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TEACHING MEMBERS OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN  
MONROE CITY, MISSOURI, AN APOLOGETIC  
FOR THE RESURRECTION

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
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Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Chad Michael McMath

July 2018

**APPROVAL SHEET**

TEACHING MEMBERS OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN  
MONROE CITY, MISSOURI, AN APOLOGETIC  
FOR THE RESURRECTION

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## PREFACE

I count it a great privilege to have been a part of Southern Seminary's first Doctor of Ministry cohort in Applied Apologetics. This project on the resurrection of Jesus has been especially rewarding. To research, preach, teach, and write on such a crucial topic—the linchpin of Christianity—has been a thrilling undertaking. I am pleased that I and many others were encouraged in the faith through it.

This project could not have been completed (or certainly could not have been done well) without the help of many people, to whom I would like to express my gratitude. First, I want to thank my wife, Emily, who has been an incredible support throughout this whole process. She not only has allowed me the time and attention necessary to complete this project, but also has encouraged me and assisted me along the way. I am also grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Ted Cabal, a man I have found to be as humble and helpful as he is brilliant and accomplished.

The four men who reviewed my sermons, teaching sessions, and evangelistic tract were key to this project. I am thankful for the invaluable input Dr. Sam Swisher, Terry Critten, Dr. David Cox, and Jeff Anderson offered. Likewise, I am grateful to all my project participants. I know that certain elements of this project were challenging for many, but I was encouraged by the resilience and growth I observed throughout its implementation.

Finally, I give thanks to God for giving me the abilities, resources, inspiration, and perseverance to complete this project. Most of all, I am thankful for the

hope I have been given through the resurrection of Jesus. My prayer is that this project will for many mark a positive shift in thinking on the resurrection that endures for a lifetime.

Chad McMath

Monroe City, Missouri

July 2018

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Apologetics is a discipline of growing necessity in the church today. In a world increasingly hostile to the gospel, it serves to strengthen the faith of believers as well as their confidence and preparedness in evangelism. Apologetics can also help believers connect their theology with other areas of knowledge (e.g., science and history) and lead them to a deeper understanding of certain theological truths. These claims are especially true concerning resurrection apologetics, for the resurrection of Jesus is a central truth of the gospel that can be demonstrated through modern historiographic methods. Moreover, it has profound eschatological and ethical implications. Thus, it was determined that the members of First Baptist Church would benefit greatly from receiving instruction on this topic.

#### **Context**

First Baptist Church (FBC) was established in 1869 in Monroe City, Missouri. The church has a rich history and has been a part of the Southern Baptist Convention since its inception. Monroe City is a small town in northeast Missouri with a population of 2,531. FBC plays a vital role in the community as the largest and most active protestant congregation in a heavily Catholic area. Following a pastor with a tenure of sixteen years, I began my service as pastor of FBC on October 2, 2016. The average Sunday morning attendance was around 120 with many opportunities for growth, especially among young adults and families. While such growth is now coming to fruition, still a majority of FBC members are over the age of sixty.

As important as numerical growth is, of first priority in my new ministry was building relationships with and instructing those already attending FBC, both young and old. Time spent with various members revealed a broad range of spiritual maturity and theological acumen. Across the board, however, apologetic instruction was seen to be an unmet need in the congregation. This left church members disadvantaged in two primary ways, affecting both their personal faith and their witness.

First, they were left vulnerable to challenges to Christianity. While Monroe City is by no means a hotbed for religious skepticism, perhaps for this very reason many at FBC did not recognize their need for apologetics. Such an ignorance is always unfortunate, because apologetics is a great tool for strengthening faith regardless of the believer's context. And to be sure, even in Monroe City there are many unbelievers, some of whom speak openly against Christianity. Furthermore, via internet and other media outlets, people today are exposed to all kinds of challenges to Christianity regardless of where they live. Thus, having little to no instruction in apologetics, the members of FBC were left vulnerable to these challenges which threatened to slowly and quietly weaken their faith.

The second disadvantage of FBC's lack of apologetic instruction was hindered evangelism. When Christians lack confidence in their ability to defend their faith, evangelism will almost certainly suffer. Conversely, when taught apologetics, Christians will likely be bolder in sharing their faith with others. Of course, any church body should desire to increase in evangelism, but this was especially needed at FBC as there were few signs that members were active in personal evangelism.

Instruction in apologetics seemed to be a good remedy for both of the problems described above. Thankfully, the members of FBC were welcoming of such instruction. Moreover, it seemed to be a prime time for apologetic instruction as the church was seeking to reach more young adults and families, a demographic much in need of apologetics in our increasingly secular world.

Many different facets of apologetic study would have proved helpful to the members of FBC. For example, cultural apologetics (the defense of a Christian worldview against cultural challenges) is certainly important. This kind of apologetics concerns challenges such as homosexuality, abortion, and many others. FBC's limited apologetic instruction had been almost exclusively of this kind. However, a more basic defense of the Christian faith itself is also important. This kind of apologetics concerns primarily arguments for the existence of God, the resurrection of Jesus, and the reliability of Scripture—all areas in which members of FBC were even less informed. It seemed that instruction in one of these areas would perhaps prove most helpful in remedying the two problems described above.

A focus on the resurrection of Jesus was regarded as especially beneficial. After all, Christianity rises or falls on the resurrection, and so it is of utmost importance. Thus, it was determined that apologetic instruction on the resurrection would be most effective in making members of FBC less vulnerable to challenges to Christianity and more confident witnesses of the gospel.

The hymns that have been sung at FBC for many decades now further established the need for a focus on the resurrection. While there are many wonderful songs of the faith in our hymnbook,<sup>1</sup> it has a noticeable deficiency by which FBC's older majority had especially been affected. The problem is that these classic Baptist hymns often emphasize escape from the body and this world to heaven (e.g., "I'll Fly Away"), yet rarely speak of the resurrection of the dead and the new heavens and earth.<sup>2</sup> But, of course, the resurrection of the dead is a key doctrine of the faith that is guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus. Unfortunately, even the broader evangelical church in America

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<sup>1</sup>*Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: Lifeway, 2008).

<sup>2</sup>According to the topical index of the *Baptist Hymnal*, forty-six hymns focus on either the resurrection, eternal life, or the second coming. An examination of these hymns reveals that only four even make mention of the future resurrection of believers.

struggles to grasp this truth, with a full 25 percent of regular church attenders denying the resurrection of the dead<sup>3</sup> and many more minimizing it.

This lack of focus on the resurrection of the dead at FBC was in the end not merely a symptom of deficient hymnody, but ultimately seemed to result from (and contribute to) a false dichotomy between the sacred and secular—that is, the immaterial being regarded as sacred and the physical being regarded as secular. Likewise, church members’ lack of concern for connections between theology and other areas of knowledge were thought to correlate with this same false dichotomy. Apologetic instruction on the resurrection was therefore considered especially helpful in countering this problem, for it emphasizes that the gospel is rooted in events that took place in time and space, which can be demonstrated through modern historiographic methods. Jesus’ resurrection more fundamentally counters the sacred/secular dichotomy in that it ultimately does not promise escape from one’s body and this world, but the renewal of them.

### **Rationale**

The factors above indicated that instruction in apologetics was a real need at FBC and that a focus on the resurrection of Jesus would be most beneficial. It was determined that such instruction would not only increase church members’ own faith, but also their impact on unbelievers. Certainly it would help them to heed Peter’s instruction to “always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15).<sup>4</sup>

It is noteworthy that this hope that Peter refers to is ultimately the believer’s

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<sup>3</sup>Mark Regenerus, “Resurrecting the Dead in America,” accessed February 20, 2017, <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2014/09/resurrecting-the-dead-in-america>. Mainline Protestants and Catholics are much worse, with about double this percentage of regular attenders denying the resurrection of the dead.

<sup>4</sup>All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

glorification at the resurrection of the dead. This reality is itself significant, and even more so because its basis is the resurrection of Jesus—hence Peter’s preceding reference to our “living hope through the resurrection of Jesus” (1 Pet 1:3b). Likewise, Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 15 that the believer’s confidence in future resurrection is grounded in Jesus’ own resurrection, proclaiming that the risen Jesus is “the firstfruits” (1 Cor 15:20, 23) of those who belong to him. Since Christ was raised to glory, we too will be raised to glory. Thus, the resurrection of Jesus has incredible significance even beyond its miraculous testimony to the truth of the gospel. Such is the rationale behind the choice to focus the instruction on the resurrection.

To be clear, this instruction did not consist only of a defense of the resurrection as an historical event. Rather, three aims were in view. The first aim was to establish the centrality of the resurrection to the gospel. It seems clear that, at least in recent years, FBC had not appropriately mirrored the New Testament’s emphasis on the resurrection. Case in point, I once asked the congregation in a Sunday night Bible study why Christians worship on Sunday rather than on Saturday. I was discouraged by the long delay that ensued before someone finally provided the answer. While this of course does not mean that no one else knew the answer, it did reveal that the resurrection of Jesus was not as central as it should be in the theology of FBC members. Thus, establishing the centrality of the resurrection in the New Testament was key to this project.

The second aim then was to teach church members a defense for the resurrection as an historical event. This is where the apologetic emphasis of the project was heaviest. Although this kind of instruction was challenging for many, the hope was that it would strengthen church members in their faith, making them less vulnerable to challenges to Christianity and more confident witnesses of the gospel.

Finally, the third aim was to educate FBC members on what the resurrection of Jesus means for them personally in light of its eschatological and ethical implications. Since the second of these implications flows from the first, church members’ neglect of

the first left them wanting in regards to both. A better understanding and appreciation of both implications was certainly needed.

These three aims were accomplished primarily through a series of sermons and teaching sessions. An evangelistic tract on the resurrection was also created as an aid for church members to share the good news of the resurrection with others in the community. The ultimate desire for this project was that it would both strengthen the church and grow God's kingdom.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to teach the members of First Baptist Church in Monroe City, Missouri an apologetic for the resurrection.

### **Goals**

The following four goals represent steps necessary for the completion of this project. These goals utilize various methods (preaching, teaching, and writing) geared toward fulfilling the project's stated purpose.

1. The first goal was to assess FBC members' knowledge and appreciation of the resurrection, its defense, and its implications.
2. The second goal was to develop a series of six sermons and six teaching sessions on the resurrection of Jesus.
3. The third goal was to increase FBC members' knowledge and appreciation of the resurrection, its defense, and its implications through the sermons and teaching sessions.
4. The fourth goal was to produce and distribute evangelistic tracts on the resurrection for FBC members to use as an aid in evangelism.

Aligned research methodology measured the success of these four goals and determined when they were accomplished.<sup>5</sup> The specific methodology and instruments that were used are detailed in the following section.

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<sup>5</sup>All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.



## **Research Methodology**

Four goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to assess FBC members' knowledge and appreciation of the resurrection, its defense, and its implications. This goal was measured by administering a survey to a minimum of fifteen adult members of the church.<sup>6</sup> The survey questions were divided into three categories: questions on perspective, questions on biblical data, and questions on apologetic data. This goal was considered successfully met when at least fifteen church members completed the survey and it had been analyzed yielding a clearer picture of the FBC members' knowledge and appreciation of the resurrection, its defense, and its implications.

The second goal was to develop a series of six sermons and six teaching sessions on the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>7</sup> This goal was measured by a panel consisting of two Southern Baptist pastors, one FBC deacon, and a professor who used a rubric to evaluate the relevance, biblical faithfulness, and clarity of the sermons and teaching sessions.<sup>8</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level. In the case that the initial feedback yielded less than 90 percent, the content was revised until it met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to increase FBC members' knowledge and appreciation of the resurrection, its defense, and its implications through the sermons and teaching sessions. This goal was measured by administering the assessment survey for a second time to the same group of participants after they had listened to all the sermons and teaching sessions to measure the change in knowledge.<sup>9</sup> Both pre and post-series surveys

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<sup>6</sup>See appendix 1.

<sup>7</sup>The sermons were expositions of 1 Cor 15. The teaching sessions were lectures giving an apologetic for the resurrection.

<sup>8</sup>See appendix 2.

<sup>9</sup>See appendix 1.

were anonymous, employing the use of identification numbers so that the surveys could be matched for clearer analysis. This goal was successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre and post-series survey scores. The t-test measures the difference in the means of the pre and post-series survey scores. It is used to ensure that the changes in score on the survey are not due to chance, but that actual increase in knowledge has occurred.<sup>10</sup>

The fourth goal was to produce and distribute evangelistic tracts on the resurrection for members of FBC to use as an aid in evangelism.<sup>11</sup> This goal was measured by a panel consisting of two Southern Baptist pastors, one FBC deacon, and a professor who utilized a rubric to evaluate the relevance, biblical faithfulness, persuasiveness, clarity, and layout of the tract.<sup>12</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level. In the case that the initial feedback yielded less than 90 percent, the content was revised until it met or exceeded the sufficient level.

### **Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**

The following are definitions of key terms used in the ministry project:

*Explanatory scope.* Explanatory scope is the measure of how many inter-related facts are well explained by a hypothesis. In resurrection apologetics, this term is used when comparing the hypothesis of Jesus' resurrection to alternative hypotheses that seek to explain facts relevant to the claim that Jesus rose from the dead.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 189-91.

<sup>11</sup>One hundred tracts were produced and distributed to participants with extras made available to church members via a resource table.

<sup>12</sup>See appendix 3.

<sup>13</sup>Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman, Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2005), 196-97.

*Gnosticism.* Gnosticism is a belief system that arose during the early centuries of Christianity. The name derives from the Greek word γνῶσις, which means “knowledge.” The Gnostics held to “a radical dualism between God (spirit) and the world (matter),” believing the latter to be inferior, even evil. Thus, the aim of salvation according the Gnostics was “for the spirit to be awakened by knowledge so the inner person can be released from the earthly dungeon and return to the realm of light where the soul becomes reunited with God.”<sup>14</sup>

*Minimal facts approach.* The minimal facts approach is an apologetic method developed by Gary Habermas which uses a minimal common ground to build a case for Jesus’ resurrection. Habermas describes it as follows: “The major idea is to utilize data that have two characteristics: they are well-evidenced, usually for multiple reasons, and they are generally admitted by critical scholars who research this particular area.”<sup>15</sup>

*Resurrection.* Resurrection is the action of rising from the dead bodily. It may refer to either Jesus’ resurrection or the eschatological resurrection of the dead. Though Scripture teaches that all people will be raised on the last day, only the righteous will be raised “to the resurrection of life” (John 5:28-29), to a resurrection body like Jesus’ (1 Cor 15:49, Phil 3:20-21). The wicked will be raised to judgement.<sup>16</sup>

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the effectiveness of the teaching was limited by the frequency of attendance, for if a participant failed to attend some of the sermons and teaching sessions, it would be more difficult to measure how beneficial the teaching had been. To mitigate this limitation, each sermon and teaching session was

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<sup>14</sup>“Gnosticism,” in *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Ronald F. Youngblood (Nashville: Nelson, 1995), 500-501.

<sup>15</sup>Gary Habermas, “Evidential Apologetics,” in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Stephen B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 100.

<sup>16</sup>For further insight, see “Resurrection” and “Resurrection of Jesus the Christ,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman Bible, 2003), 1380-82.

recorded and made available to all participants. Those who were absent were asked to watch/listen to the sermon or teaching session they missed. Second, the effectiveness of the evangelistic tracts on the resurrection was limited by the participants' initiative to read and utilize them as an aid to evangelism. To mitigate this limitation, participants were encouraged repeatedly to make use of these tracts throughout the month following the sermons and teaching sessions.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project was intended to provide teaching on resurrection apologetics but came short of adequately training participants in the practice of apologetics. The objective was to increase their knowledge and appreciation of the resurrection, its defense, and its implications. Second, the project was confined to a twenty-two-week timeframe. This gave adequate time to prepare and deliver the six-weeks of sermons and teaching sessions, conduct the pre and post-series surveys, and produce and distribute the evangelistic tracts on the resurrection.

### **Conclusion**

The resurrection of Jesus is a key tenet of the Christian faith with profound implications for believers. Therefore, the teaching that participants received on this subject was of utmost importance. The hope was that such instruction would strengthen their faith as well as their confidence and preparedness in evangelism. Moreover, it was hoped that the participants would attain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the resurrection and its implications. The biblical and theological basis for this project will be explained in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2  
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR  
PREACHING AND TEACHING ON  
THE RESURRECTION

The resurrection of Jesus is a central and demonstrable truth of the gospel. Moreover, it carries with it both eschatological and ethical implications. Numerous biblical passages point to these realities, but none more forcefully than 1 Corinthians 15. Here one finds not only the biblical and theological foundations for preaching and teaching on the resurrection, but also the richest content for doing so.

In this chapter, the text of 1 Corinthians 15 will be divided into three major sections and addressed sequentially. First, verses 1-11 will be exegeted, revealing the centrality and demonstrability of the resurrection. Next, verses 12-34 will be exegeted, revealing the eschatological and ethical implications of the resurrection. Finally, verses 35-58 will be exegeted, revealing the coherence and nature of the resurrection body. While these passages certainly give great insight on why and how the resurrection ought to be defended, chapter three will be reserved for a fuller treatment of such apologetic concerns. This chapter will simply be an exegesis and application of the biblical text.<sup>1</sup>

**The Resurrection of Jesus as a Central and  
Demonstrable Truth of the Gospel  
(1 Cor 15:1-11)**

In 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Paul delivers the gospel in an early creedal form, with special emphasis given to Jesus' resurrection and subsequent appearances. This section serves as a reminder to the Corinthians of the centrality and demonstrability of Jesus' resurrection, setting the stage for Paul's following arguments for the resurrection

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<sup>1</sup>This chapter is restricted to 1 Corinthians 15 in order to focus on the text of the sermon series.

of the dead.

### **The Need for Gospel Reminding (1 Cor 15:1-2)**

In the view of Karl Barth, 1 Corinthians 15 “forms not only the close and crown of the whole Epistle, but also provides the clue to its meaning, from which place light is shed on the whole, and it becomes intelligible.”<sup>2</sup> Up to this point, Paul has dealt mostly with inadmissible behavior. Now he turns to belief, a matter not unrelated in his mind. David Garland notes that “the ethical admonitions in this discourse betray [Paul’s] conviction that errant belief inevitably leads to inadmissible behavior.”<sup>3</sup> As will be seen, the errant belief in Corinth is that there is no resurrection of the dead.

In verse 1, Paul opens this new section (indicated by the conjunction *δὲ*) by stating his intent to remind the Corinthians of “the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand.” The actual reminder begins in verse 3. Concerning the verb *γνωρίζω* (“I remind” or “I make known”) in verse 1, Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer note, “There is a gentle reproach to the word. He has to begin again and teach them an elementary fact, which they had already accepted.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, the reminder that follows, though heavily evidential in verse 5-7, is not delivered as proof for those who have yet to believe, but as reassertion for those who already have.<sup>5</sup>

But why must Paul reassert what the Corinthians have already accepted as

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<sup>2</sup>Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, trans. Henry James Stenning (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1933), 11, quoted in Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1169.

<sup>3</sup>David Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 678.

<sup>4</sup>Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1911), 331, quoted in Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 743.

<sup>5</sup>Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 718.

true? It becomes clear that although they have received and in fact stand in the gospel Paul preached to them, some of them do not fully understand its implications. There is confusion in Corinth. While this situation is not made fully clear until verse 12, it is hinted at even in verse 2, which closes with the phrase, “unless you believed in vain” (ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ εἰκῆ ἐπιστεύσατε). Concerning this common translation, Thiselton comments,

To translate εἰκῆ as *in vain* causes needless difficulties and forces Paul into an aggressive irony that undermines his seeking common ground. . . . There is firm lexicographical evidence for the meaning *without due consideration*, or *in a haphazard manner* (e.g. Epictetus, Dissertations 1.28.28; 6.7) or *thoughtlessly* or *at random* (1 Clement 40:2). Here Paul envisages the possibility of such a superficial or confused appropriation of the gospel in which no *coherent* grasp of its logical or practical entailments for eschatology or for practical discipleship had been reached. *Incoherent* belief is different from believing *in vain*.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, in delivering the following reminder, Paul begins the process of correcting the Corinthians’ confusion. This goes to show that reminders of basic foundational truths can be of great value to the church. Though to some they may seem like unnecessary repetition, important gospel truths are worth repeating and can ultimately serve to bring clarity to the confused. This observation certainly holds true when applied to the resurrection both in Paul’s day and ours. In the following verses, Paul will deliver the basics of the gospel, with special emphasis given to Jesus’ resurrection and subsequent appearances. In doing so, he sets the stage for confronting the errant belief of some that there is no resurrection of the dead.

