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TRAINING THE MALAYSIAN CHURCHES OF THE
SARAWAK CHINESE ANNUAL CONFERENCE
IN APOLOGETICS

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TRAINING THE MALAYSIAN CHURCHES OF THE
SARAWAK CHINESE ANNUAL CONFERENCE
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To my faithful and gracious Lord, may His will be done. And also to my wife, Susanna, and children, Grace, Joyce, and James: your love, support, and prayers have accompanied me through all the hardships of these years.

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PREFACE

By God's grace and mercy, I have finally completed an apologetics ministry project for Malaysian churches. The project aims to increase the truth of the resurrection (both Jesus's bodily resurrection and Christians' future bodily resurrection) among the Iban and Chinese Christians of SCAC. The apologetics training has strengthened them to defend their Christian faith against the Islamization movement and given them the confidence to share the gospel with their Muslim friends. The Great Commission of the risen Lord Jesus Christ calls us to go into all nations (including Malaysia) and make all people (including the Malay Muslims) disciples of Jesus Christ. Indeed, it was a challenging project because it is almost impossible for a Muslim to convert to Christianity in Malaysia. Malaysia is an Islamic country with restrictions to prevent Malay Muslims from converting to other faiths, especially Christianity. However, I have finally completed the project with encouraging results—may all glory to God!

Therefore, I want to extend my gratitude to some wonderful people. First, I want to thank the risen Lord Jesus Christ, without whom this project would not have been possible. Indeed, he is a faithful God, and I will continue to obey his will to advance his kingdom for the rest of my life.

Second, I express my gratitude to Dr. Robert L. Plummer (my supervisor) and Dr. Jay D, Owens (my reader) for their advice and assistance during the research journey.

Third, I want to thank Susanna Sia, my beloved wife. You are a priceless gift from God, and you have done a great job assisting our family in times of hardship. "Who can find a worthy woman? For her price is far above rubies." (Prov 31:10 WEB). We shall continue to obey God's calling and serve him faithfully together.

Fourth, I want to thank Grace, Joyce, and James (my children) for their praying

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Hin Hung Wong

Louisville, Kentucky

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Mission of the Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference (SCAC) and Sarawak Iban Annual Conference (SIAC) is to build “A Church after God’s Own Heart.” As we are a group of Christian minorities living among the Muslim majority, how will we build a church after God’s heart? How will we defend our Christian faith among the majority Muslim religion, and how will we proclaim the Christian gospel to our Muslim friends?

Context

Malaysia is located in the Southeast Asia region, with West Malaysia (situated at the Peninsula Malaya) and East Malaysia (located at the Borneo Island) separated by the South China Sea. Malaysia is an Islamic country, where Muslims comprise approximately 61.3 percent of the Malaysian population, while Christians comprise only 9.2 percent. Therefore, as the dominant group in multi-religious Malaysia, Muslims have the decision-making power, as is reflected in their persecuting other religions—especially Christians. Some examples of such persecution are the restriction of using the word “*Allah*” (denotes “God”) in other faiths, the restriction of sharing the Christian faith with the Muslims, and the forced learning of the Islamic faith in public schools, etc.

Malaysia has thirteen states, but this project will only focus on the churches in Sarawak state. Sarawak is one of two states of East Malaysia, located in the Northwestern of Borneo Island (the world’s third-largest island). In Sarawak, we have two Methodist Church conferences: Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference (SCAC) and Sarawak Iban Annual Conference (SIAC). The SCAC is shepherding the Chinese Christians in Sarawak, while SIAC is shepherding the Iban indigenous Christians in the area. SCAC

was founded in 1901 by a group of Chinese Methodists from China, besides they also established the SIAC in 1930 after thirty years of mission works among the Iban indigenous community. I have served in SCAC as a senior church pastor for more than twenty-two years (including six years of District Superintendent ministry). I have become familiar with the conferences' strengths and weaknesses during that time.

One of the most significant issues facing the churches of the SIAC is the increasing need for believers to defend the Christian faith under the Islamization movement. The Malaysian Islamic authorities have put the indigenous Christians of Sarawak as their ultimate mission target. The Malaysian Islamic authorities have put much human resources and finance into Sarawak state to convert the Indigenous Christians (the majority are Iban) to Islam as they have already done in the state of Sabah (another state of East Malaysia). The indigenous Christians in the state of Sabah were conquered by the Islamization movement about ten years ago, and tens of thousands have lost their Christian faith by being converted to Islam. Right now, the Islamization movement is highly active in Sarawak, where hundreds of Iban indigenous people have already lost their Christian faith under pressure. Thousands of Muslim teachers have been sent from West Malaysia to Sarawak. They travel into the deep tropical forest to teach in the public primary schools of the Iban indigenous community. These teachers serve as Islamic missionaries in the Iban longhouses. They are spreading the Islamic faith to the Iban indigenous people. In doing so, they teach a false Christology in arguing that Jesus is not the Son of God but merely one of the ordinary minor prophets of *Allah*. However, Mohammad, Islam's founder, is the greatest prophet among many minor prophets. The Muslim teachers also deny the deity of Jesus and, in particular, the divine power of Jesus's resurrection. Many Iban indigenous children believe what the Muslim teachers have taught in the class and are being persuaded to convert to Islam. Moreover, due to the misleading of the Muslim false teachers, many Iban indigenous parents have also forsaken their Christian faith and converted to Islam. Hence, there is an urgent need to

teach the Iban indigenous people about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the truth of Jesus's resurrection so that they might see his vast superiority as the God-man over the merely human Mohammed.

The weakness of the churches of the SCAC is the proclamation of the gospel among Muslims. Significantly lacking in their evangelizing Muslims is the excellent answer to common apologetics questions. While the SCAC excels in overseas missions, its churches struggle to effectively reach their Muslim neighbor, the Malays (almost 100 percent of the Malays are Muslims). Due to the restriction of the Christian faith to the Muslims in Malaysia, SCAC has no evangelical strategy for this largest ethnic group of people. We are so fearful of being captured by the Malaysian Islamic authorities that we remain silent but pray that an evangelism door for Muslims will be opened soon. But nothing has changed since Malaysia gained independence in 1957 until now.

The churches of Malaysia must take the initiative to do something, or else we will continue to lose the souls of our Malay friends. By God's grace, the SCAC has launched the Bahasa Malaysia Ministry (*Bahasa Malaysia* is the Malay language, i.e., the national language of Malaysia). Bahasa Malaysia Ministry (BMM) is designated for all Malay-speaking Christians (Chinese and Iban Christians). Chinese and Iban Christians gather together and use the Malay language as the means of language for Sunday worship, Bible study, discipleship training, fellowship, and evangelism. In Sarawak, though it is prohibited to proclaim the gospel openly with the Malays, there is always a chance for Malay-speaking Christians to secretly share the gospel with their Malay friends. The relationship between the Malay and Chinese in Sarawak is comparatively better than in West Malaysia. Malay Muslims and Chinese Christians can become good friends in many ways. They visit each other during festivals such as Chinese New Year and *Hari-Raya Puasa* (Malay New Year) and have good connections through daily business. Hence, Chinese Christians can always share the gospel with their Malay Muslim friends. However, Muslim friends do not easily accept the doctrine of the

resurrection and usually ask questions concerning the historical evidence of Jesus's resurrection. The Chinese Christians often stumble in this area because they cannot give strong historical evidence that Jesus is the risen Lord. Therefore, there is a strong need to teach them how to answer the apologetics question regarding the truth of the resurrection and what precautions and steps they need to take when approaching and sharing the gospel with their Muslim friends.

My project focuses on the church leaders and members of one of the churches of SCAC, Gloria Methodist Church (GMC). I trained the Chinese Christians and Iban Christians of the BMM of GMC to defend their Christian faith among Muslims and evangelize to Muslim friends.

Rationale

The weakness of Iban Christians is the ineffective defense for the Christian faith under the challenge of the Islamization movement. The necessity of believers being able to defend the Christian faith is stated in the Bible clearly, as Peter says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, with humility and fear" (1 Pet 3:15).¹ James E. Taylor explains, "Christian Apologetics is a defense of the truth of Christian convictions from the standpoint of Christian commitment."² Indeed, there is an urgent need to teach the Iban Christians how to defend their faith in order to stop the trend of conversions to Islam.

The weakness of Chinese Christians lies in proclaiming the Christian faith to their Muslim friends. The biblical argument for the necessity of believers being able to proclaim the Christian gospel is stated clearly in the Great Commission of Jesus Christ:

¹ All Scriptures quotations are from the World English Bible (WEB) throughout the project unless otherwise noted.

² James E. Taylor, *Introducing Apologetics: Cultivating Christian Commitment* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 19.

“Jesus came to them and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I command you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age’” (Matt 28:18-20). Moreover, Paul also emphasizes, “For if I preach the Good News, I have nothing to boast about; for necessity is laid on me; but woe is to me, if I don’t preach the Good News” (1 Cor 9:16). For Paul, believers must not be “ashamed of the Good News of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes; for the Jew first, and also for the Greek” (Rom 1:16). The SCAC believers are not being ashamed of the gospel itself, but their inability to answer the questions of their Muslim neighbors inhibits their ability to proclaim it boldly. We never want to see our Muslim friends perish, even though they are persecuting our Iban brothers and sisters, but they are indeed our friends. We have the responsibility to proclaim the gospel to them.

The two weaknesses of Iban Christians and Chinese Christians can be solved together by training them in apologetics. The Iban Christians need to be trained on the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in order to defend their faith against the false teaching of the Muslim teachers. Iban Christians must know that our Lord Jesus Christ is not merely a minor prophet but the risen Son of God and the Savior of all humanity. And for Chinese Christians, we also need to teach them the truth of Jesus’s resurrection so they can effectively evangelize their Muslim friends.

Scripture mentions the necessity of focusing on the resurrection when dealing with non-Christians. As the apostle Peter says, “This Jesus God raised up, to which we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:32). Luke further tells us, “With great power, the apostles gave their testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Great grace was on them all” (Acts 4:33). Hence, my project is focused on the deity of Jesus Christ as evidenced by the resurrection. I strongly hope that my project will help the Iban indigenous Christians stand firm and effectively defend against the Islamization movement. Moreover, it also

allows both Iban Christians and Chinese Christians effectively proclaim the gospel to their Muslim friends.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to train Gloria Methodist Church (GMC) of SCAC in apologetics for the effective defense and proclamation of the Christian faith.

Goals

In order to achieve the purpose of my project, there are three goals to cultivate:

1. The first goal was to assess the knowledge of the resurrection in GMC.
2. The second goal was to develop an eight-session apologetics curriculum on the knowledge of the resurrection.
3. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the resurrection of GMC by teaching an eight-session apologetics curriculum.

A specific research methodology has been created that will measure the successful completion of these three goals.³ This methodology will be more clearly described in detail in the following section.

Research Methodology

Successful completion of this project depends upon the completion of these three goals. The first goal was to assess the knowledge of the resurrection in Gloria Methodist Church (SCAC). This goal was measured by administering the *Apologetics Survey* (AS) among the church leaders and members of GMC.⁴ This goal is considered successfully met when the church leaders and members complete the questionnaires, and the inventory has been analyzed yielding a clear picture of the knowledge of the

³ All of the research instruments used in this project will be performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

⁴ See appendix 1.

resurrection in GMC.

The second goal was to develop an eight-session apologetics curriculum on the knowledge of the resurrection. This goal was measured by an expert panel (five members) who used a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, theological soundness, and clarity of the apologetics curriculum.⁵ This goal is considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators meet or exceed the sufficiency level.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the resurrection of GMC's church leaders and members by teaching an eight-session apologetics curriculum. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-survey which were used to measure the change in the knowledge of the resurrection. This goal is considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrates a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definition of a key term is used in the ministry project:

Islamization. In Malaysia, Islamization is a movement that penetrates politics, education, economy, society, law, and other religions. The target of this movement is to influence other faiths through various ways and convert them to Islam.

There are three delimitations applied to this project. First, due to time constraints, the project was limited to one of the SCAC's churches only, that is, Gloria Methodist Church (GMC). There are two reasons for choosing GMC. First of all, GMC is located in the Bintulu District, which is more familiar to me because I served as the Superintendent of the Bintulu District for six years (2011-2016). Secondly, GMC is one of the SCAC's churches that has Bahasa Malaysia Ministry. The BMM is a specific

⁵ See appendix 2.

congregation of GMC with a combination of Chinese Christians and Iban Indigenous Christians, but none are Malays. There are about two hundred people; 80 percent are Iban Indigenous Christian, and 20 percent are Chinese Christian. Generally, they can speak two to three kinds of languages: Malay, Chinese, and Iban. In this project, Chinese Christians and Iban Christians learn the truth of the resurrection and how to deal with their Muslim friends (i.e., Malay friends) together. In Malaysia, almost all Muslims are Malays; hence the word “Muslims” is identical to “Malays.”

Secondly, due to time constraints, I could only focus on SCAC instead of SIAC (actually, I belong to SCAC). Another reason is that SIAC already had its apologetics program in June 2022, which another pastor leads. Indeed, SCAC and SIAC are two separate annual conferences; they could plan for any ministry with no obligation to notify each other. Moreover, it is too hard for me to do the project in two different churches simultaneously. Therefore, I only chose to do the project ministry in SCAC. However, I have chosen a SCAC church with Malay language ministries, GMC, where Chinese Christians and Iban Indigenous Christians could participate together in the apologetics curriculum.

Third, due to the COVID-19 problem (a quarantine period is still required for anyone who enters Malaysia from other countries) and the distancing problem (the traveling and living expenses are far beyond my financial budget), the whole project was done online via Zoom conferences.

Conclusion

The knowledge of Jesus’s resurrection is crucial for all Christians, especially those who engage with the Muslims, such as the Iban Indigenous Christians and Chinese Christians in Sarawak. The following chapters will show the knowledge of Jesus’s resurrection. Chapter 2 focuses on Scripture’s sufficiency for biblical knowledge of Jesus’s resurrection, and chapter 3 focuses on historical knowledge of Jesus’s

resurrection.

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

In this chapter, I demonstrate that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to the apostles' apologetic presentations. My discussion includes three of the apostles' apologetic presentations from the New Testament: 1 Corinthians 15:1-58, Acts 2:14-41, and Acts 17:16-34. Each of the chapter's subsections will focus on different perspectives of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but they all point toward the main thesis of this chapter: Christ's resurrection was the center of the apostles' apologetic presentations.

**The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Stands at
the Heart of Christianity**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ stands at the heart of Christianity. An examination of 1 Corinthians 15 will support the thesis by demonstrating Paul's view of the resurrection as the primary component of the gospel and the lynchpin of the Christian faith.

**The Resurrection of Christ Is the Primary
Component of the Gospel (1 Cor 15:1-11)**

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul has demonstrated that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the primary component of the gospel and the lynchpin of the Christian faith. Fred Fisher highlights that "the resurrection of Christ is an essential part of the gospel message."¹ When Paul deals with the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, he begins by restating the truth of the resurrection that he had faithfully preached to the Corinthians,

¹ Fred Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1975), 234-35.

which they have already accepted; then he reinforces the truth with a list of eyewitnesses or historical evidence, including Paul himself.²

1 Corinthians 15 epitomizes the classical discussion concerning the truth of the resurrection in the New Testament. Obviously, some Corinthians had denied the truth of the resurrection (v. 12). Paul wanted to show that such “a denial cannot be countenanced for a moment, for the resurrection of the believer is integral to the faith.”³ Paul strongly warns that if only for this life that they had such hope, they would be “of all men most pitiable” (v. 19). To present his point, Paul showed that Christ’s resurrection is fundamental to the gospel, and the resurrection of the Christ, in turn, implies the resurrection of the Christian. Next, he continues by dealing with some objections that were raised or might be raised and showing how hopeless those opponents are.⁴

The creed delivered to the Corinthians by Paul (vv. 1-4). “Now I declare to you, brothers, the Good News which I preached to you, which also you received, in which you also stand, by which also you are saved” (vv. 1-2). The Greek style here (*kai . . . kai . . . kai*) conveys an escalation, and “in English a repetition of the substantive gives the effect better than a repetition of the conjunction.”⁵ Apparently, some Corinthians had forgotten their belief in the resurrection, so Paul calls their attention to it. The historical fact of the resurrection that Paul preached was the common ground of the whole church, the primary component of the gospel, and the lynchpin of the Christian faith. As Archibald Robertson says, “The doctrine of the Resurrection is primary and

² Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 122.

³ Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 203.

⁴ Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 203.

⁵ Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1950), 331.

cardinal, central and indispensable [of the gospel].”⁶ Hence, Gordon Fee warns, “any deviation from this gospel which ‘saved them’ and ‘in which they stand’ puts them in danger of ‘believing for naught.’”⁷

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received” (v. 3). Robertson and Plummer believe Paul initially received the resurrection facts from the apostles, but the importance of the facts was made known to him by Christ himself on the road to Damascus.⁸ Hence, before Paul came on the scene, the two basic tenets of the Christian faith—Christ’s atonement through his death and Christ’s resurrection—were already well formed. This is what Paul “received” and “passed on.”⁹

The three most important doctrines of Christology are “Christ died for our sins” (v. 3), “he was buried” (v. 4), and “he was raised on the third day” (v. 4). As F. F. Bruce states, “Whatever differences there might be in primitive Christian faith and preaching, there was evidently unanimity on these fundamental data.”¹⁰ The connection of “buried” with “raised on the third day” indicates the resurrection of a dead body and not merely the spiritual renewal of a life after death; thus, “the nature of resurrection is genuine and corporeal.”¹¹ The burial of Jesus and his empty tomb are the crucial historical proof of his bodily resurrection, and these have been genuinely recorded in all four Gospels. As Robertson and Plummer state, “The body [of Jesus] was laid in the

⁶ Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 332.

⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 718.

⁸ Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 333.

⁹ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 722.

¹⁰ F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 138.

¹¹ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 718.

tomb, and the tomb was afterward found to be empty . . . [By] death and burial, he came down to our level, by resurrection he raised us to his.”¹²

The official witnesses of the resurrection of Christ (vv. 5-8). Verse 5 records that Jesus then “appeared to Cephas [Peter] and then to the Twelve.” Peter saw Jesus after his resurrection because Jesus took the initiative to show himself to Peter.¹³ ‘The Twelve’ is here an official name for the apostolic body; only ten were present, for Judas had died and Thomas was away.¹⁴

“Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers at once, most of whom remain until now, but some have also fallen asleep” (v. 6). Paul provided further information about the appearances of the risen Jesus, “culled from various sources, to what he had ascertained during those fifteen days in Jerusalem.”¹⁵ He added, “most of whom remain until now,” to show the possibility of checking the truth of the story.¹⁶ “Then he appeared to James [the half-brother of Jesus], then to all the apostles” (v. 7). Paul’s aim was to provide as many appearance evidences as possible so there is no doubt concerning the reality of Jesus’s resurrection.¹⁷

“Last of all . . . he appeared to me” (v. 8). Paul added his Damascus road testimony into the list. Bruce notes, “As the apostleship of Peter, James and their colleagues was validated by the fact that they saw the risen Lord, his own apostleship was validated on identical grounds,”¹⁸ although the appearance of Jesus to Paul was

¹² Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 334.

¹³ Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 140.

¹⁴ Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 336.

¹⁵ Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 141.

¹⁶ Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, 238.

¹⁷ Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, 238.

¹⁸ Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 142.

comparatively later than the other apostles, “as to the child born at the wrong time” (v. 8). In sum, the list of witnesses provides strong and reliable evidence of Jesus’s resurrection. Paul lays the foundation by showing how well-founded belief in the resurrection is, and he builds his argument from there.¹⁹

The agreement between Paul and other apostles respecting this creed (vv. 9-11). Paul always likes to mention his own unworthiness and boast in the greatness of the grace of God. Paul’s conversion is a miracle indeed, as Fisher comments, “One of the great miracles of early Christianity was the transformation of the chief persecutor into the chief preacher.”²⁰ Paul is what he is by the grace of God (v. 10). Finally, Paul ends his argument with the assertion (v. 11) that Corinthian Christians came to a belief in the risen Christ through the same gospel (v. 1), whether preached by him or other apostles. Paul thereby builds the foundation for his coming argument on the resurrection of the dead, as summarized by Joseph Fitzmyer: “Since Jesus was raised from the dead, Christians too may expect to share in such a revival after death.”²¹

The Consequences of Denying the Truth of the Resurrection (1 Cor 15:12-19)

Fisher notes that Paul provides an experiential argument, showing that “the resurrection of Jesus, the resurrection of the believer, and the reality of the gospel are all bound together . . . [The] argument is that if any one of these great truths is false, then all are.”²² Craig Keener believes that some “elite Corinthians probably followed views held by many philosophers, such as immortality of the soul after the body’s death; many

¹⁹ Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 207.

²⁰ Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, 239.

²¹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible, vol. 32 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 543.

²² Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, 235.

viewed the body as earthly, the soul as heavenly, including some Jews.”²³ That is why Paul accused, “how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (v. 12b).

Paul’s main focus here is to argue “the validity of the resurrection of believers from the fact of the resurrection of Christ.”²⁴ Paul argues that by denying the resurrection of Christ, the skeptics embrace (1) the futility of Apostolic preaching (v. 14a), (2) the futility of Christian faith (v.14b, 17a), (3) a false witness of God (v. 15), and (4) the destruction of all Christian hope (v.17b, 18).

The falsification of apostolic teaching and of the Christian faith (vv. 14-17). If Christ has not been raised for our justification, his death is in vain and possesses no redemptive power. Christ’s death does not save us from the guilt and penalty of sin, as Fisher asks, “How can a dead Christ save others from death, . . . and how can he secure for others a life beyond the grave which he himself does not possess?”²⁵ In the same token, Paul continues that if Christ has not risen, “our preaching is in vain . . . your faith also is in vain.” Moreover, “We are found to be false witnesses of God, . . . the dead are not raised . . . [and] you are still in your sins” (vv. 14-17). The whole Christian faith collapses if Christ has not risen, and our faith and service for Christ would be aimless and futile.

The destruction of all Christian hope (vv. 18, 19). “Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (v. 18). “Perish” means “eternal death.” That is, the dead believers will be eternally dead. If Christ has not been raised, Paul admitted, “we are of all men most pitiable” (v. 19). Bruce explains, “Not that the gospel brings no benefits

²³ Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 122.

²⁴ W. Harold Mare, *1 Corinthians*, in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol.10, *Romans-Galatians* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1976), 281.

