

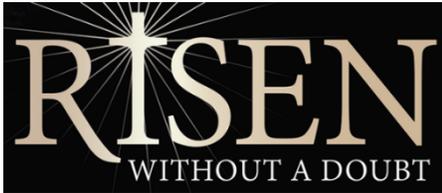
Risen Without a Doubt

with

Eric Hovind and Tim Chaffey

Discussion Questions

Answer Key



Triumphal Timing

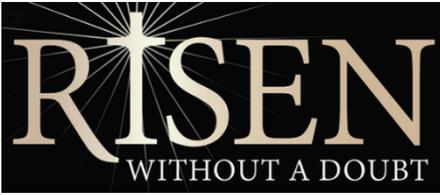
Session 1 – Part A

The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ was no accident. It was planned from eternity past by the all-knowing Creator who is in charge of history. The timing of the events leading up to the Crucifixion demonstrates the Lord's oversight in these matters. Jesus knew exactly when He would be openly proclaimed as the Messiah, and He fulfilled the relevant Old Testament prophecies perfectly.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Galatians 4:4–5. Why was the first century AD the perfect time for the Incarnation of Jesus Christ?
 - The timing of Christ's first coming was perfect since He came at the precise time predicted by the Old Testament prophets. From a logistics perspective, He arrived at a time when the message could quickly spread far and wide. The people shared a common language, and the Roman Empire developed a system of roads, allowing people to travel throughout the empire.
2. Read Isaiah 46:9–10. How does God's ability to foretell the future and bring it to pass establish His reputation as the Almighty God?
 - God states His incomparability in these verses. While other entities are called "gods" in Scripture, no one else is able to foretell future events with perfect accuracy, and no one else has the power to bring them to pass. Prophecy is one of the ways God demonstrates His existence, wisdom, and power.
3. What "secret" did Jesus tell His disciples to keep on numerous occasions? Why didn't He want them to share such important news at that time?
 - Jesus repeatedly commanded His followers and others not to proclaim that He was the Messiah and Son of God. He knew that He had come to earth to fulfill all of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, and that included dying on the Cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. The prophecies about the Messiah ruling and reigning over Israel await future (soon?) fulfillment.
4. In what ways is Jesus similar to the Passover lambs described in Exodus 12?

- Like the Passover lamb, Jesus is a male without blemish, and He was sacrificed for the sins of the people. The Israelites were to take the blood of the lamb and brush it on their doorposts and lintel, so that the Lord would not allow the destroyer to go into the houses with the blood. Similarly, those who trust in Christ are protected from God's wrath against sin because of His sacrifice on the Cross. Another interesting connection is seen in these passages: the Israelites used hyssop to brush the blood around their doors, and when Jesus was on the Cross, some sour wine was lifted up to Him in a sponge on some hyssop.
5. God gave the Israelites specific instructions about when to select the Passover lambs and when to sacrifice them. How do these commands relate to Jesus?
- The Passover lambs were brought into the homes of the people on the tenth day of the month of Nisan and then sacrificed at twilight on the fourteenth after being examined for four days. Jesus entered Jerusalem on the tenth of Nisan, was examined in the coming days, and was sacrificed around the same time as the Passover lambs were being slaughtered in Jerusalem.
6. Jesus was born in a humble setting in Bethlehem. How did He show humility at the Triumphal Entry while simultaneously exhibiting His authority over all things?
- Conquering kings are known to enter their city with tremendous pomp. They are often depicted as riding a white horse. While this imagery is shown in Revelation in relation to the Lord's Second Coming, He rode into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of a donkey, in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9.