### **The Gospel Delivered in Creedal Form (1 Cor 15:3-5)**

Gary Habermas and Michael Licona note that verse 3 marks the beginning of “an ancient creed that was part of the earliest traditions of the Christian church and that

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<sup>6</sup>Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1186.

predates the writings of Paul.”<sup>7</sup> There are many factors that support this claim. First, the phrase “I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received” clearly denotes “the imparting of oral tradition.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the parallelism of verses 3-5 would have accommodated its remembrance and dissemination. While the first and third lines of the formula are of the same length and construction and both end with the phrase “according to the Scriptures,” the second and fourth lines are much shorter<sup>9</sup> and serve to confirm the first and third lines, respectively.<sup>10</sup> Beyond being helpful for memorization, this structure highlights the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus as historically demonstrable events that together form the core of the gospel message.

Further regarding the creedal nature of this section, Hans Conzelmann writes,

The fact that vv. 3-8 contain a formula which Paul has taken over from the church tradition is proved not only by his own explicit statement, but also by an analysis. The following are indications: similar formulation in other, non-Pauline passages; the style, particularly the non-Pauline linguistic usage; the content, which goes beyond the immediate occasion (proof of the resurrection of the dead) and is self-sufficient.<sup>11</sup>

The early dating of this creed is of great apologetic value. It supports that the resurrection of Jesus was not a legend that developed over time, but was believed by Christians from the very beginning. Habermas and Licona note that “many critical scholars hold that Paul received [the creed] from the disciples Peter and James while visiting Jerusalem three years after his conversion. If so, Paul learned it within five years of Jesus’ crucifixion and from the disciples themselves.”<sup>12</sup> In support of this position is

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<sup>7</sup>Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 52.

<sup>8</sup>Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 259.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 746.

<sup>11</sup>Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 251.

<sup>12</sup>Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 52-53.



Paul’s use of *ἵστορησαι* (lit. “to gain a historical account”) in Galatians 1:18 to describe his visit with Peter (identified as *Cephas*).<sup>13</sup>

It is noteworthy that the only two people listed by name in this opening section of 1 Corinthians 15 are Cephas and James—the very two people Paul met in Jerusalem according to Galatians 1:18-19. The possible significance of this differs depending on where the original creed in 1 Corinthians 15 ends. If it ends before the references to Cephas and James in verses 5 and 7, it could be that Paul is recounting the personal testimonies they gave in addition to the creed during his visit. On the other hand, if the original creed includes the references to Cephas and James, it may support that they had a role in its composition sometime before passing it on to Paul.

There is much debate on where the original creed ends and where Paul’s own comments begin. Of course, at the very least, Paul’s recounting of Christ’s appearance “also to me” (καὶ μοί) in verse 8 is his own. But Fee suggests that the original tradition Paul cites may end as early as the middle of verse 5, after “and that he appeared” (καὶ ὅτι ὤφθη). Since *Cephas* is a common Pauline appellation for Peter, he reasons that “to Cephas” (Κηφᾶ) in verse 5 may be the beginning of Paul’s own commentary.<sup>14</sup> However, this argument is not compelling given that the use of *Cephas* can just as easily signal that it is part of the original creed. After all, *Cephas* is Aramaic. Would not one expect an early Christian creed to have first appeared in Aramaic, the primary spoken language of the early Christians? Habermas and Licona note that there are indeed “indications that verses 3-5 had an Aramaic origin, such as the four-fold use of the Greek term for ‘that’ (ὅτι) common in Aramaic narration *and the name Cephas, which is Aramaic for Peter*” (italics mine).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 260.

<sup>14</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 728-29.

<sup>15</sup>Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 259.

Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner note that the majority of scholars are split between whether the creed ends at the end of verse 5 or at the end of verse 7.<sup>16</sup> Of course, if it ends at the end of verse 7, the phrase “most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep” in verse 6 is almost certainly an addition. There is a third option, however, upon which Ciampa and Rosner settle. It is simply that Paul constructed this particular formation himself from pre-Pauline creedal material.<sup>17</sup> In this case, the ending may not be as clear-cut.

Ultimately, what we can be sure of is that Paul’s statement of Christ’s death, burial, resurrection, and appearance(s) is of earlier non-Pauline creedal origin and that Paul likely received it circa A.D. 35 in Jerusalem from Peter and James. While it is possible that Paul received this specific formulation under other circumstances, his letter to the Galatians nevertheless makes clear, and critics grant, that Paul and Peter and James all agreed upon content of the gospel when they met in Jerusalem at this early point in Christian history.<sup>18</sup>

Now, concerning the content of gospel as it is relayed here in 1 Corinthians 15, there are four lines to consider. The first line (v. 3b), “that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,” is not only a statement of history, but also theology. The use of *Christ* is likely intentional. It implies what is then confirmed by “for our sins.”<sup>19</sup> Surely, the substitutionary atonement is in view. This theological claim remains to this day more controversial than any historical claim regarding Jesus’ death. To modern sensibilities, it is especially offensive. Yet such a sacrificial death was prophesied centuries before Christ’s coming. Indeed, the phrase “according to the Scriptures” in this context

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<sup>16</sup>Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 745.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, 746.

<sup>18</sup>Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 260-61.

<sup>19</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 724.

brings to mind prophetic passages such as Isaiah 53:5. Ultimately, though, we cannot be certain what specific Scriptures the original formulator of the creed had in mind.

The second line (v.4a), “that he was buried,” as noted before, serves to confirm the line it follows—specifically “that Christ died,” leaving no question as to the historical truth of the creed’s first line. It also seems to imply an empty tomb in light of the claim to resurrection which follows in the third line. After all, if Jesus was buried and then raised, an empty tomb is unavoidable.

The third line (v. 4b), “that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,” becomes central to this section, as its confirmation in the fourth line extends to a long list of post-resurrection appearances. Verse 12 onward further establishes that the resurrection of Jesus is the main point of Paul’s reminder to the Corinthians. Concerning the phrase, “according to the Scriptures” in this third line, we again cannot be certain what specific Scriptures the original formulator of the creed had in mind. Psalm 16:10 and Hosea 6:2 are two possibilities.

Finally, the fourth line (v. 5a) “and that he appeared,” as noted before, serves to confirm the third line—specifically “that he was raised.” Concerning the verb *ὤφθη* (translated “he appeared”), Thiselton writes, “Although the aorist passive indicative often means *was seen*, the passive voice also regularly conveys the force of *he became visible* or *he appeared*.”<sup>20</sup> Ben Witherington contends for the latter, writing, “The term *ὤφθη* speaks to the objectivity of the appearances: Jesus ‘appeared,’ not ‘they claimed to see him.’”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, this line and the long list of appearances that follows seems to serve no other purpose but to confirm the *bodily* resurrection of Jesus.

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<sup>20</sup>Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1198.

<sup>21</sup>Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 301.

## **Post-Resurrection Appearances (1 Cor 15:5b-11)**

The post-resurrection appearances listed in this passage begin with Cephas (v. 5b), which is not surprising considering his high standing among the apostles. This reference is likely to the appearance in Luke 24 on the road to Emmaus. “Then to the twelve” of course could not include Judas. Craig Keener notes that “numerical group titles were common, and often remained even when numbers fluctuated.”<sup>22</sup>

The appearance to the five-hundred (v. 6) is an impressive claim that is recorded nowhere else in Scripture. Nevertheless, the truthfulness of the claim is demonstrated by its boldness and by Paul’s following comment, “most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.” In essence, Paul is saying, “You can go ask them yourselves!”

The appearance to James (v. 7) is certainly noteworthy. There is broad consensus that this refers to James, the brother of Jesus. We know from Galatians 1:19 that James rose to leadership, even apostleship, quite early in the history of the church. Later in Acts 15, James appears as leader of the Jerusalem church. These two facts are remarkable, considering that during Jesus’ lifetime James was an unbeliever (John 7:5). No doubt, Jesus’ appearance to James provides a much needed explanation for this dramatic shift. Although we do not have any other biblical record of this appearance to James, interestingly, one such appearance is recorded in the apocryphal Gospel of Hebrews.<sup>23</sup>

The appearance recounted in verse 7b, “then to all the apostles,” is the last possible portion of the original creed received by Paul. This apparently refers to a broader circle than the twelve. The implication here is that seeing the risen Christ is “definitive for the concept of an apostle.”<sup>24</sup> This is one support Paul gives for his own apostleship. In

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<sup>22</sup>Craig Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 124.

<sup>23</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 731.

<sup>24</sup>Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 258.

1 Corinthians 9:1, he writes, “Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?”

Verse 8 onward is self-evidently Paul’s own comments. Three comments are in order for verses 8-11. First, there is some confusion concerning what Paul means by “as to one untimely born” (ὡσπερὲι τῷ ἐκτρώματι) in verse 8. *Ἐκτρώματι* was a word often used to refer to a miscarriage or premature birth. George Nichelsburg argues that here it suggests that “in comparison to the other apostles who had accompanied Jesus during his ministry he had been born without the due period of gestation.”<sup>25</sup> Others, however, suggest a more pejorative meaning, such as *freak* or *monster*.<sup>26</sup> Barrett says that it may be a reference to Paul’s physical and/or apostolic deficiencies and that “it is probable that Paul took it up from the lips of his adversaries.”<sup>27</sup> It is hard to know which, if not both, of these meanings Paul had in mind.

Second, Paul’s comment “because I persecuted the church of God” in verse 9 is significant not only because it explains why he is “the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle,” but also because it draws to remembrance the radical transformation he went through. This, as does James’ transformation, testifies to the truth and power of the resurrection.

Third and finally, it must be noted that “in vain” (κενή, from κενός) in verse 10 is a different word than what the ESV also translates “in vain” (εἰκῆ) in verse 2. The word in verse 10 means *without effect* and appears four times (in varying forms) in this chapter, yet nowhere else in this letter.<sup>28</sup> The significance of this repetition will come to

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<sup>25</sup>George Nichelsburg, “An Ἐκτρώμα, though Appointed from the Womb: Paul’s Apostolic Self-Description in 1 Corinthians 15 and Galatians 1,” *Harvard Theological Review* 79 (1986): 198-205, quoted in Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 297.

<sup>26</sup>Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1209.

<sup>27</sup>C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 344.

<sup>28</sup>Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 752.

light when the later occurrences of this word are addressed.

Before moving on to the next section, it bears repeating that Paul's purpose in delivering this discourse to the Corinthians was not to convince them of something they had yet to believe. Rather, it was a *reminder*—a reassertion of what Paul had already preached to them and what they had already accepted as true. Clearly, though, Paul had no aversion to appealing to evidence. For us today, there is great apologetic value to this material in both its early and eyewitness testimony to the resurrection. Such testimony should be appealed to unsparingly for the advancement of the gospel. We also should recognize, though, the importance of reasserting the truth of the resurrection to those who already believe. As we see here in 1 Corinthians 15, this may be necessary before one can fully grasp the eschatological and ethical implications of the resurrection of Jesus.

### **The Eschatological and Ethical Implications of the Resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor 15:12-34)**

In 1 Corinthians 15:12-34, Paul argues that the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead are inseparable realities, apart from which there is no salvation. Paul also seeks to show the effects that the resurrection of the dead should have on the way one lives in the present. Thus, both the eschatological and ethical implications of the resurrection are revealed in this section.

#### **The Eschatological Implication: The Resurrection of the Dead (1 Cor 15:12-28)**

Paul begins this new section with a question: “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead?” (v. 12). Witherington notes, “His major tactic is to show ‘some’ of the Corinthians the logical implication of their position...that ‘there is no resurrection of the dead.’”<sup>29</sup> The

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<sup>29</sup>Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 291.

implication is that “not even Christ has been raised” (v. 13). But since they do indeed proclaim Christ as raised from the dead, Paul is able to move into a *modus tollens* argument for the resurrection of the dead.<sup>30</sup> The formula is this:  $-P \rightarrow -Q$ ;  $Q$ , therefore  $P$ . Paul’s argument is expressed particularly through verses 13 and 20-21. He argues, “If there is no resurrection of the dead ( $-P$ ), then not even Christ has been raised ( $-Q$ )....But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead ( $Q$ ), the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead ( $P$ ).” Thus, the reality of Jesus’ resurrection implies (indeed, requires) the resurrection of the dead.

To put it another way, Paul argues in this section that it is *all or nothing* when it comes to Jesus’ resurrection and the resurrection of the dead. A realization of this reality is a great need of the church today. The statistics shared in chapter one show that far too many Christians (at least in America) deny the resurrection of the dead. Moreover, one must wonder how often those who affirm it ever actually think about it. The almost exclusive use of the word “heaven” for the afterlife suggests that the resurrection of the dead is not often at the forefront of the average Christian’s mind. As Craig Blomberg observes, “Referring to the life to come simply as ‘heaven’ points out a serious misconception. The biblical hope is for believers to experience all of the wonders and glories of a fully re-created heavens *and earth* (Rev. 21-22).”<sup>31</sup> Of course, the resurrection of the dead goes hand-in-hand with this re-creation of earth. Yet both are often exchanged for an all-too-common “I’ll Fly Away” sentiment. This requires correction. We must proclaim the same message today that Paul proclaimed to the Corinthians: Since Christ has been raised, we too will be raised. And if the latter is denied, then by extension so is the former.

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<sup>30</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 740.

<sup>31</sup>Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 311.

A number of possible influences led some of the Corinthians to deny the resurrection of the dead. Certainly Greco-Roman philosophy was not favorable to bodily resurrection. Allen Johnson draws attention to this statement attributed to Apollo in *Eumenides* by Aeschylus of the fifth century B.C.: “When the blood of a dead man is once and for all dust, there is no resurrection.”<sup>32</sup> This sentiment would only get worse centuries down the road with the rise of Gnosticism. Garland comments,

These Corinthians would be the theological forerunners of the second-century gnostics who appear to adapt and rebut Pauline statements. The Nag Hammadi *Treatise on the Resurrection* alludes to a spiritual resurrection: Christ swallowed up death, gave us the way of our immortality, and we suffered with him, rose with him, and went to heaven with him (4.25-28; 49.15-16). The Gospel of Philip declares, “Those who assert: ‘One dies first and is then raised,’ are wrong. If the resurrection is not received first, while still alive, there is nothing to be received upon death.”<sup>33</sup>

Such *over-realized* eschatology is seen even earlier in 2 Timothy 2:16-18:

But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.

While the above illustrates the Greek influence upon the Corinthians, Keener notes that the problem was not only because of Gentiles, but also Jews.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, there were Jews at that time who denied the resurrection of the dead for their own reasons, such as the Sadducees (Matt 22:23). So these may have also had some influence upon the Corinthians. And there are yet other possible reasons for the Corinthian denial of the resurrection of the dead which are more pragmatic than philosophical. These will come to light in the section on the resurrection body.

Moving on to verse 14, the second and third uses of *κενὸς* (“in vain”) appear here. Remember, the first use was in verse 10, where Paul writes, “But by the grace of

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<sup>32</sup>Allen Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 28.

<sup>33</sup>Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 699.

<sup>34</sup>Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 123.



God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain (κενή). On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.” Notice, Paul says here that that God’s grace toward him was *not* in vain, and he supports his statement by noting his hard work—that is, in preaching the gospel. But then in verse 14 he says that “if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching *is* in vain (κενὸν) and your faith is in vain (κενή)” (italics mine). Paul’s point here is that his statement in verse 10 is not true if Christ has not been raised. But Christ has been raised, and because of this, Paul is able to close the chapter in verse 58 with his fourth and final use of *κενὸς*: “knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

Verses 16-17 are key to this section on the eschatological implication of the resurrection. Paul first establishes the hypothetical that “if the dead are not raised, not even Christ had been raised” (v. 16). He continues, “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” (v. 17). It bears reminding here that earlier in verse 3, the creed states that “Christ died *for our sins*” (italics mine). The claim then in verse 17 that apart from the resurrection “you are still in your sins” brings to light two important truths. First, Christ’s death *for our sins* has no effect apart from his resurrection. Second, Christ died and rose not only to forgive our sins, but also to deliver us from them. As Fee puts it, “Jesus’ death as ‘for us,’ including both justification and sanctification, is inextricably bound together with his resurrection.”<sup>35</sup>

Continuing on, the words “fallen asleep” (κοιμηθέντες) and “hope” (ἐλπιότες) in verses 18-19 bring to mind 1 Thessalonians 4:13. Just as Paul had to inform the Thessalonians of the resurrection of the dead and the hope that it brings, so he did also the Corinthians. Concerning the use of *κοιμηθέντες*, Ciampa and Rosner note that it “had been used as a polite euphemism among the Greeks for centuries, but had come to serve

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<sup>35</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 743-44.

as an allusion to the hope of the resurrection among Christians.”<sup>36</sup> Of course, this hope is *the* eschatological implication of Jesus’ resurrection.

This implication is stated positively in verses 20-23. Paul says here that the resurrected Christ is “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Fee notes that the term *firstfruits* is used “as a metaphor for the first of the harvest serving as a kind of guarantee for the full harvest.”<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Christ’s resurrection guarantees the resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in him. “But each in his own order,” says Paul (v. 23). The Corinthians’ *over-realized eschatology* is subtly addressed here. They “cannot yet live as if the triumph is complete.”<sup>38</sup> There will be a resurrection “at his coming” of “those who belong to Christ” (v. 23).

Now, it should be clarified that Scripture teaches that both the righteous and the wicked will be raised in the last day—one to the resurrection of life and the other to the resurrection of judgment (John 5:28-29). Verse 22 (“so also in Christ shall all be made alive”) might at first seem to reference this fact. However, such a suspicion cannot be sustained in light of Paul’s following specification of “those who belong to Christ” (v. 23). While Paul undoubtedly believed in the resurrection of both the righteous and wicked, his focus in 1 Corinthians 15 is on the righteous—“those who belong to Christ.” From a premillennial perspective, one would simply say this is so because the resurrection of the righteous happens 1000 years before the resurrection of the wicked. From an amillennial perspective, though, this focus is rather because (1) Paul is addressing a Christian audience, and (2) the kind of resurrection in store for them is much different than the kind in store for those who do not belong to Christ. When Paul goes on to discuss the nature of the resurrection body, the need for such a focus can be clearly seen.

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<sup>36</sup>Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 758.

<sup>37</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 749.

<sup>38</sup>Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1285.

A subtle transition takes place in verse 24. Here, the resurrection of the dead is linked to “the end” (τὸ τέλος), and the focus shifts to the kingdom of God. Paul writes that at this time Christ “delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power” (v. 24). While verses 24 and 28 both indicate that there will be a voluntary handing over of the kingdom to the Father, Johnson notes, “That the lordship and exaltation of Christ never end is amply attest in other writings of Paul (Phil 2:9-11).”<sup>39</sup> Likewise, concerning verse 25 (“For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”), Cyril of Jerusalem observed, “If he is king before he has finally defeated his enemies, must he not be all the more king when he has finally mastered them?”<sup>40</sup> Thus, perhaps the best understanding of these verses is that there is first an “interim rule of Christ...to bring the full fruits of Christ’s saving work (death, burial, resurrection) to bear on the full redemption of the world,”<sup>41</sup> and then, “Christ’s kingdom will be blended into the eternal kingdom of God when he returns.”<sup>42</sup>

The Psalms are very prominent in this section of 1 Corinthians 15. Ciampa and Rosner observe that in the verses prior to verse 27, “Paul has been interpreting Psalm 110:1 in light of Psalm 8.” They continue, “He now shifts the focus to the language of Psalm 8 in particular.”<sup>43</sup> While this Psalm’s immediate concern is man’s dominion over creation, here it is applied to Christ. Barrett writes, “In the obedient service of the representative man Jesus Christ, man’s dominion is being restored, but its security lies

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<sup>39</sup>Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, 295.

<sup>40</sup>*Catechetical Lectures* 15.29, quoted in Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 773.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 293-94.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>43</sup>Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 774.

only in the unvarying submission of Jesus the son to his Father.”<sup>44</sup> Concerning this submission to the Father, Blomberg helpfully notes that although the son is *functionally subordinate* to the Father, he is *essentially equal* to the Father.<sup>45</sup>

**The Ethical Implication of Jesus’  
Resurrection: Do Not Go on  
Sinning (1 Cor 15:29-34)**

Verse 29 marks a change in focus to the ethical implication of Jesus’ resurrection. This implication was first hinted at in verse 17, where Paul writes, “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.” (A positive way of stating this would be that if Christ *has* been raised, your faith is *effective* and you *have deliverance from* your sins.) Verses 29-34 then more explicitly address the ethical implication, summed up by the command, “Do not go on sinning” (v. 34). In this section, Paul puts forth the resurrection of the dead as a motivation for holy living.