²⁵ Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, 241.

for the present life, but Christian hope rests in a risen and living Christ, and if he is neither risen nor living, then hopes were dupes indeed.”²⁶ Hence, as Robertson and Plummer say, “the resurrection of Christ is not an isolated fact or doctrine which can be accepted or rejected independently of other truths, it is the very center of the Gospel.”²⁷

The Consequences of Christ’s Resurrection (1 Cor 15:20-28)

Next, Paul shifts his focus from the consequences of denying Christ’s resurrection to the consequences of affirming Christ’s resurrection. He deals with the resurrection of believers and the eschatological order of events at the final time. All things will then be subjected to the risen Christ, and even death will be overcome.²⁸

Christ became the first fruits of those who are asleep (vv. 20-23). “But now Christ has been raised from the dead. He became the first fruits of those who are asleep” (v. 20). Paul argues that Jesus is the first one to be raised, followed by his believers who have fallen asleep. Fisher illustrates that “the resurrection of Christ was the first harvest over death; it predicts and guaranteed the full harvest at the final resurrection.”²⁹ Paul also introduced the idea of corporate existence and a contrast between the first Adam and the second Adam (Christ), as David Garland argues, “All humans are included in Adam with respect to sin and death; all Christians are included in Christ with respect to the future resurrection.”³⁰ The first Adam and his descendants were lost by disobedience, but the second Adam (Christ) and his believers will be raised by Christ’s obedience.

²⁶ Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 145.

²⁷ Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 348.

²⁸ Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 213.

²⁹ Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, 243.

³⁰ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 704.

Robertson and Plummer affirm, “Christian hope is not limited to this life; and Christians are not the most pitiable of men.”³¹ The reason is thus indicated: “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. . . . Christ the first fruits, then those who are Christ’s, at his coming” (vv. 22, 23). Mare explains, “Christ’s having been raised and being the first-fruits of the believing dead, guarantees the sequence of events at the second coming of Christ.”³²

All things have been subjected to Christ (vv. 24-28). Then the end comes, when Christ will abolish all earthly rule and all authority and power (v. 24). Paul assures that Christ must reign until God has put all his enemies under Christ’s feet (v. 25), as Bruce says, “The kingship of Christ, the age of the Messiah, began with his exaltation to the right hand of God, . . . until God has put all his enemies under his feet (Paul quotes Psalm 8:8).”³³ Even death, the last enemy, will be abolished by Christ (v. 26). As it is the Father’s power that ensures all things will one day be fully submitted to Christ, then “the Son will also himself be subjected to him [the Father] who subjected all things to him, that God may be all in all” (v. 28b).

Arguments from Christian Devotion and Practices (1 Cor 15:29-34)

This is “the argument from Christian devotion, showing that such devotion with its dangers and trials has no meaning if there is no resurrection from the dead.”³⁴ Paul demonstrates that the practice of baptism for the dead³⁵ is pointless if the dead are

³¹ Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 351.

³² Mare, *1 Corinthians*, 281.

³³ Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 147.

³⁴ Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, 234.

³⁵ The most natural meaning of the expression “baptism for the dead” is that some early believers got themselves baptized on behalf of their friends or relatives who had died without receiving that sacrament. See Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 218.

not actually raised (vv. 29, 30). He also asks why Christians should suffer for Christ if there is no resurrection; instead, “if the dead are not raised, then ‘let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’” (v. 32). Paul’s narrative perspective changes from third person to first to second, followed by rhetorical questions (vv. 29-32).³⁶ Then he urges the Corinthians, “Don’t be deceived! . . . Wake up righteously, and don’t sin!” (vv. 33, 34a).

Paul wanted to tell those who “have no knowledge of God” (v. 34b) that a denial of the resurrection shows an ignorance of God, stating, “I say this to your shame,” (v. 34c). The Corinthians were proud of their intellect and spiritual gifts, but Paul wanted them to see that “they were gullible if they allowed themselves to be swayed by men who did not really know God at all.”³⁷ Hence, as Mare says, “Paul calls on the Corinthians to give up these doubts and witness to their faith in a risen Christ.”³⁸

The Nature of the Resurrected Body (1 Cor 15:35-58)

Paul’s final discussion covers the kind of body with which we will be raised, and this question has troubled most skeptics and even some Christians. Paul begins his illustration with nature; he makes it clear that one’s resurrected life will continue with the present body but of a different kind (vv. 36-41). Then he shows a number of contrasts between the two different lives (vv. 42-50). Finally, Paul concludes his argument with a hymn of victory, in which he praises that the resurrection will bring final victory for the believer over death and sin (vv. 51-58).³⁹

³⁶ Richard A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 206.

³⁷ Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, 251.

³⁸ Mare, *1 Corinthians*, 281.

³⁹ Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, 251.

The future body has continuity with but is different from the present body (vv. 35-41). Generally, those who deny the resurrection assume “earthly embodied existence is completely incompatible with heavenly spiritual existence.”⁴⁰ But Paul argued with the Corinthian skeptics from the analogy of the sown seed, which highlights two significant points of view: “The body as the principle of continuity,” understanding “the future body to be taken by the new life that comes from the sown seeds; and the introduction of God as the causative agent who gives the body to the sown seed.”⁴¹ The seed is buried, but it is raised up with a new and more glorious body. This leads to the fact that though our bodies are ‘sown’ in corruption, they will be raised in incorruption. As Leon Morris says, “As God has willed that we should have bodies fitted for our life on earth, so has he willed that we shall have bodies fitted to our heavenly existence.”⁴²

Paul went on to show that there is a variety of fleshly bodies and glorified bodies. For instance, men, birds, fish, the sun, the moon, and the stars have their own bodies (vv. 39-41), highlighting the infinite variety that reigns in the world which God created, as Bruce asks, “Why then should it be supposed that there can be only one kind of human body, the one with which we are familiar in this life?”⁴³ The fleshly body of men will be raised to glory. For Paul, resurrection is the mortal body changed by God’s power so that “those who are raised will be given a body that is consistent with its new celestial habitat.”⁴⁴

A spiritual, imperishable body (vv. 42-49). Paul then applies the analogies directly to the resurrection of the dead. Some Corinthians had trouble believing in the

⁴⁰ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 725.

⁴¹ Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 209.

⁴² Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 223.

⁴³ Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 151.

⁴⁴ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 725.

resurrection of the dead because they knew the terrestrial body to be “Susceptible to corruption—the condition of fallen creation; Dishonored—the condition of being subject to shame and shameful treatment; and Weak—the condition of being embodied in something that is subject to physical infirmities and deformities.”⁴⁵ Paul continued to show the significant difference between the two bodies: the physical body is natural and sown in corruption, dishonor, and weakness; but the resurrected body is raised a spiritual body in incorruption, glory, and power (vv. 42-44). In each of the four parallel pairs of clauses, Paul repeats “the metaphor of the sown seed and applies it to the resurrection, using antithetical terms.”⁴⁶

In light of Genesis 2:7, the analogy of the first Adam and the second Adam (Christ) has two parts. First, Paul says, “So also it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, that which is spiritual isn’t first, but that which is natural, then that which is spiritual” (vv. 45, 46). Here, the key word *psyche* is used of Adam, and the implied word *pneuma* (“God-breathed”) is applied to Christ. Paul points out that what is *pneumatikos* comes after what is *psychikos*.⁴⁷ For the second part of the analogy, seen in verses 47-49, Paul contrasts Adam and Christ in terms of the nature of their humanity: Adam by virtue of creation is “of earth” (“made of dust”); Christ by virtue of resurrection is “of heaven” (v. 47).⁴⁸ Finally, in verse 49, Paul urges the Corinthian believers to bear the image of the heavenly, last Adam, or the risen Christ.

Victory over sin and death in the resurrection of Christ (vv. 50-58).

Finally, the chapter comes to a magnificent climax. Paul reaffirms his concept of

⁴⁵ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 733.

⁴⁶ Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 210.

⁴⁷ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 788.

⁴⁸ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 788.

resurrection in 15:51-53: (1) We will not all die before the *parousia*, but we will all be changed (v. 51); (2) At the *parousia*, the dead believers will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed (v. 52);⁴⁹ (3) The corruptible and mortal must put on incorruption and immortality (v. 53). God's divine transformation power occurs at the *parousia*, so that "what is earthly becomes fit for heavenly existence,"⁵⁰ and "death is swallowed up in victory" (v. 54). Hence, Paul declared the final victory over death, which is vanquished by the resurrection: "Death, where is your sting? Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (vv. 55-57). In this doxology of gratitude, Paul wants to thank God that we have victory over sin and the law through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁵¹

In the final verse, Paul exhorts the Corinthians in the hope of resurrection. "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable" (v. 58a). Paul urged the Corinthians to have doctrinal stability, as Fisher says, "The Corinthians needed to strive to be so securely tied to the gospel that no false teaching would move them from their moorings."⁵² If the Corinthians got a firm grip on the truth of the resurrection, the center of the gospel, they would not be so readily shaken.⁵³ Paul further exhorts them to be "always abounding in the Lord's work, because you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (v. 58b). Having secured their faith in the risen Christ, the Corinthians can then turn to their practice, especially being witnesses for the risen Christ. All their labors of mission are not in vain in "the sphere of Christ's lordship."⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 734.

⁵⁰ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 734.

⁵¹ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 807.

⁵² Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, 261.

⁵³ Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 236.

⁵⁴ Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, 261.

Sub-Conclusion

Paul clearly demonstrates that the resurrection of Jesus Christ stands as the heart of Christianity. The examination of 1 Corinthians 15 has supported the thesis by demonstrating Paul's view of the resurrection as the primary component of the gospel and the lynchpin of the Christian faith. Robertson and Plummer summarize, "In short, the resurrection of Christ is not an isolated fact or doctrine which can be accepted or rejected independently of other truths, it is the very center of the Gospel."⁵⁵ In light of the sure hope of resurrection, and in light of Christ's triumph over sin and the law, Paul assures that our present existence in Christ and our present labors will not be in vain. Therefore, we may confidently continue on our way in the risen Lord.⁵⁶

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Is Central in Peter's Apologetic Speech to a Jewish Audience

The resurrection is central in Peter's apologetic speech to a Jewish audience. An examination of Acts 2:14-41 will support the thesis by demonstrating Peter's appeal to the resurrection as God's confirmation of Jesus's works and words concerning himself.

Introduction (Acts 2:14-15)

This is the story of Pentecost. Before Jesus's ascension, he promised to send the Holy Spirit and commanded his followers to stay at Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit's coming. He said, "Don't depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which you heard from me" (Acts 1:4). The disciples waited in Jerusalem for ten days until the Spirit came at the right time.⁵⁷

After the ten days, the Holy Spirit came and filled all one-hundred twenty followers of Christ gathered together. The Holy Spirit empowered them to stand boldly

⁵⁵ Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 348.

⁵⁶ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 809.

⁵⁷ Charles C. Williamson, *Acts*, Interpretation Bible Studies (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 16, PDF, eBook.

before Jewish people and bear witness for the risen Christ. As Charles Williamson says, “The same group of disciples who only weeks before were running in fear, denying, doubting, was now standing up boldly declaring their faith in the crucified and risen Christ.”⁵⁸ They were empowered by the Spirit to speak boldly for Christ. And the Jews from Jerusalem, Judea, and the Jewish diaspora were bewildered when they heard the disciples speaking in their own native languages, which the disciples never learned before (vv. 5-8).⁵⁹

Peter uses three Old Testament texts in his inaugural speech which theologially interlock. Peter begins by claiming that the prophetic vision in Joel 2:28-32 was fulfilled in the events of Pentecost. Then he argues that David in Psalm 16:8-11 envisioned the prospect of a future Messiah (the Holy One) who would be resurrected from the dead. Finally, Peter argues that in Psalm 110:1 David also envisioned a “Lord” who would be exalted, enthroned, and seated on the right side of God with full authority.⁶⁰ Peter explains the manifestations of sound, wind, and speaking in tongues (unlearned native languages) as the fulfillment of Scripture, and that the Spirit has been poured out by “the crucified, risen, and exalted Jesus, who is the Messiah and Lord and who reigns on the throne of David at God’s right hand.”⁶¹ Indeed, Peter’s speech is one of the most important theological declarations in the New Testament. As Darrell Bock says, “It highlights who Jesus is and explains how one can know what God was doing through him, . . . it complements the presentation of the gospel . . . with emphasis on how Jesus provides salvation as a sacrifice for sin.”⁶²

⁵⁸ Williamson, *Acts*, 20.

⁵⁹ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 5, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), chap. 4, “Literary Context,” para. 3, EPUB.

⁶⁰ Carl R. Holladay, *Acts: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 98, PDF, eBook.

⁶¹ Schnabel, *Acts*, chap. 4, “Theology in Application,” para. 1.

⁶² Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids:

Luke's recording of Peter's speech is too brief to be understood as a verbatim recording. Not only that, but Peter's speech was most likely delivered in Aramaic and not Greek. I. Howard Marshall comments, "This means that Luke's Greek text is at best a translation of an Aramaic original." Nevertheless, Peter's speech fits absolutely into the situation of the day of Pentecost.⁶³

Peter's address (v. 14). Peter acts as the spokesman of apostles, standing to speak in front of the crowd and backed up by the other eleven other apostles (including Matthias).⁶⁴ Peter addresses the crowd, "You men of Judea, and all you who dwell at Jerusalem" (v. 14b). "You men of Judea" should not be interpreted as Peter was welcoming "all Jerusalemites to listen but only adult males from the rest of Judea."⁶⁵ Peter "spoke out" to the crowd. The word "speak out" (*apephthenxato*) is aligned with the verb used of speaking in tongues in Acts 2:4; it implies that Peter spoke in Aramaic with the power of the Spirit,⁶⁶ as Marshall says, "Peter's sermon is regarded as being the work of a man filled with the Spirit."⁶⁷

Refutation of the charge of drunkenness (v. 15). Peter's first task is to correct the misunderstanding among his audience that "they are filled with new wine" (2:13). He points out the unreasonableness of suggesting that men were likely to be drunk

Baker Academic, 2007), 109, PDF, eBook.

⁶³ I. Howard Marshall, *The Book of Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 72, PDF, eBook.

⁶⁴ Marshall, *The Book of Acts*, 73.

⁶⁵ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 868, PDF, eBook.

⁶⁶ Stanley M. Horton, *Acts, A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2001), 65, PDF, eBook.

⁶⁷ Marshall, *The Book of Acts*, 73.

before nine o'clock in the morning.⁶⁸ Actually, the normal Jewish breakfast time was the fourth hour (approximately 10 a.m.), and the sixth hour on the Sabbath.⁶⁹ Peter simply wanted to point out they were not drunk but filled by the Holy Spirit.

The Age of Fulfillment Has Come (Acts 2:16-24)

Peter cites Joel 2:28-32 (LXX, Joel 3:1-5). He begins by declaring that the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy is here, and the last days have begun. The Pentecost events are "God's long-awaited promise in fulfillment of new-covenant hope."⁷⁰ Hence, Peter read Joel's text as kingdom texts, for he and the other apostles saw themselves as in the last days.

The Spirit of prophecy has arrived, as promised in Joel 2:28-32 (vv. 16-21). Peter points out that what the people witnessed was the fulfillment of a prophecy by Joel. He claims to his audience they are now living in the last days, and "God's final act of salvation has begun to take place."⁷¹ Joel, like the other Old Testament prophets, did not foresee that history would include both a first and second coming of Christ.⁷² Peter used the phrase "God says" (v. 17) in the introduction to emphasize that the prophecy of Joel is the promise of Yahweh God. According to Joel, the outpouring of the Spirit is "in the last days" (v. 17). In the inspiration of the Spirit, Peter points out that the last days have begun, as Stanley Horton says, "The 'last days' begun with the ascension of Jesus, . . . we are in the last age before the rapture of the church, the restoration of Israel, the

⁶⁸ Marshall, *The Book of Acts*, 73.

⁶⁹ C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, vol. 34 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), 135, PDF, eBook.

⁷⁰ Bock, *Acts*, 112.

⁷¹ Marshall, *The Book of Acts*, 73.

⁷² Horton, *Acts*, 67.

Christ's millennial reign on earth."⁷³

Unlike the original which opens with, "Then afterward" (Joel 2:28), the opening words in Acts are, "In the last days" (Acts 2:17), "a change that clearly connects the events of Pentecost with the eschatological promise of Jesus's return."⁷⁴ The first part of the quote from Joel, "that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh" (v. 17), obviously refers to the one-hundred twenty followers of Christ on the day of Pentecost. God keeps pouring his Spirit on "all flesh" (Gk. *pasan sarka*, also meaning "all people"); in Hebrew "all flesh" normally means all humankind, as in Genesis 6:12.⁷⁵ Here, "all people" is broken down to sons, daughters, young men, and old men (v. 17). Therefore, there is no distinction in the Pentecostal experience with regard to gender and age; men and women, young and old, were all baptized in the Spirit.⁷⁶

It was prophesied that the Spirit will also be poured out "on my servants and my handmaidens" (v. 18). Even the lowest of classes will be blessed across both genders, both "menservants and maidservants."⁷⁷ Two often ignored groups of people, servants and women, are included here.⁷⁸ According to Horton, the word "servants" actually means "slaves," about whom he adds, "Twenty percent of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves, and in many areas, slaves composed as high as eighty percent of the population."⁷⁹

⁷³ Horton, *Acts*, 67.

⁷⁴ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), chap. 2, "Peter's Response," "The Prophecy of Joel," para. 2, EPUB.

⁷⁵ Horton, *Acts*, 67.

⁷⁶ Horton, 68.

⁷⁷ Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel, ed. Eldon Jay Epp and Christopher H. Matthews (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 20, PDF, eBook.

⁷⁸ Bock, *Acts*, 114.

⁷⁹ Horton, *Acts*, 68.

This new era of “the last days” will also be accompanied by visible signs and wonders: the earth beneath will have blood, fire, and billows of smoke (v. 19); and the cosmic world will have solar and lunar eclipses—“the sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood” (v. 20).⁸⁰ The outpouring and prophesying would continue until these signs come at the end of the age.⁸¹

“It will be, that whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved” (v. 21). This is the purpose of the outpouring of the Spirit. The Spirit will do his work of convicting in the world until the end of the age, and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The door of salvation is open for all people, and many people are expected to call on the name of Christ, repent, and be saved.⁸² The apostle John agrees with Peter, for John saw “a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes, peoples, and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev 7:9).

The prophecy has been fulfilled in Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection (vv. 22-24). Peter’s speech now focuses on Jesus, the man of Nazareth whom the people of Jerusalem knew well. Peter is explicit that Jesus was “approved by God to you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you” (v. 22), referring to all the miracles as works God did through Jesus among the people.⁸³ Indeed, the crowds need to be reminded of what Jesus did for them, as Marshall says, “something more was needed to convince the Jews that God was at work in the life of Jesus.”⁸⁴ The nature of Jesus’s miracles, signs, and wonders echo Joel’s prophecy quoted in verse 19.

⁸⁰ Holladay, *Acts: A Commentary*, 102.

⁸¹ Horton, *Acts*, 69.

⁸² Horton, *Acts*, 71.

⁸³ Horton, *Acts*, 71.

⁸⁴ Marshall, *The Book of Acts*, 75.

Therefore, the main subject of Peter’s speech is not the Holy Spirit but Jesus. The Pentecostal experience was to empower Christ’s followers to bear witness for Jesus, the one pouring out the Spirit (cf. Acts 1:8).⁸⁵

In verse 23, Peter emphasizes that the people of Jerusalem are responsible for the death of Jesus on the cross, as Horton says, “many of the Jerusalem Jews were involved in the cry ‘crucify Him!’”⁸⁶ Peter points out that they killed him “by the hand of lawless men” (v. 23b). ‘Lawless men’ (Gk. *anomon*, “men outside the law”), are none other than Pontius Pilate and the Roman soldiers.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the crucifixion of Christ occurred according to the plan of God, for Jesus was “delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God” (v. 23a). Evidenced here is the paradox of God’s plan and human freewill. Marshall explains that “the Jews were simply fulfilling what God had already determined must take place and indeed had foretold in the prophetic writings.”⁸⁸ But that does not mean that those who were involved in the crucifixion of Christ are innocent; they still need to ask for God’s forgiveness.

Peter goes on to describe Jesus as the one “whom God raised up” (v. 24a). The resurrection of Christ reversed the decision of the Jewish leaders and Pilate; it also removed the stigma of the cross. By the resurrection, God freed Jesus “from the agony of death” (v. 24b). The word “agony” (Gk. *odinas*) usually means “birth pangs,” so the death here is perceived as labor. Horton explains, “Just as labor pains are relieved by the birth of a child, so the resurrection brought an end to the pains of death.”⁸⁹ God raised up Jesus “because it was not possible that he should be held by it [death]” (v. 24c). And

⁸⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), chap. 1, “The New Direction Clarified,” para. 7, EPUB.

⁸⁶ Horton, *Acts*, 72.

⁸⁷ Horton, *Acts*, 72.

⁸⁸ Marshall, *The Book of Acts*, 75.

⁸⁹ Horton, *Acts*, 73.

Jesus's resurrection is "an anticipated part of the resurrection in the last day, brought forward in such a way that the rest of men might share in it by faith,"⁹⁰ as Paul highlights in 1 Corinthians 15.

Jesus Is David's Promised Heir by Virtue of His Resurrection (Acts 2:25-32)

Next, Peter claims that David uttered a prophecy in Psalm 16:8-11 regarding the Messiah, who would be David's descendant.

David prophesies of a Lord who is Messiah, according to Psalm 16:8-11 (vv. 25-28). Peter bases his whole argument on the Word of God. He says David was speaking in the inspiration of the Spirit about Jesus the Messiah in Psalm 16:8-11.⁹¹ The psalm is a prayer in which David claims his faith in God and declares his confidence that "because the Lord is, as it were, his right-hand man, he can be joyful and sure that he will not be left in 'Hades' or 'decay' but will rejoice in the presence of God."⁹² God would not abandon Jesus "to the grave" (Gk. *eis hadou*, "into Hades," the place of punishment for the wicked, translating the Heb. *sheol*). Jesus did go into the grave, but this does not mean that he went into Hades.⁹³

The prophecy has been fulfilled by Jesus's resurrection from the dead (vv. 29-32). Peter claims the psalm could not possibly apply to the patriarch David (v. 29), because "he not only died and was buried; his tomb was still there in Jerusalem."⁹⁴ David's body has already decayed, but Jesus's did not. Rather, Jesus resurrected, and his

⁹⁰ Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 143.