Triumphal Timing

Session 1 – Part B

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CONTINUED

7. Christians frequently disagree over the proper interpretation of Daniel 9:24–27 (the “Seventy Sevens” prophecy), particularly as it relates to eschatology. How does Nehemiah 2:1 match the description of the terminus a quo (starting point) in Daniel 9:25 better than the other proposed verses, such as 2 Chronicles 36:23 or Ezra 7:12–26?
 - The fulfillment of the prophecy in Daniel 9:24–27 was to begin with “the command to restore and build Jerusalem.” While there are multiple proclamations related to the return of the Jewish people to Jerusalem, only the one found in Nehemiah 2 is specifically about rebuilding the city. The decree of Cyrus (2 Chronicles 36:23; Ezra 1:2–4) is specifically related to the rebuilding of the temple, and the decree of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:12–26) has to do with the sacrifices for the temple.
8. Why did Jesus say that if His followers were silent that even the stones would cry out?
 - The reason Jesus said that even the stones would cry out is because that particular day was the day prophesied by Daniel that the Messiah would come to Jerusalem. Yes, Jesus had been to Jerusalem many times before, but this was the only time He allowed people to publically proclaim Him as the Messiah.
9. How did Jesus show that He knew He was in the process of fulfilling prophecy during, and immediately following, the Triumphal Entry?
 - Jesus demonstrated that He knew He was fulfilling prophecy at the Triumphal Entry through His response to the Pharisees about the stones crying out. Also, in the following verses (Luke 19:41–44), He specifically pointed out that this specific day was “your day” (speaking of Jerusalem) and that the people did not “know the time of your visitation.”
10. Why should the Jewish leaders have recognized Jesus as their Messiah rather than having most of them reject Him?
 - The Jewish leaders should have recognized Jesus as the Messiah because He fulfilled all the prophecies related to the Messiah’s first coming. He was born of a

virgin in Bethlehem. He healed the lame and sick, gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, raise the dead, and cast out demons. He spoke in parables and was a great light in Galilee, and He came to Jerusalem to be proclaimed as the Messiah in the right manner at exactly the right time.



The Messiah in Charge of History

Session 2 – Part A

At the Triumphal Entry, Jesus fulfilled numerous prophecies related to the Messiah's timing. In the events that followed, Jesus showed that He was not only on a divine timetable, but He was in complete control of all the events, many of which were foretold in the Old Testament. No one could lift a finger against Him if the Father did not permit it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In John 11:49–52, the high priest, Caiaphas, unwittingly prophesied that it would be better for Jesus to die instead of the rest of the nation. Why was it better for Jesus to die? What event prompted this response from Caiaphas?
 - The reason it was better for Jesus to die than the rest of the nation is that Christ's death made salvation possible for mankind. Caiaphas didn't realize he was prophesying part of God's plan from the beginning. The event that prompted his response was the raising of Lazarus and the fact that many people were believing in Jesus as a result of that miracle.
2. Describe three of the events on the day/evening of His arrest that Jesus had told His disciples would come to pass.
 - Jesus prophesied about several events on the day/evening of His arrest, including the arrangements for the Last Supper, His betrayal, His impending Crucifixion and Resurrection, and Peter's denials.
3. Read Zechariah 11:12–13. How did Judas fulfill the prophecies found in these verses?
 - Judas' betrayal of Christ fulfilled the prophecy in Zechariah 11:12–13 in two ways. First, Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, the precise amount spelled out in this Old Testament passage. Second, the money was thrown in the house of the Lord and used to buy the potter's field. See also Matthew 26:14, 27:3–10; Jeremiah 19.
4. How did Jesus show that He was in complete control at His arrest?
 - Jesus demonstrated His control of His own arrest by giving a glimpse of His power. When He said, "I am" those who came out to arrest Him fell down. He also

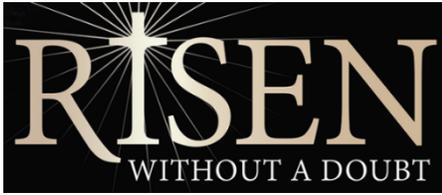
made sure that they let His disciples go free. To top it off, He healed the ear of Malchus.

5. What was wrong with Christ's trials before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin?

- The trials before Annas and Caiaphas were illegal because they were held overnight, which violated Jewish laws of the day. These two trials, along with the one before the Sanhedrin, were unethical because they relied upon false witnesses.

6. Many people believe Jesus refused to give a straight answer to the high priest's question about being the Christ, but this is far from the truth. Caiaphas immediately recognized the Lord's crystal clear response. How was the Lord's citation of Daniel 7:13–14 a bold and direct answer to the high priest's question?