Paul begins by asking a couple of questions about why they do certain things if there is no resurrection of the dead. He wants to point out the Corinthians’ inconsistency. Their baptism practices and their<sup>46</sup> risks and suffering for Christ simply make no sense apart from the resurrection of the dead, Paul argues. “If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’” (v. 32). But Paul has already established that the dead are raised. Thus, he warns the Corinthians in verse 34, “Do not go on sinning.”

Now, as the saying goes, the devil is in the details. The first question Paul asks is very confusing at best. He writes, “Otherwise, what do you mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf” (v. 29)? Much ink has been spilled in efforts to makes sense of this verse.

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<sup>44</sup>Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 361.

<sup>45</sup>Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 298.

<sup>46</sup>It is unclear whether the “we” in v. 30 refers only to Paul and his fellow apostles or if he means to include the Corinthians.

Thiselton counts no fewer than forty explanations.<sup>47</sup> “It smacks of a ‘magical’ view of sacramentalism of the worst kind, where a religious rite, performed for someone else, can have saving efficacy,” writes Fee.<sup>48</sup> Such *vicarious baptism* certainly does not fit with the rest of the New Testament. Thus, many assume this verse must mean something different. But Fee argues that the meaning, grammatically, is quite plain. “This meaning is such a plain understanding of the Greek text that no one would ever have imagined the various alternatives were it not for the difficulties involved.”<sup>49</sup>

Alternative interpretations include the metaphorical view, which Garland cites as the unanimous view of the Greek fathers. This view posits that “the dead” does not refer to those who are physically dead, but those who are spiritually dead—the very people being baptized.<sup>50</sup> While this interpretation would make sense of Paul’s lack of correction on the matter, it seems strained and is accordingly rejected in favor of *vicarious baptism* by most scholars today. One other alternative interpretation is that *ὕπερ* here does not denote *on behalf of*, but rather *on account of*<sup>51</sup> or *for the sake of*,<sup>52</sup> indicating that these were people who were being converted and baptized because of the testimony of others who have died. Thiselton argues that this understanding is the “least problematic and most convincing of all.”<sup>53</sup>

Whatever kind of baptism is being referenced, it must be noted that while Paul does not condemn it, neither does he give his approval. He simply points out that it does

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<sup>47</sup>Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1240.

<sup>48</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 764-65.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 764.

<sup>50</sup>Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 717-19.

<sup>51</sup>Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 784.

<sup>52</sup>Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1248.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 1249.

not make sense if there is no resurrection of the dead. After all, baptism symbolizes being both buried with Christ *and raised* with him. In light of the grammar, it seems best to understand verse 29 as referring to *vicarious baptism*. In further support of this position, Blomberg notes that early church fathers actually allude to second-century Gnostic and Gnostic-like groups practicing this kind of baptism.<sup>54</sup> It should be of no surprise that the Corinthians were early forerunners of this practice.

Paul's following questions are much easier to assess. It is sufficient to say that by these he simply points out that risk and suffering for Christ make no sense apart from the resurrection of the dead. Then in verse 32 he reasons, "If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

The quotation in verse 32 could be meant as a quotation from Isaiah 22:13 or perhaps the tombstone of Sardanapallus, the founder of Tarsus.<sup>55</sup> However, it is most likely a reference to a common epicurean stereotype. Given the pervasive anti-epicurean sentiment at that time and place, this would have been perceived as an insult.<sup>56</sup> Keener notes that earlier in this letter, Paul addresses inappropriate eating and drinking (10:7, 11:22, 27).<sup>57</sup> The use of *to play* (παίζειν) in connection with eating and drinking in 10:7 is particularly noteworthy. In its context, it clearly refers to some kind of sexual immorality. Likewise, Johnson notes that "literature of ancient Greece and Rome makes a connection between eating, drinking and play (παίζω) that involved sexual intercourse after dinner."<sup>58</sup> Thus, there are undertones of sexual immorality in 15:32, even though the word *play* is

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<sup>54</sup>Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 299.

<sup>55</sup>The tombstone reads, "Sardanapallus . . . built Anachiale and Tarsus in one day. Eat, drink, and play, because all things else are not worth this." See Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, 298-99.

<sup>56</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 722.

<sup>57</sup>Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 129.

<sup>58</sup>Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, 299.

not used. Paul's words in 6:13b-14 are thus also relevant to this verse. Supporting his teaching against sexual immorality with the resurrection of the dead, he writes, "The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power."

In verse 33, Paul then seemingly references a line in Meander's lost comic play *Thias*. It had become a popular saying by Paul's day, so it is uncertain whether he was acquainted with the actual play.<sup>59</sup> Paul's use of this line, "Bad company ruins good morals," could be a reference to "evil conversations such as those that deny the resurrection of the dead," argues Fee.<sup>60</sup> He is making clear that false doctrine is not something to be held and discussed lightly. It corrupts character and leads to sin, including but not limited to sexual sin. No doubt, beliefs (whether true or false) carry with them ethical implications.

In the phrase "for tomorrow we die" (v. 33), Paul is leaving no room for a merely spiritual eternal existence. It is all or nothing for him. This seems also to be Paul's assumption earlier in verse 19, where he writes, "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied." Given then that there is no afterlife at all if the dead are not raised, the ethical implication of denying the resurrection of the dead is hedonism. But even granting a merely spiritual eternal existence does not overcome such an implication. After all, the Corinthians believed in an eternal spiritual afterlife, just as the later Gnostics did, and both groups proved quite tolerant of sins of the body. This same problem persists today, though often in more subtle form.

As noted earlier, while far too many professing Christians today reject the resurrection of the dead, the bigger problem may be that even those who accept it hardly ever think of it. This often translates into a false dichotomy of the sacred and the secular concerning the spiritual and the physical. Thus, the body is not seen as important and is

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<sup>59</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 773.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

not treated as such. I once heard a four-hundred-pound preacher rant in a sermon about how people idolize physical fitness, but for Christians who do not give proper attention to the resurrection of the dead, there is probably a greater danger of neglecting due care of the body.

It is not uncommon to hear believers today say things like “this body is just a shell,” but that represents Greco-Roman philosophy more than it does a Christian worldview. The Christian view is that our earthly bodies should be honored as precursors of our resurrection bodies. Thus, a proper recognition and appreciation of the resurrection of the dead will surely positively impact how one treats their body in the present. Just as the resurrection of the dead discourages sexual immorality, so it also discourages gluttony, drunkenness, and other maltreatment of the body. And yet remarkably, at the same time, knowing that there will one day be a resurrection of the dead imparts a fearlessness of bodily harm in this life—hence Paul’s willingness to face “danger every hour” (v. 30), “die every day” (v. 31), and “[fight] with the beasts at Ephesus” (v. 32).

Finally, a recognition and appreciation of the resurrection of the dead should likewise positively impact how one chooses to treat their body after death. Accordingly, the Jews of Paul’s day had a set of burial customs that stood in great contrast to the Greco-Roman world in which cremation was the most common practice for disposing of human remains.<sup>61</sup> Surely their disparate beliefs on the resurrection of the dead had much to do with this contrast. Until recent decades, cremation was frowned upon by virtually all Christian traditions and was not very common in America. The practice has been steadily increasing, however, gaining more approval along the way. In 2016, the cremation rate edged past 50 percent, and it is predicted to be at over 78 percent by

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<sup>61</sup>Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 294.



2035.<sup>62</sup> While one must be careful to not call sin what the Bible is silent on, Christians who promote cremation should at least consider the attitude this practice may reflect or project to others.

In verse 34, Paul finally concludes this section by communicating, in the form of an imperative, the overarching ethical implication of the reality of the resurrection of the dead: “Wake up from your drunken stupor, as it is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.” The command is clear, and the connection is clear. The eschatological implication of Jesus’ resurrection does not stand alone, but carries with it an ethical implication. The Corinthians must cease their sinful living. Indeed, the resurrection of the dead is a motivation for holy living. On the flip side, the rejection of it has dangerous moral consequences as evidenced by the Corinthians. False doctrine (v. 34, “for some have no knowledge of God”) and sin are shown to be connected, but sound doctrine serves as a remedy.

### **The Coherence and Nature of the Resurrection Body (1 Cor 15:35-58)**

In 1 Corinthians 15:35-58, Paul defends the coherence and describes the nature of the resurrection body. Here Paul reveals that the resurrection body of believers will be of the same nature as Jesus’, thereby closing his discourse on the resurrection to the Corinthians.

### **Seed, Flesh, and Heavenly Bodies (1 Cor 15:35-44)**

Paul begins this section with a question: “But someone will ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?’” (v. 35). Although he responds, “You foolish person!” (v. 36), this seems like a reasonable question. As Ciampa and

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<sup>62</sup>James Barron, “In a Move Away From Tradition, Cremations Increase,” *New York Times*, accessed April 20, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/10/nyregion/cremations-increase-in-a-move-away-from-tradition.html>.

Rosner surmise, the Corinthians were likely wondering, “If those bodies have disintegrated and have been incorporated into other creatures, how can they be raised again? Will the dead *come* back in completely different and unrelated bodies? Or *will they come* in patched-up versions of their old bodies?”<sup>63</sup> In response, Paul gives his first analogy—a *seed*. He begins, “What you sow does not come to life unless it dies” (v. 36). Witherington notes, “This is botanically untrue, but Paul simply uses the widely believed idea to make a point about the resurrection, not to teach agriculture.”<sup>64</sup> The point is that there is “both continuity and transformation”<sup>65</sup> with the resurrection, as is made clear in verses 37-38. What is sown is not the body that will be, but God gives to each kind of seed its own body.

Concerning the question of decomposition, Johnson gives an example supplied by Merrill Terry in the burial and later exhuming of the body of Roger Williams. It was discovered that the roots of an apple tree entered into William’s body, and many unknowingly ate from this tree. The result was that the substance of his body had been altered and disseminated far and wide. In only a matter of time, he would seemingly be no more. So then, how will Roger Williams be raised on the last day? Johnson argues that the seed analogy Paul gives reveals that there is “a persistence in type”—that is, “a continuity of identity” but not necessarily of substance. He further comments, “Identity of type is not incompatible with discontinuity of substance.”<sup>66</sup> Hank Hanegraaff, however, does not so quickly abandon continuity of substance. His assessment is helpful:

While orthodoxy does not dictate that every cell of our present bodies will be restored in the resurrection, it does require continuity between our earthly bodies and our heavenly bodies. Just as there is continuity between our present bodies and the

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<sup>63</sup>Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 799.

<sup>64</sup>Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 307.

<sup>65</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 779.

<sup>66</sup>Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, 302-3.

bodies we had at birth—even though all of our subatomic particles and most of our cells have been replaced—so too there will be continuity from death to resurrection, despite the fact that not every particle in our bodies will be restored. In fact, without continuity there is no point in even using the word *resurrection*.<sup>67</sup>

It does in the end seem clear that *as far as it is possible*, there will indeed be a continuity of substance in the resurrection. This certainly was the case in Jesus' resurrection, and it likewise appears to be the case in passages such as John 5:28-29 which states that “all who are in their tombs will hear his voice and come out.”

The next analogy Paul uses is *flesh*. Paul clearly has the Genesis creation account in mind, as will be seen in verse 45.<sup>68</sup> Here in verse 39, he works his way backwards in the account from humans to animals to birds to fish. In verse 40, Paul will begin his analogy of heavenly bodies, thus coming full-circle in the creation order back to *seed*.<sup>69</sup> Paul's purpose in the *flesh* analogy is stated simply enough—to establish that “not all flesh is the same” (v. 39). There is continuity, but there is also discontinuity.

Paul finally turns to the analogy of *heavenly bodies*. In verse 40, he contrasts *heavenly bodies*, with *earthly bodies*, noting their difference in glory. Different from his use of ἄλλη (indicating *another of the same kind*) in verses 39 and 41, Paul uses ἑτέρα (indicating *another of a different kind*) in verse 40.<sup>70</sup> Again, Paul intends to relate both continuity and discontinuity, but in this case emphasizes the uniqueness of the glory of the resurrection body. Here the superiority of the resurrection body is first hinted at.

Verses 42-43 then makes four stark contrasts between the body as it is sown and as it is raised: perishable/imperishable, in dishonor/in glory, in weakness/in power, natural/spiritual. The final contrast is then emphasized by the statement, “If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body” (v. 43b). One must understand that *spiritual*

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<sup>67</sup>Hank Hanegraaff, *The Third Day* (Nashville: W Publishing, 2000), 81.

<sup>68</sup>That Paul has the creation account in mind is also evidenced in v. 38, where Paul notes that God gives to each kind of seed its own body.

<sup>69</sup>Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 805.

<sup>70</sup>Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 315.

(πνευματικόν) in this context does not mean *non-physical*. After all, the word *natural* (ψυχικόν) in this same verse might more literally be translated *soul-ish*. But this word does not mean “made of soul.” In fact, this same word is used in the Septuagint to denote *living being* in the creation of Adam in Genesis 2:7, from which Paul borrows in verse 45. So just as *soul-ish* here does not mean “made of soul,” neither does *spiritual* in this context mean “made of spirit.” In fact, the larger context makes clear, notes Witherington, that “in Paul’s view, the truly ‘spiritual’ person is ultimately one who has the resurrection body.”<sup>71</sup> As C.S. Lewis remarked, “There is no use trying to be more spiritual than God. . . . He likes matter. He invented it.”<sup>72</sup> So then, it is clear that this contrast of natural and spiritual concerns mode of existence and not substance.<sup>73</sup>

### **The First Adam and the Last Adam (1 Cor 15:45-49)**

In verse 45, Paul moves into a contrast between the first Adam and the last Adam, who is Christ. This is not the first time in this chapter for Paul to make this contrast, as he does also in verse 22. The main purpose of verses 45-49 is to illustrate through these two figures the difference between the natural and the spiritual just discussed. “Living being” and “life-giving spirit” (v. 45) correspond to “natural” and “spiritual” (v. 46), respectively. Likewise, “from the earth, a man of dust” and “from heaven” (v. 47) correspond to the same.<sup>74</sup>

Verse 49 is the climax of this section: “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.” Paul teaches through this turn of phrase what he later teaches in Philippians and Romans—that in the

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<sup>71</sup>Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 309.

<sup>72</sup>C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 65.

<sup>73</sup>Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 132.

<sup>74</sup>Note, “from the earth, a man of dust” and “from heaven” concern not origin, but present existence. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 792.

resurrection, all those who belong to Christ will be given a body like his (see Phil 3:20-21, Rom 6:5, 8). Thus, not only does Pauline discourse help one to understand the nature of the resurrection body, but Gospel accounts of Jesus' post-resurrection interactions do as well. For example, after his resurrection, Jesus ate and drank in the disciples' presence (Luke 24:42-43), but also appeared to them through a locked door (John 20:26). He was recognizable, but sometimes not (John 20:14, Luke 24:16). Again, both continuity and discontinuity with the preceding earthly body are implied. No doubt, the resurrection body is shown to be superior.

Finally, the word *image* in verse 49 once again brings to mind the Genesis creation account, in which God creates man in His own image. Though that image has not been lost (see Gen 9:6, 1 Cor 11:7), it has been skewed. But Christ came to restore it. Paul writes in Romans 8:29 that “those whom [God] foreknew he also predestined to be *conformed into the image of his Son*” (italics mine). Colossians 1:15 tells us that Jesus is “the image of the invisible God.” Thus, the image of Christ is the image of God, and it is being restored in believers even now.<sup>75</sup> This restoration is the essence of sanctification. Its completion (glorification) comes when believers fully and finally “bear the image of the man of heaven” (v. 49) in their resurrected bodies.

### **Death Is Swallowed Up in Victory (1 Cor 15:50-58)**

In verse 50, Paul writes, “I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.” Craig Blomberg notes that *flesh and blood* was “a stock idiom in Jewish circles for ‘a mere mortal.’” (This could very well be why Jesus used the phrase “flesh and *bones*” in reference to his post-resurrection body in Luke 24:39.) So then, the idea behind verse 50 is that “frail, mortal

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<sup>75</sup>Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 824.

humanity cannot survive in God's eternal and perfectly holy presence"<sup>76</sup> Thus, Paul follows up in verse 51, "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." As in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, this transformation takes place at Christ's coming, "at the last trumpet" (v. 52). Apparently, Paul has in mind here specifically those who are still alive at Christ's coming. He is affirming that they will not be left out of the resurrection. Rather, their bodies will be transformed into the same kind of bodies received by those who are raised from the dead. He further comments, "The perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality" (v. 53). Ciampa and Rosner identify the language used here as a common Jewish way of implying transformation. To *put on* is to clothe, and thus to transform.<sup>77</sup>

Upon this transformation, Paul proclaims, "shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?'" (vv. 54b-55). These two lines are apparently references to Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14. Fee observes that "the citations themselves, both of which vary from the LXX, are brought into collocation by the key words 'death' and 'victory.'"<sup>78</sup> Thus, Paul is ultimately "not grounding an argument upon Scripture," Barrett notes, "but writing freely, in scriptural language, of the ultimate victory over death."<sup>79</sup> In these verses is the pinnacle of the whole passage. Through Christ's resurrection, and then ultimately his second coming, death is fully and finally defeated. Paul reemphasizes this victory in the form of a doxology in verse 57. Barrett notes on this verse that our victory through Christ is "so certain that Paul can speak of it in the present tense."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 361.

<sup>77</sup>Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 831-32.

<sup>78</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 803.

<sup>79</sup>Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 383.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 384.

Finally, Paul moves from doxology to exhortation in this closing verse of the chapter: “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” (v. 58). What an apt closing this is to Paul’s discourse on the resurrection to the Corinthians. Because Christ was raised, and therefore they too will be raised, their labor is not in vain (cf. v. 14). Moreover, they have hope—and not in this life only (v. 19), but in something infinitely greater to come. But until then, the Corinthians must live in this hope and “not in a false triumphalism that leads to aberrant behavior,” says Fee.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, the fact that Christ has been raised from the dead has both eschatological and ethical implications for them. Believers today must not neglect that the same is true for them.

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<sup>81</sup>Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 797.

CHAPTER 3  
HISTORICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED  
TO PREACHING AND TEACHING ON  
THE RESURRECTION

Scripture's testimony to the resurrection of Jesus does not stand in isolation but can be investigated through modern methods of historiography. When such is done, a compelling case for the historicity of the resurrection emerges. Thus, the resurrection is not merely Christian dogma, but is a historically defensible event. Moreover, Jesus' resurrection serves as a basis for Christian hope and sanctification. That is to say, the resurrection is not only true, but it has practical outworkings. In this chapter, such claims will be addressed in two major sections: first, "The Historical Defensibility of the Resurrection of Jesus," and second, "The Practical Outworkings of the Resurrection of Jesus."

**The Historical Defensibility of the Resurrection of Jesus**

The historicity of the resurrection of Jesus has been aptly defended by a variety of biblical scholars and historians. In this section, arguments from Gary Habermas, Michael Licona, and N. T. Wright will be engaged. The goal is to establish that the resurrection of Jesus is a historically defensible event.

**Habermas and Licona: Establishing the Facts**

Gary Habermas has made great strides in defending the historicity of the resurrection. He has developed an approach by which he builds a case for the resurrection arguing only from a scholarly common ground. Habermas describes it as follows: "The major idea is to utilize data that have two characteristics: they are well-evidenced, usually



for multiple reasons, and they are generally admitted by critical scholars who research this particular area.”<sup>1</sup>

A number of pertinent facts have been established using this criteria. Habermas’ most complete list, which he refers to as the *known facts*, amounts to twelve. These facts were settled on after a two year study of over 1400 publications on Jesus’ resurrection written in German, French, and English from 1975-2003.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it has been demonstrated that the majority of scholars who study the resurrection agree to these facts, even if in the end they deny the resurrection. For example, Habermas and Licona note, “Antony Flew, considered by many to be the most influential philosophical atheists of the late twentieth century, granted all twelve of these facts in a televised debate with Habermas on the resurrection in April 2000.”<sup>3</sup> The twelve *known facts* are as follows:

1. Jesus died by Roman crucifixion.
2. He was buried, most likely in a private tomb.
3. Soon afterward, the disciples were discouraged, bereaved, and despondent, having lost hope.
4. Jesus’s tomb was found empty very soon after his interment.
5. The disciples had experiences that they believed were actual appearances of the risen Jesus.
6. Due to these experiences, the disciples’ lives were thoroughly transformed, even being willing to die for this belief.
7. The proclamation of the resurrection took place very early, at the beginning of church history.
8. The disciples’ public testimony and preaching of the resurrection took place in the city of Jerusalem, where Jesus had been crucified and buried shortly before.
9. The Gospel message centered on the death and resurrection of Jesus.
10. Sunday was the primary day for gathering and worshipping.
11. James, the brother of Jesus and a former skeptic, was converted when, he believed, he saw the risen Jesus.
12. Just a few years later, Saul of Tarsus (Paul) became a Christian believer due to an experience that he believed was an appearance of the risen Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gary Habermas, “Evidential Apologetics,” in *Five Views on Apologetics*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Stephen B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 100.