⁹¹ Horton, *Acts*, 73.

⁹² Marshall, *The Book of Acts*, 76.

⁹³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 586-94. See also Horton, *Acts*, 73.

⁹⁴ Horton, *Acts*, 74.

tomb remains empty, as Hans Conzelmann says, “David’s grave serves as proof that David has decomposed, thus the quotation cannot refer to him.”⁹⁵

Being a prophet, David knew that “God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, he would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne” (v. 30). Peter recalls the divine oath that God made to David: “I will set up your seed after you, who shall proceed out of your bowels, and I will establish his kingdom” (2 Sam 7:12). God’s promise indicates that David would be the father of a line of kings, and “the throne would remain in his family and not be taken over by usurpers from some other family.”⁹⁶ The risen King Jesus sits on David’s throne and makes it eternal (cf. Luke 1:32-33, Gabriel’s message to the virgin Mary), therefore he has fulfilled what the Old Testament prophesied about the Messiah.⁹⁷

In conclusion, what was prophesied in the Old Testament has been fulfilled in Jesus. The Messiah would rise from the dead; since Jesus rose from the dead, therefore it follows that he must be the prophesied Messiah,⁹⁸ and “neither was his soul left in Hades nor did his flesh see decay” (v. 31). Peter boldly declares, “This Jesus God raised up, to which we all are witnesses” (v. 32). Hence, the conclusion repeats the central claim in verse 24 and is now linked to the call of Jesus to become his witnesses.⁹⁹

Jesus Has Poured Out the Spirit by Virtue of His Exaltation (Acts 2:33-36)

After explaining that Jesus Christ is the Messiah who has risen from the dead, Peter goes on to discuss the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, also emphasizing that the

⁹⁵ Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 21.

⁹⁶ Marshall, *The Book of Acts*, 76.

⁹⁷ Horton, *Acts*, 75.

⁹⁸ Marshall, *The Book of Acts*, 77.

⁹⁹ Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 1, “Peter’s First Sermon,” para. 12.

resurrection of Jesus Christ brought forth his exaltation and ascension to be with God.¹⁰⁰

Jesus is the exalted Lord who reigns and who pours out God’s Spirit (vv. 33-35). Jesus was “exalted by the right hand of God” (v. 33a) and placed at God’s his right hand. Horton describes that “right hand” is “an exalted position of power and authority; this is also the place of triumph and victory.”¹⁰¹ Now Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, and he shall remain there throughout this age to intercede for us (cf. Heb 7:25).

Peter moves on to explain the Pentecostal experience from the understanding of Jesus’s exaltation. At his Father’s right hand, Jesus “received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, [and] he has poured out this [Holy Spirit], which you now see and hear” (v. 33b). The results of this outpouring the crowd now saw and heard. The baptism in the Spirit is the promise of the Father, and Jesus is the one who pours the Spirit out, just as Horton concluded, “God is the Giver, but Jesus is the Baptizer.”¹⁰² This Pentecostal baptism experience becomes an evidence to the crowd that Jesus is alive and still at work.

Peter’s third Old Testament quotation is taken from Psalm 110:1. This is a royal song composed by David himself, probably for his own enthronement as king in Jerusalem. The “Lord” who speaks is Yahweh; the “Lord” who is addressed is not David himself, but the Davidic Messiah, because David recognizes the superiority of this person as his own Lord.¹⁰³ Therefore the invitation, “Sit by my right hand” (v. 34b), is not made to David but to this superior King, Jesus Christ. Peter declares that Jesus, “as a result of his resurrection and ascension, is sitting at God’s right hand, on God’s throne, as the

¹⁰⁰ Marshall, *The Book of Acts*, 78.

¹⁰¹ Horton, *Acts*, 75.

¹⁰² Horton, *Acts*, 76.

¹⁰³ Schnabel, *Acts*, chap. 4, “Explanation of the Text,” para. 81.

Davidic Messiah”¹⁰⁴ until God make Christ’s enemies a footstool for his feet (v. 35).

Jesus who was crucified is the Lord and Messiah of prophecy (v. 36). Peter wanted the crowd to know that this Jesus, whom the Jerusalemites crucified, is “both Lord and Christ [the Messiah]” (v. 36). In the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, Jesus is the Lord on whom all must call for salvation. Psalm 16:8-11 envisions a resurrected Messiah, and Psalm 110:1, an exalted Lord. In sum, each of the three quoted Old Testament texts point to a single person, “a resurrected Messiah, a Holy One, who as ‘Lord’ has been exalted to God’s right hand.”¹⁰⁵ He is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Reaction to the Speech by Three Thousand People (Acts 2:37-41)

Now when the crowd heard this, they were “cut to the heart” (v. 37), which indicates how painful and regretful the people were. The crowds immediately ask Peter and other apostles, “Brother, what shall we do?” (v. 37b). Peter says to them, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ” (v. 38). The twofold result of such repentance is “forgiveness of sin and receipt of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰⁶ The “promise” (v. 39) refers to the hope of receiving the Spirit, and it is extended to Jews (“you and your children”) as well as the Gentiles (“all who are far off”).¹⁰⁷ Peter urges the crowd to save themselves (rather, ‘be saved’) from this crooked generation (v. 40), meaning they should turn away from “the perversity and corruptness of those around them who were rejecting the truth about Jesus.”¹⁰⁸ Consequently, many “received”

¹⁰⁴ Schnabel, Chapter 4, Explanation of the Text.

¹⁰⁵ Holladay, *Acts*, 105.

¹⁰⁶ J. Bradley Chance, *Acts*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2007), 58, PDF, eBook.

¹⁰⁷ Holladay, *Acts*, 106.

¹⁰⁸ Horton, *Acts*, 81.

Peter's message then testified to their faith by being baptized, and "there were added that day about three thousand souls" (v. 41).

Sub-Conclusion

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to the apostles' apologetic presentation, for it is central in Peter's apologetic speech to the Jewish audience. An examination of Acts 2:14-41 supports the thesis by demonstrating Peter's appeal to the resurrection as God's attestation of Jesus's works and words concerning himself. In summary, it is clearly demonstrated in Peter's apologetic speech that Jesus is the promised Messiah, as prophesied in the Old Testament. Through Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, the prophecy has been fulfilled. Consequently, the Spirit was sent and poured onto the apostles and all who have received Peter's message, and these testified to their faith by being baptized. They were the first group who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, witnessed for the risen Christ "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Is Central in Paul's Apologetic Speech to a Gentile Audience

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was central in Paul's apologetic speech to a Gentile audience. An examination of Acts 17:16-34 will support the thesis by demonstrating Paul's appeal to the resurrection of Jesus Christ as evidence that the Judeo-Christian God—rather than pagan gods—is the one, true God and judge of the world.

Introduction

Athens was the heart of Greek philosophy and culture, with its unsurpassed literature, sculpture, and oratory in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. The reason is because Athens was "the native city of Socrates and Plato, and the adopted home of

Aristotle, Epicurus, and Zeno.”¹⁰⁹ Due to its brilliant past, it was well treated by Rome and respected in its role of notable university.¹¹⁰ By the time Paul arrived there, Athens had passed her splendid era. However, Athens was still considered the greatest university city of its time, and intellectuals from all over were attracted by her, especially when new things came along. Athenian intelligentsias gathered in the marketplace to argue and debate over new things, such as new religions or philosophical ideas.¹¹¹

The narrative of Paul in Athens can be divided into five sections: (1) The proclamation of the gospel in the synagogue and marketplace (vv. 16-17), (2) the discussion with Athenian philosophers (v. 18), (3) the invitation to appear before the Areopagus Council (vv. 19-21), (4) Paul’s speech before the Areopagus Council (vv. 22-31), and (5) a brief conclusion on the responses to Paul’s speech (vv. 32-34).

The Proclamation of the Gospel in the Jewish Synagogue and the Greek Marketplace (Acts 17:16-17)

The provocation of the idols in Athens (v. 16). While Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy (v. 15), he had opportunity to see the ancient city of Athens. As Parsons describes, “Athens was well in antiquity to have an abundance of cult statues.”¹¹² Paul was sightseeing among the cult statues in the city center, and rather being impressed by the artistic excellence of cult statues and architecture (much Athenian art and architecture centered on Greek religion), “his spirit was provoked within him” (v. 16).¹¹³ “Provoke” (Gk. *parozyneto*) can also denote outrage, anger, or infuriation; the LXX used

¹⁰⁹ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), chap. 2, “Athens (17:16-21),” para. 1, EPUB.

¹¹⁰ Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 266.

¹¹¹ Williamson, *Acts*, 57.

¹¹² Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 243, PDF, eBook.

¹¹³ Parsons, *Acts*, 243.

the word to denote “God’s extreme anger and wrath due to people’s rebellion or false worship.”¹¹⁴ Paul responded this way because “he saw the city full of idols” (v. 16b). In Agora, Paul would have seen many Athenian religious statues and altars, such as the statue of Hermes Agoraies, the temple of Ares, the temples of Mother Goddess, Apollo Patros, and the Hall of the Twelve gods.¹¹⁵

Paul debated in the Jewish synagogue and the agora (v. 17). In Athens, Paul visited the Jewish synagogue and the Greek agora (the marketplace), where he engaged with three groups of people: Jews, God-fearers, and Greeks. “So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons” (v. 17a). Generally, Paul chose to begin his outreach in synagogues, as seen by his approach in Damascus (Acts 9:20-22), Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16-41), and Thessalonica (Acts 17:2-3).¹¹⁶ The devout persons (“God-fearers”) are “presumably Gentile sympathizers with Judaism.”¹¹⁷ Paul presented to these two groups of people that Jesus is the Messiah, or Savior, who was crucified and raised from the dead according to God’s plan revealed in the Scripture.¹¹⁸

The second place Paul visited is the agora marketplace, the center of Athenian life and activity, where he debated “every day with those who met him” (v. 17b). Paul was ready to debate with anyone willing to debate him, especially the Stoic philosophers who were good in Socratic dialectical method, which grew out of marketplace argument.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Chance, *Acts*, 305.

¹¹⁵ Chance, *Acts*, 306.

¹¹⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, chap. 31, “Explanation of the Text,” para. 6.

¹¹⁷ Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 266.

¹¹⁸ Schnabel, *Acts*, chap. 31, “Explanation of the Text,” para. 6.

¹¹⁹ Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 266.

The Discussion with Athenian Philosophers (Acts 17:18)

The encounter with Epicurean and Stoic Philosophers (v. 18a). “Some of the Epicureans and Stoic philosophers also were conversing with him” (v. 18a). “Converse” (Gk. *Symballo*) could also mean “confer,” but the New Revised Standard Version translates it as “debate.”¹²⁰ Two leading groups of philosophical schools, the Epicureans and Stoic philosophers, were conversing with Paul. The Epicureans didn’t hold much belief in any god, but “they believed that the gods were remote from the world and didn’t particularly care about what was going on in it.”¹²¹ However, the Stoics were pantheists who believed that the divine spirit was present in all of creation.¹²²

The irritated reaction of some intellectuals (v. 18b). When Paul mentioned the resurrection of Jesus, some intellectuals were irritated and said, “What does this babbler want to say?” (v. 18b). They used insulting language, calling Paul a “babbling” (Gk. *spermologos*), which literally refers to birds picking seeds and dropping them everywhere they fly. The term metaphorizes “persons who picked up others’ ideas then scattered them about, depicting themselves as more learned than they really were.”¹²³

The assumption that Paul is introducing new deities (v. 18c). “Others said, ‘He seems to be advocating foreign deities, because he preached Jesus and the resurrection’” (v. 18c NIV). Others assumed that Paul was introducing new foreign deities as he preached about “Jesus and the resurrection.” This is because Athens was famous in promoting new gods in the Greek world. In Greek, the name “Jesus” is grammatically

¹²⁰ Chance, *Acts*, 306.

¹²¹ Williamson, *Acts*, 57.

¹²² Parsons, *Acts*, 243.

¹²³ Chance, *Acts*, 306.

masculine and his consort, “Anastasia” (“Resurrection”) is grammatically feminine.¹²⁴ Obviously, they misinterpreted Paul’s message to be about two deities, Jesus and his consort, Anastasis (resurrection).¹²⁵

The Invitation to Appear before the Areopagus Council (Acts 17:19-21)

Paul’s invitation to the Areopagus Council (v. 19a). The Areopagus Council was the most honorable institution in Athens. Its function varied from time to time. At one time it was limited to cases of capital crime; at others it had to do with “a wide range of legal, political, educational, and religious matters.”¹²⁶ The Athenians assumed Paul was introducing “new gods” (Jesus and Resurrection) for the purpose of securing them a place in the Athenian Pantheon, so they “took hold of him, and brought him to the Areopagus,” (v. 19a) perhaps by force. The Council of Areopagus was “the governmental body responsible for adding any new deities to the pantheon of gods.”¹²⁷

Query concerning the foreign deities Paul is introducing to Athens (vv. 19b-21). The Council asked Paul, “May we know what this new teaching is, which is spoken by you? For you bring certain strange things to our ears. We want to know therefore what these things mean” (vv. 19b-20). The Council wanted to know Paul’s “new teaching” which confused them; this is a common request of the Council. The Athenians and the foreigners who lived in Athens were always full of curiosity, wanting to be posted about the latest teaching of philosophical or religious ideas.¹²⁸ “[They] spent

¹²⁴ Parsons, *Acts*, 243.

¹²⁵ David John Williams, *Acts*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 5 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 302, PDF, eBook.

¹²⁶ Williams, *Acts*, 304.

¹²⁷ Parsons, *Acts*, 244.

¹²⁸ Horton, *Acts*, 298.

their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing” (v. 21). Hence, the occasion gave Paul an opportunity to present his message.

Paul’s Speech before the Council of the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-31)

Perhaps no text in Acts has received more scholarly attention than the ten verses of Paul’s Areopagus speech. Paul’s speech is biblical and thoroughly rooted in Old Testament thought. The main theme of Paul’s speech is God as creator and the proper worship of the Creator God. In order to build a bridge which could reach the Athenian intellectuals, Paul tried his best to use the language related to Greek philosophy.¹²⁹ Paul’s speech can be divided into five couplets that follow a chiastic structure (an A-B-C-B-A pattern).¹³⁰

Introduction: evidence of the ignorance of pagan worship (v. 22c-23).

Paul’s speech begins with a typical convention of ancient rhetoric, the *captatio benevolentiae*.¹³¹ In order to attract his audience, Paul begins by complimenting them: “You men of Athens, I perceive that you are very religious in all things” (v. 22). His evidence is from his tour of the city. The term “religious” (Gk. *deisidaimonesterous*) is very difficult to translate and could also mean “too superstitious” (KJV).¹³² It can have either a positive or negative connotation, as David John Williams says, “It is a comparative and can mean either that they were more devout than most in the practice of their religion or more superstitious.”¹³³ In his wisdom, Paul deliberately chose this word

¹²⁹ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 345, PDF, eBook.

¹³⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, 345.

¹³¹ Parsons *Acts*, 246.

¹³² Bock, *Acts*, 564.

¹³³ Williams, *Acts*, 305.

with ambiguous meaning so as “not to offend his hearers, but expressing to his own satisfaction what the thought of their religion.”¹³⁴

Paul continued and said, “For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD’” (v. 23a). This gave Paul a good opportunity to present his belief of monotheism to the polytheistic and pantheistic Athenians.¹³⁵ Thus, right after his compliment he criticizes, “what therefore you worship in ignorance, this I announce to you” (v. 23b). To worship an “unknown [Gk. *Agnosto*] god” is to admit one’s ignorance: “If he is unknown to you, you are then in total ignorance of his true nature.”¹³⁶ Paul uses “what” to indicate the objects the Athenians worshiped, stressing that the Athenians had been worshipping objects and not a personal God—a “what,” not a “whom.”¹³⁷

The object of true worship is the one Creator God (vv. 24-25). The object of true worship is the one Creator God, who is defined in a twofold way: (1) He is creator of all, and (2) the Creator God is not contained in a temple. Paul says, “The God who made the world and all things in it, . . . doesn’t dwell in temples made with hands” (v. 24). This creator “by implication, is not reflected by an idol.”¹³⁸ Paul also emphasizes that God is a sustainer and is not “served by men’s hands, as though he needed anything” (v. 25a). The Greeks shared this idea of an independent deity; hence, verse 25 serves as a connection between the Jewish and Greek religious heritages.¹³⁹

Proper relationship between humanity and God (vv. 26-28). If God is the

¹³⁴ Williams, *Acts*, 305.

¹³⁵ Polhill, *Acts*, 347.

¹³⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, 347.

¹³⁷ Parsons, *Acts*, 246.

¹³⁸ Bock, *Acts*, 565.

¹³⁹ Bock *Acts*, 565.

creator of heaven and earth, then he is the creator of human being as well. So, Paul begins with God's creation of humanity: "He made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the surface of the earth" (v. 26a). Paul alludes to Adam, the ancestor of all nations of men. The Stoics similarly held ideas of humanity's common kinship.¹⁴⁰

This same God also "determined appointed seasons, and the boundaries of their dwellings" (v. 26b). Paul could mean God determined specific seasons and places fit for human habitation. Humanity is created "to live" (v. 26) within this cosmos and "to seek the Lord" (v. 27a), taking both infinitives as holding purpose.¹⁴¹ Verse 27a expands on the nature of seeking: "if perhaps they might reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us" (v. 27b). "Reach out" (Gk. *pselapheseian*) carries the connotation of groping, as a blind person might feel her or his way along a room, and "finding" (Gk. *heuroien*) conveys the optative mood.¹⁴² Paul assures that God is "not far from each one of us" (v. 27c), by which he implies that God is within our reach and is willing to be known by us.

The relationship of persons to God (v. 28). God is not far from us, meaning he takes care of our lives. Paul claims, "'For in him we live, and move, and have our being'" (v. 28a), implying our very existence depends totally on God. Mikeal Parsons notes, "Paul's natural theology is grounded in the enabling presence of God."¹⁴³ Paul adds, "some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are his offspring'" (v. 28b). Here Paul quotes from the poem "Phaenomena" by the Greek poet Aratus (ca. 315-240 BC), who studied with the Stoic Zeno at Athens.¹⁴⁴ Paul wisely connected biblical creation

¹⁴⁰ Chance, *Acts*, 310.

¹⁴¹ Chance, *Acts*, 310.

¹⁴² Chance, *Acts*, 311.

¹⁴³ Parsons, *Acts*, 248.

¹⁴⁴ Holladay, *Acts*, 345.

with a popular philosophical poem, claiming “kinship between God and humanity that results from being created by God.”¹⁴⁵

The objects of false worship are idols of gold, silver, or stone (v. 29) Next, Paul contrasts the object of true worship (vv. 24-25) with an account of the false worship of idols: “Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold, or silver, or stone, engraved by art and design of man” (v. 29). Paul starts to condemn the idolatry problems, arguing, “If human life derives from a living deity, how can inanimate and lifeless objects properly honor such a deity?”¹⁴⁶ Here, Paul bases his argument on Old Testament and Jewish traditional monotheistic thought to fight against the Greek pagan ideas of polytheism and pantheism.¹⁴⁷ Paul affirms there is no image made by men’s skill and creativity (whether it is made from gold, silver, or stone) that could possibly be the image of the true God. Rather, the idols and those who make them distort the image of God.¹⁴⁸

Conclusion: the time of ignorance is now over (vv. 30-31). Paul ends his speech by proclaiming that the time of ignorance is now over and calling for an eschatological repentance: “The times of ignorance, therefore, God overlooked. But now he commands that all people everywhere should repent” (v. 30). It is clear that Paul does not want the Athenians to add any new gods to the Athenian Pantheon; he strongly wants them to repent before the Creator God who is the only true God in the universe.¹⁴⁹ The urgency of Paul’s calling for repentance is underlined by the fact that “he [the Creator

¹⁴⁵ Holladay, *Acts*, 345.

¹⁴⁶ Holladay, *Acts*, 346.

¹⁴⁷ Marshall, *Acts*, 289.

¹⁴⁸ Parsons, *Acts*, 248.

¹⁴⁹ Parsons, *Acts*, 248.

God] has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained” (v. 31a). This ordained man is Jesus, through whom God “has given assurance to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead” (v. 31b). Paul claims that the historical fact of Jesus’s resurrection has proved that Jesus is the divine appointed judge of the world. Marshall explains that the “new status [was] given to Jesus by the resurrection, which was interpreted by the early church as exaltation to lordship and consequently to judicial authority.”¹⁵⁰

Behind the call for repentance is a positive invitation to receive God’s forgiveness and salvation through this risen Jesus.¹⁵¹ Paul’s speech ends with the Creator God as the main actor of humanity: “He overlooks, commands, sets the day, judges the world, and provides [salvation] through the resurrection [of Jesus].”¹⁵² The Athenians, like the Thessalonians, need to “turn to God from idols, to serve a living and true God” (1 Thess 1:9).

Mixed Responses to Paul’s Speech (Acts 17:32-34)

The responses to Paul’s speech were mixed: “Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked” (v. 32a). These were probably the Epicureans, as they do not believe that any god would perform miracles. Many Greeks also believed in “an immoral soul that existed in a shadowy Hades after death,” believing the body was a “prison and [having] little regard for its being resurrected.”¹⁵³ However, others pledged to hear Paul again: “We want to hear you again concerning this” (v. 32). Therefore, to view Paul’s speech as a total failure is a mistake. Some desired to hear Paul speak again, and

¹⁵⁰ Marshall, *Acts*, 291.

¹⁵¹ Chance, *Acts*, 313.

¹⁵² Parsons, *Acts*, 248.

¹⁵³ Horton, *Acts*, 302.

others “joined with him, and believed, among whom also was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them” (v. 34). Tradition holds that Dionysius became the first bishop of Athens.¹⁵⁴ Marshall agrees and says it is “a fair inference since the first converts often became the leaders of the church.”¹⁵⁵

In sum, Paul’s Areopagus speech is not a failure. Parsons says, “Neither Paul nor the gospel failed in Athens; only those who heard the good news and did not respond in faith failed.”¹⁵⁶ The thrust of Paul’s speech is a theology that sees God in his most basic roles: (1) He is the creator and sustainer of human life, and (2) he ordained Jesus and raised him up from dead as the judge of the world. Therefore, the Greek Gentiles need to repent from worshiping false gods and turn to the Creator God to serve this living and true God. Hence, the resurrection of Jesus was central in Paul’s apologetic speech made to the Greek Gentile audience. An examination of Acts 17:16-34 has supported the thesis by demonstrating Paul’s appeal to the resurrection of Jesus Christ as evidence that the Judeo-Christian God—rather than pagan gods—is the one, true God and judge of the world.