- Jesus cited Daniel 7:13–14 and applied its words to Himself. These verses speak of the Son of Man as a divine being who was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom by the Most High. Jesus said that these words were about Him, and in doing so, He identified Himself as God.



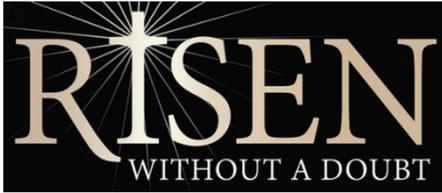
The Messiah in Charge of History

Session 2 – Part B

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CONTINUED

7. Pilate repeatedly declared the innocence of Jesus. How did he try to get out of condemning Jesus?
 - Pilate tried to get out of condemning Jesus in at least three ways. Upon hearing that Jesus was from Galilee, he sent Him to Herod. He tried to appease the crowd by having Jesus beaten. Then he offered the crowd a choice between Barabbas and Jesus, thinking that they would want Jesus released.
8. Describe the various beatings and ridicule Jesus endured prior to the Cross.
 - Before reaching the Cross, Jesus endured a tremendous amount of beating and torture. He was illegally struck during the trial before Annas. He was spit on, blindfolded, beaten, and mocked during the trial before Caiaphas. Before Herod, He was mocked and dressed in an elegant robe. At His second trial before Pilate, He was beaten (probably with rods), given a crown of thorns, beaten with a reed, and mocked. Before being led out to be crucified, He was flogged severely.
9. Some skeptics propose that Jesus may not have died on the Cross. In light of all that Jesus endured and what crucifixion entails, why is this a preposterous notion?
 - Many victims sentenced to be crucified did not survive the severe flogging. Crucifixion itself is designed to inflict maximum pain and shame. With nails driven through His wrists and feet in addition to all of the other torture He endured, there is simply no way that He was alive when He was taken off the Cross. The spear thrust into His side confirmed that He was dead. In all likelihood, the spear would have punctured His lung and probably His heart as well. The description of the blood and water that flowed from the wound seems to indicate this. But someone still clinging to life could not survive such a wound. Besides the Roman soldiers at the Cross made sure He was dead and they were very good at recognizing death.
10. List at least five prophecies Jesus fulfilled while on the Cross.
 - See the following passages:

- - Psalm 22 (Multiple)
- - Psalm 68:21
- - Isaiah 52:13–53:12 (More than a dozen)
- - Matthew 20:17–19



A Hole in Our Gospel

Session 3 – Part A

Supplemental Reading: In Defense of Easter, chapter 23

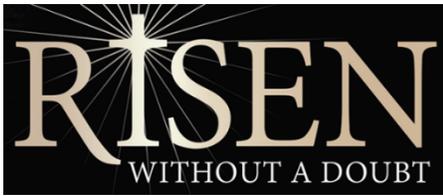
Paul spelled out the gospel that he preached to the Corinthians. It was the message he had received and it was the message that saved those who truly believed. Yet despite Paul's Holy Spirit inspired teaching, many Christians forget part of the gospel when attempting to share the good news with an unbeliever.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1–19. According to Paul, what is the gospel message?
 - Paul told the Corinthians that the gospel message he had preached, and which they believed and were saved, was that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried, and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:1–4).
2. Due to the influence of Greek thought, the Corinthian believers struggled with believing in the bodily resurrection of the dead. But if the dead do not rise, what are some of the consequences Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:12–19?
 - Christ is not risen
 - Our preaching is empty
 - Our faith is empty
 - We are false witnesses
 - You are still in your sins
 - We are to be pitied above all others
3. What did Charles Spurgeon notice about the apostles' preaching?
 - Charles Spurgeon noticed that no matter where they went the apostles always testified of Christ's Resurrection and our future bodily resurrection. He also notices that many people in his day (as is often true today) neglect to talk about Christ's Resurrection.
4. What are some possible reasons why Christians often forget to mention the Lord's Resurrection when attempting to share the gospel?