<sup>2</sup>Gary Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), vii.

<sup>3</sup>Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 256.

<sup>4</sup>Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 9-10.

It is easy to see that the one event of the resurrection fully explains each and every one of these facts. Still, many reject the resurrection hypothesis. Those who do, however, are tasked with the responsibility of giving an alternative explanation that will account for these facts. While many such explanations have been suggested, in the end, they are all found lacking. This matter will be discussed more later on, but first, a brief defense of the most key facts is in order.

In *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, Habermas and his co-author, Michael Licona, reduce the twelve *known facts* to five<sup>5</sup> *minimal facts* and offer a defense of each. The first is that *Jesus died by crucifixion*. Habermas and Licona establish that this is abundantly evidenced and affirmed by virtually all historians and biblical scholars. In addition to the four Gospels and other New Testament writings, non-Christian sources that affirm Jesus' death by crucifixion include Josephus, Tacitus, Lucian, Mara Bar-Serapion, and the Talmud.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the plainest quotation from these sources comes from Josephus, who in reference to Jesus wrote that "Pilate, at the suggestion of the principle men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross."<sup>7</sup> No doubt, Jesus' death by crucifixion is the least contested of all the facts. As the highly critical scholar John Dominic Crossan has said, "That [Jesus] was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be."<sup>8</sup>

The second fact that Habermas and Licona defend is that *Jesus' disciples believed that he rose and appeared to them*. They write:

There is virtual consensus among scholars who study Jesus' resurrection that, subsequent to Jesus' death by crucifixion, his disciples really believed that he

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<sup>5</sup>More precisely, "4+1," since the final fact does not enjoy the nearly unanimous consensus the other four do.

<sup>6</sup>Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 49.

<sup>7</sup>Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.64, in *The Works of Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 480.

<sup>8</sup>John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 145, quoted in Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 49.

appeared to them risen from the dead. This conclusion has been reached by data that suggest that (1) the disciples themselves claimed that the risen Jesus had appeared to them, and (2) subsequent to Jesus' death by crucifixion, his disciples were radically transformed from fearful, cowering individuals who denied and abandoned him at his arrest and execution into bold proclaimers of the gospel and the risen Lord. They remained steadfast in the face of imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom. It is very clear that they sincerely believed that Jesus rose from the dead.<sup>9</sup>

Numerous New Testament writings testify to the disciples' belief that Jesus rose and appeared to them. First Corinthians 15:3-5 in particular supports that they proclaimed this belief from the very beginning of the Christian movement. Here, Paul gives a formulaic recounting of Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and appearances. Habermas and Licona note that "several factors mark this as an ancient creed that was part of the earliest traditions of the Christian church and that predates the writings of Paul."<sup>10</sup> Critical scholar Walter Kasper holds that it may have been in use as early as the end of A.D. 30.<sup>11</sup> Even skeptic Gerd Lüdemann argues that "the elements in the tradition are to be dated to the first two years after the crucifixion of Jesus."<sup>12</sup> Almost certainly, this creed traces back to before Paul's visit to Peter and James in Jerusalem around A.D. 35, which is likely the occasion upon which Paul received the material. Thus, it is strongly supported that the New Testament provides very early testimony to the disciples' belief that Jesus rose and appeared to them.

In addition to New Testament writings, Clement (c. 30-100) and Polycarp (c. 69-155) give further confirmation of the disciples' belief that Jesus rose and appeared to them. Clement testifies to their "complete certainty caused by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Clement 42:3) and Polycarp to their love for "him who died for our

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<sup>9</sup>Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 49-50.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 52. For details, see the discussion on this passage in chap. 2.

<sup>11</sup>Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 17. See also Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, trans. V. Green (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1976), 125.

<sup>12</sup>Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 38, quoted in Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 18.

benefit and for our sake was raised by God” (*To the Philippians 9:2*). According to Irenaeus and Tertullian, both of these men had relationships with the disciples themselves (Clement with Peter et al.; Polycarp with John et al.).<sup>13</sup> It is no surprise then that even the late New Testament critic Norman Perrin would write, “The more we study the tradition with regard to the appearances, the firmer the rock begins to appear upon which they are based.”<sup>14</sup>

Now, it is important to understand that the consensus on this matter is not only that the disciples *claimed* that Jesus rose and appeared to them, but also that they *sincerely believed* this happened. The transformation of the disciples that Habermas and Licona note testifies to this. As the fourth century historian Eusebius satirically demonstrated, it is absurd to assign to these conditions any other cause than a sincere belief in the resurrection:

Let us band together, to invent all the miracles and resurrection appearances which we never saw and let us carry the sham even to death! Why not die for nothing? Why dislike torture and whipping inflicted for no good reason? Let us go out to all nations and overthrow their institutions and denounce their gods! And even if we don't convince anybody, at least we'll have the satisfaction of drawing down on ourselves the punishment for our own deceit.<sup>15</sup>

The third fact that Habermas and Licona defend is that *the church persecuter Paul was suddenly changed*. Concerning Paul’s transformation, they write, “In his letters to the churches in Corinth, Galatia, and Philippi, Paul himself writes of his conversion from being a persecutor of the church to one who strongly promoted the Christian message.”<sup>16</sup> (Note: These letters are all accepted, almost universally, as authentically

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<sup>13</sup>Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 54-55.

<sup>14</sup>Norman Perrin, *The Resurrection according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 80, quoted in Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 55.

<sup>15</sup>Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, book 3, chap. 5, quoted in William Lane Craig, *The Son Rises: The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 24.

<sup>16</sup>Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 64.

Pauline.<sup>17)</sup> Galatians 1:22-23 in particular reveals that Paul's former persecutions of the church were well known even apart from his own testimony. He writes, "I was personally unknown, however, to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the account: 'The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.'" Additionally, the book of Acts tells of Paul's pre-Christian life, his conversion, and his labor and suffering for the gospel from there on.

Licona writes in his published dissertation on the resurrection,

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus, better known in history as the apostle Paul, to an aggressive Christian missionary who was largely responsible for the early spread of the church is a historical fact that must be adequately accounted for by any responsible historical hypothesis.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, the explanation given by Paul himself is that the risen Jesus appeared to him (see Acts 22:6-8, 1 Cor 15:8, Gal 1:15-17). No doubt, something drastic must have happened to turn Paul from persecutor to proselytizer, and there is no good reason to doubt that it was the experience he claims. Paul's martyrdom for his faith in the risen Jesus further supports this. According to church tradition, Paul was condemned by Nero and beheaded with the sword. His execution probably occurred in A.D. 67.<sup>19</sup>

The fourth fact that Habermas and Licona defend is that *the skeptic James, brother of Jesus, was suddenly changed*. In John 7:5 we read that during Jesus' ministry "even his own brothers did not believe in him." Yet then in Galatians 1:19, James is referred to as an apostle. Later in Acts 15, he is shown to be leader of the Jerusalem church. Finally, his eventual martyrdom as a Christian is attested by Josephus, Hegesippus, and

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<sup>17</sup>David E. Aune, *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010), 9.

<sup>18</sup>Michael Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 373.

<sup>19</sup>Charles L. Quarles, "Paul," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman Bible, 2003), 1259-60.

Clement of Alexandria.<sup>20</sup> We must ask, “What prompted this transformation from skeptic to high-ranking apostle and martyr?” The answer is likewise that the risen Jesus appeared to him.

The testimony of Jesus’ appearance to James in 1 Corinthians 15:17 is not only reliable and sufficient, but is arguably necessary for explaining such an about-face. Habermas and Licona cite critical scholar Reginald Fuller who suggested that without this testimony “we should have to invent” such an appearance in order to account for James’ transformation<sup>21</sup>—hence why the majority of scholars who comment on this matter grant that James had an experience he believed to be an appearance of the risen Jesus.<sup>22</sup> Craig further notes that “even the skeptical NT critic Hans Grass admits that the conversion of James is one of the surest proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”<sup>23</sup>

The fifth and final fact that Habermas and Licona defend is that *the tomb was empty*. This claim, no doubt, fits the criteria for the twelve *known facts*, as it is both well-evidenced and is generally admitted by critical scholars who research the resurrection. In fact, “roughly 75 percent of scholars on the subject accept the empty tomb as a historical fact.”<sup>24</sup> However, it does not fit the stricter criteria for *minimal facts* given in *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*. These criteria, to which the four facts just reviewed conform, are that “they are well evidenced and nearly every scholar accepts them.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, even though a considerable majority of scholars grant the empty tomb, Habermas and Licona

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<sup>20</sup>Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 68.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. See also Reginald Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 37.

<sup>22</sup>Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 621.

<sup>23</sup>William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith* (Wheaton, IL, Crossway, 2008), 283. See also Hans Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberishte*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 80.

<sup>24</sup>Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 70.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 44.

give a disclaimer that it does not have the nearly unanimous support that the other four facts have.

The historicity of the empty tomb is indeed very well attested. Habermas and Licona give three lines of evidence. First is what they call *the Jerusalem factor*. The reasoning is simple: “Jesus was publically executed in Jerusalem. His post-mortem appearances and empty tomb were first proclaimed publically there. It would have been impossible for Christianity to get off the ground in Jerusalem if the body had still been in the tomb.”<sup>26</sup> Yet, of course, Christianity did “get off the ground in Jerusalem”—even though there were many detractors. Certainly, if the tomb was still occupied, this would have been seized upon as a way to halt the quickly growing movement, and yet there are no known records of any claims that Jesus’ body was exhumed.

Further evidence for the empty tomb is found in *enemy attestation*, the second line of evidence Habermas and Licona give. They note that rather than pointing to an occupied tomb, early critics of Christianity instead accused Jesus’ disciples of stealing the body (Matt 28:12-13; Justin Martyr, *Trypho* 108; Tertullian, *De Specaculis* 30).<sup>27</sup> Thus, not only did Jesus’ followers claim the tomb was empty, but their enemies confirmed it in their rebuttals.

The third and final line of evidence Habermas and Licona give for the empty tomb is *the testimony of the women*. In the Gospel accounts, we read that it was women who discovered the empty tomb. “This would be an odd invention,” they write, “since in both Jewish and Roman cultures, woman [*sic*] were lowly esteemed and their testimony was regarded as questionable, certainly not as credible as a man’s.”<sup>28</sup> The fact that these

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<sup>26</sup>Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 70. See also *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright in Dialogue*, ed. Robert Stewart (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 40-41 in which Wright points to messianic movements in second temple Judaism that halted upon the supposed messiah’s death.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 72.

women are nevertheless reported as those who discovered the empty tomb testifies to the authenticity of the accounts.

Pincas Lapid, a Jewish scholar, agrees that the above is strong evidence for the empty tomb. Lapid, although a rejecter of Jesus as Messiah, believes that Jesus was in fact raised from the dead. In his book, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*, he argues for the resurrection along a number of the same lines as Habermas and Licona. He places special emphasis on the empty tomb and its discovery by Jesus' women followers, pointing also to many details related to the women that further the case for authenticity.<sup>29</sup> That Lapid believes in the empty tomb and the resurrection wholly apart from a religious commitment to Christianity is a powerful testimony to the persuasiveness of the case. At the same time, the fact that most others who have been convinced of the resurrection are now committed Christians is only to be expected.

Habermas and Licona conclude their defense of the *minimal facts* by noting that these five facts accomplish two things: “(1) They provide compelling evidence for Jesus' resurrection and (2) they stand as data that must be accounted for by any opposing theory.”<sup>30</sup> While space does not permit a thorough assessment of each opposing theory, I will briefly discuss below Habermas and Licona's general treatment of these.

### **Habermas and Licona: Determining the Best Explanation of the Facts**

Habermas has noted that there are both natural and supernatural opposing theories to the resurrection of Jesus. The natural theories are divided into two categories: internal and external.<sup>31</sup> Essentially, natural internal theories all rely on some kind of

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<sup>29</sup>See Pinchas Lapid, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 95-97.

<sup>30</sup>Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 76.

<sup>31</sup>Gary Habermas, “Mapping the Recent Trend toward the Bodily Resurrection Appearances of Jesus in Light of Other Prominent Critical Positions,” in *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright in Dialogue*, ed. Robert Stewart (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 83-84.



hallucination or self-deception to explain the data. In doing so, these face at least four major problems. First, they fail to explain all the data—the empty tomb in particular. Second, they do not fit the physical nature of the appearances that the disciples were convinced they experienced (e.g., touching Jesus, eating with Jesus, etc.). Third, even granting that the disciples’ experiences were internal in nature, not only would many isolated hallucinations be required, but also mass hallucinations, which would hardly qualify as *natural*. Fourth, merely internal experiences surely would not transform the disciples so dramatically. Consider Lapid’s assessment:

If the defeated and depressed group of disciples overnight could change into a victorious movement of faith, based only on autosuggestion of self-deception – without a fundamental faith experience – then this would be a much greater miracle than the resurrection itself.<sup>32</sup>

Natural external theories come in a much greater variety. Some of the most popular have been (1) that Jesus only appeared to have died, (2) that the disciples stole Jesus’ body, (3) that Jesus was never properly buried, and (4) that the resurrection story is legendary. Again, none of these explain all of the data as does the resurrection. Moreover, they are simply not supported by the evidence.

Concerning the first of these theories, Habermas and Licona cite a 1986 study on the procedures and effects of scourging and crucifixion published by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The study concluded that “interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge.”<sup>33</sup> One might add that even setting modern medical knowledge aside, historically, there is no doubt that Roman soldiers knew both how to kill people and how to discern when a person had died. Finally, if Jesus had somehow survived, he

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<sup>32</sup>Lapid, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 126.

<sup>33</sup>William D. Edwards, Wesley J. Gabel, and Floyd E. Hosmer, “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 255, no. 11 (March 1986): 1463, quoted in Habermas and Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, 102.

would have hardly been in a condition that would lead the disciple to believe he had been supernaturally raised from the dead.

That the disciples stole Jesus' body is the oldest of all natural external theories.<sup>34</sup> While it may explain the empty tomb, it is utterly incompatible with the disciple's sincere belief that Jesus rose and appeared to them. This theory has been largely abandoned, but its early emergence actually serves as evidence against the third theory listed above—that Jesus was never properly buried. After all, to say that Jesus' body was stolen grants that an empty tomb was something to be accounted for, which presupposes Jesus' burial in a known tomb. Additional evidence for such a burial is found in the independent reports that Jesus was buried in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. Craig writes,

Even the most skeptical scholars acknowledge that Joseph [of Arimathea] was probably the genuine, historical individual who buried Jesus, since it is unlikely that early Christian believers would invent an individual, give him a name and nearby town of origin, and place that fictional character on the historical council of the Sanhedrin, whose members were well known.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, there is the theory that the resurrection is legendary. This theory posits that the resurrection was not believed and proclaimed from the beginning but developed as a legendary story over time. This faces several problems—namely, its incompatibility with all but one of the *minimal facts* established above. We have seen that the disciples, Paul, and James all had very early and sincere belief in the resurrection of Jesus. Moreover, much of the evidence put forth for the empty tomb also runs counter to legend. While perhaps a case could be made for legendary embellishments of certain details in the resurrection story, the origin of belief in the resurrection itself cannot be legitimately attributed to legend.

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<sup>34</sup>See comments on *enemy attestation* in the fifth and final fact that Habermas and Licona defend in the sub-section above.

<sup>35</sup>Craig, *The Son Rises*, 53.

Now turning to supernatural theories, Habermas divides these also into two categories: subjective and objective.<sup>36</sup> Supernatural subjective theories, like natural internal theories, deny that the disciples actually saw a *physically* or *bodily* risen Jesus. However, the difference is that supernatural subjective theories attribute the disciples' experiences not to internal hallucination, but to outward spiritual manifestation. That is to say, Jesus actually appeared to them supernaturally, but the appearances were *visionary* or *luminous*, not corporeal<sup>37</sup> (implying a merely spiritual resurrection). Unlike natural internal theories, supernatural subjective theories can make sense of the group appearances. However, the purported physical nature of the appearances is still not explained, nor is the empty tomb.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, there is the category of supernatural objective theory, which now brings us outside of the realm of opposing theories. This is essentially the theory that Jesus was indeed raised bodily and appeared to his disciples in like manner. Of course, Habermas and Licona argue that this best explains all the data. Certainly, the evidence for the physical nature of the disciples' experiences is quite strong—such that even some commentators who deny bodily resurrection, like Gerd Lüdemann, still acknowledge that the disciples must have had experiences that were convincingly corporeal.<sup>39</sup> But why insist that their experiences were not as they seemed? The following quote from Lüdemann gives some insight on the matter. He writes, “If you say that Jesus rose from the dead biologically, you would have to presuppose that a decaying corpse—which is already

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<sup>36</sup>Habermas, “Mapping the Recent Trend,” 87-88.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Fuller is an exception in that although he believed that Jesus rose and appeared only spiritually, he did affirm the empty tomb. Apparently, he believed that the tomb was empty because Jesus' physical body was transformed into an immaterial body, leaving no remainder.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 88-89.

cold and without blood in its brain—could be made alive again. I think that is nonsense.”<sup>40</sup>

Thus, it appears that worldview, not evidence, is what it ultimately comes down to for some. Licona further demonstrates this notion via a quotation of Charles Hartshorne. In reference to Flew and Habermas’ 1985 debate on the resurrection, Hartshorne wrote, “I can neither explain away the evidences [for the resurrection] to which Habermas appeals, nor can I simply agree with [the skeptical position]. . . . My metaphysical bias is against resurrections.”<sup>41</sup> This is revealing and is perhaps indicative of the majority of those who reject the resurrection, whether admitted or not.

A more explicit recognition of Licona’s independent work is in order before moving onto N.T. Wright’s contributions. At various points in this section, I have cited Licona’s published dissertation *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographic Approach*. In this work, Licona establishes what he calls “the historical bedrock pertaining to the fate of Jesus” (similar to the *minimal facts*) and then concludes, by way of meticulous analysis, that the bodily resurrection of Jesus serves as the best explanation for it. He uses five criteria for determining this conclusion: explanatory scope, explanatory power, plausibility, less ad hoc, and illumination.<sup>42</sup> Although space does not permit an explanation of each of these criteria, many of them have been illustrated in the above analysis of various theories. Most clearly, we have seen that the bodily resurrection of Jesus has the greatest explanatory scope in that it explains all of the data rather than just some of it.

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<sup>40</sup>Gerd Lüdemann, “Opening Statements,” in *Jesus’ Resurrection: Fact or Figment?*, ed. Paul Copan and R. K. Tacelli (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2000), 45, quoted in Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 496.

<sup>41</sup>Charles Hartshorne, “Response to the Debate,” in *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? The Resurrection Debate*, ed. T. L. Miethe (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 142, quoted in Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 43.

<sup>42</sup>Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 600-607.

All of the above strongly supports that the resurrection of Jesus is indeed the best explanation of the facts. In recent decades, scholars have taken notice of this and have responded accordingly. In 2003, Habermas tallied the positions of current scholars, noting a recent trend toward bodily resurrection. Interestingly, he found that less than one-quarter hold to any kind of natural theory. Accounting for the few who are agnostic on the matter, the almost three-quarters that remain hold that Jesus rose from the dead *in some sense*. Of these, more than three-quarters hold to the bodily resurrection of Jesus.<sup>43</sup>

### **N. T. Wright: Six Christian Mutations**

N.T. Wright has also made great strides in defending the historicity of the resurrection. In his monumental work *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, “he boldly challenges resurrection scholars that anything less than a historical, bodily resurrection of Jesus simply cannot account for the evidence,” observes Ted Cabal.<sup>44</sup> Wright approaches his argument from a bit of a different angle than Habermas and Licona. He argues that “the combination of empty tomb and appearances of the living Jesus forms a set of circumstances which is itself *both necessary and sufficient* for the rise of early Christian belief.” He continues, “Without these phenomena, we cannot explain why this belief came into existence, and took the shape it did. With them, we can explain it exactly and precisely.”<sup>45</sup>

Now, what exactly is this early Christian belief to which Wright says only the empty tomb and appearances could give rise? Of course, it is first of all the resurrection of Jesus, which served as a central tenet of the faith from the very beginning. But it is also the unique Christian emphasis and view on the doctrine of resurrection that suddenly

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<sup>43</sup>Habermas, “Mapping the Recent Trend,” 91.