Conclusion

The discussion of the three texts has proved that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to the apostles’ apologetic presentations. In the first text, 1 Corinthians 14, the resurrection of Jesus Christ stands as the heart of Christianity. The examination of the text has supported the thesis by demonstrating Paul’s view of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the primary component of the gospel and the lynchpin of the Christian faith. In the second text, Acts 2:14-41, the resurrection was central in Peter’s apologetic to a Jewish audience. The examination of the text has supported the thesis by demonstrating

¹⁵⁴ Williams, *Acts*, 309.

¹⁵⁵ Marshall, *Acts*, 291.

¹⁵⁶ Parsons, *Acts*, 250.

Peter's appeal to the resurrection of Jesus Christ as God's attestation of Jesus's works and words concerning himself. In the final text, Acts 17:16-34, the resurrection was central in Paul's apologetic to a Gentile audience. The examination of the text has supported the thesis by demonstrating Paul's appeal to the resurrection of Jesus Christ as evidence that the Judeo-Christian God—rather than pagan gods—is the one, true God and judge of the world.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL ISSUES RELATED TO THE RESURRECTION: THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE CENTRAL CONCERN FOR PATRISTIC APOLOGISTS

Christianity was born in the Greco-Roman world of paganism, and indeed, it was not easy to grow in the pagan world. On the one hand, the post-apostolic Christians needed to defend the resurrection faith among the pagans. Moreover, they needed to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews. Likewise, Malaysian Christians are pretty similar to post-apostolic Christians in terms of background. We have to defend our Christian faith among the Muslims (the Iban indigenous Christians in particular), and at the same time, we need to spread the gospel to our Muslim friends living around us (the Chinese Christians in particular).

In the late first and early second century, the post-apostolic church was struggling to plant in the hard soil of the pagan world. Christians were facing all kinds of persecutions and misunderstandings. For instance, the pagans “misrepresented Christian teaching and spread calumnies against Christians.”¹ The pagans accused that the Holy Communion of Christians was incest, child murder, and cannibalism, and those rumors eventually came to the notice of Roman governors.² In order to vindicate against those false accusations, the Christians not only gave a clear explanation of what authentic Christianity is (generally, the apologists were doing the defending works), but Christians also needed to live lives that manifested the holiness and love of God. Hence, the post-

¹ Leslie William Barnard, introduction to *the First and Second Apologies*, by Justin Martyr, trans. Leslie William Barnard, Ancient Christian Writers 56 (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 1.

² Barnard, introduction to *The First and Second Apologies*, 1.

apostolic Christians had a higher aim, as Leslie William Barnard says, “To win their readers [pagans] to the Christian faith.”³ The Christian apologists aimed to defend the Christian faith of resurrection and to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. The main message of the Christian apologists was that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the promised Messiah, who has been crucified, buried, resurrected from the dead, and shall reign forever.

The internal evidence of Jesus Christ’s resurrection is in the Bible, but the external evidence of his resurrection is the works of the patristic apologists. The thesis of chapter 3 is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central message of patristic apologists; therefore, this chapter examines five famous patristic apologists. The first one is Justin Martyr (AD c. 100-c. 165); an examination of Justin Martyr’s works supports the thesis by demonstrating Justin’s appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection of Christ’s believers. The second one is Clement of Rome (AD c. 30-c. 100); an examination of Clement of Rome’s works supports the thesis by demonstrating Clement’s appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection. The third one is Irenaeus (AD c. 130-c. 202); examining Irenaeus’s works supports the thesis by demonstrating Irenaeus’s appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection. The fourth one is Ignatius (died AD c. 110); an examination of Ignatius’s works supports the thesis by demonstrating Ignatius’s appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection. The fifth one is Tertullian (AD c. 169-c. 225); an examination of Tertullian’s works supports the thesis by demonstrating Tertullian’s appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Is the Central Message of Apologist Justin Martyr

An examination of Justin’s works supports the thesis by demonstrating his

³ Barnard, introduction to *The First and Second Apologies*, 2.

appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection. Before we focus on Justin's view on the resurrection of Jesus, let us also take a brief look at his background and his view on the deity of Jesus Christ and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

The Background of Justin Martyr (AD c. 100-c. 165)

Justin was born in Flavia Neapolis. His Greek grandfather Bacchius probably was a colonist who settled in the town, but Justin and his father Priscus were Latin citizenships.⁴ Justin was a great philosopher who “[underwent] instruction from a Stoic, a Peripatetic, a Pythagorean, and finally a Platonist teacher.”⁵ However, Justin's life was changed after he met an old Christian on a special occasion. The old Christian shared the gospel with Justin, and he was inspired by the truth of the gospel and kindled a flame in his soul, as Justin writes, “My spirit was immediately set on fire, . . . while pondering in his words, I discovered that he was the only sure and useful philosophy.”⁶ After Justin became a Christian, he started to defend his Christian faith and spread the gospel. Justin was martyred in the reign of Marcus Aurelius between AD 162 and 167.⁷ At that time, the Rome prefect, Rusticus, forced Justin and his companions to sacrifice to the pagan gods of Rome, but Justin and his companions firmly refused to obey. Consequently, they were beaten and beheaded, “they pass to their deaths praising God and confessing Christ.”⁸ Justin is considered the pioneer of apologists, as Barnard says, “Justin's testimony of Christianity as the true philosophy is one of the most important that has

⁴ Denis Minns and Paul Parvis, “Justin's Apology on Behalf of Christians” in *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies*, by Justin Martyr, ed. Denis Minns and Paul Parvis, Oxford Early Christian Texts (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 81.

⁵ Michael Slusser, *introduction to Dialogue with Trypho*, by Justin Martyr, trans. Thomas B. Falls, ed. Michael Slusser (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 15.

⁶ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 8.1 (Falls, 20).

⁷ Barnard, introduction to *The First and Second Apologies*, 3.

⁸ Barnard, introduction to *The First and Second Apologies*, 4.

come down from the second century of our era.”⁹ Many people acknowledge Justin as an apologist, philosopher, martyr, and witness of Jesus Christ. He wrote openly to Roman emperors and diaspora Jews at length. Undoubtedly, Justin is an excellent source of “information about mid-second century Christian and even Jewish and Roman theology attitude, and practice.”¹⁰

The three great works of Justin are *The First Apology*, *The Second Apology* (these two books were written between AD c. 150 and c. 155), and *the Dialogue with Trypho* (written sometime later than AD c. 155).¹¹ *The First Apology* is Justin’s petition on behalf of Christians to “the emperor Titus Aelius Hadrian Antoninus Pius Augustus Caesar and to Verissimus, his son, and Lucius, the son of Caesar.”¹² Justin’s *Dialogue* is a discussion that took place at Ephesus between Justin and the Jew Trypho. It has three parts: Part I (chapters 1-47), Part II (chapters 48-108), and Part III (chapters 109-141).¹³ Justin defends Christians in his *Second Apology*: Why did the pagan Romans want to kill Christians just because they were Christians? Why did the Christian’s God not protect them from the persecutions?¹⁴

Justin Martyr Defends the Christian Faith

Justin was the pioneer apologist who defended his Christian faith against the false accusations from the pagans. Simultaneously, he also spread the newly formed Christianity, especially emphasizing the deity and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The

⁹ Barnard, *introduction to The First and Second Apologies*, 3.

¹⁰ Sara Parvis and Paul Foster, ed., *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 1.

¹¹ Willis A. Shotwell, *The Biblical Exegesis of Justin Martyr* (London: SPCK, 1965), 1.

¹² Martyr, *The First Apology* 1.1 (Minns and Parvis, 81).

¹³ Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, xvi.

¹⁴ Barnard, *introduction to The First and Second Apologies*, 9-10.

false accusations against Christians included claims they were atheists (as they refused to sacrifice to pagan gods) and cannibals (as they partook in the Eucharist).

Christians are not atheists. Justin explains, Christians were called atheists for not worshipping the so-called [pagan] gods. However, Christians worship the true God, the father of righteousness and all virtues. They worship and adore both the God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.¹⁵ Justin asserts the Christians' God is the Maker (Creator) of the universe, and he explains that the way that Christians worship God the Creator is different from the sacrifices to pagan gods; he says, "He has no need of blood and libations and incense . . . [We worship Him] through the word of prayer and thanksgiving for all things that we receive . . . [and] with thanksgiving to Him celebrating our solemnities in hymns and speech."¹⁶ Here, Justin explains the different attributes between the Christian God and the pagan gods; he also explains why Christians do not sacrifice animals and birds to their God but only praise and prayer to their Almighty God, the Creator.

The Christian Eucharist is not cannibalism. Justin accuses the Jews who were spreading the rumors; he said to Trypho, the Jewish scholar, "You . . . report the outbreak of the godless heresy of the Christians and to spread those ugly rumors against us which are repeated by those who do not know us. As a result, you are to blame not only for your own wickedness but also for that of all others."¹⁷ Justin explains that the Eucharist service of Christians has nothing to do with cannibalism; it is just a remembrance of the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote, "The Apostles . . . have handed down what Jesus ordered them to do: that he [Jesus] took bread and,

¹⁵ Martyr, *The First Apology*, 23-85 (Barnard, 26).

¹⁶ Martyr, *The First Apology*, 23-85 (Barnard, 30).

¹⁷ Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 17.1 (Falls, 28-29).

after giving thanks, said, ‘Do this in remembrance of me, this is my body.’ In like manner, he also took the chalice, gave thanks, and said: ‘This is my blood, and to them only did he give it.’”¹⁸ Hence, in the Christian Eucharist service, the bread represents Christ’s body, and the red wine represents Christ’s blood. It has nothing to do with killing and offering babies as most pagans did in their sacrificial ceremonies.

Justin Martyr Proclaims the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

The identity of Jesus Christ has confirmed his deity. Justin believed that Jesus was born a human being of the Virgin Mary. He claimed that Jesus is the incarnation of the Logos, as he says, “Through the power of the Logos according to the will of the Father of all and Lord God, he was born a human being of a virgin and was named Jesus and was crucified and died and rose and has gone up to heaven.”¹⁹ Justin adds, “The cosmic Reason [Logos] had become available to men as a human being of flesh and blood.”²⁰ Justin asserts the virgin birth of Jesus (or the incarnation of Logos) is an absolute belief in Christianity; indeed, no one can deny the historical truth of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Besides, Justin also claimed that Jesus is the Son of God; he proclaims, “He is the Son of the true God Himself and holding Him in the second place, and the prophetic Spirit in the third rank.”²¹ As Parvis and Foster studied the Christology of Justin, they found that Justin’s view on Jesus is “the personal and embodied manifestation of God’s name.”²² They say, “In Dialogue 64, Justin lodges Old Testament citations in support of the view that Jesus himself is the manifest name and glory of

¹⁸ Martyr, *The First Apology* 66.3 (Parvis and Foster, 77).

¹⁹ Martyr, *The First Apology* 46.5 (Minns and Parvis, 201).

²⁰ L. W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), 118.

²¹ Martyr, *The First Apology*, 23-85 (Barnard, 30-31).

²² Parvis and Foster, *Justin Martyr and His Worlds*, 131.

God . . . in which Jesus is to be given divine honor and properly joined with God in confessional and devotional practice as a second, distinguishable figure.”²³

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is one of the central teachings of Justin. He mentions Jesus’s crucifixion in his *First Apology*: “[Jesus Christ] was crucified under Pontius Pilate, the procurator of Judea at the time of Tiberius Caesar.”²⁴ Besides, in his work, *Dialogue*, he also mentions, “Jesus our Lord who was crucified under Pontius Pilate.”²⁵ Justin claimed the crucifixion of Christ was not only prophesied in the Old Testament, but Christ also prophesied himself to be crucified. Justin writes, “Before His crucifixion, He exclaimed, “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the Scribes and Pharisees, and be crucified and rise again on the third day” [Mk 8:31].”²⁶ Hence, Christ’s crucifixion is an absolute historical truth.

In his dialogue with Trypho (a rabbinic Pharisaic Jew²⁷), Justin accuses that the Jews have murdered the Just One, Jesus Christ. Justin accused Trypho, “For you [Jews] have murdered the Just One, and His prophets before Him.”²⁸ Justin precisely points out the wickedness of the Jews, saying, “The other nations have not treated Christ and us, his followers, as unjustly as you Jews have.”²⁹ Justin points out that Christ had risen from the dead after he had been crucified by the wicked Jews, he saying, “He had risen from the dead and had ascended into heaven.”³⁰

²³ Parvis and Foster, *Justin Martyr and His Worlds*, 133.

²⁴ Martyr, *The First Apology* 13.3 (Minns and Parvis, 111).

²⁵ Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 76.6 (Falls, 119).

²⁶ Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 76.7 (Falls, 119).

²⁷ Timothy J. Horner, *Listening to Trypho: Justin Martyr’s Dialogue Reconsidered* (Leuven, VA: Peeters, 2001), 57.

²⁸ Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 16.4 (Falls, 28).

²⁹ Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 17.1 (Falls, 28-29).

³⁰ Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 17.1 (Falls, 29).

In another chapter of his dialogue with Trypho, Justin claims that Christ's sacrifice is for the redemption of sinners, saying, "Not because He needed such sacrifices [crucifixion] but because of the sins of your people, especially their sins of idolatry."³¹ The crucifixion of Jesus Christ brings forth the forgiveness of our sins and redeems us from eternal perishes. Justin even points out the original sin of humanity, as he says, "We should thank God for having saved us from the sin in which we were born."³² Justin asserts that Jesus Christ saves humanity by his crucifixion and resurrection. In fact, Justin makes this claim more than any other apologist of the second century.³³ Justin makes it clear that Christ's death and resurrection is a triumph over the demons.³⁴

Justin Martyr Proclaims the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Justin points out that Jesus is the Christ who is the Son of God, as he proclaims the truth to Trypho, "Trypho, the fact [is] that this man [Jesus] is the Christ of God is not to be denied, . . . being God, preexisted as the Son of the Creator of the universe and became man through a virgin."³⁵ Justin confirms that Jesus Christ is the preexisted one, the Son of God, the Creator. And no one can ever deny the Messianic identity of Jesus. Justin asserts, "You cannot deny that he is the Christ, even though he apparently is of human origin, and evidently became the Christ by the Father's choice."³⁶

Justin also believed that the resurrection of Jesus proves the deity of Jesus. He writes, "[Jesus Christ] being born of a virgin, and growing to manhood, and healing every

³¹ Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 22.1 (Falls, 35).

³² Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 41.1 (Falls, 63).

³³ Martyr, *The First Apology* 32, 56, 63; Martyr, *The Second Apology* 13; Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 13, 40, 49, 54, 86, 94-96, 98, 103, 111, 115-16, 137-38, 143.

³⁴ Martyr, *The First Apology* 46; Martyr, *The Second Apology* 6; Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 91, 131 (Allert, 118).

³⁵ Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 48.2 (Falls, 73).

³⁶ Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 48.3 (Falls, 73).

disease and every illness . . . and being crucified, and dying and rising again, and going to the heaven.”³⁷ Despite his resurrection, Jesus’s deity is also shown in his incarnation (virgin birth), his ministries (healing and miracles), and his ascension to heaven. Moreover, Justin quotes King David from the Old Testament as his support to argue the truth of Jesus’s crucifixion and resurrection. He wrote, “David spoke the preceding texts fifteen hundred years before Christ became a human being and was crucified, and none of those who lived before David caused rejoicing among the nations on being crucified, and neither did any of those who lived after him.”³⁸ Justin continues, “But in our time, Jesus Christ, after being crucified and dying, rose and reigned, ascending into heaven . . . there is joy over the things . . . among all the nations.”³⁹

Justin appealed to the bodily resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week (Sunday). He writes, “And it is on Sunday that we all make assembly in common, since it is the first day, on which God changed darkness and matter and made the world, and Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead on the same day. For they crucified him on the day before Saturday, and on Sunday, [Jesus] having appeared to his apostles.”⁴⁰ According to Justin, two crucial things occurred on the first day of the week: God changed darkness into lightness and raised Jesus from the dead. Hence, Christians gather and worship on Sunday (Lord’s Resurrection Day) instead of Saturday (Sabbath Day).

Justin also points out the life change of Jesus’s disciples after the resurrected Jesus has appeared to them. He writes, “After his crucifixion, . . . even his acquaintances having denied him, all stood aloof. Nevertheless, later, when he had risen from the dead

³⁷ Martyr, *The First Apology* 31.7 (Minns and Parvis, 167).

³⁸ Martyr, *The First Apology* 42.3 (Minns and Parvis, 191).

³⁹ Martyr, *The First Apology* 42.4 (Minns and Parvis, 191).

⁴⁰ Martyr, *The First Apology* 67.8 (Minns and Parvis, 263).

and had appeared to them . . . and when they had seen him going up to heaven and had believed and had received power sent from there from him to them and had gone to every race of human beings, they taught these things and were called apostles.”⁴¹ Before his ascension, the risen Christ had given the Great Commission to his disciples (later called apostles), “Go, and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). All disciples were testified Christ with courage; indeed, almost all Christ’s disciples were martyred for their Christian faith of resurrection.

Justin also points out that the resurrected Jesus Christ will conquer his enemies and reign forever. He says, “God the Father of all was going to lead Christ to heaven after he raised him from the dead and keep him there until he had struck the demons who were his enemies.”⁴² Justin also quotes Psalm 110:1-2 for his support: “The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit on my right until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. The Lord will send forth from Jerusalem a scepter of power for you, and rule amid your enemies.’”⁴³ Furthermore, Justin also believed in the second coming of the resurrected Jesus Christ. He says, “For we Christians, made up of all nationalities, have become pious and just through our faith in Christ, and we look forward to his second coming.”⁴⁴ Generally, Justin’s Christology is pretty complete; it includes Christ’s incarnation, Christ’s crucifixion (death), Christ’s resurrection, Christ’s ascension, Christ’s second coming, and Christ’s victorious reign forever.

An examination of Justin Martyr’s works supports the thesis—the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central message of patristic apologists—by demonstrating his appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Justin highlights the deity of Jesus Christ; he

⁴¹ Martyr, *The First Apology* 50.11 (Minns and Parvis, 209).

⁴² Martyr, *The First Apology* 45.1 (Minns and Parvis, 199).

⁴³ Martyr, *The First Apology* 45.3-4 (Minns and Parvis, 199).

⁴⁴ Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 52.4 (Falls, 79).

emphasizes the Sonship and the Messiah personality of Jesus Christ. On top of that, he especially emphasizes the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is also the cornerstone of Christianity. Justin’s apologetic message is a “Christocentric interpretation”⁴⁵ of the Old Testament Scriptures. Indeed, Justin Martyr was a man of the Bible, and he made an excellent contribution to the intellectual tradition of Christian thought through his Christocentric interpretation. Justin was not merely an academic philosopher but an apologist with a heart of mission. As Barnard says, “Christianity was, for him, not a theory but philosophic truth itself and this he served with unswerving devotion and courage.”⁴⁶ He adds, “The heart of Christianity, which for him was indispensable, was God’s care and love for men and women revealed in the Bible and supremely in Jesus Christ.”⁴⁷ Indeed, Justin Martyr is the pioneer of the apologists; what he accomplished was the seedbed of the later church.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Is the Central Message of Apologist Clement of Rome

An examination of Clement’s works supports the thesis by demonstrating Clement’s appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection of the believers of Jesus Christ. This section discusses the background of Clement and his view on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Background of Clement of Rome (AD c. 30-c. 100)

The apostolic father Clement of Rome (AD c. 30-c. 100)⁴⁸ was a bishop of

⁴⁵ Shotwell, *The Biblical Exegesis of Justin Martyr*, 116.

⁴⁶ Barnard, introduction to *The First and Second Apologies*, 20.

⁴⁷ Barnard, introduction to *The First and Second Apologies*, 21.

⁴⁸ Albert Truesdale, *The Book of Saints: The Early Era* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2013), a12.

Rome, traditionally believed “the third in succession from the Apostles,”⁴⁹ as Eusebius and Irenaeus claimed. According to Tertullian, Clement was ordained by St. Peter as the bishop of the Jewish Church of Rome (he succeeded Anencletus), while Linus was ordained as the bishop of the Gentile Church of Rome by St. Paul.⁵⁰ Clement served as bishop of Rome from AD 69 to 83.⁵¹ Besides, Irenaeus claimed that Clement had a personal relationship with the apostles Peter and Paul. Furthermore, Eusebius and Origen both claimed that Clement was the person whom the apostle Paul mentioned in his Epistle to the Philippians.⁵² Paul writes, “Yes, I beg you also, the yokefellow, help these women, for they labored with me in the Good News, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life” (Phil 4:3).

The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians (known as *1 Clement*) was “written in the name of the Roman Church to the Christian brotherhood at Corinth.”⁵³ It was written either after the end of Nero’s persecution (AD 70)⁵⁴ or at the end of Domitian’s reign (AD 96).⁵⁵ Although Clement did not put his name on this letter,⁵⁶ Eusebius gives Clement credit. Eusebius confirms that Clement was the author of this letter to the Corinthians; likewise, Heras also claimed that Clement was officially

⁴⁹ Temple Chevallier, *Epistles of Clement of Rome, Polycarp, and Ignatius, and of the First Apology of Justin Martyr: An Introduction and Brief Notes Illustrative of the Ecclesiastical History of the First Two Centuries*, ed. William R. Whittingham (New York: Henry M. Onderdonk, 1846), 25.

⁵⁰ Chevallier, *Epistles of Clement of Rome*, 25.

⁵¹ Chevallier, *Epistles of Clement of Rome*, 25.

⁵² David Ivan Rankin, *From Clement to Origen: The Social and Historical Context of the Church Fathers* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 26.

⁵³ J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Comprising the Epistles (Genuine and Spurious) of Clement of Rome, the Epistles of S. Ignatius, The Epistle of S. Polycarp, the Martyrdom of S. Polycarp, the Teaching of the Apostles, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Epistle to Diognetus, the Fragments of Papias, the Reliques of the Elders Preserved in Irenaeus*, ed. J. R. Harmer (London: Macmillan, 1891), 2, eBook.

⁵⁴ Chevallier, *Epistles of Clement of Rome*, 25.

⁵⁵ Rankin, *From Clement to Origen*, a12.