- Some of the reasons people may forget to talk about the Resurrection include the following:
 - Intense focus on the Cross
 - Debating various aspects of the Cross
 - Shying away from miracles
 - Emotional approach focusing on Christ's Passion
 - Misunderstanding Paul in 1 Corinthians 1–2

- 5. Some Christians have defended the practice of not mentioning the Resurrection in their gospel presentation by citing Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." What are some of the problems with this argument?
 - The major problem with citing 1 Corinthians 2:2 in an attempt to justify not discussing the Resurrection is that Paul specifically outlined the message that he preached to the Corinthians, and it most certainly included the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1–4).



A Hole in Our Gospel

Session 3 – Part B

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CONTINUED

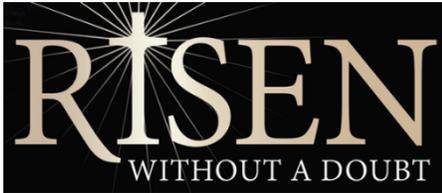
6. Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost focused on the Resurrection. What did Peter tell the crowd about the Resurrection?
 - Peter told the crowd at Pentecost that the Resurrection fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, that it was impossible for God to not raise Christ, and that the disciples were witnesses of the risen Savior.

7. How did the people in Athens respond to Paul's preaching on the Resurrection?
See Acts 17:18, 32–34.
 - When Paul first preached to the Athenians about the Resurrection, some thought he was a babbler, and others thought he proclaimed foreign gods. Later, when he mentioned the resurrection of the dead again, some mocked, some wanted to hear him again, and some believed.

8. How did Jesus identify Himself in Revelation 1:18 and 2:8?
 - In Revelation, Jesus identified Himself as the one who lives, and was dead, and is not alive forevermore (Revelation 1:17–18). In the next chapter, He mentions that He is the one who was dead and came to life (Revelation 2:8).

9. What do the physical death and bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ have to do with Adam's sin?
 - If Adam's sin did not bring physical death into this world, then why is the physical death of the Son of God the solution to sin? And why would Jesus need to rise physically from the dead, if sin has nothing to do with death?

10. Given the centrality of the Resurrection in apostolic preaching, will you strive to remember to mention this vital truth when sharing the good news?
 - Hopefully, your answer will be and emphatic "Yes!"



Infallible Proofs of the Resurrection

Session 4 – Part A

Supplemental Reading: In Defense of Easter, chapters 2–5

Watch “Donall and Conall Meet Richard Dawkins” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0d4FHHf00pY>

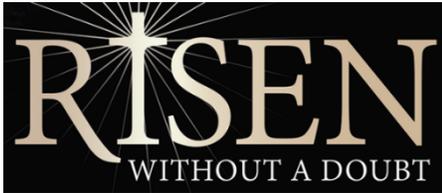
The Resurrection of Jesus Christ has been called the best proven event in ancient history. While this is debatable, Luke stated that Jesus showed Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3). In light of Scripture’s teaching and the wealth of evidence for the event, Christians can have tremendous confidence that Jesus really did rise from the dead.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jesus prophesied on multiple occasions that He would be crucified and then rise from the dead. Why is this evidence that Jesus really did rise from the dead?
 - The reason that Christ’s prophecies about His own Resurrection can be considered evidence of the event is that Jesus is the Son of God and cannot lie. Since He said He was going to rise, then He had to rise from the dead.
2. Did Jesus agree to give a sign to a wicked and adulterous generation? If so, what was it?
 - Jesus did agree to give a sign to a wicked and adulterous generation. It was the sign of the prophet Jonah. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, Jesus would be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. The reason Jesus would only be in the grave for three days is that He was going to rise.
3. What are the “infallible proofs” of the Resurrection that Luke spoke of in Acts 1:3?
 - The infallible proofs of the Resurrection spoken of in Acts 1:3 are the post-Resurrection appearances Jesus made to various people.
4. Can a proof really be infallible if someone does not accept it? Explain.
 - Yes, a proof can be infallible even if someone does not accept it. If Jesus truly rose from the dead and appeared to people, and He did, then the infallible proof of such

an event would be for Him to show Himself, and He did this multiple times. The proof is still infallible (i.e. not able to be falsified) regardless of one's response to it.