<sup>44</sup>Ted Cabal, “Defending the Resurrection of Jesus: Yesterday, Today, and Forever,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 123.

<sup>45</sup>N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 696.

emerged. When this is set against the common beliefs of Second Temple Judaism, it becomes especially clear that the empty tomb and appearances (which are well-evidenced themselves) together serve as a necessary and sufficient cause. Of course, the implication of the empty tomb and appearances is clear. Jesus did indeed rise from the dead. And, according to Wright, no other theory can adequately explain the unprecedented rise of early Christian belief.

Wright's intimate understanding of Second Temple Judaism is probably his greatest strength, and it has led him to a unique and powerful set of arguments for the resurrection of Jesus. In *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, he highlights six Christian mutations within first-century Jewish resurrection belief that are satisfactorily explained only by the bodily resurrection of Jesus. These were given in a condensed form in Wright's 2005 debate with John Dominic Crossan on the resurrection. From Wright's opening statement:

My case here is that we can track with considerable precision and over a wide range of early evidence a phenomenon so striking and remarkable that it demands a serious and well-grounded historical explanation. Early Christian belief in resurrection is clearly not something derived from any form of paganism; it is a mutation from within Judaism, or rather six mutations.<sup>46</sup>

The first mutation Wright highlights is that belief in resurrection moved from being a peripheral item of belief to the very center.<sup>47</sup> He writes in *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, "There is general agreement that for much of the Old Testament the idea of resurrection is, to put it at its strongest, deeply asleep, only to be woken by echoes from later times and texts."<sup>48</sup> And yet something quite different is seen in the New Testament, which itself was largely responsible for awakening resurrection in the Old Testament.

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<sup>46</sup>N. T. Wright, "The Resurrection: A Dialogue," quoted in Stewart, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 18.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 85.

Wright notes that if resurrection were taken away from, say, Paul's letters, 1 Peter, or Revelation, their whole framework would be destroyed, adding that the same is true for the great second-century church fathers.<sup>49</sup> Certainly, this major shift would be very curious apart from the disciples encountering truly compelling evidence for the resurrection of Jesus.

The second mutation Wright highlights has to do with the nature of resurrection. While Jewish sources are vague on what form the resurrected body will take, Wright notes that "the early Christian sources, again and again, indicate that the body will be transformed into a new type of immortal physicality."<sup>50</sup> Likewise, this change is difficult to explain apart from convincing proofs of the resurrection (in particular, Jesus appearing in a glorified immortal body). Certainly, on both counts above, Jesus' Jewish disciples would not have been disposed to make such abrupt changes regarding resurrection, whether in emphasis or view, unprovoked.

The third mutation Wright highlights is that a change from a wide spectrum of belief in what happens after death to a very strong and unified affirmation of resurrection took place. For the Jews and pagans there remained many different opinions on this matter, but outside of the distortion of Gnosticism, the early Christians all believed in the resurrection of the dead. And "from Paul through Tertullian," Wright states, "there is development and reflection about what precisely resurrection would mean, and how to argue it before a skeptical audience."<sup>51</sup> Ultimately, we see that belief in resurrection became not only central and specific, but also quite homogeneous.

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<sup>49</sup>N. T. Wright, "The Self Revelation of God in Human History: A Dialogue on Jesus with N.T. Wright," in Antony Flew, *There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 200.

<sup>50</sup>Wright, "The Resurrection," 19.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

The fourth mutation Wright highlights is that the resurrection as an event split in two.<sup>52</sup> We observe that before the rise of Christianity, resurrection was thought of only as a single event in the last day, but this suddenly changed as followers of Jesus came to believe and proclaim he had been raised from the dead. This new perspective on resurrection is clearly seen in 1 Corinthians 15:22-23 where Paul writes, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.” Such a spitting in two of the resurrection, Wright argues, was a novel idea not likely to have been simply imagined by the disciples.

The fifth mutation Wright highlights is that resurrection began to function in a newly metaphorical way. After noting its metaphorical meaning in Judaism of “return from exile,” as in Ezekiel 37, Wright states, “That has disappeared in early Christianity. Instead, we find the term *resurrection* . . . functioning metaphorically . . . with reference to baptism and holiness.”<sup>53</sup> Of course, resurrection maintained its literal, bodily meaning, but its metaphorical meaning changed quite suddenly and drastically. Moreover, this change was linked directly to Jesus’ resurrection. Consider Paul’s words in Romans 6:4-5:

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

The sixth and final mutation Wright highlights is the idea of the Messiah rising from the dead. He states, “Nobody expected the Messiah to be raised from the dead, for the simple reason that nobody in Judaism at the time expected a Messiah who would die, especially one who would die shamefully and violently.”<sup>54</sup> He later gives the example of

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<sup>52</sup>Wright, “The Resurrection,” 19.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.



Bar-Kochaoba, who many hailed as the Messiah, but once he was killed, all accepted they were wrong and moved on. This is just one example, Wright notes, for the Jews of Jesus' time (give or take two hundred years) simply did not believe or teach that the Messiah would die and be raised from the dead.<sup>55</sup> "But not only did the early Christians believe that the Messiah had been raised from the dead," observes Wright, "they made the resurrection a key element in their demonstration that he was the Messiah, developing several brand-new exegetical arguments to make the point, particularly from Psalms and Isaiah, as in Romans 1, Romans 15, Acts 2, and so forth."<sup>56</sup> Now, to be clear, this is not say that these Old Testament passages do not actually concern Jesus' resurrection. It is simply to say that their prophetic meaning had not been uncovered until the light of Jesus' resurrection had been shed upon them.

In response to these Christian mutations as a whole, Wright has summarized the challenge they bring, writing, "All this forces us as historians to ask a very simple question: 'Why did all the early Christians known to us, from the earliest times for which we have evidence, have this very new, but remarkably unanimous, view of resurrection?'"<sup>57</sup> The answer to him is clear: The tomb was empty and the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples. These two phenomena together, Wright argues, are both necessary and sufficient for the rise of early Christian belief.

One might find it interesting that the above quotation was taken from an appendix of a book by Antony Flew. You will remember that both of his debates with Gary Habermas on the resurrection have been referenced in this chapter. Only a few years after the second debate, Flew publically renounced his atheism in *There is a God: How the Word's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*. Though he did not become a

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<sup>55</sup>Wright, "The Resurrection," 40-41.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>57</sup>Wright, "The Self Revelation of God," 201.

Christian (but rather a deist), his attitude toward Christianity did change quite dramatically. At the close of the appendix in which he featured N.T. Wright, Flew wrote,

I am very impressed with Bishop Wright's approach, which is absolutely fresh. He presents the case for Christianity as something new for the first time. This is enormously important, especially in the United Kingdom, where the Christian religion has virtually disappeared. It is absolutely wonderful, absolutely radical, and very powerful."<sup>58</sup>

Wright's contributions to the defense of the resurrection are indeed impressive. When considered alongside those of Habermas and Licona among others, the case for the resurrection is shown to be especially strong. Surely this section has demonstrated, at minimum, that the resurrection of Jesus is historically defensible.

### **The Practical Outworkings of the Resurrection of Jesus**

It is important not only to defend the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus, but also to demonstrate its practical outworkings. This section will show that the resurrection serves as a basis for Christian hope and sanctification. More precisely, we will see that the resurrection brings hope in the midst of suffering and motivation for holy living.

#### **Hope in the Midst of Suffering**

Because we live in a fallen world, suffering is inevitable. Christians, of course, are not immune to this. In fact, for the sake of Christ, believers often suffer much more than unbelievers. Yet, in the midst of this suffering, there is great hope. Peter writes of this hope, calling it "a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). As John Piper notes, this verse assures us that the Christian's hope is "as alive as Jesus!"<sup>59</sup> In light of the convincing proofs of the resurrection of Jesus just reviewed, this is quite encouraging.

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<sup>58</sup>Flew, *There Is a God*, 213.

<sup>59</sup>John Piper, "Your Hope Is as Alive as Jesus," *Desiring God*, accessed August 21, 2017, <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/your-hope-is-as-alive-as-jesus>.

“Human hope is integrally linked to the dimension of time,” writes Hal Lane. “Hope involves a present perspective based upon a future expectation.”<sup>60</sup> Such can be seen clearly throughout the New Testament. Of course, this future expectation for the Christian is the resurrection of the dead, which is guaranteed by Jesus’ own resurrection (see 1 Cor 15:20-23, Phil 3:7-11). And such hope does indeed make a tremendous difference in the here and now—especially in the midst of suffering. Below, we will explore how the resurrection brings hope in the midst of three kinds of suffering: grief, fear, and daily struggles.

Grief can be spurred on by many things. In particular, the death of a loved one is a very powerful grief-inducing event that most everyone experiences at some point in life. Gary Habermas experienced this in the premature loss of his wife to cancer. This especially tragic event compelled him to apply in a very personal way the resurrection he had for years defended so vigorously in the academic arena. Habermas says he felt a kinship with Job during the difficult time leading up to and following his wife’s death. He writes, “I had said in print that the lessons found in Job really *worked* in real-life predicaments. Now I had the opportunity to prove it.”<sup>61</sup>

So, what are these lessons found in Job? Perhaps the most important is that even though Job did not receive the answer as to why he had to suffer so greatly, what he already knew about God was sufficient for him to trust Him. The same is true for believers today. It is also noteworthy that even though God did not answer Job’s chief question, He did not ask Job to trust in Him without any basis. “God repeatedly directed him to facts in the real world, usually based on biology and physics,” writes Habermas.

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<sup>60</sup>Hal Lane, “‘Hope’ in Paul’s Letters,” *Biblical Illustrator* 39, no. 3 (Spring 2013): 64.

<sup>61</sup>Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 188.

He continues, “This may be refreshing in an age in which science is frequently thought to oppose religious belief. For later believers, the historical resurrection of Jesus is key.”<sup>62</sup>

Accordingly, the New Testament writers repeatedly direct their readers to the resurrection of Jesus. Although this is a past event, it has huge future implications—namely, that death does not have the final word, but rather all who are in Christ will one day be raised to live together with him forever. In the meantime, God is in control working in all things towards this end. We therefore have hope even in the midst of suffering (and unanswered questions). Habermas had to continually force himself to focus on these facts, and in doing so was able to deal with his grief. He encourages his readers to do the same.<sup>63</sup>

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul writes specifically of the hope that the resurrection brings when grieving the loss of a loved one:

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Here Paul very clearly teaches that because Jesus was raised from the dead, believers who have “fallen asleep” will also be raised. Thus, the Thessalonians do not have to “grieve as others do who have no hope.” There is a resurrection in store for them upon Christ’s coming. Moreover, this entails a reunion of all believers in the end. As for those who do not remain on earth until Christ’s coming but follow their loved ones in death, they will together await the resurrection of the dead in heaven. While the above

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<sup>62</sup>Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 195.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 193-96.

passage only hints at such an intermediate state,<sup>64</sup> the New Testament as whole teaches this more clearly.<sup>65</sup>

Now, all of the above is a great comfort to those who have the assurance of their loved one's salvation in Christ. But what about those who do not? This does indeed make the grief much more difficult to bear. In such a case, one would do well first to entrust their loved one to God, remembering Abraham's words, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (Gen 18:25). Then, one can still turn to the resurrection of Jesus as a source of hope. While it may not offer hope for the one who dies in unbelief, those who grieve the loss of such a person can look forward to what it promises them—that in the new creation God "will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4).

Moving on, fear is another form of suffering believers often face. Fear of death in particular might be spurred on by the death of a loved one, aging, personal illness, or other life-threatening dangers. Habermas addresses this common affliction as well in his application of the resurrection to suffering. He gives a three-step strategy for facing the fear of death: "internalizing the truth that eternal life is a reality, shifting your pattern of thinking to a heavenly perspective, and substituting your anxious thoughts of death with these truths."<sup>66</sup> Thus, similar to his advice on dealing with grief, Habermas encourages an intentional redirecting of thoughts. He maintains that this is "thoroughly biblical, and for

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<sup>64</sup>Such a hint is seen in the phrase, "God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep." See David Ewart, "1-2 Thessalonians," in *Baker Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 1080.

<sup>65</sup>For more on the intermediate state, see Wayne Grudem, "Death and the Intermediate State," in *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 810-25.

<sup>66</sup>Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 179.

those interested in scientific verification, it is also based on demonstrated psychological methods.”<sup>67</sup>

Now, it bears reminding that the resurrection is at the heart of the strategy outlined above. After all, “eternal life” comes through the death and resurrection of Jesus and ultimately entails one’s own resurrection from the dead. For this reason, believers can proclaim with Paul, “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Cor 15:55). Ultimately, the resurrection renders death powerless. This truth came alive for Paul and his companions as they faced deadly peril and, in the end, were able to do so with confident hope rather than fear. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:8-10,

For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

It is important to observe that Paul and his companions were not unmoved by the circumstances they faced. Rather, they were at first deeply distressed by them—such that they were forced to rely not on themselves but on God. Indeed, it was through their reliance on “God who raises the dead” that their great burden was lifted. God’s power demonstrated in resurrection of Jesus assured them that God could deliver them from any peril. But the label “God who raises the dead” indicates much more than that. Stephen Mathewson points out that “dead” (νεκρούς) in this phrase is plural. “Here, as in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23,” he concludes, “[Paul] anticipates our future resurrection as the logical consequence of Jesus’s resurrection.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, even death itself must not be feared. Whether one is facing cancer, persecution, or simply the reality of death, hope can be found in “God who raises the dead.”

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<sup>67</sup>Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*, 176.

<sup>68</sup>Stephen Mathewson, *Risen: 50 Reasons Why the Resurrection Changes Everything* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 72.

Finally, suffering can take on many other forms besides grief and fear. Certainly, we all face daily struggles of various kinds, some more severe than others. Paul uses the phrase “sufferings of this present time,” stating that these “are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18). These sufferings may include physical pain, disability, financial difficulty, or relational strain to name a few. Ligon Duncan notes that besides such outward struggles, inward struggles with sin are also in view here. Yet Paul proclaims that none of these sufferings are even worth comparing to the glory that is to come. Moreover, they are not without purpose. As Duncan observes, “Paul is saying that God uses those sufferings to produce the future glory that he will reveal to you and in you.”<sup>69</sup>

The connection between Romans 8:18 and resurrection is revealed in the broader context of the verse—that is, in the groaning of creation to be freed of its bondage to corruption. “And not only the creation,” Paul writes, “but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:23). Of course, “redemption of our bodies” is no less than *resurrection*, which is guaranteed to believers by the resurrection of Jesus. Joni Eareckson Tada reflects on this in light of her paralysis, writing, “Somewhere in my broken, paralyzed body is the seed of what I shall become. The paralysis makes what I am to become all the more grand when you contrast atrophied, useless legs against splendid resurrected legs.”<sup>70</sup>

Likewise, every daily struggle a Christian faces provides yet another stark contrast to what will be when the risen Jesus returns and makes all things right. This is “our blessed hope” that we await (Titus 2:13). In the meantime, believers are given the

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<sup>69</sup>Ligon Duncan, “Living in the Hope of Liberation from Bondage,” in *Come Home: Essays on the New Heaven and New Earth*, ed. D. A. Carson and Jeff Robinson, Sr. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 112.

<sup>70</sup>Joni Eareckson Tada, *Heaven: Your Real Home* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 39.

Holy Spirit, “who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Eph 1:14). And even this gift is not unrelated to the resurrection. In John 7:37-39, Jesus’ resurrection is shown to be a prerequisite for the giving of the Holy Spirit:

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

John’s commentary in the final verse is key. As Adrian Warnock observes, “Prior to the death, resurrection, and glorification of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, although at work in the world, had not yet been sent to do this special work.”<sup>71</sup> This is because only the risen and glorified Jesus could pour out the Holy Spirit. Of course, he did this at Pentecost and ever since has given the Holy Spirit to indwell all who believe. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit’s indwelling of believers today testifies to the resurrection of Jesus. On the flip side, the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection assures believers that the Holy Spirit indwells them, ready to minister to and empower them. Thus, there is hope for the believer even in the midst of suffering. As Paul writes, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you” (Romans 8:11).

### **Motivation for Holy Living**

The resurrection of Jesus not only brings hope in the midst of suffering, but also motivation for holy living. That is to say, because Jesus was raised from the dead, believers are motivated to live righteously in the present time. Below, three ways through which the resurrection brings motivation for holy living will be discussed. These can be summarized as identification, fixation, and anticipation.

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<sup>71</sup>Adrian Warnock, *Raised with Christ: How the Resurrection Changes Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 210.



The first way through which the resurrection brings motivation for holy living is the Christian's *identification* with the death and resurrection of Jesus (dying to sin and being raised to walk in new life). Now, until this point, our focus has been largely on how Jesus' resurrection guarantees to believers their own future bodily resurrection. To this we shall return, but here we are concerned with the *spiritual* resurrection that believers share in at the present time.<sup>72</sup> Romans 6:1-4 is key:

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

This passage makes clear that to be baptized into Christ Jesus is to both die (to sin) and be raised (to walk in newness of life) with him. The logical outcome of both of these is holy living, and yet we know through both Scripture and experience that this does not come immediately but progressively. Paul shows that one way to spur on this progression is by way of remembrance. He reminds the Christians in Rome of how they have shared in Christ's death and resurrection, so that they might be motivated to work toward fulfilling its logical implication of holy living. Believers today should likewise be motivated to progress in sanctification by remembering their identification with Jesus' death and resurrection.

A subsequent and similar reminder Paul gives is worth citing. In Romans 7:4, he writes, "Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God." Notice again the connection between death, resurrection, and sanctification. Tom Schreiner comments that this verse "indicates that the death and resurrection of Christ not only were designed to remove the condemnation

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<sup>72</sup>This is what Wright calls its "metaphorical meaning."

of the law, but they also broke the power of the law so that believers could live lives pleasing to God by bearing good fruit.”<sup>73</sup>

A second way through which the resurrection brings motivation for holy living is the Christian’s *fixation* on the risen, glorified Jesus. Since sanctification is being transformed into Christ’s likeness and culminates in the believer’s glorification, to fixate on Christ in all his glory will encourage such a transformation to that end. This reality is not always appreciated, but instead, Jesus’ crucifixion is often presented as a motivation for holy living to the exclusion of the resurrection. Of course, the former can certainly serve as such a motivation. As noted above, identification with Christ’s death means dying to sin. But what good is death without resurrection? Moreover, often the motivation of the crucifixion is put not in terms of identification but rather indebtedness to Jesus for his sacrifice, which is foreign to the New Testament. The sentiment is, “Jesus suffered a torturous death on the cross for us. What will we now do for him?” The old hymn, “I Gave My Life for Thee,” communicates this sentiment from Jesus’ perspective as follows:

I gave My life for thee,  
My precious blood I shed,  
That thou might'st ransomed be,  
And quickened from the dead;  
I gave, I gave My life for thee,  
What hast thou giv'n for Me?  
I gave, I gave My life for thee,  
What hast thou giv'n for Me?<sup>74</sup>

This approach is problematic not only theologically, but also pragmatically.

Warnock gives some helpful insight:

If we only contemplate Jesus experiencing terrible suffering on the cross, there is a danger that we might even feel sorry for him. Jesus does not want our pity. He wants our worship, adoration, and celebration as the rightfully installed King of the universe! Contemplating the resurrection and glorification of Jesus helps us

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<sup>73</sup>Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 353.