⁵⁶ Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2.

responsible for the correspondence with other churches outside Rome.⁵⁷

The letter of Clement was written to rebuke the feud that broke out in the Corinthian church, where apostle-appointed presbyters had been forced to resign and were replaced by some young members,⁵⁸ as Albert Truesdale describes, “Rebellion by some younger members against the bishop had erupted.”⁵⁹ The consequences of the conflict between the old and new church leaders was church disunity and brokenness. Hence, Clement’s letter was calling for reconciliation among the bodies of Christ. Clement aimed to build a church with unity and glory to become faithful witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides, the letter also mentioned the martyrdoms of St. Paul and St. Peter.⁶⁰ And of course, the central message of the letter is about the gospel of Jesus Christ, including Jesus’s crucifixion and resurrection. This letter was “highly esteemed in the early church for its sound doctrine.”⁶¹ There is another letter which bears Clement’s name called *2 Clement*, but it is not an authentic letter, as Edward Burton says, “The Second Epistle of Clement so-called is not said to be to the Corinthians, though later writers have so described it. But it is all but certain that this Epistle is not St. Clement’s at all.”⁶² In short, St. Clement is a well-known apostolic father with a high reputation, as Truesdale describes, “He had a clear understanding of the gospel, a love of God and the church, and a passion for order and harmony in Christ’s body.”⁶³

⁵⁷ Rankin, *From Clement to Origen*, 26.

⁵⁸ Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2.

⁵⁹ Albert Truesdale, *The Book of Saints*, a12.

⁶⁰ Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2.

⁶¹ Truesdale, *The Book of Saints*, a12.

⁶² Edward Burton, *The Epistles of Ss. Clement of Rome and Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas*, Apostolic Fathers, vol. 3 (London: Griffith Farran Browne, 1888), 152.

⁶³ Truesdale, *The Book of Saints*, a12.

Clement of Rome Proclaims the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

Clement emphasized the atonement of Christ's crucifixion, as he says, "Let us fix our eyes on the blood of Christ and understand how precious it is unto his Father because being shed for our salvation it wins for the whole world the grace of repentance."⁶⁴ He also says, "Let us fear the Lord Jesus, whose blood was given for us."⁶⁵ Clement points out that the blood of Christ shed on the cross is for our salvation; hence, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is genuine and authentic. God's grace has given to all sinners the chance to repent from sins and accept Christ as their Savior so that he or she can be forgiven and receive eternity. Clement also emphasized the High Priest position of Jesus Christ, as he says, "This is the way, dearly beloved, wherein we found our salvation, even Jesus Christ the High Priest of our offerings, the Guardian and Helper of our weakness."⁶⁶ Jesus, the High Priest who has offered himself as the most precious sacrifice, has been crucified for our salvation. Besides, he is also our guardian and helper whenever we need him.

Clement of Rome Proclaims the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

However, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was never locked in death. On the third day of his death, Jesus was resurrected from his death. As Clement says, "Let us understand, dearly beloved, how the Master [the Father] continually showed unto us the resurrection that shall be hereafter; whereof he made the Lord Jesus Christ the first-fruits when he raised him from the dead."⁶⁷ Jesus Christ is the first fruits of the resurrection, for those who believe in him shall be granted resurrection. In order to suppose the event of

⁶⁴ Clement of Rome, *1 Clement* 7 (Jackson, 30).

⁶⁵ Clement, *1 Clement* 22 (Jackson, 37).

⁶⁶ Clement, *1 Clement* 36 (Jackson, 44).

⁶⁷ Clement, *1 Clement* 24 (Jackson, 38).

the resurrection, Clement gives some examples of resurrection and restoration. First of all, Clement shows the nature of the restoration of daytime and night. He says, “The resurrection which happeneth at its proper season. Day and night show unto us the resurrection. The night falleth asleep, and the day ariseth; the day departeth and night cometh on.”⁶⁸ Second, Clement brings forth the example of the biological cycle of fruits. He explains,

Let us mark the fruits, how and in what manner the sowing taketh place. The sower goeth forth and casteth into the earth each of the seeds; and these, falling into the earth dry and bare, decay [dead]: then out of their decay the mightiness of the Master’s providence raiseth them up [resurrection], and from being one they increase manifold and bear fruit.⁶⁹

Moreover, Paul also used the analogy of seeds as a natural or biological cycle of fruits (1 Cor 15:36, 37).

Third, Clement brings forth a great sign of a kind of bird called a phoenix, which can be found in Arabia. Clement discloses that the phoenix could live for five hundred years; and before it dies it will make a coffin of frankincense and myrrh for itself, then it will enter the coffin and die. Clement writes of what happens after the phoenix dies, saying, “But as the flesh rotteth, a certain worm is engendered, which is nurtured from the moisture of the dead creature and putteth forth the wings. Then, when it is grown lusty, it taketh up that coffin where are the bones of its parent.”⁷⁰

Therefore, Clement strongly believed in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Besides, Clement also emphasized the missional sending order, and he called the church to share the gospel: “Christ was sent forth from God. So, then Christ is from God, and apostles are from Christ. Both, therefore, came of the will of God in the appointed

⁶⁸ Clement, *1 Clement* 24 (Jackson, 38).

⁶⁹ Clement, *1 Clement* 24 (Jackson, 38).

⁷⁰ Clement, *1 Clement* 25 (Jackson, 39).

order.”⁷¹ The Great Commission is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ; upon his resurrection, he received all authority (both heavenly and earthly power). Therefore, he sends his disciples (now the church): “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt 28:19-20).

Clement also mentions the future resurrection of the believers of Christ, as he told the Corinthian church, “Let us consider, beloved, how the Lord does continually show us, that there shall be a future resurrection, of which He has made our Jesus Christ the first-fruits, raising Him from the dead.”⁷² Jesus promised this to his believers in the Bible: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will still live, even if he dies” (John 11:25). The future resurrection of Christ’s believers is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is the first fruit of all bodily resurrection.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Is the Central Message of Apologist Irenaeus of Lyons

An examination of Irenaeus’s works supports the thesis by demonstrating Irenaeus’s appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection of the believers of Jesus Christ. This section discusses the background of Irenaeus and his view on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Background of Irenaeus of Lyons (AD c. 130-c. 202)

Irenaeus of Lyons (AD c. 130-c. 202) is one of the greatest theologians since the apostles’ time. One of Irenaeus’s significant and influential works is *Against Heresies: A Refutation and Subversion of What is Falsely Called Knowledge*. It is “the

⁷¹ Clement, *1 Clement* 42 (Jackson, 47).

⁷² Clement, *1 Clement* 24 (Burton, 171-72).

first major defense and presentation of the Christian faith.”⁷³ Irenaeus was instructed under Polycarp, and he also studied with Justin Martyr in Rome for a short time. After that, Irenaeus went to Lyons, a lively interchange city of trades and cultures between southern Gaul and Asia Minor. Probably, Irenaeus was sent by Polycarp to assist Pothinus (who was the bishop of Lyons), and he was soon serving as a presbyter in Lyons.⁷⁴ Irenaeus became bishop of Lyons around the late 170s or early 180s. He was also one of the greatest Christian writers.⁷⁵

Besides the five volumes of *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus has written many other works. Behr has a chronological list of the works of Irenaeus: “*Against Heresies* 1-11; *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*; *Against Heresies* III; *Letter to Florinus*, on the Sole Sovereignty; *Letter to Blastus*, on Schism; *Against Heresies* IV; *Letter to Victor*, on the Ogdoad; *Against Heresies* V; *Letter to Vitor*.”⁷⁶

The first two books of *Against Heresies* deal with Gnosticism’s problems and false teaching. Gnosticism is a general movement focused on the dualistic distinction of flesh and spirit.⁷⁷ In Gnosticism, “The material realm was disparaged in favor of the immaterial realm.”⁷⁸ They divided humankind into two distinct categories of flesh and spirit. Gnostics view flesh (the material realm) as meaningless and hopeless; it will never arise to loftier realms. Nevertheless, they view spirit (the immaterial realm) with great hope and glory. Although the spirit is temporary in this material world, it never belongs

⁷³ James R. Payton, *Irenaeus on the Christian Faith: A Condensation of Against Heresies* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), ix.

⁷⁴ Payton, *Irenaeus on the Christian Faith*, 2.

⁷⁵ Sara Parvis and Paul Foster, “Irenaeus and His Traditions” in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy*, ed. Sara Parvis and Paul Foster (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 1.

⁷⁶ John Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons Identifying Christianity: Christian Theology in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 69.

⁷⁷ Payton, *Irenaeus on the Christian Faith*, 6.

⁷⁸ Payton, *Irenaeus on the Christian Faith*, 6.

to this material world. One day, as the gnostics believe, “the spirits would ultimately manage to totally escape matter and be absorbed into ultimate spirit.”⁷⁹ Finally, the last three books of *Against Heresies* focus on Christian belief from the Scriptures and apostles.⁸⁰

Irenaeus of Lyons Proclaims the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

Irenaeus was a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, who believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, as he quotes the apostle John’s words, “These are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name [John 20:31].”⁸¹ Besides believing the deity of Jesus Christ, Irenaeus also believed that Christ is a complete real man, as he confirms, “Christ, however, was completely human: he ate, he was hungry after the temptation in the desert, he was tired and sat himself down. He wept for Lazarus, sweated drops of blood.”⁸²

For Irenaeus, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was God’s love toward humankind, as he says, “He bound the strong one and loosed the weak ones and gave salvation to His handiwork by destroying sin. For the Lord is most kind and merciful and loves humankind.”⁸³ The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ is one of the main prophecies in the Scriptures, as Irenaeus quotes Paul’s words, “For I delivered to you first of all, that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the

⁷⁹ Payton, *Irenaeus on the Christian Faith*, 7.

⁸⁰ Payton, *Irenaeus on the Christian Faith*, 4.

⁸¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.16.5 (Unger, 87-88).

⁸² J. T. Nielsen, *Adam and Christ in the Theology of Irenaeus of Lyons: An Examination of the Function of the Adam-Christ Typology in the Adversus Haereses of Irenaeus, Against the Background of the Gnosticism of His Time* (Assen, Netherlands: Koninklijke Van Gorcum, 1968), 13.

⁸³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.18.6 (Unger, 91).

Scriptures' [1 Cor 15:3-4]."⁸⁴ Ignatius adds, "The Son, Word of God that He (Jesus) is, accomplished both, by coming down from the Father and becoming incarnate, and descending even to death, and bringing the economy of our salvation to completion."⁸⁵

Irenaeus confirms the grant of salvation through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ as he quotes Paul's words, "'If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved' [Rom 10:9]."⁸⁶ The crucifixion of Christ manifested "[Christ's] triumph of our redemption, and His fulfillment of the promise to the patriarchs [is established]."⁸⁷

Furthermore, Irenaeus emphasizes the suffering of Christ as he says, "Paul did not know another Christ besides Him [Jesus] alone who suffered and was buried and rose again who was also born, whom he also called man."⁸⁸ Irenaeus also calls the followers of Christ to take up the same cross and suffer with Christ in response to Christ's suffering, saying, "Follow the footprints of the Lord's Passion, having become martyrs of the Suffering One."⁸⁹

Irenaeus of Lyons Proclaims the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Irenaeus spoke against the dualism idea of the gnostics who believed "the separation of body and soul and the disparagement of the physical and corporeal as the handiwork of God."⁹⁰ Instead, Irenaeus strongly believed in the bodily resurrection, as

⁸⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.18.2 (Unger, 88).

⁸⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.18.2 (Unger, 88).

⁸⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.18.2 (Unger, 88).

⁸⁷ Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 37 (Smith, 71).

⁸⁸ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.18.3 (Behr, 90).

⁸⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.18.5 (Behr, 90).

⁹⁰ Iain M. Mackenzie, *Irenaeus's Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching: A Theological Commentary and Translation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 216.

Iain Mackenzie says, “To deny the resurrection in the flesh is effectively to deny the reality of the flesh which the Word assumed, Irenaeus argues.”⁹¹ Without the incarnation, there will be no crucifixion. Likewise, without crucifixion, there will be no resurrection. Irenaeus wisely linked the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ together, saying, “So, if He was not born, neither did He die; and if He did not die, neither was He raised from the dead; and if He was not raised from the dead, He has not conquered death, nor is its reign abolished.”⁹² Irenaeus even further linked the incarnation body to the second coming Jesus’s body. He asserts that Jesus will come in the same flesh in which he suffered, died, and resurrected, as he says, “[Jesus Christ] will come in the same flesh, in which He suffered, revealing the glory of the Father.”⁹³ Besides, Irenaeus also mentioned the replacement of the First Adam by the Second Adam (Christ), saying, “Through the disobedience of one man, the first man Adam, sin entered in, and consequently death. Through the obedience of one man, the second Adam, Jesus Christ’s righteousness came upon the earth. He gave life.”⁹⁴ We were fallen in the First and disobedient Adam; however, we were redeemed and gained victory and resurrection in the Second and obedient Adam, Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, Irenaeus believed in the future resurrection of believers, as he says, “Thus mankind, receiving from God the salvation it could not have hoped for, might rise from the dead, glorify God, . . . and [render] thanks to Him unceasingly for the salvation he has received from Him.”⁹⁵ As Mark Olson says, “He [Irenaeus] believed that God created the physical world, including human bodies, that God sent his son to the

⁹¹ Mackenzie, *Irenaeus’s Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 216.

⁹² Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 39 (Smith, 72).

⁹³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.16.8 (Lawson, 280-81).

⁹⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.21.10 (Nielsen, 12).

⁹⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.20.1 (Unger, 95).

physical bodies of believers into His kingdom.”⁹⁶ As Irenaeus says, “For if the flesh were not in a position to be saved, the Word of God would in no wise have become flesh.”⁹⁷ Irenaeus strongly believed that man’s physical body will resurrect and enter into the kingdom of God. In supporting his idea of bodily resurrection, Irenaeus gives the examples of the bodily resurrection of the widow’s son (Luke 7:12) and Lazarus (John 9:30), as both were bodily resurrected by Jesus.⁹⁸ Irenaeus argues that if Christ could raise widow’s son and Lazarus bodily resurrected from death, why can he not resurrect himself from death bodily?

Irenaeus also firmly describes how the bodily resurrection will occur in the last day: As the spirits of the believers are waiting in Paradise, when the last trumpet sounds, “[those believers] shall rise again, having their own bodies, and having also their own souls, and their own spirits.”⁹⁹ Hence, the bodily resurrection of believers is confirmed, as it has already occurred in Christ’s resurrection. Likewise, on the last day, the dead bodies of believers will also resurrect and become immortal and glorious bodies.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Is the Central Message of Apologist Ignatius of Antioch

An examination of Ignatius’s works supports the thesis by demonstrating Ignatius’s appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection of the believers of Jesus Christ. This section discusses the background of Ignatius and his view on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

⁹⁶ Mark Jeffrey Olson, *Irenaeus, The Valentinian Gnostics, and The Kingdom of God: The Debate About 1 Corinthians 15:50*, A. H. Book V (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 92.

⁹⁷ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.14.1, 5.31.1 (Olson, 92).

⁹⁸ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.13.1 (Olson, 96).

⁹⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.33.5 (Lawson, 281).

Background of Ignatius of Antioch (died AD c. 110)

Ignatius of Antioch (died in AD 110) succeeded the apostle Peter as the second bishop of Antioch.¹⁰⁰ However, Ignatius tells us nothing about his birth and life before his departure from Antioch of Syria to Rome for religious trial.¹⁰¹ On his way to Rome, Ignatius was so badly treated that he complained of the ill-treatment by a squadron of Roman soldiers. He complains, “From Syria all the way to Rome I am fighting with wild beasts, on land and sea, by night and day, chained to ten leopards, a squadron of soldiers, who become worse even though some benefaction.”¹⁰² The Roman soldiers were so rude and wild that Ignatius called them “wild beast and leopards” in his work.

Ignatius claimed that his sufferings were not due to his leadership but just because of his Christian identity. He explains, “[I am] one who is a prisoner from Syria on account of the shared [Christian] name and hope.”¹⁰³ As Allen Brent supports, “He is suffering for the common Christian name that all warring factions claim.”¹⁰⁴ Consequently, Ignatius was martyred at Rome under Emperor Trajan’s reign (AD 98-117).¹⁰⁵ After Ignatius died, Hero succeeded him as the bishop of Antioch.¹⁰⁶

On Ignatius’s journey from Antioch to Rome, he wrote seven letters, so-called “Middle Recension to the churches in Asia and to Rome itself.”¹⁰⁷ At Smyrna, he wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Epistle to Magnesia, the Epistle to Tralles, and the

¹⁰⁰ Kenneth J. Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna: A New Translation and Theological Commentary* (Zanesville, OH: CHRresources, 2008), 2.

¹⁰¹ Allen Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch: A Martyr Bishop and the Origin of Episcopacy* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2007), 14.

¹⁰² Ignatius, *The Epistle to Rome* 5.1 (Brent, 14).

¹⁰³ Ignatius, *The Epistle to Ephesians* 1.2 (Brent, 45).

¹⁰⁴ Brent, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 45.

¹⁰⁵ Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna*, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna*, 2.

¹⁰⁷ Christine Trevett, *A Study of Ignatius of Antioch in Syria and Asia*, *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity*, vol. 29 (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 1.

Epistle to the Romans. At Troas, he wrote the Epistle to Philadelphia and the Epistle to Smyrna. Another one is his personal letter to the bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp.¹⁰⁸ Ignatius left us seven genuine and authentic letters which have greatly influenced the church's life even to this day, as Kenneth Howell says, "[Ignatius's] letters expressed the fundamental ideas of Christianity."¹⁰⁹

Ignatius of Antioch Proclaims the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

Ignatius points out that Christ's sufferings were for our sakes, in order to save us from the punishment of our sins, as he says, "For all these sufferings He endured for our sakes [that we might be saved]. And He truly suffered [and died], as also He truly raised Himself up."¹¹⁰ In another letter to the Trallians, Ignatius aligned his claim, as he says, "Jesus Christ, who died for our sakes, . . . [and] believing in His death you might escape [from] death."¹¹¹ Hence, to Ignatius, the concept of redemption in Christ's crucifixion is clear; Christ, the righteous man, has sacrificed himself to save all sinners.

Moreover, Ignatius emphasizes how crucial the suffering of Jesus was, as Howell says, "For Ignatius, any denial or mitigation of the passion is in effect to relinquish the message of the gospel."¹¹² Ignatius claimed that only the true suffering and crucifixion of Christ brings forth the true resurrection of Christ, as he says, "All these things he suffered for our sake to save us. And truly he suffered just as he also truly raised himself."¹¹³ Indeed, Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection are aligned, and all are crucial; the canonical Gospels record all those events of Christ.

¹⁰⁸ Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna*, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna*, 1.

¹¹⁰ Ignatius, *The Epistle to Smyrnaeans 2* (Srawley, 92).

¹¹¹ Ignatius, *The Epistle to the Trallians 2* (Srawley, 63).

¹¹² Howell, *Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna*, 20.

¹¹³ Ignatius, *The Epistle to Smyrnaeans 2.1* (Srawley, 92).

Ignatius of Antioch Proclaims the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

For Ignatius, Christ is the source of life and “breathes immortality into the Church.”¹¹⁴ He also writes, “Apart from [Christ] we do not possess the true life.”¹¹⁵

Ignatius confirmed that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a bodily resurrection, as Mikael Isacson says, “Ignatius both ‘knows and believes’ that Christ existed ‘in the flesh’ even after the resurrection.”¹¹⁶ Ignatius supports his view of the bodily resurrection of Christ by quoting Scriptures from the canonical Gospel, “See my hands and my feet, that it is truly me. Touch me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see that I have” (Luke 24:39). Ignatius also emphasizes that Jesus was eating and drinking together with the disciples: “They gave him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. He took them and ate in front of them” (Luke 24:42, 43). With strong faith, Ignatius asserts, “For I know and believe that He was in flesh even after the resurrection. . . . Moreover, after His resurrection He ate with them and drank with them, as living in the flesh, although spiritually united with the Father.”¹¹⁷

Therefore, Ignatius believed in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. For Ignatius, the real resurrection of the flesh can conquer Satan’s rule of the physical body; hence, the real resurrection is “not by the escape of the soul from creation to some other supposed reality.”¹¹⁸ For Ignatius, there is no separation between Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection. John Romanides also agree with him, saying “they are

¹¹⁴ Ignatius, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* 17 (Romanides, 3); See also Ignatius, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* 3; Ignatius, *The Epistle to Magnesia* 1; Ignatius, *The Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* 4 (Romanides, 3).

¹¹⁵ Ignatius, *The Epistle to the Trallians* 9 (Romanides, 3).

¹¹⁶ Mikael Isacson, *To Each Their Own Letter: Structure, Themes, and Rhetorical Strategies in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series 42, ed. Bengt Holmberg (Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2004), 160.

¹¹⁷ Ignatius, *The Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* 3.1 (Srawley, 93).

¹¹⁸ John S. Romanides, *The Ecclesiology of St. Ignatius of Antioch* (Atlanta: International Printing, 1956), 5.

necessarily united and inseparable. The denial of the one leads to the rejection of the others.”¹¹⁹ Moreover, Ignatius also points out that those who reject the bodily resurrection will have no hope of life after death, as the Bible says, “Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable” (1 Cor 15:18-19). Hence, according to Ignatius, those who deny the bodily resurrection of Christ are “advocates of death,” “bearers of death,” and “their names are unbelief.”¹²⁰

Ignatius also emphasizes that the resurrection of Jesus Christ has brought reconciliation of the body of Christ, among the Jews and the Gentiles, as he says, “He might raise up an ensign to the ages through His resurrection, for His saints and believers, whether among Jews or Gentiles, in one body of His Church.”¹²¹

Furthermore, Ignatius explains why the Christian Eucharist (mystery rite) should take place on Sunday (the Lord’s day) instead of Saturday (the Sabbath day); the reason is that Jesus rose on the Lord’s day. Ignatius explains, “[Now] no longer Sabbatizing but living according to the Lord’s day in which our life rose through him and his death.”¹²² For Ignatius, the Christian Eucharist also brought forth unity as they partake in one bread (the flesh of Christ), and one cup (the blood of Christ), on one altar (the unity of church).¹²³ Finally, Ignatius had faith he would be raised again in Christ after he was martyred, as he says, “If I suffer, I will be liberated for Jesus Christ, and I will rise again free in him.”¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Romanides, *The Ecclesiology of St. Ignatius of Antioch*, 5.