5. Explain how the Resurrection can be said to be foundational to the entire New Testament.
 - The Resurrection is foundational to the New Testament because the entire Christian message rests upon it (along with the Crucifixion). If Christ did not rise, then we are still in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17). In the book of Acts, every sermon delivered by an apostle focused on the Resurrection. The book of Hebrews proclaims Jesus as our great High Priest who ever lives to intercede for us. He must have risen from the dead for this to be possible.
6. The disciples underwent a drastic shift in their thinking soon after Jesus was crucified, even to the point that they were willing to die for their belief that Jesus had risen from the dead. How does the fact that they were willing to die differ from the fact that followers of other religions are willing to die for their faith?
 - The difference between the disciples' willingness to die for their faith and the willingness of followers of other religions who are willing to do the same is that the disciples were in a position to know the truth. They knew whether they were promoting a fraud or if they had truly seen the risen Lord.



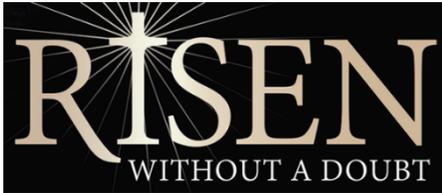
Infallible Proofs of the Resurrection

Session 4 – Part B

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CONTINUED

7. Skeptics have claimed that Jesus only appeared to those who already believed in Him. Explain why this is false and cite examples.
 - Jesus did not appear to only His followers. He appeared to at least two former non-believers: James and Paul. However, neither remained in unbelief. In fact, Scripture does not record a single instance of someone remaining in unbelief upon encountering the risen Christ.
8. What is the principle of embarrassment? What are some embarrassing details recorded in the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection? Why are these actually helpful to demonstrating the historicity of the events?
 - The principle of embarrassment is something historians look for in historical writings. If a person includes details that are embarrassing to their cause, then there are good reasons to believe it to be true since the writer gains nothing in recording it. The fact that women, particularly Mary Magdalene, were the first eyewitnesses of the risen Savior is an example of an embarrassing detail.
9. How can the empty tomb be used as evidence for the Resurrection?
 - The empty tomb is evidence for the Resurrection because skeptics and critics have been unable to develop a viable theory to explain how it became empty, a fact that even Christ's enemies admitted.
10. What is the Nazareth Inscription and how might it provide archaeological confirmation of the Resurrection?
 - The Nazareth Inscription is a marble tablet that summarizes a law passed by Emperor Claudius in the 40s. The law prohibited, upon penalty of death, anyone from removing a body from a tomb with wicked intent.
11. What are the five “minimal facts” that the vast majority of historians accept?
 - The five “minimal facts” that the vast majority of historians accept are:
 - a. Jesus died by crucifixion.

- b. The disciples were convinced they had seen the risen Christ and boldly proclaimed this belief.
- c. Paul converted to Christianity because he believed he had an encounter with the risen Christ.
- d. James became a believer because he believed he had an encounter with the risen Christ.
- e. The tomb was empty on Sunday morning.



Skeptical Attacks on the Resurrection

Session 5 – Part A

Supplemental Reading: In Defense of Easter, chapters 6–17

Watch “Horus Ruins Christmas” at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0-EgjUHRqA>

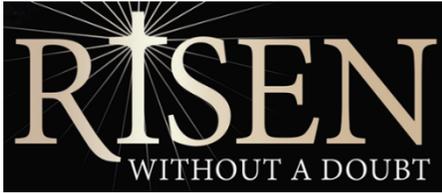
For nearly 2000 years, skeptics have attempted to develop alternative theories to explain the evidence for the Resurrection. Any theory they propose must be able to explain how the tomb became empty, and they must be able to account for the post-Resurrection appearances. Not one of the theories proposed can explain both of these points, and each of these alternative views has numerous fatal flaws.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. A popular claim among atheists today is that beliefs about Jesus were simply copied from teachings about pagan gods, such as Horus or Mithras. What are some of the problems with these claims?
 - The main problem for the copycat theory is that there are no sources predating Christianity that provide support for any of the claims. There is no evidence that Christians copied from the stories about Horus, Mithras, Zoraster, Buddha, Krishna, Osiris, Dinoysus, or Attus. These claims were invented in the late 1800s and are not borne out by the evidence.
2. Explain the problems with thinking that Christians copied the concept of Christ’s Resurrection from Greek philosophy or Jewish theology.
 - The problem with thinking that Christians copied their beliefs about the Resurrection from other groups is that the Christian view of Resurrection is distinct from all the beliefs that came before it. The Greeks abhorred the concept of a physical resurrection. Those who hold to reincarnation do not believe we take up the same body. The Jews believed in a bodily resurrection of the dead at the end of history.
3. What are some of the problems with the claim that the doctrine of the bodily Resurrection of Jesus resulted from decades of legendary development?
 - There are many problems with the claim that the belief in the Resurrection was simply the result of legendary development. There is no hint of legendary development in Scripture. Also, some of the most extraordinary claims are the