<sup>74</sup>Frances R. Havergal, “I Gave My Life for Thee,” in *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: Lifeway, 2008), 174.

recognize him for who he really is. Whenever we seek his face, we see glimpses of his glory, and our transformation into his likeness continues.<sup>75</sup>

Finally, a third way through which the resurrection brings motivation for holy living is the Christian's *anticipation* of the resurrection of the dead and the renewal of creation. Because there remains a continuity with what is now and what will be, actions in this present world have eternal significance. Thus, at the end of his great discourse on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul does not write, "Therefore, sit back and relax because there's this wonderful future ahead of you,"<sup>76</sup> observes Wright. No, he writes, "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Because of the resurrection of the dead and the renewal of creation, Wright states, "what we do in the present . . . in name of Christ and in the power of the Spirit, will not be lost but will be part of the eventual kingdom that God will make. In other words, there is continuity as well as discontinuity."<sup>77</sup>

Wright comes back to this idea repeatedly in his book *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. In addition to the verse quoted above, he also references 1 Corinthians 6:13b-14, which reads "The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power." Wright notes, "Paul speaks of the future resurrection as a major motive for treating our bodies properly in the present time."<sup>78</sup> Only a few verses down from here, Paul writes the oft quoted verses, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor

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<sup>75</sup>Warnock, *Raised with Christ*, 150.

<sup>76</sup>Wright, "The Resurrection: A Dialogue," 42.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 26.

6:19-20). While this is indeed a great motivation for holy living, just as great a motivation is that God will “raise us up by his power” (1 Cor 6:14).

So then, the Christian’s hope for the resurrection of the dead and the renewal of creation should inspire personal holiness, resulting in good works that benefit all. John Updike nonetheless observed “that many believe the desire for the afterlife is selfish,” notes Timothy Keller.<sup>79</sup> Why is this so? Keller argues that this belief is rooted in the misconception that such an afterlife is some “immaterial, spiritual paradise removed from this world.”<sup>80</sup> Updike himself recognized this error, countering that true Christian hope “is opposite of selfish: it is love and praise for the world...It is not for some *other* world but for *this* world.”<sup>81</sup> Indeed, when believers long for the resurrection of the dead and the renewal of creation, they naturally seek to move themselves and this present world toward that end. And as they share the hope of the gospel with others, they seek through their good deeds to give them a taste in the present of what is to come.

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<sup>79</sup>Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical* (New York: Viking, 2016), 170.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>81</sup>John Updike, *Self-Consciousness: Memoirs* (London and New York: Penguin, 1990), 206, quoted in Keller, *Making Sense of God*, 170.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

The ministry project consisted of a series of six sermons and six teaching sessions on the resurrection of Jesus. An evangelistic tract on the resurrection was also produced and distributed among church members. The sermons were expositions of 1 Corinthians 15, and the teaching sessions were lectures giving an apologetic for the resurrection. The purpose was to teach the members of FBC an apologetic for the resurrection in hopes of increasing their knowledge and appreciation of the resurrection, its defense, and its implications. Other elements of the project that helped facilitate and measure the project's success consisted of a test group, a pre and post series survey, and evaluation forms for the sermons, lessons, and tract.

#### **Project Schedule**

The project from start to finish took twenty-two weeks, having three phases: preparation, implementation, and follow-up. It began July 23 and ended December 24.

Below is a weekly schedule:

- A. Description of preparation phase (Weeks 1-13).
  - 1. During weeks 1-6, I wrote the six sermons for the project and received evaluations forms.
  - 2. During weeks 7-12, I wrote the six teaching sessions for the project and received evaluations forms.
  - 3. During week 13, I composed the evangelistic tract for the project and received evaluation forms.
  
- B. Description of implementation phase (Weeks 14-20).
  - 1. During week 14, I enlisted participants in the project and had them complete the pre-series survey.
  - 2. During week 15-20, I preached the sermons and taught the lessons for the project.
  - 3. During week 20, I also distributed the evangelistic tract to the project participants.

C. Description of follow-up phase (Weeks 21-22).

1. During week 21, I administered the post-series surveys and made the remaining evangelistic tracts available to all church members.
2. During week 22, the pre and post-series surveys were compared using a t-test for dependent samples.

### **Preparation Phase**

The sermon series and teaching sessions required a good amount of study and writing on the front end. It was, however, helpful that research for chapters 2 and 3 of this paper corresponded well to the sermons and lessons, respectively. In addition to composing the sermons and lessons, they were submitted to a panel of reviewers who used a rubric to evaluate them and suggest any changes. The evangelistic tract was also written and reviewed during this phase.<sup>1</sup>

An open call was given for those who would take part in the test group. The only qualification given was that they had to be older than eighteen. For a number of weeks leading up to the project implementation, a brief explanation of the participants' responsibilities was given during the Sunday morning announcement time with an invitation to sign up on a sheet at the back of the sanctuary. Email and social media were also used to recruit participants. The sign-up was closed once the pre-series survey was given.

### **Implementation Phase**

The first step of the project implementation was the official enlistment of project participants. Their enlistment was marked by their completion of the pre-series survey which was given the Sunday night before the preaching and teaching was to begin. The survey utilized a six point Likert scale and consisted of thirty questions: ten on perspective, ten on biblical knowledge, and ten on apologetic knowledge.<sup>2</sup> While twenty people took this first survey, only seventeen fulfilled their duty to completion, fully completing both

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<sup>1</sup>See appendices 2 and 3.

<sup>2</sup>See appendix 1.

the pre and post-series surveys. The average attendance was approximately 125 for the sermon series and 30 for the teaching sessions.

The next Sunday, the preaching and teaching began. The sermons were preached in the morning services, and the lessons were taught in the evening services. They were all recorded and posted to YouTube so that they could be viewed online in case of a participant's absence. Others who were not project participants also appreciated being able to view these online. At the end of the final teaching session, the evangelistic tracts were distributed.

### **Follow-Up Phase**

The follow-up phase consisted of administering the post-series survey and comparing it with the first survey to determine any changes in the participants' knowledge and appreciation of the resurrection, its defense, and its implications. The remaining evangelistic tracts were also made available to all church members, being placed in various locations throughout the church building.

The post-series survey was the same as the first survey given and was compared against it using a t-test for dependent samples to determine if there was a statistically significant overall change for each participant. Also for each participant, the average pre and post-series scores for each category were calculated and compared.<sup>3</sup> For each question, the pre and post-series group averages were calculated and compared.<sup>4</sup>

### **Synopsis of Sermons Preached**

The sermon series was titled "Firstfruits: The Truth and Implications of the Resurrection," a title shared with the accompanying teaching series. The sermons were a series of expositions of 1 Corinthians 15. While apologetic arguments were made when

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<sup>3</sup>See appendix 7.

<sup>4</sup>See appendix 5.

appropriate (particularly in the first two sermons), the sermons mostly concerned the implications of the resurrection, while the teaching sessions dealt more directly with apologetic arguments defending the truth of the resurrection. The implications, as revealed in 1 Corinthians 15, are both eschatological and ethical.

### **Sermon 1**

The first sermon was on 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and was titled “A Reminder of the Gospel.” It highlighted the simple gospel message Paul reminds the Corinthians of, having three points: (1) Christ died for our sins, (2) He was buried, and (3) He was raised. The sermon celebrated the simplicity of the gospel while also mourning contemporary expressions of the gospel that make little or no reference to Jesus’ death and resurrection. The latter underscored how much even believers today need to be reminded of the gospel. The sermon also explained the apologetic significance of the early creedal nature of what Paul received and delivered to the Corinthians.

### **Sermon 2**

The second sermon was on 1 Corinthians 15:5-11 and was titled “He Appeared.” This sermon focused on the list of appearances given as confirmation of Jesus’ resurrection. It was argued that these appearances provided both tangible and transforming proof of the resurrection. Peter, James, and Paul served as examples of its transformative power. A question posed to the congregation was, “Have you been radically transformed by the risen Jesus?” Given that no person living today has seen the risen Jesus as did Peter, James, and Paul, the apologetic value of this passage for present-day believers was emphasized. The inward testimony of “the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead,” with reference to Romans 8:8-11, was also stressed.

### **Sermon 3**

The third sermon was on 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 and was titled “A Forgotten Foundation, a Futile Faith.” The thesis of the sermon was that the resurrection of the dead



is foundational to our faith and that without it, our faith is futile. The sermon was organized according to its title under two headings. Under the first heading, “A Forgotten Foundation,” modern evangelicals were compared to the Corinthians by way of statistics and examples of their neglect of the resurrection of the dead. Under the second heading, “A Futile Faith,” it was demonstrated through the text that apart from the resurrection of the dead, our faith is futile. The hearers were challenged to keep at the forefront of their minds that “because Christ was raised, we too will be raised.”

#### **Sermon 4**

The fourth sermon was on 1 Corinthians 15:20-34 and was titled “The Implications of the Resurrection.” Two implications were identified in the text. The first was the eschatological implication (i.e., the resurrection of believers at Christ’s return). Although already addressed in earlier sermons, this implication was further elaborated on with specific reference to Christ as “the firstfruits.” Proto-Gnosticism was explained, and subtler modern manifestations of this error were highlighted. The second implication identified was the ethical implication. The command in verse 34, “do not go on sinning,” was shown to have its basis in the resurrection of the dead, and various practical applications were given. In the end, the sermon demonstrated that the resurrection of Jesus has implications for our future eternal state as well as for our present morality. The hearers were called upon to recognize and appreciate these realities and to live in accordance with them.

#### **Sermon 5**

The fifth sermon was on 1 Corinthians 15:25-49 and was titled “The Resurrection Body.” Two questions were answered: “How will our bodies be raised?” and “What will our resurrection bodies be like?” Paul’s seed analogy was given special attention in answering the first question. The answer to the second question further elaborated on the continuity and discontinuity the resurrected body will have with that

which is sown. Jesus' resurrection body served as the example. The sermon showed that the raising of our bodies is not too farfetched to believe, but is a glorious reality that awaits believers. The truth that God cares about redeeming not only the souls of believers, but also their bodies, was celebrated.

### **Sermon 6**

The sixth sermon was on 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 and was titled "Victory for Tomorrow, Meaning for Today." The believer's ultimate victory over death was celebrated as various questions concerning Christ's coming and the resurrection of the dead were addressed. The greater emphasis of the sermon, however, was given to how the believer's future victory gives meaning to the present day. It was shown that the resurrection of the dead and the renewal of creation do not only mean that life does not end at death, but also that there is a real and profound connection between this life and the next. For this reason, Paul could say "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (v. 58).

### **Synopsis of Lessons Taught**

As noted already, the teaching sessions shared the title "Firstfruits: The Truth and Implications of the Resurrection" with the sermon series. These lessons were lectures giving an apologetic for the resurrection, focusing mostly on the work of Gary Habermas, Michael Licona, and N.T. Wright. PowerPoint presentations were utilized with each session. These lessons focused almost entirely on the truth of the resurrection. A question and answer time followed each lesson.

### **Lesson 1**

The first lesson was titled "The Whys and Hows of Defending the Resurrection" and served as an introduction to resurrection apologetics. The thesis was that learning an apologetic for the resurrection is both worthwhile and achievable. Four benefits to

learning an apologetic for the resurrection were shared. Key scholars and terms were introduced, and the stage was set for discussing two approaches to defending the resurrection: The Minimal Facts approach and The Christian Mutations Approach.

## **Lesson 2**

The second lesson was titled “The Minimal Facts Approach (Part 1).” It argued that there is a core of accepted historical data in the New Testament that is useful for building a case for the resurrection. Habermas’ list of twelve *known facts* was discussed and then narrowed down to the *minimal facts*. The criteria for each list and their apologetic significance was established. The conclusion reached was that these facts provide compelling evidence for Jesus’ resurrection and stand as data that must be accounted for by any opposing theory.

## **Lesson 3**

The third lesson was titled “The Minimal Facts Approach (Part 2).” In this lesson, the minimal facts were looked at more closely with the aim of demonstrating that these agreed-upon facts are well-evidenced and can be established historically apart from appeal to divine inspiration. The empty tomb was given special attention since it does not enjoy the virtually unanimous consensus that the other facts do. Three lines of evidence were appealed to: 1) the Jerusalem factor, 2) enemy attestation, and 3) the testimony of the women. This lesson further established the conclusion that the minimal facts provide compelling evidence for Jesus’ resurrection and stand as data that must be accounted for by any opposing theory.

## **Lesson 4**

The fourth lesson was titled “Opposing Theories.” Its objective was to analyze opposing theories and compare their explanatory scope and power to the resurrection. These theories fall under two categories: natural and supernatural. Under the first category, hallucination/self-deception, the swoon theory, wrong tomb/stolen body theories, and

legend were measured against the resurrection. Under the second category, visionary appearances were measured against the resurrection. In the end, bodily resurrection was put forth as the best explanation of the facts. This lesson sought to expose that many scholars' rejection of the resurrection is based solely on a naturalistic worldview. At the same time, a scholarly trend toward belief in bodily resurrection was highlighted.

### **Lesson 5**

The fifth lesson was titled "The Christian Mutations Approach." It outlined N.T. Wright's defense of the resurrection, which posits that only the bodily resurrection of Jesus can account for the rise of early Christian belief in resurrection. Wright highlights six mutations from within Judaism which concerned both Jesus' resurrection and the eschatological resurrection of the dead. The lesson presented each of these mutations and concluded that the only good explanation for them is the empty tomb and appearances of Jesus. It was argued that these two phenomena are not only necessary and sufficient for explaining the rise of early Christian belief, but that together they point conclusively to the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

### **Lesson 6**

The sixth lesson was titled "The Resurrection and the Gospels." Since the prior five lessons drew primarily from New Testament sources outside of the Gospels, this one focused in on the Gospels' testimony to the resurrection. Four historical arguments for the resurrection from the Gospels were given and charges that the Gospels contradict one another in their resurrection accounts were addressed. For example, it was shown that the number of women who visited the tomb is not a point of contention between the Gospels when one takes a closer look. The conclusion was that the Gospels testify to the resurrection of Jesus reliably and in line with what one would expect from eye-witness testimony.

## **The Evangelistic Tract**

The evangelistic tract was titled “The Quest for Immortality.” It was designed to share the gospel with a special focus on the resurrection of the dead, having the resurrection of Jesus as its basis. The tract was made using Microsoft Word and was formatted with three columns on each side of the paper with a landscape orientation. One column was utilized for the cover with the other five being reserved for text. The tracts were printed and folded so that, when opened, the first three (numbered) columns of text were displayed. Columns four and five continued on the other side of the paper.

The track begins with a recognition of the human desire to live forever followed by an explanation of the biblical teaching of the resurrection of the dead in Christ. Acknowledging that this may seem hard to believe, the tract goes on to explain that the basis of this belief is the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus’ resurrection is briefly defended by way of the empty tomb and appearances, and then tract moves on to matters of the heart. The reason Jesus had to die in the first place is explained, and finally, the reader is called to faith and repentance for the forgiveness of sin and eternal life in Christ.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>See appendix 4 for the full text.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

In this final chapter, the ministry project's success will be evaluated. First, the project's purpose will be evaluated in light of its original intent and what it ultimately accomplished. Second, the project's goals will be evaluated to determine if they were met. Data gathered from the pre and post-series surveys will be analyzed with respect to the third goal. Third, the strengths and weaknesses of the project will be evaluated followed by a discussion of what I would do differently if I were to do it all over again. Finally, theological and personal reflections will be given.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The ministry project's stated purpose was "to teach the members of First Baptist Church in Monroe City, Missouri, an apologetic for the resurrection." This purpose was undoubtedly central to the six-part teaching series. Moreover, apologetic arguments for the resurrection were likewise engaged in the six-part sermon series, particularly in the first two sermons. But the project was ultimately much more than apologetic instruction, strictly speaking.

The preaching and teaching series shared the title "Firstfruits: The Truth and Implications of the Resurrection." Of course, the truth of the resurrection was the primary apologetic concern. But 1 Corinthians 15, which the sermons explicated, is focused mostly on its implications. Thus, the implications of the resurrection (both eschatological and ethical) were also central to the project. These are not unrelated to the truth of the resurrection, however. Rather, the implications fit hand-in-hand with the apologetic emphasis of the project for two reasons. First, the implications of the resurrection make

its defense all the more important. Second, the eschatological implication (i.e., the resurrection of the dead) is key to N.T. Wright's apologetic for the resurrection, which was outlined both in chapter 3 and in the teaching sessions.

The third goal, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section, communicates well the broader purpose of the project: "to increase FBC members' knowledge and appreciation of the resurrection, its defense, and its implications through the sermons and teaching sessions." When the project was first envisioned, giving a defense of the resurrection was of higher priority than delineating its implications. In the end, however, the two took equal footing. I do believe this was for the best. In fact, it turns out that the greater need at FBC was a better understanding and appreciation of the resurrection's implications. As this need was met through the preaching series, the participants came to better recognize the importance of the apologetic instruction concentrated in the teaching sessions.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

The ministry project had four stated goals. In this section, each goal will be evaluated sequentially. The first goal was "to assess FBC members' knowledge and appreciation of the resurrection, its defense, and its implications." This was accomplished through a thirty question survey made up of three categories: questions on perspective, questions on biblical data, and questions on apologetic data. These three categories of questions proved helpful in gauging the full range of attitudes and understanding that the project sought to enhance. In retrospect, however, some of the questions should have been worded better or changed entirely. In such cases, the desired answer was either too controversial, too difficult, or too tricky. More will be said on this in the section on the project's weaknesses.

There was also unfortunately some confusion among some of the participants which rendered their surveys unusable. For the fill-in-the blank questions, they were instructed that if they did not know the answer they could leave it blank. Some of them,

however, apparently understood this to mean that they could skip over any question they did not know the answer to, including those that used a six point Likert scale. But the whole point of the Likert scale is to gauge the participant's level of agreement or disagreement. This cannot be done when left blank. Thus, three of twenty pre and post-series surveys were dropped from the data collection, reducing the number of official participants to seventeen. Still, the survey was ultimately quite helpful in assessing their knowledge and appreciation of the resurrection, its defense, and its implications. Having more than the minimum fifteen participants, this goal was successfully met. Moreover, as will be demonstrated in the evaluation of the third goal, significant growth was seen when comparing this initial assessment to the post-series surveys.

The second goal was “to develop a series of six sermons and six teaching sessions on the resurrection of Jesus.” This exercise (culminating in the delivery of the sermons and teaching sessions) was the most enjoyable and rewarding part of the project. While the sermons and teaching sessions corresponded somewhat closely to chapters 2 and 3, respectively, much extra work was still required for their development. Of course, both the text of 1 Corinthians 15 and the topics of apologetic instruction first had to be divided into six parts. Then the individual sermons and teaching sessions were crafted, each with its own thesis and clearly delineated points. Tough decisions were made on what to include or exclude from the research in chapters 2 and 3. At the same time, additional research and insights along with carefully considered illustrations and applications were incorporated.

Upon completion, each sermon and teaching session was sent via email to a panel consisting of two Southern Baptist pastors, one FBC deacon, and a professor who used a rubric to evaluate its relevance, biblical faithfulness, and clarity. Submitting these notes certainly stretched me. As I reviewed them, many of the outlines seemed rather puny and lifeless. Although I knew my delivery would fill-out and bring to life what was on the page, I was nervous as to how it might be read by these men whom I much



admired. This was a humbling experience, and in the end helped me to hone my unique method of notation. Many helpful comments were made by the panel, and having met or exceeded the sufficiency level on more than 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators, this second goal was successfully met. More importantly, I was ultimately pleased with the content and composition of the sermons and teaching sessions.

In addition to the development of the sermons and teaching sessions, PowerPoint presentations were created for the latter. This proved helpful to participants, as many would have likely been lost without them. Indeed, the content of both the sermons and the teaching sessions proved difficult for many. The congregation was not used to such doctrinal preaching, nor were they used to academic apologetic instruction. Though it was certainly a challenge, I do believe I did the best I could at making this heavy material simple, interesting, and applicable to the average layperson. My only regret concerning delivery was that I did not stick close enough to my notes for the teaching sessions. This resulted in getting into some tertiary issues that probably distracted from the main points being made.

The third goal was “to increase FBC members’ knowledge and appreciation of the resurrection, its defense, and its implications through the sermons and teaching sessions.” This goal was measured by administering the assessment survey for a second time to the participants after they had listened to all the sermons and teaching sessions to measure any change. Overall, the analysis showed significant growth.

Of the thirty questions, the average score for all but two of them moved in a positive direction when the pre and post-series surveys were compared. Of these two, the results of at least one of them, question twenty-three, seemed to be on account of it being too tricky.<sup>1</sup> Since the statement sounded rather impressive, claiming “almost 90 percent” agreement among historians that the disciples believed they saw appearances of the risen

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix 5, table A23.

Jesus, it is understandable why participants would be in stronger agreement with it after receiving apologetic instruction. However, the statement was actually false (and thus reverse-scored). While “almost 90 percent” agreement is indeed impressive, the agreement among historians on this point is in fact higher as there is a virtually unanimous consensus that the disciples believed they saw appearances of the risen Jesus. Although this fact was highlighted in the teaching, there was nevertheless confusion concerning this question.