¹²⁰ Ignatius, *The Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* 5 (Romanides, 5).

¹²¹ Ignatius, *The Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* 1 (Srawley, 92).

¹²² Ignatius, *The Epistle to the Magnesians* 9.1 (Brent, 71).

¹²³ Ignatius, *The Epistle to the Philadelphians* 4 (Srawley, 83).

¹²⁴ Ignatius, *The Epistle to Romans* 4.3 (Howell, 12).

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Is the Central Message of Apologist Tertullian

An examination of Tertullian's works supports the thesis by demonstrating Tertullian's appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection of the believers of Jesus Christ. This section discusses the background of Tertullian and his view on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Background of Tertullian (AD c. 169-c. 225)

Tertullian (AD 169-225) is well known as the first Western Church theologian. Geoffrey Dunn says Tertullian "ranks among the most prominent of the early Latin fathers."¹²⁵ His actual full name was *Septimius Tertullianus*.¹²⁶ He was also the first Christian Latin writer, who wrote numerous remarkable works. He was the son of a proconsular centurion from Carthage of Africa. He was also "a man of a sharp and vehement temper, flourished under Severus and Antonius Caracalla."¹²⁷ Tertullian was highly educated (in both Latin school and Greek school); therefore, he had a wide knowledge of Greek and Roman history and thought.¹²⁸

Tertullian was from a pagan family, but in God's grace, he was converted to Christianity when he faced certain challenging events. After his encounter with God, he truly repented and rejected his past sinful life.¹²⁹ From his works, we can know that Tertullian has married, and he must have had a good relationship with his wife as he had

¹²⁵ Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian: The Early Church Fathers* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.

¹²⁶ Dunn, *Tertullian*, 3.

¹²⁷ C. Dodgson, preface to *Apologetic and Practical Treatises*, by Tertullian (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1854), i.

¹²⁸ David E. Wilhite, *Tertullian the African: An Anthropological Reading of Tertullian's Context and Identities*, Millennium Studies, vol. 14, ed. Wolfram Brandes, et al. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 20.

¹²⁹ Tertullian, *On Repentance* 1.1; Tertullian, *On Flight in Time of Persecution* 6.2 (Dunn, 3).

asserted that man should not seek remarriage after their spouse dies.¹³⁰

As the first Western theologian, he absorbed “elements of philosophy into theology and also illuminates the relation between the New Testament and later creeds.”¹³¹ To Tertullian, we “owe the first formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity . . . [and] owe a great part of the Christian Latin vocabulary.”¹³²

Tertullian explained the reason Christians only worship one and true God. He defends, “We cease to worship your gods from the time when we discover that they are no gods.”¹³³ Tertullian points out that the pagan “hath made gods out of men.”¹³⁴ Tertullian explains that Christians only worship one God, the creator of heaven and earth, instead of worshipping the manmade gods of paganism. Tertullian says, “That which we worship is the One God, who through the Word by which He commanded, the Reach by which He ordained, the Power by which He was able, formed out of nothing, this whole material mass with all its furniture of elements, bodies, and spirits, to the honor of His Majesty.”¹³⁵ Tertullian also emphasizes on the special revelation of Jesus Christ, “We worship God through Christ; we believe Him a man; it is through Him and in Him that God willeth Himself to be known and worshipped.”¹³⁶ Indeed, Christ has revealed the invisible God the Father, as Jesus says, “He who sees me sees him who sent me” (John 12:45).

¹³⁰ Dunn, *Tertullian*, 3.

¹³¹ Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xv.

¹³² A. Souter, *Tertullian Concerning the Resurrection of the Flesh*, Translations of Christian Literature, Series II (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), xi.

¹³³ Tertullian, *Apologetic and Practical Treatises* 10 (Dodgson, 25).

¹³⁴ Tertullian, *Apologetic and Practical Treatises* 10 (Dodgson, 25).

¹³⁵ Tertullian, *Apologetic and Practical Treatises* 16 (Dodgson, 25).

¹³⁶ Tertullian, *Apologetic and Practical Treatises* 21 (Dodgson, 50).

Tertullian Proclaims the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

Tertullian describes how Jesus Christ was denied and put-on trial and finally crucified on the cross, saying, “[The Jewish leaders] brought Him before Pontius Pilate, and by the violence of their voices, wrung from him that He should be delivered up unto them to be crucified . . . and at length [He was] nailed to the cross . . . [and] taken down from the cross and buried in a sepulcher.”¹³⁷ For Tertullian, all events of Jesus’s trial, suffering, crucifixion, death, and burial were genuine and authentic; many political figures (both Jews and Romans) were involved.

For Tertullian, Christology is that “the Son [Christ] is of the substance of the Father, is the Agent of the Father in the creation. . . . He became incarnation, being as such both God and man. He suffered, died, and rose from the dead, and is exalted to the Father’s right hand, [and] He is coming again to judge the world.”¹³⁸ His understanding of Christology is authentic even until now.

Moreover, Tertullian was the first theologian to use the word “Trinity,” even though it never mentions in the Bible. Despite his tendency to complain of multi-deity teaching, Tertullian asserted that the Trinity is the way to understand God’s oneness. For Tertullian, “Trinity is never a mere multiplication of heavenly beings; there must be one God. Trinity is the faith of the gospel.”¹³⁹ Tertullian believed that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are one unique God; “they are the object of the same faith and adoration.”¹⁴⁰ In terms of works, God the Father emphasizes creation, God the Son emphasizes salvation, and God the Spirit emphasizes witnessing the resurrected Christ (Act 1:8).

¹³⁷ Tertullian, *Apologetic and Practical Treatises* 21 (Dodgson, 51).

¹³⁸ Robert E. Roberts, *The Theology of Tertullian* (London: The Epworth Press, 1924), 166.

¹³⁹ Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West*, 117.

¹⁴⁰ Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 18.5, 19.5, 22.11 (Osborn, 117).

Tertullian Proclaims the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Tertullian describes the historical event of Christ's resurrection saying,

Him being taken down from the cross, and buried in a sepulcher, they caused moreover to be surrounded with great diligence by a guard of soldiers. . . . On the third day, the earth was suddenly shaken, and the massive body [big rock] which closed the sepulcher being rolled away . . . nothing was found in the sepulcher save the grave clothes only of the buried.¹⁴¹

The body of Christ was not found in the sepulcher; it is an empty tomb, which is the most authentic sign of Christ's resurrection. Indeed, among all humans only Christ's tomb is empty. For Tertullian, all resurrection must be bodily resurrections, as Robert E. Roberts says, "Tertullian's view of the subject of resurrection is that unless the body rose, there could be no resurrection, even for Christ."¹⁴² Christ was bodily resurrected from dead, as His angels said to the women, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He isn't here, but is risen" (Luke 24:5, 6).

Moreover, Tertullian also mentions the life of the post-resurrected Jesus in order to prove that Jesus is genuinely bodily resurrected, saying, "But He continued forty days with certain disciples in Galilee, a region of Judea, teaching them what things they should teach. After that, having ordained them to the office of preaching throughout the world, He was taken from them into heaven in a cloud which covered Him."¹⁴³ In his second letter to Governor Theophilus, physician Luke also mentioned the appearance of post-resurrected Christ over a period of forty days as a great proof of Christ's bodily resurrection (Acts 1:3).

Besides, Tertullian mentions the change of the disciples' lives after encountering the resurrected Lord Jesus. All the weak and vulnerable disciples became strong witnesses of Christ after witnessing the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, as Tertullian

¹⁴¹ Tertullian, *Apologetic and Practical Treatises* 21 (Dodgson, 51).

¹⁴² Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 3.18 (Roberts, 177).

¹⁴³ Tertullian, *Apologetic and Practical Treatises* 21 (Dodgson, 51).

says, “The disciples, spread throughout the world, obeyed the commandment of their Divine Master [Jesus]; who, themselves also, having suffered many things from the persecuting Jews, . . . through the cruelty of Nero, sow the seed of Christian blood.”¹⁴⁴ Indeed, most of the disciples of Christ were martyred for their Christian faith.

Last but not least, Tertullian also believed in the future resurrection of all believers of Jesus Christ. Tertullian claimed that if God could create this world (including humans) out of emptiness, it would be even more straightforward for him to raise believers from death. He says, “The power of God . . . has produced this great body of the world out of what did not exist, which is no less than to produce it out of the death of emptiness and void.”¹⁴⁵ Tertullian encourages those people who have lost their loved ones not to grieve poorly, explaining, “If we believe in the resurrection of Christ, we believe in our own, also, since it was for us that He died and rose again. Therefore, since there is sure ground for faith in the resurrection of the dead, there is no grief associated with death and no inability to bear grief.”¹⁴⁶ His teaching is aligned with Paul’s exhortation of the resurrection: do not grieve for the deceased one like who has no hope (1 Thess 4:13).

Sub-Conclusion

The thesis of chapter 3 is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection was the central message of the patristic apologists. The examination of the works of the five crucial patristic apologists—Justin Martyr, Clement of Rome, Irenaeus of Lyons, Ignatius of Antioch, and Tertullian—supports the thesis by demonstrating their appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection of the believers of Christ. Hence, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the

¹⁴⁴ Tertullian, *Apologetic and Practical Treatises* 21 (Dodgson, 52).

¹⁴⁵ Tertullian, *Apologetic* 48.7 (Arbesmann, 119).

¹⁴⁶ Tertullian, *Patience* 9.2 (*DiscArbesmann*, 208-9).

cornerstone of Christianity. The patristic apologists are the role models of today's church. We need to defend our Christian faith—especially on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—in any circumstance; simultaneously, we need to spread the gospel to the non-believers among us. The central message of today's church should be none other than the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ's crucifixion emphasizes the redemption of humans from sins, and Christ's bodily resurrection emphasizes his victory over the authority of Satan and death. As Paul shouts, "Death, where is your sting? Hades, where is your victory? . . . But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:55-57). Moreover, Christ's bodily resurrection also gives us the affirmation of the future bodily resurrection of his believers, as Jesus promised, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will still live, even if he dies" (John 11:25). Last but not least, the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ will also grant us the courage to face all kinds of challenges in our lives, such as the loss of our loved ones, the COVID-19 pandemic, the fear of death, and many more. Indeed, the risen Lord Jesus Christ has promised to be with us as we endure through all kinds of pains, difficulties, and challenges in our lives.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

In this chapter, I describe the preparation of my ministry project and its implementation at Gloria Methodist Church. The purpose of this project is to train one of the Sarawak Chinese Annual Conference (SCAC) churches regarding the truth of the resurrection for an effective defense of the Christian faith and to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ among the church's Muslim friends. The project began on May 1, 2022, and was completed on August 31, 2022.

The Preparation of the Project

This section discusses the project ministry's delimitations and the project's promotion.

The Delimitations of the Project Ministry

There are three delimitations applied to this project. First, due to time constraints, the project was limited to one of the SCAC's churches only, that is, Gloria Methodist Church (GMC). There are two reasons for choosing GMC. First of all, GMC is located in the Bintulu District, which is more familiar to me because I served as the Superintendent of the Bintulu District for six years (2011-2016). Secondly, GMC is one of the SCAC's churches that has Malay language¹ ministries (including Malay language Sunday service, Malay language Sunday school, Malay language Bible class, etc.). The Malay language ministries (in their church called *Bahasa Malaysia* ministries) is a specific congregation of GMC with a combination of Chinese Christians and Iban

¹ Malay language is also known as *Bahasa Malaysia*.

Indigenous Christians, but none are Malays. They are about two hundred people; 80 percent are Iban Indigenous Christian, and 20 percent are Chinese Christian. Generally, they can speak two to three kinds of languages: Malay, Chinese, and Iban. In this project, Chinese Christians and Iban Christians learn the truth of the resurrection and how to deal with their Muslim friends (i.e., Malay friends). In Malaysia, almost all Muslims are Malays; hence the word “Muslims” is identical to “Malays.”

Secondly, due to time constraints, I could only focus on SCAC instead of SIAC (actually, I belong to SCAC). Another reason is that SIAC already has its apologetics program in June 2022, which another pastor does. Indeed, SCAC and SIAC are two separate annual conferences; they could plan for any ministry with no obligation to notify each other. Moreover, it is too hard for me to do the project in two different churches simultaneously. Therefore, I only chose to do the project ministry in SCAC. However, I have chosen a SCAC church with Malay language ministries, GMC, where Chinese Christians and Iban Indigenous Christians could participate together in the apologetics curriculum.

Third, due to the COVID-19 problem (a quarantine period is still required for anyone who enters Malaysia from other countries) and the distancing problem (the traveling and living expenses are far beyond my financial budget), the whole project was done online via Zoom conferences.

Project Promotion

The promotion of and recruitment for the project began on May 1, 2022, until June 5, 2022. It was open to all the church leaders and members of GMC’s Malay language ministries congregation. Several promotional tools were implemented, such as the weekly church bulletin, WhatsApp, emails, and phone calls. Besides publicity through the weekly church bulletin, I have personally invited others through WhatsApp and phone calls. Eventually, twenty-three participants participated in the project,

including the apologetics survey and apologetics curriculum.

The Implementation of the Apologetics Project in GMC

The Christian apologetics project was implemented according to my three goals. The first goal was to assess the knowledge of the resurrection in GMC. The second goal was to develop an eight-session apologetics curriculum on the truth of the resurrection. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the resurrection in GMC.

The First Goal Was to Assess the Knowledge of the Resurrection in GMC

The first goal was to assess the knowledge of the truth of the resurrection among the church leaders and members of GMC (SCAC). The goal is considered a success when church leaders and members of GMC complete the Apologetics Survey (AS).² The AS assessment has given me a picture of how well the church leaders and members of GMC understand the truth of the resurrection as well as their confidence in answering questions raised by the Muslims. The survey was taken about two weeks before the curriculum began on June 20. Twenty-three participants completed the AS and agreed to participate in the curriculum. Among them are twelve church leaders (including two church pastors, several church executive committee members, cell group leaders, and Fellowship Committee members) and eleven church members. All participants responded to each question on a six-point Likert scale, which ranges from strongly disagree (1 point) to strongly agree (6 points). I am happy that all twenty-three participants committed to doing pre- and post-tests for comparison purposes. The AS consists of twenty-five questions which can be divided into four sections: the general knowledge of the resurrection, the biblical knowledge of the resurrection, the historical knowledge of the resurrection, and the confidence in practical dealings with Muslim friends.

² See appendix 1.

Before, I analyzed the pre-test results of the apologetics survey, I wanted to analyze the demographics of the participants. From the identity and gender demographics (table 1), twenty-three participants participated in the pre-test survey. Generally, the number of church leaders (twelve persons) and church members (eleven persons) is quite balanced. Regarding gender, there are ten males (six church leaders plus four church members) and thirteen females (six church leaders plus seven church members). Generally, the number of female participants is slightly higher than the number of male participants, but this does not affect my project.

Table 1. Identity and gender demographics

Gender	Male	Female	Total number
Church leader	6	6	12
Church member	4	7	11
Total number	10	13	23

From the age demographics (table 2), we can see more adult participants than young participants. The mode of age group is 35-44, which scores 7 points, and the minor age group is 18-34, which scores 0 points. The 45-54 age group is the second largest age group, scoring 5. More young participants need to be added to my future project through personal invitation.

Table 2. Age demographics

Age Group	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Church leader	0	0	4	3	1	2
Church member	0	3	3	2	2	1
Total number	0	3	7	5	3	3

First, let us look at the pre-test results on the general knowledge of the resurrection (table 3). Generally, church leaders and members believe in Jesus's resurrection, which is the central message of the gospel (question 1); they scored as high as 5.91 and 5.95, respectively. However, the recognition that every Sunday worship is a celebration of Jesus's resurrection (question 2) is slightly low. Therefore, I needed to emphasize the paradigm shift from the Sabbath day (the seventh day of God's creation) to Sunday (the first day of the week in which Jesus was resurrected from his death) in my curriculum.

Table 3. Pre-test results regarding general knowledge of the resurrection

Survey Question	Church leaders (N=12)	Church members (N=11)	Total (N=23)
1. I believe in Jesus's resurrection as much as I do in his crucifixion.	5.91	5.91	5.91
2. I recognize that every Sunday worship is a celebration of Jesus's resurrection.	5.83	5.43	5.63
4. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus are the central messages of the gospel.	5.91	5.99	5.95

Second, let us take a look at the pre-test results regarding the biblical knowledge of the resurrection (table 4). This section consists of ten questions: the first eight questions are regarding biblical knowledge of Jesus's resurrection, and the last two

are regarding biblical knowledge of Christian's future resurrection (questions 8 and 9). Generally, the church leaders' scores are slightly higher than the church members' scores; they scored 5.67 (average) and 5.37 (average), respectively, and the difference is only 0.3. The average score of the pre-test result regarding biblical knowledge of the resurrection is 5.52. Generally, this is pretty high, which indicates that either church leaders or church members of GMC have excellent biblical knowledge of the resurrection. In my curriculum, I highlighted some biblical books, for instance, 1 Corinthians 15, Acts 2, Acts 17, and the four canonical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).

Table 4. Pre-test results regarding biblical knowledge of the resurrection

Survey Questions	Church Leaders (N=12)	Church Members (N=11)	Total (N=23)
5. I would know the consequences for Christians if Jesus did not rise from death.	5.83	5.43	5.63
6. I have the confidence to share the eyewitnesses of the post-resurrected Christ in the Bible.	5.58	5.04	5.31
7. According to the Scripture, Christ died for our sins, and was buried, and was raised on the third day.	5.83	5.89	5.86
10. I have the confidence to share the difference between the First Adam and Second Adam (Jesus Christ).	5.08	5.00	5.04
11. I recognize that because of Jesus's resurrection, all my labors in him are not in vain.	5.91	5.71	5.81
13. The resurrection of Jesus was central to Apostle Peter's apologetic presentation to the Jewish audiences at Pentecost.	5.75	5.69	5.72
14. The risen Lord Jesus Christ is David's promised heir, the everlasting King.	5.58	5.50	5.54
15. The resurrection of Jesus was central to Apostle Paul's apologetic presentation to the Gentile Greek audiences at Athens.	5.66	5.24	5.45
8. The resurrection of Jesus gives assurance for the future resurrection of his believers.	5.91	5.35	5.63

Survey Questions	Church Leaders (N=12)	Church Members (N=11)	Total (N=23)
9. I have the confidence to share the difference between the earthly body and resurrected body.	5.58	4.86	5.22
Average score	5.67	5.37	5.52

Third, let us take a look at the pre-test results regarding historical knowledge of the resurrection (table 5). The average of the church leaders' scores is again slightly higher than the church members' scores; they are 5.15 and 4.64, respectively, and the difference is 0.51. The average of the total scores in the historical knowledge of the resurrection is lower than in biblical knowledge; they are 4.89 and 5.52, respectively, and the difference is 0.63. However, the difference might be even more significant in reality because they were unfamiliar with the five patristic apologists (Justin Martyr, Clement of Rome, Irenaeus of Lyons, Ignatius of Lyons, Ignatius of Antioch, and Tertullian). Therefore, there was a need to teach them about patristic apologists' views on the truth of the resurrection. The Bible is the internal evidence of Jesus's resurrection, while the historical works of the five apologists are the external evidence of Jesus's resurrection.

Table 5. Pre-test results regarding historical knowledge of resurrection

Survey Question	Church leaders (N=12)	Church members (N=11)	Total (N=23)
16. Patristic apologist Justin Martyr defends that Jesus saves humanity by his redemptive death and bodily resurrection.	4.83	4.90	4.86
17. Patristic apologist Clement of Rome defends the atonement of Jesus's crucifixion and his bodily resurrection.	5.17	4.73	4.95
18. Patristic apologist Irenaeus of Lyons spoke against the dualism idea of Gnosticism, and he firmly believed in bodily resurrection.	5.33	4.57	4.95
19. Patristic apologist Ignatius of Antioch defends the bodily	5.25	4.75	5.00

Survey Question	Church leaders (N=12)	Church members (N=11)	Total (N=23)
resurrection of Jesus, and he emphasizes the unity and completion of Jesus's incarnation, death, and resurrection.			
20. Patristic apologist Tertullian defends that there could be no resurrection unless the body rose.	5.17	4.27	4.72
Average score	5.15	4.64	4.89
12. The proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus took place at the very beginning of the church's history.	5.83	5.79	5.81

Fourth, let us take a look at the pre-test results regarding confidence in dealing with Muslim friends (table 6). The average score of the church leader is again slightly higher than the church members' average score; they are 4.64 and 4.38, respectively, and the difference is 0.26. The total average score is 4.51, which is comparatively lower than the average score for biblical knowledge of the resurrection (5.52) and historical knowledge of the resurrection (4.89). It indicates that the leaders and members of GMC have both high biblical knowledge and historical knowledge of the resurrection, but they are not putting the knowledge into practice by sharing the gospel with their Muslim friends. In fact, they like to share the gospel, but they lack the knowledge of how to share it with their Muslim friends. This view is clear if we look at the results of question 24 and question 3 (see table 7). The score of question 24 ("I believe that Jesus's Great Commission also commands us to share his gospel with the Muslims") is much higher, and it scores 5.90. Besides, the score of question 3 ("I have a passion for sharing the truth of Jesus's resurrection with others") is also higher, which is 5.04. My conclusion is that the church leaders and the church members of GMC have biblical knowledge of the resurrection (score 5.52) and historical knowledge of the resurrection (score 4.89), they know that the Great Commission is also for Muslims (score 5.90), and they are willing to share the gospel of the resurrection (score 5.04). However, they are reluctant and have

little confidence to share the gospel with their Muslim friends (score 4.51). The reason is that they lack knowledge of how to deal with Muslim friends. Therefore, there is a strong need for apologetic teaching in this area for both church leaders and church members of GMC. And I am delighted to see that both church leaders and church members of GMC believe that their faith will be strengthened through studying the truth of Jesus's resurrection (the apologetics curriculum); it scores 5.54 (see table 7).

The Second Goal Was to Develop an Eight-Session Apologetics Curriculum on the Truth of the Resurrection

The second goal was to develop an eight-session apologetics curriculum on the truth of the resurrection. The eight sessions of apologetics have eight topics. The first session's topic is that the center of the Christian faith is the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Matt 28:12-15; Acts 1:1-3; 1 Cor 15:12-23). The second session focuses on the eyewitnesses of the post-resurrected Jesus Christ (Matt 28:1-19; Mark 16:1-10; Luke 24:25-37; John 20:19-29, 21:1-17; 1 Cor 15:5-6; Acts 9:1-5).