earliest. For example, Paul told the Corinthians that Jesus showed Himself to over 500 people at once and that many of them were still alive. Some critical scholars admit that Paul's teaching can be traced back to the earliest days of the church, from within 3–5 years of the events in question. One would think that if the Resurrection were simply a legend that the claim of 500 witnesses would be one of the latest beliefs to be invented.

4. Many Muslims believe that Jesus was never crucified, but instead, one of His disciples was transformed to look just like Jesus, and then this disciple was crucified. Describe some of the problems with looking to the Koran or the so-called Gospel of Barnabas for accurate information on these subjects.
 - One problem for the mistaken identity view proposed in the Koran is that this writing is from nearly six centuries after the events, so the burden of proof is on them to show why someone should trust their view over the writings of the eyewitnesses. Another problem is that the account in the Koran includes multiple discrepancies (e.g., Jews boasting about killing Christ Jesus) and makes Allah out to be a deceiver.
5. The Vision, Dream, and Hallucination theories attempt to explain the post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus. Describe the major problem with each of these positions.
 - The major problem for the vision, dream, and hallucination views is that these things, by definition, are not shared experiences. Yet the Bible tells us that Jesus appeared to multiple people several times. Another problem for these views is that they do not account for the empty tomb.
6. Why do the empty tomb and post-Resurrection appearances create such a huge problem for critics and skeptics seeking to explain away the Resurrection?
 - The various alternative theories proposed to explain away the Resurrection seek to explain either the empty tomb or the post-Resurrection appearances. But there is not one alternative view that explains both, so a skeptic must really adopt two of these theories: one to explain the empty tomb and another to explain the post-Resurrection appearances.



Skeptical Attacks on the Resurrection

Session 5 – Part B

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CONTINUED

7. What is the so-called Jesus Family Tomb? What are some of the problems with this proposal?
- The so-called Jesus Family Tomb refers to a tomb from the Talpiot neighborhood uncovered in 1980. It contained 10 bone boxes (ossuaries), and several of them were inscribed with names found in the New Testament in connection with Jesus. However, the epigrapher gave only a 10% certainty that “Jesus, son of Joseph” is what was written on one of the boxes.
 - Other problems include the changing of Mariamenon to Mary Magdalene and the claim that the James ossuary was also part of the collection, except we have pictures of it dating back to 1976.
 - It also does not make sense that Christ’s disciples would turn the empire upside down with their preaching of the risen Christ if they knew all along that His bones were lying in a Jerusalem tomb.
8. What is the Swoon Theory? What is the Passover Plot? What are the major problems with these theories?
- The swoon theory states that Jesus slipped into a coma-like state while on the Cross and then revived in the tomb. The Passover Plot goes a little further and claims that Jesus planned to fake His death, but He didn’t anticipate the spear wound and eventually died from it after making a few appearances. The major problem with these views includes:
 - a. There is no way that Jesus could convince His followers to give their lives for Him if it were obvious that He faked His death.
 - b. It contradicts everything we know about Jesus’ character.
 - c. The Roman centurion certified that He was dead.
 - d. It just is not feasible that someone could survive everything He endured and then revive in the tomb and make His getaway.
9. Describe and state the problems with the following lesser-known theories: Wrong Tomb, Séance, Annihilation, Time Traveler, and Aliens Stole the Body.
- Wrong tomb view: the women and disciples visited the wrong tomb. There are so many problems with this view. Is it really feasible to think that all of the following forgot where the tomb was: the women, the disciples, Joseph of Arimathea, Jewish authorities, Roman guards, and angels? Why were there grave cloths in the wrong

tomb? Why didn't someone produce the body? Why did the authorities promote a different view?