The other question on which the score moved in a negative direction was number five which read, “If I became convinced that Jesus was not raised from the dead, I would abandon Christianity.”<sup>2</sup> The hope was that participants would agree with this statement in view of Paul’s proclamation that if Christ has not been raised, our faith is in vain. But perhaps as the participants became more confident in the resurrection, this hypothesis became even more difficult to entertain. Indeed, participants did show a considerable increase in both their faith and their confidence in their ability to defend the resurrection.<sup>3</sup>

In regard to the seventeen participants themselves, fourteen showed a statistically significant total change in a positive direction when their pre and post-survey questions were compared using a t-test for dependent samples. The remaining three (participants twelve, fifteen, and seventeen) also showed an overall positive change, but not of a statistically significant degree.<sup>4</sup> Participant fourteen showed the greatest increase in average scores, moving 1.767 points in a positive direction from a pre-series average of 3.366 to a post-series average of 5.133.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>See appendix 5, table A5.

<sup>3</sup>See appendix 5, tables A9 and A10.

<sup>4</sup>See appendix 7.

<sup>5</sup>See appendix 7, table A45.

Observing each participant's changes according to category was helpful as it showed a topical breakdown of each participant's total change. Looking at them collectively, the greatest increase was in biblical knowledge (+1.247) followed by apologetic knowledge (+1.117) followed by perspective (+.658). The helpfulness of this analysis, however, is limited for at least the following reason. The two leading categories had fill-in-the-blank questions while the questions on perspective did not. Since fill-in-the-blank questions are naturally going to generate a greater swing in scores (wrong answers receiving a score of one and correct answers receiving a score of six<sup>6</sup>), this likely contributed to the greater increases in these categories.

The fourth goal was "to produce and distribute evangelistic tracts on the resurrection for FBC members to use as an aid in evangelism." The original intent was for this tract to take booklet form, but in the end it took a much simpler tri-fold form. This design made the tract more succinct, portable, and easily produced. It was nevertheless daunting to produce such a text intended for wide distribution. As with the notes, the tract was sent to the aforementioned panel to be evaluated. Having met or exceeded the sufficiency level on more than 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators, this goal was considered successfully met.

### **Strengths of the Project**

Generally speaking, the sermon series was probably the greatest strength of the project. This strength was attested to in part by the surveys. Since the survey questions on biblical knowledge and apologetic knowledge both had a combination of Likert questions and fill-in-the-blank questions, a valid comparison between the two can be made. As noted above, participant's increase in biblical knowledge took a slight edge over their increase in apologetic knowledge. What makes this edge more significant, though, is that participants began with a higher level of biblical knowledge. So although there was less

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<sup>6</sup>A handful of partially correct answers were the exception and were graded accordingly.

room for growth in biblical knowledge compared to apologetic knowledge, there was nevertheless more growth in it. Of course, this biblical knowledge corresponds more to the sermons, while the apologetic knowledge corresponds more to the teaching sessions. There was, however, some overlap. For example, the question with the second highest increase (+2.941), which concerned the conversion of James, was a question on biblical knowledge also having great apologetic significance.<sup>7</sup>

The title used for both the sermons and teaching sessions was derived from my study of 1 Corinthians 15. This title, “Firstfruits: The Truth and Implications of the Resurrection,” served as a good summary of the project’s aim. I returned to this title throughout both series and believe that the focus it offered was a strength of the project. Organizing the core of 1 Corinthians 15 in terms of the eschatological and ethical implications of the resurrection was especially helpful in sorting out the biblical teaching. The teaching on the eschatological implication in particular stands out as a strength, as it was eye-opening for many. For example, when the pre and post-series surveys were compared, there was a significant increase on questions four and eight, which both measured participants’ recognition and appreciation of the physical nature of the believer’s eternal state.<sup>8</sup> I also received many positive comments regarding this teaching. One man, a deacon in the church who has been active in church his whole life, remarked that he has heard more about the resurrection of the dead since I came as pastor than he had over the course of his whole life to that point.

The teaching series was not without its strengths. As noted before, the PowerPoint presentations were certainly a helpful component. Lesson four was perhaps the strongest of the six, as it compared the resurrection hypothesis against opposing theories, demonstrating its superior explanatory scope and power. Although the

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<sup>7</sup>See appendix 5, table A18.

<sup>8</sup>See appendix 5, table A4 and A8.

participants' retention of apologetic information was not particularly impressive, the increase in both their faith and their confidence in their ability to defend the resurrection was encouraging.<sup>9</sup>

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

The project had a handful of weaknesses. As noted before, one weakness was in the wording or inclusion of some of the survey questions. In such cases, the desired answer was either too controversial, too difficult, or too tricky. Question twenty-three has already been given as an example of one that was too tricky. One that was perhaps too controversial was question six regarding cremation. Finally, one that proved too difficult for most was question thirty concerning explanatory scope.<sup>10</sup> The desire was to avoid making the questions too easy so that there would be room for growth between the pre and post-series surveys. This strategy proved effective, barring these few exceptions.

Concerning the instruction given through the preaching and teaching series, the doctrinal and apologetic focus was challenging for many. Unfortunately for some, it was challenging to the point that they did not rise to the occasion and benefit from the teaching as much as was hoped. In one rather discouraging moment, during the question and answer time after one of the teaching sessions, an older congregant asked, "Why should we care what these scholars believe about all this anyway?" What made this even more discouraging is that I had just explained why this was important. Likewise, another congregant expressed in another context that she was getting a little weary from the sermon series. From these same people, however, I have received very encouraging words concerning other sermons and lessons. This goes to show that sometimes the teachings one works on the most can be the least appreciated. Thus, although the heavy content of

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<sup>9</sup>See appendix 5, tables A9 and A10.

<sup>10</sup>See appendix 1.

the preaching and teaching series was in some ways a strength, it certainly worked as a weakness as well.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

Of the things I would do differently if I were to do this project again, one of them would be to aim to work faster and more efficiently. Whether in the composition of a sermon, teaching session, tract, or chapter for the project, I often found myself delaying to my own detriment. To be sure, the delay was not always on starting a certain component, but rather finishing it. Sometimes this was on account of not devoting large enough segments of time to my endeavor. Other times the delay was on account of getting bogged down in editing while making little overall progress.

I have already noted regrets concerning some of the questions on the survey. If I were to do the project over again, I would think more carefully about these questions. I would also probably not include any fill-in-the-blank questions at all because of the greater swing in scores they produce in comparison to six-point Likert questions.

I can see now that a listener's guide for the sermons and teaching sessions would have been worth the effort. While the PowerPoint presentations that accompanied the teaching sessions were printed out for those in attendance, a series of fill-in-the-blank notes for each lesson may have been more helpful. The sermons would have benefited from this as well. Although the main points for the sermons were displayed on the screen, nothing was printed out for congregants besides the notes section in the bulletin. If I were to do this project again, I would create a bound guide to help participants better interact with the instruction received through the sermons and teaching sessions.

Given that the content of the project remained the same, I would change the title if I were to do it over again. Although an apologetic for the resurrection was given, as noted already, the project ended up being much more than that. Thus, perhaps I would change the title to "Teaching Members of First Baptist Church in Monroe City, Missouri, the Truth and Implications of the Resurrection." On the other hand, if I were to do a

project that was strictly apologetic, I believe that a broader focus addressing all the main areas of apologetics would be more beneficial for most believers. Because I consider the content of 1 Corinthians 15 to be so important, I do not regret taking the approach I did.

### **Theological Reflections**

Though already passionate about the resurrection, I nonetheless gained a much greater knowledge and appreciation of it through this project. In regards to the truth of the resurrection, my faith was strengthened as I studied and taught apologetic arguments for it. Moreover, the project forced me to face a pastoral concern related to apologetics: If Christianity hinges on the resurrection of Jesus, are those with little to no apologetic knowledge concerning the resurrection justified in their Christian belief?

I found a helpful answer to this question in William Lane Craig. He reminds us that the Christian faith is based on the *event* of the resurrection, not on the *evidence* for it, noting that “we can know that Jesus rose from the dead wholly apart from a consideration of the historical evidence.”<sup>11</sup> Craig, an apologist who has himself made scholarly contributions on the historicity of the resurrection, can make this claim because, in his words, “There are really two avenues to knowledge of the resurrection: the avenue of the Spirit and the avenue of historical inquiry. The former provides a spiritual certainty of the resurrection, whereas the latter provides a rational certainty of the resurrection.”<sup>12</sup> In my first teaching session on defending the resurrection, I gave this explanation, and it has continued to be a helpful in my own thinking.

One thing that gave me pause as I have reflected on this project was that I may have come close to overemphasizing the resurrection. (Question one in the survey may be

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<sup>11</sup>William Lane Craig, *The Son Rises: Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 7-8.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

one indicator of this error.<sup>13</sup>) Ironically, I have written about the tendency of some to overemphasize the cross at the expense of the resurrection. But it is also possible to overemphasize the resurrection at the expense of the cross. This realization hit me when reading about Martin Luther's distinction between the theologian of the cross and the theologian of glory. Suffice it to say, I want to be a theologian of the cross. While the power and glory of the resurrection are indeed central to gospel message, the humility of the cross is likewise central and should not be neglected.

In regard to the implications of the resurrection, the project has helped me see more fully the key role the resurrection of the dead plays in the New Testament and by extension, the role it should play in my own life. Indeed, there are even profound ethical implications that stem from the reality that because Jesus was raised, I too will be raised. Concerning the eschatological implication in particular, since implementing the project there have been some events in my life that have further impressed upon me the need for strong teaching on this in the church. First, I have attended two funerals, and in neither of them did the minister even give the slightest hint that the deceased person's body would be raised. Rather, the current state of the dead was spoken of as both ideal and eternal. I find this very saddening and commit that I will never miss such an opportunity to proclaim the Bible's teaching on the resurrection of the dead.

The second event that further impressed upon me the need for strong teaching on the resurrection of the dead was a social media engagement. A friend of mine posted an article on this very doctrine titled "Evangelical Gnosticism." The article was quite relevant to the work that I have done as it proclaimed the importance of the resurrection of the dead while mourning its neglect among many today. The comments from other individuals, however, were troubling. One wrote, "I don't mean to be disrespectful here at all, but why does this matter? What does this particular belief have to do with one's

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<sup>13</sup>See appendix 1.



salvation? Again, I'm not trying to argue. I'm just really not seeing why it matters." The original poster gave a solid response to which another replied, "Perhaps, but we dare not let lesser issues divide the body of Christ. When we divide, we lose. We must keep the main thing the main thing. The body that we see returns to dust. How would someone who is blown to bits or burned as the Catholic Church once did or is cremated as they are now fare in the resurrection?" No doubt, the attitudes of these believers concerning the resurrection of the dead gave me a vivid reminder that teaching on this wonderful Christian truth is not to be neglected, but rather prioritized.

### **Personal Reflections**

I have personally grown a great deal through completing this project. First of all, the research, writing, planning, and execution of the project has itself taught me how to work hard and press on to the end. This project has certainly been my largest single endeavor in my studies and ministry thus far. My drive to press on was not always strong, but it has brought me to this point. Following the implementation of the project, there was a considerable period of time in which I did little besides continuously edit the first three chapters. Although some helpful changes were made, I know I got too bogged down in the minutia and was not very productive. (This perfectionism, I believe, is an unhealthy personality trait that I am learning how to fight.) When I finally moved on to writing chapters 4 and 5, my productivity increased exponentially. I committed larger segments of time, did not fuss over the details as much, and continued to move forward. Certainly, some lessons were learned which I will follow in future writing endeavors.

I do believe that I have become a much better writer through this project. Indeed, the whole doctoral program has helped me in my writing. Likewise, I have become a clearer thinker. These improvements together have helped me in my sermon and lesson composition in my current ministry. Other factors have also contributed. As mentioned earlier, submitting my notes to the panel for evaluation was stretching for me, but in the end it made me think more carefully about my method of notation for

preaching and teaching. Also, my evaluation rubric required a clearly stated thesis for each sermon and teaching session. While still not every sermon I preach is thesis driven, many of them now are as I have seen the value of such focus and clarity.

Of course, I have grown a great deal as an apologist and theologian through this project. Not only have I grown in apologetic knowledge, but I have honed my skills in teaching apologetics to others. Likewise, I have grown theologically while also learning how to better teach profound theological truths to others. The latter is truly a pastoral skill that I want to continue to grow in. In particular, I want to know how to strike the right balance in challenging my parishioners. I want my teaching to be deep and intellectually rigorous enough to pull people a little bit out of their comfort zone, but not so much that it causes them to disengage. Basically, I want to be as effective as possible in growing my congregation theologically (and apologetically). This project was largely an exercise in trying to strike this balance, and I believe I grew much in my ability to do so.

Finally, it is important to not only challenge my parishioners, but also myself. This project was certainly a challenge in many respects. Now, as I conclude its final chapter, I want to make certain that I do not cease to challenge myself moving forward. I want to continue to grow as a minister of the gospel for both my own good and the good of those whom God has placed under my care. Thus, I commit now to be a life-long learner towards those ends—all for the glory of God.

APPENDIX 1  
RESURRECTION APOLOGETICS SURVEY

The following instrument is the Resurrection Apologetics Survey. It consists of questions to be answered via a six point Likert scale<sup>1</sup> as well as fill-in-the-blank. The instrument's purpose was to assess participants' knowledge and appreciation of the resurrection, its defense, and its implications.

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<sup>1</sup>Questions 3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 14, 21, 22, and 25 were reverse-scored.

## RESURRECTION APOLOGETICS SURVEY

### Agreement to Participate

This research is being conducted by Chad McMath for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are providing informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

This survey will be anonymous for your privacy. Please create a four-digit PIN *and retain the number* for future use. After a series of sermons and teaching sessions are delivered, you will be asked to take this survey again. At that time, you will need to fill-in the same four-digit PIN so that your pre and post-surveys can be compared.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Four-digit PIN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Please mark the appropriate answer or fill-in the blank. Some questions will ask you to give your opinion using the following scale:

SD = strongly disagree

D = disagree

DS = disagree somewhat

AS = agree somewhat

A = agree

SA = strongly

### Questions on Perspective

- |   |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. I think about the resurrection of Jesus at least as often as I do his death.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. In Sunday worship, I consciously recognize Jesus' resurrection as the reason for gathering on Sunday rather than Saturday. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. A person who believes that Jesus' resurrection was only spiritual, not physical, can still be a born-again Christian.      | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. The body is a prison from which I long to escape.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. If I became convinced that Jesus was not raised from the dead, I would abandon Christianity.                               | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. The increasing popularity of cremation is cause for concern.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

- |  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 7. The future resurrection of the dead is an important element of the gospel.                                  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. When I think about the afterlife, I tend to think more about heaven (a spiritual realm) than the new earth. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. My faith has been strengthened through studying a defense of Jesus' resurrection.                           | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. I feel confident in my ability to present a case for Jesus' resurrection.                                  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

**Questions on Biblical Data**

- |   |    |   |    |    |   |       |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|-------|
| 11. In 1 Corinthians 15:44a (“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.”), <i>spiritual</i> means non-physical. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA    |
| 12. Paul compares our bodies to seeds.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA    |
| 13. In the last day, both the righteous and the wicked (believers and unbelievers) will be raised from the dead.                | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA    |
| 14. Jesus' death on the cross would still have forgiven sins even if he didn't rise from the dead.                              | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA    |
| 15. Today, Jesus has a physical body.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA    |
| 16. What was the Jewish leaders' explanation of the empty tomb?   |    |   |    |    |   | <hr/> |
| 17. In 1 Corinthians 15:6, how many “brothers” does Paul say Jesus appeared to (post-resurrection) at one time?                 |    |   |    |    |   | <hr/> |
| 18. Who does Paul say Jesus appeared to “last of all”?  |    |   |    |    |   | <hr/> |
| 19. Who at first did not believe in Jesus but then became leader of the Jerusalem church?                                       |    |   |    |    |   | <hr/> |
| 20. 1 Corinthians 15:26 reads, “The last enemy to be destroyed is...”   |    |   |    |    |   | <hr/> |

### Questions on Apologetic Data

- |  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 21. First century Jews generally believed that the Messiah would die and rise again.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 22. There are other ancient accounts that challenge the Gospels' report that Jesus was buried in a tomb.                                   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 23. Almost 90 percent of New Testament historians agree that the disciples believed they saw appearances of the risen Jesus.               | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 24. The idea that Jesus' disciples had hallucinations of Jesus after his death is a popular naturalistic theory among skeptics.            | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 25. Today, most New Testament historians continue to rely on naturalistic theories to explain evidence for the resurrection.               | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 26. The "criterion of embarrassment" explains that the report of the women's discovery of the empty tomb was not likely made up because... |    |   |    |    |   |    |
| 27. What first century Jewish historian confirms the death of Jesus by crucifixion?  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
| 28. In 1 Corinthians 15:3, Paul begins a statement of the gospel in the form of an early...  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
| 29. What major change did Jesus' resurrection have on the weekly worship habits of his followers?  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
| 30. What does "explanatory scope" mean?  |    |   |    |    |   |    |

## APPENDIX 2

### EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR SERMONS AND TEACHING SESSIONS

The following instrument is the Evaluation Rubric for Sermons and Teaching Sessions. Members of a selected panel used this tool to evaluate the relevance, biblical faithfulness, and clarity of the sermons and teaching sessions.

EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR SERMONS  
AND TEACHING SESSIONS

Sermon/Lesson Evaluation Tool					
Evaluation for _____					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The content is clearly relevant to the topic of the resurrection.					
The content is clearly relevant to the audience.					
The content is faithful to the Bible's teaching on the resurrection.					
The content is theologically sound.					
The thesis of the sermon/lesson is clearly stated.					
The points laid out in the sermon/lesson clearly support the thesis.					
Overall, the content is clearly presented.					



APPENDIX 3  
EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR  
EVANGELISTIC TRACT

The following instrument is the Evaluation Rubric for Evangelistic Tract.  
Members of a selected panel used this tool to evaluate the relevance, biblical faithfulness, persuasiveness, clarity, and layout of the evangelistic tract to be produced and distributed.

EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR  
EVANGELISTIC TRACT

Sermon/Lesson Evaluation Tool					
Evaluation for _____					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The tract content is clearly relevant to the topic of the resurrection.					
The tract content is faithful to the Bible's teaching on the resurrection.					
The scope of information presented is appropriate (adequate, yet not overwhelming).					
The tract is winsome and persuasive.					
The call to faith and repentance in the tract is clear.					
Overall, the material is clearly presented.					
The layout of the tract is attractive and practical.					

APPENDIX 4  
EVANGELISTIC TRACT

The following text comprises the evangelistic tract, “The Quest for Immortality.” The tract was printed in landscape orientation utilizing a tri-fold design. While the text below remains in portrait orientation to fit the formatting of this paper, it is nonetheless displayed in columns to give a better sense of the tract’s layout. Also for formatting purposes, the text below appears in all black, while the printed tracts have quotations in grey.

## THE QUEST FOR IMMORTALITY

### Column One

The quest for immortality is no stranger to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Just consider these Google search results:

“KEY TO ETERNAL LIFE? ‘Someone already born will live to 1,000 and immortality IS possible.’”

“Can a Jellyfish Unlock the Secret of Immortality?”

“Immortality: The Quest to Life forever and How it Drives Civilization”

*Understandably, people don't like the idea of death!* But scientific advancement has its limits.

The Bible teaches that until Jesus returns, death is inevitable. But did you know that it also teaches that at his coming the dead will be raised?

“For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.” – 1 Corinthians 15:52b-53

### Column Two

The idea of dead bodies being raised at the second coming of Jesus may seem simply unbelievable to some, but Christians possess this hope for good reason—*the resurrection of Jesus*.

The Apostle Paul had such a confidence in the resurrection of Jesus that he was bold enough to write,

“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.” – 1 Corinthians 15:17

He continued,

“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” – 1 Corinthians 15:20

The resurrection of Jesus, according to Paul, guarantees that “those who belong to Christ” will also be raised. (1 Corinthians 15:23)

Thus, in the end, heaven is not eternal disembodied existence in some ethereal realm, but it is the redemption of both our failing bodies and this fallen world! (Revelation 21:1-5)

### Column Three

But why would one even believe in the resurrection of Jesus?

First, *Jesus' tomb was found empty.*

Jesus was buried in a known tomb (belonging to Joseph of Arimathea) that was later claimed to be empty.