Table 6. Pre-test results regarding confidence in dealing with Muslim friends

Survey Question	Church leaders (N=12)	Church members (N=11)	Total (N=23)
22. I have the confidence to answer Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection questions raised by a Muslim.	4.75	4.61	4.68
23. I have the confidence to answer Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection questions raised by an Imam (Muslim teacher/Muslim missionary).	4.50	4.30	4.40
25. I have the confidence to share the gospel of Christ with my Muslim friends.	4.66	4.24	4.45
Average score	4.64	4.38	4.51

Table 7. Pre-test results regarding sharing the gospel

Survey Question	Church leaders (N=12)	Church members (N=11)	Total (N=23)
24. I believe that Jesus's Great Commission also commands us to share his gospel with the Muslims.	6.00	5.80	5.90
3. I have a passion for sharing the truth of Jesus's resurrection with others.	5.25	4.83	5.04
21. My faith will be strengthened through studying the truth of Jesus's resurrection.	5.75	5.33	5.54

The third session focuses on the biblical truth of the future resurrection (Luke 24:23; John 11:25; 1 Cor 15:42-54; 1 Thess 4:13-18). The fourth session focuses on the resurrection of Jesus Christ as central in Peter's apologetic speech to Jewish audiences (Acts 2:14-47, 4:19-20). The fifth session focuses on the resurrection of Christ as central in Paul's apologetic speech to Gentile (Greek) audiences (Acts 5:34, 9:15-16, 17:16-34, 22:3). The sixth session focuses on patristic apologists and Christ's resurrection: Justin Martyr (AD c.100-c.165), Clement of Rome (AD c.30-c.100), Irenaeus of Lyons (AD c.130-c. 202), Ignatius of Antioch (died AD c.110), and Tertullian (AD c.169-c.225). The seventh session focuses on the Islamic view of Jesus Christ's crucifixion and resurrection (1 Cor 13:3; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-11). The eighth session focuses on the risen Christ and the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom 3:23; 1 Cor 15:52-58).

After the development of the curriculum, I sent it to my supervisor Dr. Plummer for approval, and he approved the curriculum (for the details of the curriculum, please see appendix 3). After approval, I translated the eight-session curriculum into Chinese because most of GMC's members have difficulties understanding English. However, they can understand Chinese well, and even the Iban Indigenous participants can understand Chinese. Therefore, I was told by the participants to conduct the curriculum in Chinese instead of English. I have also translated the Apologetic Survey and Apologetic Curriculum Evaluation into Chinese for their sake.

The expert panel measured this goal to evaluate the biblical and theological faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the apologetics curriculum (see appendix 2). The expert panel has five persons, including two church pastors who have been involved in church ministries and Malay language ministry for several years. They both graduated from seminary with a Master of Ministry and a Master of Divinity, respectively. Two college teachers are among the expert panel, and each has a Master of Education. They have served in public colleges and dealt with Malay (Muslim students) for more than fifteen years. We have a church leader in the expert panel who has served in the government sector for over twenty years. He is the head of one of the Malaysian government departments and has more than twenty years of experience dealing with Malay co-workers and employees. He is also one of the lay teachers at GMC.

My supervisor and expert panel gave me some good feedback which helped me develop my curriculum. For instance, they suggested I focus on two to three areas in each lesson and set some questions for discussion in each lesson. However, most of the feedback was positive: the curriculum will strengthen students' faith in Jesus's resurrection; the curriculum is biblical, theological and historically sound; the curriculum will help students know how to answer questions raised by Muslim friends regarding Jesus's resurrection; the curriculum will encourage and increase students' confidence in sharing the gospel to their Muslim friends; and the content of the curriculum sufficiently covers all the areas regarding the truth of the resurrection.

This goal is successfully met when 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators meet or exceed the sufficiency level. Since the score of the expert panel was 153 out of 160, or 95.6 percent (see table 8), the goal has been met, and it is successful.

The Third Goal Was to Increase the Knowledge of the Truth of the Resurrection

The third goal was to increase the knowledge regarding the truth of the

resurrection for all participants by teaching an eight-session apologetics curriculum. This goal was measured by administering a pre-and post-survey to find out if there is a change in the knowledge of the truth of the resurrection. This goal is considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrates a positive, statistically significant difference in the pre-and post-survey scores.

Table 8. Apologetics curriculum evaluation results

Rubric Criteria	1	2	3	4	Score
The materials are faithful to the Bible’s teaching.	0	0	1	4	19
The materials are theologically sound.	0	0	1	4	19
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.	0	0	1	4	19
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers the thesis it is designed to address.	0	0	1	4	19
Each lesson is clear, containing a big idea.	0	0	1	4	19
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogy methodology.	0	0	1	4	19
The curriculum details on answering apologetics questions regarding the truth of Jesus’s resurrection.	0	0	1	4	19
Overall, the lessons are clear and could be re-taught again.	0	0	0	5	20
Total Score					153

First, let us take a look at the introductions of the eight sessions of the apologetic curriculum (see appendix 3 for the details of the eight-session curriculum).

The introduction of session one. In session one, we emphasized that the center of the Christian faith is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We examined some objections against Jesus’s resurrection: hallucinations, Jesus did not die on the cross but only lost his consciousness, and his disciples stole Jesus’s body. A series of answers

addressed those objections against Jesus's resurrection. We also discussed what would have happened if Jesus did not resurrect from death. We focused on 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, 27-34. With problems like preaching in vain, faith in vain, salvation in vain, witnessing in vain, even Christianity will collapse if Jesus remains dead. Finally, we discussed Jesus Christ as the first fruit of the resurrection, focusing on 1 Corinthians 15:20-23. By the end of this session, students were able to answer the objections against Jesus's resurrection. Besides, they could tell the problems if Jesus did not resurrect from his death, and they acknowledged that Jesus is the first fruit of the resurrection, which is the cornerstone of Christianity.

The introduction of session two. In session two, we examined the eyewitnesses of the post-resurrected Jesus Christ in the Bible. There are at least seven plausible individuals and groups of eyewitnesses of Jesus's resurrection found in the Bible. We studied each of them: Mary Magdalene and several female disciples (Matt 28:1-10; Mark 16:9-10; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:14-18); Simon Peter (Luke 24:34; John 21:12-17; 1 Cor 15); James, John, Thomas, Nathanael and two other disciples (John 21:1-17); the whole group of eleven disciples (Matt 28:16-20; John 20:19-20); Cleopas and one unnamed disciple on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:30-31); a group of more than five hundred people (1 Cor 15:6); and the apostle Paul (Acts 9:1-5). By the end of the session, students could tell most of the narratives of the eyewitnesses of the post-resurrected Jesus in the Bible.

The introduction of session three. In session three, we looked at the biblical truth of the future resurrection of Jesus's believers. First, we studied the differences between earthly and future resurrected bodies (1 Cor 15:42-50). After that, we looked at the future resurrection of Jesus's believers. Indeed, Jesus's resurrection has given a guarantee of his believers' future resurrection. By the end of the session, students could tell the differences between the earthly body and the future resurrected body and the

relationship between Jesus's resurrection and believers' future resurrection.

The introduction of session four. In session four, we examined an apologetic presentation of the apostle Peter, who preached to a group of Jewish audiences at Pentecost. We focused on Acts 2:14-41: The age of fulfillment has come, as promised in Joel 2:28-32; the Holy Spirit has descended (Acts 2:16-21); the prophecy has been fulfilled in Jesus's resurrection (2:22-24); Jesus is David's promised heir by his resurrection (2:25-32); and Jesus has poured out the Holy Spirit by his exaltation (Acts 2:33-36). Finally, we looked at the reaction of the Jewish audience to Peter's speech (2:37-41). By the end of the session, students could tell some of the significant points of Peter's apologetic presentation to the Jewish audience at Pentecost.

The introduction of session five. In session five, we examined an apologetic presentation of the apostle Paul, who preached to a group of Gentiles (Greeks) at Athens. Generally, the narrative can be divided into five parts: Paul's proclamation of the gospel to the Jewish people at the synagogue (Acts 17:16-17); Paul's conversation with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers at Athens (17:18); Paul's invitation to appear before the Areopagus Council (17:19-21); Paul's apologetic speech before the Areopagus Council (17:22-31); and the mixed responses to Paul's presentation (17:32-34). By the end of the session, students could tell some significant points on the true worship of the true God and Jesus's resurrection from Paul's apologetic presentation to the Greek audience.

The introduction of session six. In session six, we examined five significant patristic apologists' works on Jesus's resurrection. The works of the five patristic apologists served as historical evidence of Jesus's resurrection (while the Bible is the internal evidence of Jesus's resurrection). The five significant patristic apologists are Justin Martyr, Clement of Rome, Irenaeus of Lyons, Ignatius of Antioch, and Tertullian. The appeal of apologetics is the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future

resurrection of Jesus's believers. By the end of this session, students could tell some of the significant points of Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection from the works of the five apologists.

The introduction of session seven. We examined the Islamic views on Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection in session seven. First, we looked at some crucial facts on the Islamization of the world. Second, we examined how Islam denies Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection—the swap or replacement theory. Third, we discussed the Islamic view on salvation—there is no redemption and no guarantee of salvation in Islam, and it is all by good works outweighing evil deeds. Finally, we discussed fifteen precautions and preparations when approaching and evangelizing Muslims. By the end of this session, students could tell the significant points of the Islamic view on Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection; plus, they could tell some of the precautions and preparations that need to be taken when approaching and evangelizing their Muslim friends.

The introduction of session eight. We discussed the risen Christ and his Great Commission in session eight. First, we emphasized that in his resurrection, Jesus Christ has conquered all enemies, including death (1 Cor 15:23-26), and every creature's knees shall bow before him (Phil 2:11). Second, death is swallowed up in the victory of Jesus's resurrection (1 Cor 15:54, 57). Hence, Paul brings forth three appeals (1 Cor 15:58): we must stand firm in our faith in Jesus's resurrection, give ourselves entirely to bear witness for Christ, and believe that the evangelical works in Christ will never be in vain. Finally, we discussed the Great Commission of the risen Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 28:16-20): the resurrected Jesus came with all authority (v. 18), and he commanded his disciples, “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you” (vv. 19-20). He promised, “Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (v. 20). The Great Commission is given to all his believers to be his witnesses in all nations

(including Malaysia), and among all peoples (including the Malays). By the end of the session, students could tell the three appeals of Paul and pray for their willingness to obey the Great Commission of the risen Christ.

The entire eight-session curriculum details can be seen in appendix 3. The eight-session curriculum was translated into Chinese before I taught through the online Zoom class that commenced on June 20, 2022. After the eight-session curriculum, a post-test was taken (all the questions are similar to the pre-test). All twenty-three participants have done the post-test. A comparison of pre-and post-test results is calculated based on the individual question (see table 9).

Table 9. Pre- and post-test results based on individual questions

Questions	Pre-test M(SD)	Post-test M(SD)
General Knowledge of Resurrection		
1. I believe in Jesus's resurrection as much as I do in his crucifixion.	5.91(0.29)	5.95(0.21)
2. I recognize that every Sunday worship is a celebration of Jesus's resurrection.	5.63(0.49)	5.95(0.21)
4. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus are the central messages of the gospel.	5.95(0.21)	5.90(0.29)
Average score	5.83	5.93
Biblical Knowledge of Resurrection		
5. I would know the consequences for Christians if Jesus did not rise from death.	5.63(0.49)	5.95(0.21)
6. I have the confidence to share the eyewitnesses of the post resurrected Christ in the Bible.	5.31(0.64)	5.72(0.45)
7. According to the Scripture: Christ died for our sins, and was buried, and was raised on the third day.	5.86(0.35)	5.90(0.29)
8. The resurrection of Jesus gives assurance for the future resurrection of his believers.	5.63(0.79)	5.95(0.21)
9. I have the confidence to share the difference between the earthly body and resurrected body.	5.22(0.81)	5.63(0.58)
10. I have the confidence to share the difference between the First Adam and Second Adam (Jesus Christ).	5.04(0.90)	5.63(0.58)
11. I recognize that because of Jesus's resurrection, all my labors in him are not in vain.	5.81(0.39)	5.90(0.29)
13. The resurrection of Jesus was central to the apostle Peter's apologetic presentation to the Jewish	5.72(0.55)	5.72(0.45)

Questions	Pre-test M(SD)	Post-test M(SD)
audiences in the Pentecost.		
14. The risen Lord Jesus Christ is David's promised heir, the everlasting king.	5.54(0.80)	5.54(0.96)
15. The resurrection of Jesus was central to the apostle Paul's apologetic presentation to the Gentile Greek audiences at Athens.	5.45(0.91)	5.81(0.39)
Average score	5.52	5.77
Historical Knowledge of Resurrection		
16. Patristic apologist Justin Martyr defends that Jesus saves humanity by his redemptive death and bodily resurrection.	4.86(0.64)	5.86(0.35)
17. Patristic apologist Clement of Rome defends the atonement of Jesus's crucifixion and his bodily resurrection.	4.95(0.72)	5.59(0.50)
18. Patristic apologist Irenaeus of Lyons spoke against the dualism idea of the Gnosticism, he firmly believed in bodily resurrection.	4.90(0.61)	5.68(0.47)
19. Patristic apologist Ignatius of Antioch defends the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and he emphasizes the unity and completion of Jesus's incarnation, death, and resurrection.	5.00(0.69)	5.81(0.39)
20. Patristic apologist Tertullian defends that there could be no resurrection unless the body rose.	4.72(1.12)	5.63(0.58)
12. The proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus took place at the very beginning of the church's history.	5.81(0.39)	5.72(0.52)
Average score	4.88	5.71
Confidence in Dealing with Muslim Friends		
22. I have the confidence to answer Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection questions raised by Muslims.	4.68(0.56)	5.54(0.59)
23. I have the confidence to answer Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection questions raised by an Imam (Muslim teacher/Muslim missionary).	4.36(0.58)	5.31(0.71)
25. I have the confidence to share the gospel of Christ with my Muslim friends.	4.45(0.59)	5.40(0.79)
Average score	4.49	5.41
24. I believe that Jesus's Great Commission also commands us to share his gospel with the Muslims.	5.91(0.29)	5.81(0.39)
3. I have a passion for sharing the truth of Jesus's resurrection with others.	5.04(0.72)	5.59(0.66)
21. My faith will be strengthened through studying the truth of Jesus's resurrection.	5.54(0.74)	5.90(0.29)

Note: Likert scale scores range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree)

From table 9, we can see significant growth in the four categories. First, the general knowledge of the resurrection increased by 0.1 point, from an average score of 5.83 (pre-test) to 5.93 (post-test). The increment is small because GMC already had high general knowledge of the resurrection before the curriculum. Secondly, the biblical knowledge of the resurrection increased by 0.2 point, from an average score of 5.52 (pre-test) to 5.77 (post-test). The increment is more significant than the general knowledge. The three questions with the largest positive change between the pre-test and post-test results are question 10 (“I have the confidence to share the difference between the First Adam and Second Adam,” an increment of 0.59, from 5.04 to 5.63); question 6 (“I have the confidence to share the eyewitnesses of the post-resurrected Christ in the Bible,” an increment of 0.41, from 0.72 to 0.31); and question 9 (“I have the confidence to tell the difference between the earthly body and resurrected body,” an increment of 0.41 also, from 5.22 to 5.63).

Thirdly, the historical knowledge of the resurrection significantly increased by 0.83 point, from an average score of 4.88 (pre-test) to 5.71 (post-test). The increment of historical knowledge (0.83) is comparatively higher than the increment of general knowledge (0.1) and biblical knowledge (0.2). Frankly, we seldom teach or preach on the life of those patristic apologists. According to the survey, among the five patristic apologists, students gained the most significant knowledge from Justin Martyr, with an increment of 1.0 point, from 4.86 to 5.86. From the post-test average score of 5.71, we can see that there is still some room for them to improve, while the post-test average score of general knowledge is 5.93 and biblical knowledge is 5.77. Fourthly, the confidence in dealing with Muslim friends saw a significant increment of 0.92 point, from 4.49 (pre-test) to 5.41 (post-test). Comparatively, this is the highest incremental change (0.92) compared to the historical knowledge (0.83), the biblical knowledge (0.2), and the general knowledge (0.1). However, this category has the lowest post-test average score (5.41) compared to historical knowledge (5.71), biblical knowledge (5.77), and

general knowledge (5.93). This indicates that GMC still has more room to improve dealing with Muslim friends. Comparatively, GMC has less confidence in dealing with Muslim imams (5.31) than Muslim friends (5.54); this is understandable because the imams are well-trained Muslim missionaries or teachers. One crucial observation is that GMC is keener on sharing the gospel with non-Muslims (5.59) than with Muslims (5.40), even though they believe that the Great Commission is also telling them to share the gospel with Muslims (5.81). One significant reason is that they need more training in evangelizing their Muslim friends.

The statistical results of the pre- and post-tests of the apologetics project are shown in table 10. Since either the p-value of the one-tail (0.0013200) or the p-value of the two-tail (0.0026400) is less than 0.05 (5%), therefore there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test. The t-test demonstrated a positive difference in comparing the two surveys ($t(23) = 3.3891021$). Since it is larger than the t critical one-tail value of 1.7171400 and the critical two-tail value of 2.0738700, the apologetics curriculum makes a positive difference in the knowledge and conviction of the participants. Therefore, I have achieved the goal of increasing the knowledge of the resurrection of the participants through the apologetics project.

Table 10. Statistical results for the apologetics project

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean	133.1818181	143.5909090
Variance	229.6485653	131.4621847
Observations	23	23
Pearson Correlation	0.4266200	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	22	
t Stat	-3.3891021	
P(T<=t) one-tail.	0.0013200	
t Critical one-tail	1.7171400	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.0026400	

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means	Pre-test	Post-test
t Critical two-tail	2.0738700	

Conclusion

My assessment shows that the three project goals have met or exceeded expectations. Hence, the overall project is a success. The t-test indicates that the participants have significant growth in their knowledge of the resurrection, including general knowledge, biblical knowledge, and historical knowledge. Besides, they have gained confidence in dealing with Muslim friends, even with Muslim teachers or missionaries. There is also a gain of confidence to share the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with their Muslim friends. I am delighted that the pastors and all the participants (church leaders and church members) of GMC agree that the apologetics curriculum can be re-taught in GMC and other churches of SCAC.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This chapter evaluates the ministry project, including the project's purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. Then I discuss what I would do differently from the first project when I redo the project. Finally, I make a theological reflection, personal reflection, and a short conclusion at the end of the chapter.

Evaluation of the Project Purpose

The project's purpose was to assess and increase the knowledge of the resurrection of GMC (Malay language congregation). The Malay language congregation consists of Chinese Christians and Iban Christians; they use the Malay language in Sunday worship, Bible studies, cell groups, fellowship gathering, evangelism, and other ministries. In Malaysia, both Chinese Christians and Iban Christians face the Islamization problem; therefore, they need to learn how to defend their Christian faith and share the gospel with their Muslim friends (Malay friends). The essential questions raised by Muslims are regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They deny the resurrection of Jesus by denying his crucifixion. The Muslim teachers teach the elementary and middle school children that Jesus is not God the Son, that he was just an ordinary man without any resurrection. In brief, the Muslims teach that Jesus was just a small prophet and that we should follow Allah's greatest prophet, Mohammad. Therefore, an apologetics project was needed to assess and increase the knowledge of the resurrection in SCAC's churches, particularly GMC.

Chapter 2 gives the biblical and theological basis for teaching the resurrection. I demonstrated that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is central in the apostles' presentations

to both Jews and Gentiles. I focused on 1 Corinthians 15, showing Paul's view of the resurrection as the primary component of the gospel and the lynchpin of the Christian faith. The second text was Acts 2:14-4, in which the apostle Peter's presentation to the Jewish audience appeals to Jesus's resurrection as God's confirmation of Jesus's works. And the third text was Acts 17:16-34, in which the apostle Paul's apologetics presentation to the Greek audience appeals to Jesus's resurrection as evidence that the Judeo-Christian God, rather than pagan gods, is the one true God and judge of the world. Chapter 3 gives the historical issues related to the resurrection; the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central concern for patristic apologists. We examined five famous patristic apologists—Justin Martyr, Clement of Rome, Irenaeus of Lyons, Ignatius of Antioch, and Tertullian. The examinations of the five patristic apologists' works demonstrate their appeals to the bodily resurrection of Jesus and the future resurrection of his believers. Hence, chapters 2 and 3 successfully and effectively address the biblical, theological, and historical knowledge of the resurrection.

Eight sessions of apologetics curriculum have been implemented in GMS regarding the truth of the resurrection. Chapter 4's pre- and post-survey show a positive difference in comparing the two surveys, so the apologetics curriculum positively affected the participants' knowledge of the resurrection. Hence, I have achieved the goal of increasing the participants' knowledge of the resurrection through the apologetics project. The apologetics project has successfully covered biblical exposition, theological arguments, and historical evidence of Jesus's resurrection. It also prepares the participants of GMC to deal with the Muslim teachers, imams, and Muslim friends. As Peter says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, with humility and fear" (1 Pet 3:15).

Evaluation of the Project Goals

Three project goals needed to be met in order to achieve the project's purpose: The first goal was to assess the participants' knowledge of the resurrection. The second was to develop an eight-session curriculum on the truth of the resurrection. The third goal was to increase the participants' knowledge of the resurrection.

Goal 1: Assessment of the Knowledge of the Resurrection

The AS sought to measure the status of GMC's general knowledge, biblical knowledge, historical knowledge of the resurrection and its confidence in dealing with Muslims. I achieved this goal, which has given me a broad understanding of GMC church leaders and members regarding their varied knowledge of the resurrection and their ability to deal with Muslims. The assessment showed that GMC is strong in the general knowledge and biblical knowledge of the resurrection but weak in historical knowledge of the resurrection. Additionally, GMC understands the importance of sharing the gospel with others and is also doing evangelism ministry. However, they are weak in sharing the gospel with Muslims. This is not merely because they are scared of violating Islamic law and being captured but is mainly due to their lack of knowledge on dealing with Muslims. Therefore, there is a strong need for an apologetics curriculum.