- Séance: The appearances of Jesus were really just apparitions called up during a séance. Would the disciples, who were devout Jews, violate the law in Deuteronomy 18:9–12? How could they ever mistake an apparition for the physical body of the Savior that could be touched?
- Annihilation: The body of Jesus dissipated into gases while in the tomb. Where is the evidence for such a view? Why would the body of Jesus do this? This is special pleading at its worst.
- Time traveler: Jesus was from a different time period and just jumped back to his time in the tomb. Where's the evidence? If time travel were to be invented in the future, wouldn't we see some evidence of that in history (surely someone would have gone back in time)?
- Aliens: Aliens stole the body of Jesus. Where is the evidence that aliens even exist? Why would they be concerned with the body of Jesus?

10. What is wrong with the claim that grave robbers stole the body of Jesus?

- The main problem with citing grave robbers is that grave robbers did not steal bodies. They stole the valuables buried with the bodies. In the case of Jesus, there were no valuables and soldiers guarded His tomb.

11. What are some of the problems with John Dominic Crossan's claim that the body of Jesus was thrown into a shallow grave and eaten by wild animals?

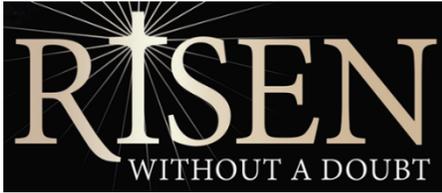
- There are many problems with Crossan's position. First, he ignores all four gospels, which all mention that Jesus was buried in Joseph's tomb, so he contradicts his own historical methodology. The Jewish leaders agreed that He was buried in a tomb and they wanted it guarded. For at least the next two centuries, they argued that the disciples stole the body from the tomb.

12. What is the fatal flaw in the soldiers' claim that the disciples stole the body while the soldiers were sleeping?

- The fatal flaw in the soldiers' story about the disciples stealing the body is that if the soldiers were truly sleeping, how could they know who stole the body?

13. How did the Crucifixion demonstrate that Jesus truly is the only Way to the Father?

- The Crucifixion demonstrates that Jesus is the only way to the Father because it would have been pointless for Jesus to die if sinners could be saved in another way. He pleaded with the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane that if it were possible for the cup (the coming sufferings) to pass from Him then let it pass. But Jesus still went to the Cross because there is no other way.



Critical Challenges to the Resurrection

Session 6 – Part A

Supplemental Reading: In Defense of Easter, chapters 18–20

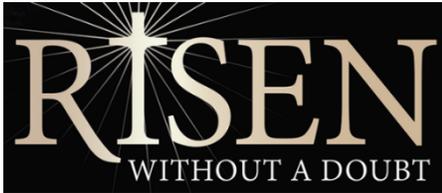
Critics have claimed that the biblical accounts of the events surrounding the Crucifixion and Resurrection cannot be trusted because the Gospels frequently contradict each other. Yet even if critics could find a contradiction between the Gospels, this would change the fact that Jesus died on the Cross and rose from the dead. In fact, plausible solutions can be given to explain all of the alleged contradictions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it not a contradiction for John to claim that Jesus cleansed the Temple early in His ministry while the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) place the Temple cleansing at the end of the Lord's ministry?
 - The reason it is not a contradiction for John to claim that Jesus cleansed the Temple early in His ministry (rather than listing it at the end as the other Gospel writers did) is that Jesus cleansed the Temple at least twice.
2. Two beloved passages related to the Lord's suffering are not found in many of the early manuscripts (Luke 22:43–44 and Luke 23:33–34). For the sake of argument, let's assume the worst-case scenario—that these verses were not part of the original manuscripts. Why would this not change truth of the gospel?
 - Even if the two debated passages in Luke turned out to be inauthentic to his Gospel, it would not change the truth of the Gospel. Jesus still died on the Cross for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day. At worst, we would lose two well-known passages.
3. What are the two alleged contradictions related to the demise of Judas? How can these apparent disagreements be reconciled?
 - The two apparent contradictions regarding Judas' demise have to do with his cause of death and what happened to the 30 pieces of silver. The first issue is not a contradiction since Acts never tells us that Judas died when he fell and burst open. He had probably already been dead for some time. The second issue is not a problem since the money used to purchase the potter's field still belonged to Judas, so it could rightly be said that he purchased the field.