This was a falsifiable claim that went unchallenged by detractors. No doubt, an occupied tomb would have put an end to early Christianity, but instead, it grew exponentially—even through intense persecution.

Second, *the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples.*

Multiple sources testify to these appearances, and there is a consensus among New Testament historians (skeptics and believers alike) that Jesus' disciples sincerely believed that he appeared to them. Hallucination cannot explain this, as they saw Jesus in groups and even ate with him.

Jesus really was raised from the dead!

### Column Four

But the gospel is about even more than resurrection. Consider Paul's reminder to the Corinthians:

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared...” – 1 Corinthians 15:3-5a

Note, “that Christ died for our sins.” While the fact of Jesus' death by crucifixion is not controversial in the least, the phrase “for our sins” is quite controversial. It suggests two things:

First, *we are guilty of sinning against a holy God.*

Second, *Jesus' death is the means by which our sin can be forgiven.*

As prophesied centuries before Christ,

“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.” – Isaiah 53:5

## Column Five

Do you recognize your sin (your failure to love God and others as He has commanded) and your need for forgiveness? Do you desire eternal life?

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” – John 10:10

Even today, you can experience God’s forgiveness and share in the abundant life found only in Jesus. Simply “repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

To repent is to turn away from your sin and toward Jesus. To believe in the gospel is to trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sin. These acts mark the beginning of a new life in Christ. Don’t delay. Turn to Jesus now! Then seek to be baptized and nurtured as a new believer in a local church.

“Then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’  
‘O death, where is your victory?  
O death, where is your sting?’” – 1  
Corinthians 15:54b-55

## APPENDIX 5

### AVERAGE RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTIONS

The following tables report the average responses to each question for the pre and post-series surveys. The change in points between averages is also reported.

Table A1. Average responses to survey question 1: I think about the resurrection of Jesus at least as often as I do his death

Pre-Series Average	4.529
Post-Series Average	4.941
Change	+.412
SD =1, D=2, DS=3, AS=4, A= 5, SA=6	

Table A2. Average responses to survey question 2: In Sunday worship, I consciously recognize Jesus' resurrection as the reason for gathering on Sunday rather than Saturday

Pre-Series Average	4.294
Post-Series Average	5
Change	+.706
SD =1, D=2, DS=3, AS=4, A= 5, SA=6	

Table A3. Average responses to survey question 3: A person who believes that Jesus' resurrection was only spiritual, not physical, can still be a born-again Christian

Pre-Series Average	5.235
Post-Series Average	5.411
Change	+.176
SD =6, D=5, DS=4, AS=3, A= 2, SA=1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A4. Average responses to survey question 4: The body is a prison from which I long to escape

Pre-Series Average	3.764
Post-Series Average	5
Change	+1.236
SD =6, D=5, DS=4, AS=3, A= 2, SA=1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A5. Average responses to survey question 5 If I became convinced that Jesus was not raised from the dead, I would abandon Christianity

Pre-Series Average	4.470
Post-Series Average	4.294
Change	-.176
SD =1, D=2, DS=3, AS=4, A= 5, SA=6	

Table A6. Average responses to survey question 6: The increasing popularity of cremation is cause for concern

Pre-Series Average	3.588
Post-Series Average	3.882
Change	+.294
SD =1, D=2, DS=3, AS=4, A= 5, SA=6	



Table A7. Average responses to survey question 7: The future resurrection of the dead is an important element of the gospel

Pre-Series Average	5.411
Post-Series Average	5.764
Change	+.353
SD =1, D=2, DS=3, AS=4, A= 5, SA=6	

Table A8. Average responses to survey question 8: When I think about the afterlife, I tend to think more about heaven (a spiritual realm) than the new earth

Pre-Series Average	2.411
Post-Series Average	4
Change	+1.589
SD =6, D=5, DS=4, AS=3, A= 2, SA=1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A9. Average responses to survey question 9: My faith has been strengthened through studying a defense of Jesus' resurrection

Pre-Series Average	4.588
Post-Series Average	5.47
Change	+.882
SD =1, D=2, DS=3, AS=4, A= 5, SA=6	

Table A10. Average responses to survey question 10: I feel confident in my ability to present a case for Jesus' resurrection

Pre-Series Average	3.705
Post-Series Average	4.882
Change	+1.177
SD =1, D=2, DS=3, AS=4, A= 5, SA=6	

Table A11. Average responses to survey question 11: In 1 Corinthians 15:44a (“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.”), *spiritual* means non-physical

Pre-Series Average	3.058
Post-Series Average	4
Change	+.942
SD =6, D=5, DS=4, AS=3, A= 2, SA=1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A12. Average responses to survey question 12: Paul compares our bodies to seeds

Pre-Series Average	4.117
Post-Series Average	5.294
Change	+1.177
SD =1, D=2, DS=3, AS=4, A= 5, SA=6	

Table A13. Average responses to survey question 13: In the last day, both the righteous and the wicked (believers and unbelievers) will be raised from the dead

Pre-Series Average	4.764
Post-Series Average	5.647
Change	+.883
SD =1, D=2, DS=3, AS=4, A= 5, SA=6	

Table A14. Average responses to survey question 14: Jesus’ death on the cross would still have forgiven sins even if he didn’t rise from the dead

Pre-Series Average	4.705
Post-Series Average	5.058
Change	+.353
SD =6, D=5, DS=4, AS=3, A= 2, SA=1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A15. Average responses to survey question 15: Today, Jesus has a physical body

Pre-Series Average	3.764
Post-Series Average	5.352
Change	+1.588
SD =1, D=2, DS=3, AS=4, A= 5, SA=6	

Table A16. Average responses to survey question 16: What was the Jewish leaders' explanation of the empty tomb?

Pre-Series Average	5
Post-Series Average	5.823
Change	+.823
Correct answer: The disciples stole the body. (1-6 scale)	

Table A17. Average responses to survey question 17: In 1 Corinthians 15:6, how many "brothers" does Paul say the risen Jesus appeared to at one time?

Pre-Series Average	3.352
Post-Series Average	5.411
Change	+2.059
Correct answer: 500 (1-6 scale)	

Table A18. Average responses to survey question 18: Who at first did not believe in Jesus but after Jesus' resurrection became an apostle and leader of the Jerusalem church?

Pre-Series Average	1.882
Post-Series Average	4.823
Change	+2.941
Correct answer: James (1-6 scale)	

Table A19. Average responses to survey question 19: Who does Paul say Jesus appeared to “last of all”?

Pre-Series Average	3.352
Post-Series Average	4.529
Change	+1.177
Correct answer: Paul (1-6 scale)	

Table A20. Average responses to survey question 20: 1 Corinthians 15:26 reads, “The last enemy to be destroyed is...”

Pre-Series Average	4.823
Post-Series Average	5.058
Change	+.235
Correct answer: Death (1-6 scale)	

Table A21. Average responses to survey question 21: First century Jews generally believed that the Messiah would die and rise again

Pre-Series Average	4.588
Post-Series Average	5.294
Change	+.706
SD =6, D=5, DS=4, AS=3, A= 2, SA=1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A22. Average responses to survey question 22: There are other ancient accounts that challenge the Gospels’ report that Jesus was buried in a tomb

Pre-Series Average	3.235
Post-Series Average	4.352
Change	+1.117
SD =6, D=5, DS=4, AS=3, A= 2, SA=1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A23. Average responses to survey question 23: Almost 90 percent of historians who have studied the evidence for the resurrection agree that the disciples believed they saw appearances of the risen Jesus

Pre-Series Average	2.176
Post-Series Average	1.411
Change	-.765
SD =6, D=5, DS=4, AS=3, A= 2, SA=1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A24. Average responses to survey question 24: The idea that Jesus' disciples had hallucinations of Jesus after his death is a popular theory among skeptics

Pre-Series Average	3.705
Post-Series Average	4.941
Change	+1.236
SD =1, D=2, DS=3, AS=4, A= 5, SA=6	

Table A25. Average responses to survey question 25: Today, most historians rely on naturalistic theories to explain the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus

Pre-Series Average	2.705
Post-Series Average	3.470
Change	+.765
SD =6, D=5, DS=4, AS=3, A= 2, SA=1 (Reverse scored)	

Table A26. Average responses to survey question 26: The "criterion of embarrassment explains that the women's discovery of the empty tomb was not likely made up because...

Pre-Series Average	1.294
Post-Series Average	5.294
Change	+4
Correct answer: The testimony of women was not considered reliable in the first century. (1-6 scale)	

Table A27. Average responses to survey question 27: What first century Jewish historian confirms the death of Jesus by crucifixion?

Pre-Series Average	2.764
Post-Series Average	3.058
Change	+.294
Correct answer: Josephus (1-6 scale)	

Table A28. Average responses to survey question 28: In 1 Corinthians 15:3, Paul begins a statement of the gospel in the form of an early...

Pre-Series Average	1
Post-Series Average	2.705
Change	+1.705
Correct answer: Creed (1-6 scale)	

Table A29. Average responses to survey question 29: The rise of early Christian belief makes sense only in light of two phenomena, which together point to the resurrection: 1) The empty tomb, and 2)...

Pre-Series Average	3.235
Post-Series Average	3.882
Change	+.647
Correct answer: The appearances of Jesus (1-6 scale)	

Table A30. Average responses to survey question 30: A theory has good “explanatory scope” what it does what?

Pre-Series Average	1.470
Post-Series Average	2.941
Change	+1.471
Correct answer: Explains all or most of the data (1-6 scale)	

## APPENDIX 6

### PARTICIPANT RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTIONS

The following table reports each participant's responses to the pre and post-series survey questions.

Table A31. Participant responses to survey questions

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14	P15	P16	P17
Q1	3/5	3/4	6/5	4/5	6/6	2/2	2/6	5/6	4/5	5/6	6/4	5/5	5/5	6/5	5/6	4/4	6/5
Q2	3/6	5/5	1/5	3/6	5/6	2/2	4/6	5/6	5/5	4/6	5/6	5/2	6/6	6/6	5/6	5/2	4/4
Q3	6/6	5/5	6/5	3/6	5/6	6/5	6/6	6/5	5/5	4/5	5/6	6/6	5/6	5/4	6/6	6/6	4/4
Q4	4/6	5/5	1/6	5/5	3/3	5/5	5/5	2/2	5/5	4/5	5/6	3/6	6/6	3/6	1/4	4/6	3/4
Q5	6/3	6/6	6/6	5/6	5/4	5/5	5/1	5/5	2/2	4/5	5/5	5/5	1/1	5/6	5/6	3/4	3/3
Q6	4/4	2/3	6/5	2/5	3/4	1/2	4/6	2/1	5/5	4/6	3/2	6/6	5/4	3/5	4/2	3/4	4/2
Q7	6/6	6/6	6/6	5/6	6/6	4/5	4/6	5/5	5/6	5/6	5/5	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	5/5	6/6
Q8	2/6	2/1	1/6	2/5	2/4	2/2	2/6	2/2	4/3	4/6	2/5	2/2	5/6	3/6	2/3	3/3	1/2
Q9	6/6	3/5	6/6	3/6	6/6	4/5	3/6	4/5	5/5	4/5	5/5	5/5	6/6	4/6	5/6	5/6	4/4
Q10	5/5	2/4	3/5	3/6	3/5	2/3	6/6	3/5	5/4	5/6	2/4	5/5	5/5	2/5	4/5	4/5	4/5
Q11	5/2	2/1	6/6	3/5	4/5	3/2	4/6	2/5	2/5	3/6	2/5	2/6	2/2	2/6	5/1	3/3	2/2
Q12	6/5	5/5	1/6	4/6	2/5	4/4	4/4	4/6	5/5	4/6	5/5	5/5	5/6	4/6	4/6	4/5	4/5
Q13	5/6	5/6	6/6	4/5	5/6	5/5	6/6	4/5	5/5	5/6	5/5	5/6	4/6	2/6	6/6	4/6	5/5
Q14	3/6	5/5	6/6	4/6	5/6	5/4	6/6	6/6	3/5	4/6	5/2	6/2	2/6	6/6	6/6	5/5	3/3
Q15	6/6	2/5	1/6	4/6	6/6	5/5	5/6	4/6	5/5	5/6	5/5	6/5	1/6	2/6	1/5	4/5	2/2
Q16	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/6	5/6	6/6	5/6	6/6	5/6	6/6	1/5	4/6	5/5	5/5	6/6
Q17	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/6	1/6	1/1	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/6	6/6	1/6	1/6	1/6	1/6	1/1
Q18	1/6	1/6	1/6	6/6	1/1	1/6	1/6	1/6	1/6	6/6	1/6	6/6	1/1	1/6	1/1	1/6	1/1
Q19	6/6	6/6	1/6	6/6	6/6	1/6	1/1	6/6	1/1	6/6	1/6	6/6	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/6	6/6
Q20	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/1	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/1	6/6	1/5	1/6	6/6

*Table A31 continued*

Q21	4/6	5/6	1/1	4/6	6/5	4/5	6/6	6/6	4/5	5/5	4/5	6/6	5/6	5/6	6/6	3/5	4/5
Q22	4/6	4/4	1/6	3/5	3/6	4/5	3/1	3/6	3/6	3/6	3/5	2/1	1/1	4/5	6/2	4/5	4/4
Q23	1/1	2/1	1/1	2/2	2/1	2/2	5/1	3/1	2/2	3/1	2/2	2/2	1/1	3/1	1/1	3/2	2/2
Q24	5/6	2/5	6/6	2/2	6/5	4/4	2/5	2/5	2/5	4/5	5/5	4/6	1/5	4/6	5/5	4/5	5/4
Q25	2/6	2/5	1/1	2/6	3/2	3/3	4/1	4/3	2/5	3/5	3/5	2/3	5/1	3/6	2/2	3/2	2/3
Q26	6/6	1/6	1/6	1/6	1/6	1/6	1/5	1/6	1/5	1/6	1/6	1/3	1/6	1/6	1/4	1/6	1/1
Q27	6/6	6/6	1/1	1/1	6/6	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
Q28	1/1	1/5	1/1	1/6	1/6	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/6	1/6	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/6	1/1	1/1	1/1
Q29	1/1	1/3	6/6	6/4	5/6	1/3	1/3	6/3	1/3	6/6	2/6	1/6	1/1	6/6	6/1	3/6	2/2
Q30	6/6	1/3	2/6	1/3	3/4	1/6	1/2	1/6	1/2	½	½	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/3	1/1



## APPENDIX 7

### PARTICIPANT AVERAGES BY CATEGORY

The following tables report each participant's pre and post-series averages by category. The change in points between averages is also reported as well as the t-test results on the participant's actual responses.

Table A32. Participant 1 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	4.5	5.3	+ .8
Biblical Knowledge	5	5.5	+ .5
Apologetic Knowledge	3.6	4.5	+ .9
Total	4.366	5.1	+ .734
T-test on actual responses indicates a statistically significant total increase. t(29)=2.209, p=.035			

Table A33. Participant 2 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	3.9	4.4	+ .5
Biblical Knowledge	4.4	5.2	+ .8
Apologetic Knowledge	2.5	4.4	+ 1.9
Total	3.6	4.666	+ 1.066
T-test on actual responses indicates a statistically significant total increase. t(29)=3.477, p=.001			

Table A34. Participant 3 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	4.2	5.5	+1.3
Biblical Knowledge	4	6	+2
Apologetic Knowledge	2.1	3.5	+1.4
Total	3.433	5	+1.567
T-test on actual responses indicates a statistically significant total increase. t(29)=3.593, p=.001			

Table A35. Participant 4 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	3.5	5.6	+2.1
Biblical Knowledge	4.9	5.8	+.9
Apologetic Knowledge	2.3	4.1	+1.8
Total	3.566	5.166	+1.6
T-test on actual responses indicates a statistically significant total increase. t(29)=5.302, p=0			

Table A36. Participant 5 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	4.4	5	+.6
Biblical Knowledge	4.2	5.3	+1.1
Apologetic Knowledge	3.6	4.7	+1.1
Total	4.066	5	+.934
T-test on actual responses indicates a statistically significant total increase. t(29)=2.936, p=.006			

Table A37. Participant 6 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	3.3	3.6	+3
Biblical Knowledge	3.2	5.1	+1.9
Apologetic Knowledge	2.2	3.6	+1.4
Total	2.9	4.1	+1.2
T-test on actual responses indicates a statistically significant total increase. t(29)=3.22, p=.003			

Table A38. Participant 7 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	4.1	5.4	+1.3
Biblical Knowledge	3.4	4.3	+.9
Apologetic Knowledge	2.5	2.6	+1
Total	3.333	4.1	+.767
T-test on actual responses indicates no statically significant total change. t(29)=1.901, p=.067			

Table A39. Participant 8 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	3.9	4.2	+3
Biblical Knowledge	4.5	5.8	+1.3
Apologetic Knowledge	2.8	3.8	+1
Total	3.733	4.6	+.934
T-test on actual responses indicates a statistically significant total increase. t(29)=2.421, p=.021			

Table A40. Participant 9 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	4.5	4.5	0
Biblical Knowledge	3.9	5	+1.1
Apologetic Knowledge	1.8	4.5	+2.7
Total	3.4	4.666	+1.266
T-test on actual responses indicates a statistically significant total increase. t(29)=3.856, p=0			

Table A41. Participant 10 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	4.3	5.6	+1.3
Biblical Knowledge	5.1	6	+0.9
Apologetic Knowledge	3.3	4.8	+1.5
Total	4.233	5.466	+1.233
T-test on actual responses indicates a statistically significant total increase. t(29)=4.643, p=0			

Table A42. Participant 11 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	4.3	4.8	+0.5
Biblical Knowledge	3.6	5.2	+1.6
Apologetic Knowledge	2.8	4.3	+1.5
Total	3.566	4.766	+1.2
T-test on actual responses indicates a statistically significant total increase. t(29)=3.194, p=.003			

Table A43. Participant 12 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	4.8	4.8	0
Biblical Knowledge	5.4	5.4	0
Apologetic Knowledge	2.6	3.5	+9
Total	4.266	4.566	+3
T-test on actual responses indicates no statistically significant total change. t(29)=.963, p=.343			

Table A44. Participant 13 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	5	5.1	+1
Biblical Knowledge	1.9	4	+2.1
Apologetic Knowledge	1.8	2.4	+6
Total	2.9	3.833	+933
T-test on actual responses indicates a statistically significant total increase. t(29)=2.493, p=.018			

Table A45. Participant 14 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	4.3	5.5	+1.2
Biblical Knowledge	2.9	5.5	+2.6
Apologetic Knowledge	2.9	4.4	+1.5
Total	3.366	5.133	+1.767
T-test on actual responses indicates a statistically significant total increase. t(29)=4.769, p=0			

Table A46. Participant 15 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	4.5	5	+.5
Biblical Knowledge	3.1	4.2	+1.1
Apologetic Knowledge	3	2.4	-.6
Total	3.533	3.866	+.333
T-test on actual responses indicates no statistically significant total change. t(29)=.847, p=.403			

Table A47. Participant 16 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	4.2	4.5	+.3
Biblical Knowledge	2.9	5.2	+2.3
Apologetic Knowledge	2.4	3.6	+1.2
Total	3.166	4.433	+1.267
T-test on actual responses indicates a statistically significant total increase. t(29)=3.384, p=.002			

Table A48. Participant 17 averages by category

Category	Pre-Series Average	Post-Series Average	Change
Perspective	3.9	4	+.1
Biblical Knowledge	3.6	3.7	+.1
Apologetic Knowledge	2.3	2.4	+.1
Total	3.266	3.366	+.1
T-test on actual responses indicates no statistically significant total change. t(29)=.827, p=.414			

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## ABSTRACT

### TEACHING MEMBERS OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN MONROE CITY, MISSOURI, AN APOLOGETIC FOR THE RESURRECTION

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018  
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This project was an exercise in preaching, teaching, and writing on the resurrection of Jesus. It sought to teach the participants an apologetic for the resurrection as well as its eschatological and ethical implications. Chapter 1 presents the project's context, rationale, purpose, goals, research methodology, definitions, and limitations/delimitations. Chapter 2 establishes the biblical and theological basis for the project through an exposition of 1 Corinthians 15. Both the truth and implications of the resurrection are addressed. Chapter 3 addresses related historical and practical issues. Specifically, two methods for defending the historicity of the resurrection are presented followed by the practical outworkings of the resurrection. Chapter 4 explains the details and process of the ministry project from start to finish. Chapter 5 evaluates the project's success, giving its strengths and weaknesses followed by theological and personal reflections.

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