this means that religion is true only for the individual worshipper and not universally true for nor applicable to everyone. Western civilization is rapidly repaganizing. Acts 17:16-32.

The Takeaways:

1. When it comes to Christianity, the resurrection is "the crux of the matter."
2. The resurrection is the stumbling block to every other worldview.
3. You don't need scientific proof to know that the resurrection occurred, nor do you have to witness it for yourself, nor do you have to depend on some feeling in your heart. The legal-historical method is enough to demonstrate the historicity of the resurrection. The evidence that we have consists of oral and written testimony of eyewitness accounts of the resurrected Jesus. Each person must weigh the testimony against the facts to determine if it is credible, and each must decide for himself if the evidence is sufficient enough reason to believe.

June 21st — Three “Troubling” Texts

The Texts: John 20:29, 2 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 11:1

The Meaning Given to Them: You don’t need evidence. Your belief in something is the “evidence” that it is real. —**Or**— You don’t HAVE evidence. The only thing that makes Jesus and heaven real to you is your faith in them. But it’s a blind faith, as even the Bible admits.

The Context (and Harmony): First, harmony. What kind of faith does the Bible encourage its readers to have? See Exodus 4:1-9; Mark 16:9-20; John 10:37-38, 20:30-31; Acts 17:1-3, 11-12; Hebrews 2:3-4. Now consider the context:

John 20:18-31

2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10

Hebrews 10:32-12:12

The Takeaways: ALWAYS interpret by context and harmony. A faith that’s blind isn’t a faith worth having. A faith that’s blind is a faith that won’t save. A faith that’s blind is a faith that can’t stand up to scrutiny. Thank God that there IS a reason to believe in the resurrection! And rejoice in knowing that your faith is just as blessed as Thomas’ was, that the resurrection guarantees that you too will be raised, and that your trust in God to keep His promises assures that He will! When properly understood, these three texts aren’t troubling at all, but quite comforting!

June 25th, 28th — The Kernel of the Gospel

Key Texts

These are the historical records contained in six books that have survived for two millennia that tell of Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and appearances:

1. Matthew 26:31-28:20
2. Mark 14:27-16:20
3. Luke 22:39-24:53
4. John 18:1-21:25
5. Acts 1:1-11, 9:1-9 (22:6-11, 26:12-18)
6. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

Kernel of the Gospel

Jesus' Death

The medical evidence for the suffering and death of Jesus is overwhelming:

1. Possible ailment in the garden — Luke 22:44
2. Physical abuse at His "trial" — Matthew 26:67, Mark 14:16, Luke 22:63, John 18:22
3. Scourging — Matthew 27:26, Mark 15:15, John 19:1
4. Beating and crown of thorns — Matthew 27:27-31, Mark 15:16-20, John 19:2-5
5. Carrying the crossbeam — Matthew 27:32, Mark 15:21, Luke 23:26, John 19:17
6. Nails in hands and feet — Matthew 27:35, Mark 15:24, Luke 23:33, John 19:18
7. Position of the body on the cross
8. Spear thrust into side to confirm death — John 19:31-35

Jesus' Burial = Proof of Death

1. Owner of the fresh tomb, Joseph of Arimathea — Matthew 27:57, 60
2. Burial clothes — Matthew 27:59, Mark 15:46, Luke 23:53, John 19:40
3. Burial spices — John 19:39-40
4. Burial stone — Matthew 27:60, Mark 15:46
5. Guard placed at the tomb — Matthew 27:62-66

6. Sealed the tomb — Matthew 27:66

Jesus' Resurrection

1. No one sees the exact moment of resurrection, and if the story was fabricated, that would've been recorded!
2. The tomb was found empty. The stone was rolled back to let people see that it was empty — Matthew 28:2, Mark 16:3-4, Luke 24:2, John 20:1
3. Burial clothes found neatly folded — Luke 24:12, John 20:5-7
4. If the guards were asleep, then how did they know what happened to the body? — Matthew 28:11-15
5. In the first century, it was never debated whether or not the tomb was found empty—the question was always how it came to be empty: naturally, or supernaturally?

Jesus' Appearances = Proof of Life

This is a list of the appearances of Christ that are submitted as proof of life. His appearances were not designed to only serve that purpose, but it's this purpose that we're mainly concerned with. It's possible that some happened at the same time (like #8 and #9).

1. Mary Magdalene, in Jerusalem on Sunday morning — Mark 16:9-11, John 20:11-18
2. The other women that went to the tomb, in Jerusalem on Sunday morning — Matthew 28:9-10, Luke 24:9-11
3. Peter, maybe early afternoon that Sunday — Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:5
4. Two on the road to Emmaus, Sunday afternoon and evening — Mark 16:12-13, Luke 24:13-35
5. The eleven minus Thomas, Sunday evening at the table — Mark 16:14
6. The eleven including Thomas, one week later — John 20:26-31
7. Seven disciples, at the sea of Galilee — John 21:1-14
8. Eleven disciples, on a mountain in Galilee — Matthew 28:16-17
9. More than five hundred brethren at one time — 1 Corinthians 15:6
10. James — 1 Corinthians 15:7
11. All the apostles at the ascension, forty days after resurrection Sunday — Luke 24:44-49, Acts 1:3-8
12. Paul — Acts 9:1-9 (22:6-11, 26:12-18)

The Takeaways:

1. The kernel of the gospel consists of two primary facts and two confirming facts: Jesus died and was buried (proof that He died), and He arose and appeared (proof that He has risen).
2. The medical evidence for His death is tremendous, and we know far more about His manner of death and burial than we do for many other historical figures.
3. The nature of His resurrection and appearances often run counterintuitive to how we would expect them to play out if this story had been made up.