4. Explain why Mark and Luke do not contradict each other concerning the two thieves crucified with Jesus.
 - Mark tells us that both thieves reviled Jesus. Luke explains that at some point, one of the thieves spoke kindly about Jesus and asked Him to remember him when He entered His kingdom. Both passages are true and there is no contradiction.

5. Why is it a poor argument to appeal to a solar eclipse to account for the three hours of darkness while Jesus was on the Cross?
 - One should not appeal to a solar eclipse to explain the three hours of darkness since solar eclipses do not ever occur around Passover, since it falls during a full moon. Also, solar eclipses do not last for three hours. The darkness was a supernatural event.



Critical Challenges to the Resurrection

Session 6 – Part B

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CONTINUED

6. What are some of the problems with insisting that Jesus had to be in the grave for exactly three days and three nights (i.e. 72 hours)?
 - Insisting that Jesus must have been in the grave for 72 hours takes one passage (Matthew 12:39–40 in a strictly literal sense, but fails to treat several passages in a consistent manner. Jesus said that he would be raised on the third day, after three days, and in three days. The truth is that these are all idioms to refer to a few days.

7. The four Gospel accounts seem to be at odds concerning each of the following details on Resurrection morning: the time the women went to the tomb, the number of women who went to the tomb, and the number of angels at the tomb. How can these differences be reconciled?
 - These alleged contradictions are easily reconciled. The women left for the tomb while it was still dark, but the sun had just risen (and so had the Son) when the women arrived. Luke provides more detail than the other writers in mentioning that at least five women went to the tomb that morning. There is no contradiction about the angels at the tomb since they are often referred to as men in Scripture, and in order to have two angels, there must also be one. Matthew and Mark mention one angel while Luke and John mention two, but neither Matthew nor Mark claim that only one angel was at the tomb that morning.

8. Matthew 28:17 includes three words that have often been misunderstood—“but some doubted.” What are some of the misconceptions people have about these words? Why should we not think that some of the disciples present that day truly doubted (i.e. refused to believe) that Jesus had risen from the dead?
 - Some people believe these words (“but some doubted”) are evidence that Matthew included an embarrassing detail about the disciples or that one should never try to use evidence while witnessing to an unbeliever. Yet both of these views misinterpret the passage. The disciples at the scene did not doubt that Jesus had risen. They had already seen Him multiple times. The Greek word translated as *doubt* here is *distazō* and would better be translated as *hesitation*. Those who hesitated were apparently unsure how they should properly respond to the risen Savior.

9. Describe the common practice by historians known as telescoping. Why is it essential to understand this concept when reading history?
- Telescoping refers to the practice of selecting certain events to record while skipping over others. This will inevitably happen when history is written since no one can write everything that happens.
10. What three inferences drawn from the text are important to reconciling the apparent contradictions in the order of the post- Resurrection appearances?
- The three inferences from the text that help us reconcile the order of post-Resurrection appearances are:
 - a. The women and most of the disciples were staying in Bethany.
 - b. When Mary Magdalene saw the stone had been rolled away, she turned back to get Peter and John while the other women continued to the tomb.
 - c. Peter and John were staying together, but not in the same place as the other disciples.
11. List the order of post-Resurrection appearances described in the Gospels and 1 Corinthians.
- The probable order of appearances are as follows:
 - a. Mary Magdalene
 - b. The other women
 - c. Peter
 - d. Cleopas and another disciple
 - e. The disciples without Thomas
 - f. The disciples with Thomas
 - g. Seven disciples at the Sea of Galilee
 - h. Disciples on Galilean hillside
 - i. Over 500 brethren at once
 - j. James, the half-brother of Jesus
 - k. The disciples at the Ascension
 - l. Paul on the road to Damascus