This is the first apologetic survey they have ever taken. Many of them were very excited due to a few reasons. First, they had yet to be taught about the historical knowledge of the resurrection; this was a weak area that they wanted to learn more about. Second, they were excited about being challenged on something they had never dared to touch before, particularly learning how to evangelize their Muslim friends. GMC is like many other churches of SCAC; they were scared and reluctant to deal with the Muslims. They only remain at the stage of closed-door prayers for Muslims. Still, no one encourages them to go forward with sharing the gospel with Muslims, and no training curriculum regarding evangelizing Muslims has ever been implemented among them. The

twenty-three participants were the first group of Christians of SCAC involved in the apologetics training; they were excited and delighted to learn the truth of the resurrection and the skills to deal with the Muslims.

Goal 2: Curriculum Development and Evaluation

The curriculum was designed regarding general knowledge, biblical knowledge, and historical knowledge of the truth of the resurrection. The biblical knowledge of the resurrection was drawn from chapter 2, which focuses on two vital texts of the apostle Paul's presentations (Acts 17:16-34 and 1 Cor 15:1-58) and one vital text of the apostle Peter's presentation (Acts 2: 14-41). Remarkably, 1 Corinthians 15 has given me the whole teaching of the truth of the resurrection, including Jesus's resurrection and the future resurrection of his believers. The historical knowledge was drawn from chapter 3; the studies of the works of the five patristic apologists (Justin Martyr, Clement of Rome, Irenaeus of Lyons, Ignatius of Antioch, and Tertullian) contribute to the historical knowledge of the resurrection. Besides, Ibrahim Ag Mohamed's work, *God's Love for Muslims: Communicating Bible Grace and New Life*¹ has contributed session seven of the curriculum on the Islamic view of Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection and how to deal with Muslims.

The eight-session curriculum was reviewed by my supervisor and the five members of the expert panel. Dr. Plummer advised me to focus on one to two important points in each lesson, and I have taken his advice. The experts have advised me to set some questions for discussion at the end of each class. At the same time, most experts gave me positive feedback, such as the curriculum is biblically, theologically, and historically sound. They also agreed that the curriculum would increase the participants'

¹ Ibrahim Ag Mohamed, *God's Love for Muslims: Communicating Bible Grace and New Life* (London: Metropolitan Tabernacle, 2015).

confidence and prepare them to deal with their Muslim friends, both in answering Muslims' questions and evangelizing to Muslims. Since the curriculum sufficiently covers all the truth of the resurrection and is biblically, theologically, and historically sound, I have achieved the second goal (my score is 95 percent).

As most participants preferred Chinese to English, I translated the eight-session curriculum into Chinese, which took me more than one week to solve. Indeed, they could understand and interact well in Chinese.

Goal 3: The Increase of the Knowledge of the Resurrection

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the resurrection of GMC's participants through the eight-session curriculum. The class turnout was encouraging; only one or two participants were absent in one to two lessons, and most were excited throughout the course; it was fruitful learning and good feedback. Chapter 4 noted that the t-test for the dependent samples showed a significant difference between the pre- and post-surveys. From table 9, we can see there is an effective growth of the participants in general knowledge (0.1 point of increment), biblical knowledge (0.2 point of increment), historical knowledge (0.83 point of increment), and confidence in dealing with the Muslims (0.93 point of increment). The t-test demonstrated a positive difference in comparing the pre- and post-surveys; therefore, the apologetics curriculum made a positive difference in the knowledge and conviction of the participants. The goal of increasing the knowledge of the resurrection of the participants has been successfully achieved.

Strengths of the Project

There are some strengths of the project; let us look at them. First, the curriculum has strengthened the participants' confidence to share the gospel with their Muslim friends. Some participants provided feedback that the curriculum has supported

them in sharing the gospel with their Muslim friends. Indeed, the eight-session curriculum has strengthened their faith and granted them the confidence and enthusiasm to share the gospel, especially with their Muslim friends.

A second strength is that the participants gained confidence in answering the Muslim teachers' and missionaries' questions about Jesus's resurrection. For instance, they are confident in sharing the seven biblical narratives of eyewitnesses of the post-resurrected Jesus, which is also the internal evidence of Jesus's resurrection. Besides, they also know how to share the historical works of the patristic apologists, which is the external evidence of Jesus's resurrection. The participants have gained much knowledge from the Scripture and the historical works of the five patristic apologists. Frankly, they had little knowledge of patristic apologists before the curriculum.

A third strength is that the three exhortations of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 and the teaching of the Great Commission have strengthened participants to stand firm in the truth of the resurrection, giving themselves entirely to the evangelism work of Christ, as the works of the Great Commission of Christ will never be in vain.

A fourth strength is that Chinese Christians and Iban Indigenous Christians could come together to attend the eight-session curriculum. The majority of the church members of GMC's Malay language congregation are Iban people (about 80 percent), and Chinese are the minority (about 20 percent). However, most of the church leaders are Chinese. The project has shown the unity of the church; Chinese Christians and Iban Christians are learning together to be prepared to deal with and evangelize the Malay Muslims. Some Iban people know how to speak and read Chinese as they have attended Chinese Kindergarten and primary school. This curriculum was taught in Chinese because all participants knew Chinese well; the pastor also requested it.

A fifth strength is that the curriculum was the first apologetics curriculum ever implanted in GMC that dealt with Muslims. In Malaysia, Christians are restricted from sharing their faith with Muslims, and all Muslims are restricted from converting to other

religions, especially Christianity. However, we should not stop our work because of the restriction and threat, because Muslims also need Jesus's salvation, and the Great Commission also calls us to make Muslims disciples of Christ. Therefore, we should do something for our Muslim friends with the skills we have learned from the curriculum. It is delightful that the church leaders and members of GMC wish the apologetics curriculum could be retaught in GMC (for more people) and other churches of SCAC.

Weaknesses of the Project

There are some weaknesses in the project; let us look at them. First of all, the class participants need young Christians. The age demographics show that we have no participants from 18 to 24 years old and only three from the age range of 25 to 34. That means among the 23 participants, only 3 of them were below 35 years old. Therefore, more young Christians should be invited to join the curriculum.

Secondly, I should have added another session on the general knowledge of Islamic studies so that my class would know more about the Islamic faith. When they know more about it, it will assist them in dealing with their Muslim friends, Muslim teachers, and even Muslim imams.

Thirdly, due to the time constraints, our discussions were done in a whole group, which is not the best way because many have yet to get the opportunity to share their thoughts. I should have given them more time for discussion and split them into several small classrooms with only five to six persons in each class.

What I Would Do Differently

When I do the project again, I will do it differently. First, I will get more young participants to join the project. To achieve that, I will do a special promotion in the Youth Fellowship (ages 19 to 28). Besides, I will personally invite the fellowship committee members to attend the class. I can even set another class for them if they want another more convenient time. I want to train the younger generation to become witnesses of the

risen Christ.

Secondly, I will add another session on general knowledge of Islamic studies to let my class learn more about the Muslim faith. The Islamic studies will be about the five pillars of Islam; the difference between the Christian trinitarian God and the Muslim mono-personal Allah; and the knowledge of holy war (Jihad), pilgrimage to Mecca (Haji), fasting month (Ramadan), poor tax (zakat), five times of daily prayers (salat), and the life of the Prophet Mohammad. When the participants know more about the Islamic faith, they will have even greater confidence in dealing with Muslim teachers and friends, even the Imams.

Thirdly, I will split my class into several groups, which can actually be done via zoom conference. I will ensure each group has at most five people so everyone can share their thoughts. Apart from the discussion, it would also be a time for them to repeat the lesson's main points. For Asians, who are reluctant to share in the class, a small group will encourage them to share without tension.

Theological Reflections

The scriptural exposition of the doctorate helped me grow in biblical exegesis, which has also directly upgraded my hermeneutical preaching in Lexington Chinese Christian Church. Good hermeneutics will cultivate excellent homiletics; chapter 2 helped me improve my hermeneutics. I realized that God's Word is "more to be desired . . . than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the extract of the honeycomb" (Ps 19:10).

I have grown in understanding the truth of the resurrection in biblical studies and historical research. Before the research studies, I thought I had enough knowledge of the resurrection. Still, after the project, I realized that my understanding of the resurrection had significantly improved, especially from the works of the five patristic apologists: Justin Martyr, Clement of Rome, Irenaeus of Lyons, Ignatius of Antioch, and

Tertullian. I must confess that I had not studied their works before the project; indeed, this apologetics project has strengthened my faith in the resurrection of Jesus.

In doing Islamic studies on how to deal with Muslims and lead them to Christ, I have grown in my knowledge of the Islam faith, especially the fifteen precautions and methodologies we could use when we engage with Muslims in evangelism. I am also one of the students of the apologetics curriculum. Indeed, after the curriculum, I also gained the confidence to approach and share the gospel with my Muslim friends. Even though I have been in the States for five years, I still have a connection with one Muslim friend in Malaysia. Sometimes, I send Christian messages and songs to him; by God's grace, he never rejects a single Christian message but always receives it with thanks. I want to take a step forward by sharing the gospel with him in the near future. Besides, I will get the opportunity to approach some Muslims in the city of Lexington.

Personal Reflections

The project was challenging because it was the first apologetics project that engaged with Muslims: how to defend the Christian faith under the power of Islamization and how to share the gospel with Muslim friends. As far as I know, no church in SCAC has ever implemented this kind of project because everyone knows sharing the gospel with Muslims is prohibited. No pastors, church leaders, or members ever think of evangelizing Muslims. Some might have had the thought, but no further actions were taken. Indeed, this was a sensitive and brain-breaking project, but in God's mercy, everything went on smoothly. The outcome is very encouraging, and I would like to do the project again and again.

The project has made me grow in spirituality, especially my passion for evangelism. One of the online Zoom sessions was held when I was at the Midwest Chinese Churches Association Summer Retreat. I represented the Evangelism Resources

(ER)² of Wilmore, Kentucky, joining the retreat. I was called to share the Portable Bible School (PBS) ministry of ER among eight hundred delegates from forty Chinese churches in the Midwest region. I have a strong feeling of urgency in evangelism to the Muslims. Indeed, I have planned to introduce PBS to Malaysia; at the moment, the translation of PBS's two hundred courses into the Malay language is progressing. The apologetics project and PBS ministry of ER have come together in a summer retreat of Chinese churches. They have strongly impacted me to evangelize the world, especially Muslims.

The studies of the Great Commission and the truth of the resurrection have encouraged me to focus on evangelism for the rest of my life, especially in Muslim evangelism. I will focus on training both Chinese Christians and Iban Christians to do evangelism among their Muslim friends. We need to step forward from just closed-door prayers for Muslim evangelism, and it is time for us to move forward to approach and evangelize our Muslim friends. We shall begin with our Muslim friends because, as good friends, they will not report us to the authorities even when they do not want to listen to the gospel. They will politely tell us they are not interested if they do not want to proceed. I must confess that there are thousands of hidden Malay Christians in Sarawak who never identify themselves. They have no church; they usually gather in small groups on the plantation at midnight, as they cannot worship openly. This is very encouraging; most of them became Christian when they were studying abroad in the States or other Western countries.

Finally, I would say without the help of the Holy Spirit, I would not have been able to complete the project successfully. Indeed, it was not an easy journey; God has led me through many struggles and challenges. For instance, the attack of the devastating

² The ER ministry aims to make disciples for Jesus Christ in many countries such as Africa, India, China, Myanmar, and others.

COVID-19 pandemic, the sudden termination of financial support from my home church in Malaysia under new leadership, and the passing away of my beloved mother in Malaysia (June 8, 2021). Despite all the difficulties, the Holy Spirit has comforted and strengthened me to move on. God's Word also gave me the courage to stand firm and do what he called me to do. As God told Joshua, he also told me, "Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid, neither be dismayed for Yahweh your God is with you wherever you go" (Josh 1:9). As the pioneer in training churches in apologetics to deal with Muslims, I would say that sometimes I am also worried about being captured by the Malaysian government after returning to my country. However, I will continue to do it as this is the command of the Great Commission of the risen Christ; no Christian can escape from the call of the risen Lord, including myself. I might return to my own country or stay back in the States after my doctorate studies. However, I will fully obey God's leading. And I know wherever I go, his presence will go with me. If I go back to Malaysia, God will protect me and continue to guide me to do the apologetics project in person in many churches. But if God wants me to stay back in the States for a few years, I can still do the apologetics training through online Zoom conferences as I have done. Indeed, it was very effective as well.

Conclusion

The tensions and hatred between Christians and Muslims continue to increase worldwide (especially between the Western world and the Middle East). I pray that the friendship between the Christians and the Muslims in the land of Malaysia continues to grow. Indeed, Christians should take the initiative to build a good friendship with the Muslims among them, which is also the Great Commandment of the risen Christ: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:39). After building up the friendship, we must also obey the Great Commission of the risen Christ by leading them to Christ and making them faithful disciples of Christ. And the risen Christ has promised us that,

“Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20). This apologetics project is just the beginning of my apologetics training journey. I pray that I shall continue to do the apologetics training among the SCAC’s churches and the SIAC’s churches. Indeed, apologetics is an effective tool for evangelism among Muslims, just as the apostles Peter and Paul and patristic apologists have done in the Jewish world and pagan world. May his name be glorified.

APPENDIX 1

THE APOLOGETICS SURVEY

The following instrument is the Apologetics Survey. It consists of questions to be answered. The instrument's purpose was to assess participants' knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

THE APOLOGETICS SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding of the resurrection's truth of the participant. This research is being conducted by Hin Hung Wong for the purposes of collecting data for a doctorate ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project, and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to the appropriate answer.

Part 1

1. Do you consider yourself a Christian?

- A. Yes
- B. No

2. Number of years as Christian?

- A. 1-5 years
- B. 6-10 years
- C. 11-15 years
- D. 16-20 years
- E. 21-25 years
- F. 26 and above

3. What is your age in years?

- A. 18-24
- B. 25-34
- C. 35-34
- D. 45-54
- E. 55-64
- F. 65 and over

4. Which of the following best define your identity? (please underline which conference)

- A. Church Member
- B. Church Leader (EXCO member, fellowship or group leader)
- C. Sunday School Teacher

- _____ C. Theological Student
- _____ D. Lay-preacher
- _____ E. Church Pastor

This survey is confidential, for your privacy you will be anonymous. Please use your birth date as the four-digit PIN and keep this number for further use. Because after the curriculum you will be asked to take the same survey again so that your pre-test and post-test can be compared.

Four-digit PIN: _____

Part 2

Directions: In the following Six-Points Likert-Scale survey, please circle the appropriate answer:

- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- DS = Disagree Somewhat
- AS = Agree Somewhat
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. I believe in Jesus’s resurrection as much as I do in his crucifixion. | SD D DS AS A SA |
| 2. I recognize that every Sunday worships is a celebration of Jesus’s resurrection. | SD D DS AS A SA |
| 3. I have a passion for sharing the truth of Jesus’s resurrection with others. | SD D DS AS A SA |
| 4. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is the central message of the gospel. _ | SD D DS AS A SA |
| 5. I know what the consequences for Christian are if Jesus has not been raised from death. | SD D DS AS A SA |
| 6. I have the confidence to share the eyewitnesses of the post-resurrected Christ in the Bible. | SD D DS AS A SA |
| 7. According to the Scripture: Christ died for us, and buried and raised on the third day. | SD D DS AS A SA |
| 8. The resurrection of Jesus gives assurance for | |

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| the future resurrection of his believers. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. I have the confidence to share the difference between the earthly body and resurrected body. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. I have the confidence to share the difference between the First Adam and the Second Adam. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. I recognize that because of Jesus's resurrection, all my labors in Him are not in vain. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. The proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus took place at the very beginning of the church's history. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. The resurrection of Jesus was central to Apostle Peter's apologetics presentation to the Jews Audiences in the Pentecost. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 14. The risen Lord Jesus Christ is David's promised heir, the everlasting king. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 15. The resurrection of Jesus was central to Apostle Paul's apologetics presentation to the Gentile Greek Audiences at Athens. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 16. Patristic Apologist Justin Martyr defends that Jesus saves humanity by His redemptive death and bodily resurrection. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 17. Patristic Apologist Clement of Rome defends that the atonement of Jesus's crucifixion and his bodily resurrection. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 18. Patristic Apologist Irenaeus of Lyons spoke against the dualism idea of the Gnosticism, he firmly believed in bodily resurrection. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 19. Patristic Apologist Ignatius of Antioch defends bodily resurrection of Jesus, and he emphasizes the unity and completion of Jesus's incarnation, death, and resurrection. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 20. Patristic Apologist Tertullian defends that there could be no resurrection unless the body rose. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 21. My faith will be strengthened through | | | | | | |

studying the truth of Jesus's resurrection.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. I have the confidence to answer Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection questions raised by a Muslim.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. I have the confidence to answer Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection questions raised by an Imam (Muslim teachers/ Muslim missionaries).	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. I believe that Jesus's Great Commission also commands us to share his gospel with Muslims.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25. I have the confidence to share the gospel of Christ with my Muslim friends.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 2

APOLOGETICS CURRICULUM EVALUATION

The five members of the Expert Panel will do the Apologetics Curriculum Evaluation.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Apologetics Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Accuracy					
The materials are faithful to the Bible's teaching.					
The materials are theologically sound.					
Scope					
The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogy methodology.					
Practicality					
The curriculum gives details on answering apologetics questions regarding the truth of Jesus's resurrection.					
Overall, the lessons are clear and could be re-taught again.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 3

THE CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS CURRICULUM

Session One: The Center of the Christian Faith is Jesus's Resurrection

Introduction:

Every religion's founder has their birth date and deceased date, but only Jesus Christ has the date of resurrection. It shows that Jesus Christ is not merely the founder of Christianity; instead, he is the savior of humanity. The resurrection of Jesus Christ has proved that he is God the Son; he is the promised Messiah; he is the savior, the way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6). Hence, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the center of the Christian faith.

Some Objections Against the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

First, Hallucinations. The opponents say that the empty tomb and resurrected Christ is not real; it was the Hallucination of the disciples. However, Dale Allison (New Testament scholar) defends that four things usually do not occur in a hallucination. (Allison 2015, 204) First, Hallucinations are rarely seen by multiple individuals and groups over an extended time. However, Jesus was seen by hundreds of people for forty days, "After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:3). Second, Hallucinations are rarely seen by a group of people of more than eight persons. However, Paul wrote in his first epistle to Corinthians, "...After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time" (1 Cor 15: 5-6). Third, Hallucinations have never led to the claim a dead person has been resurrected. Number Four, Hallucinations do not involve the person's enemy, for instance,

Saul, Jesus's enemy. And Saul has become Jesus's apostle after his encounter with the risen Jesus on his way to Damascus (Acts 9: 4-6). The encounter truly changed Saul's life; he became the last apostle of Christ. Besides, he was also one of the martyrs of Christ who was beheaded for his strong faith in Christ's resurrection. Again, Hallucinations could never become a global movement like Christianity, the world's largest religion with millions of followers.

Second, Jesus didn't die on the cross but only lost consciousness. However, this objection is unacceptable due to a few reasons. First, Jesus was nailed on the cross for almost six hours, besides he had been tortured overnight and he was so weak before he was hanged on the cross. Second, in order to ensure Jesus already died on the cross, Pontius Pilate asked a Roman guard to thrust a spear into his side. The mixture of blood and water then flowed out in front of all eyewitnesses, indicating that Jesus was dead. Third, after Jesus's death was verified, his body was taken down from the cross and tightly wrapped in linen, then put in the tomb for about three days. Even if Jesus were still alive, he could have died because of his injuries and loss of blood and water. Fourth, during the lifetime of the eyewitnesses, no one disputed Jesus's death; even secular historians such as Lucian, Josephus, and Tacitus also cited Jesus's death as a historical event. Finally, Jesus was buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, a famous person. As John A.T. Robinson (Cambridge University) says, "[the burial of Jesus in the tomb is] one of the earliest and best-attested facts about Jesus." (Robinson 1973, 131)

Third, Jesus's body was stolen by his disciples. This is also unacceptable due to the following reasons: First, the tomb belonged to a well-known member of the Sanhedrin Council, Joseph of Arimathea, and sixteen soldiers guarded it for days and nights. It would have been impossible for any disciple to have slipped by the guards unnoticed and then stolen the body of Jesus. Second, if Jesus's body were anywhere to be found, his enemies would have quickly exposed the resurrection as a fraud. Third, many disciples were martyred for the risen Lord; for instance, Peter was crucified upside down

on the cross, the sword killed James, Andrew was crucified, Mark was dragged to pieces, and Thomas and Bartholomew were skinned alive. Would they have sacrificed so much for a lie if they had taken the body?

What If Christ has not Resurrected From the Dead? (1 Cor 15:12-19)

1. The falsification of apostolic teaching and Christian faith (vv. 14-17)
 - a) If Christ has not risen, “our preaching is in vain . . . your faith also is in vain.”
Moreover, “We are found to be false witnesses of God, . . . the dead are not raised . . . [and] you are still in your sins” (vv. 14-17).
 - b) Christ’s death does not save us from the penalty of sin, as Fisher asks, “How can a dead Christ save others from death, . . . and how can he secure for others a life beyond the grave which he himself does not possess?” (Fisher 1975, 241)
 - c) The whole Christian faith collapses if Christ has not risen, and our faith and service for Christ would be aimless and fail.
2. The destruction of all Christian hope (vv. 18,19).
 - a) “Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (v. 18). ‘Perish’ means ‘eternal death.’ The dead believers will be eternally dead.
 - b) If Christ has not been raised, “We are of all men most pitiable” (v. 19). Bruce explains, “Not that the gospel brings no benefits for the present life, but Christian hope rests in a risen and living Christ, and if he is neither risen nor living, then hopes were dupes indeed.” (Bruce 1990, 145)
 - c) Robertson also says, “the resurrection of Christ is not an isolated fact or doctrine which can be accepted or rejected independently of other truths, it is the very center of the Gospel.” (Robertson and Plummer 1950, 348)

Christ became the First Fruit of Resurrection (1 Cor 15:20-23)

1. Jesus is the first one to be raised, followed by his believers who have fallen asleep.
2. The first Adam and his descendants were lost because of Adam’s disobedience, but the second Adam (Christ) and his believers will be raised because of Christ’s obedience.

3. Harrison explains, “Christ’s having been raised and being the first-fruits of the believing dead, guarantees the sequence of events at the second coming of Christ.”

(Harrison 1976, 281)

Books:

Bruce, F. F. *1 and 2 Corinthians*. New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1990.

Allison, C. Dale. *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (New York: T & T Clark, 2015), 204.

Fisher, Fred. *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*. Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1975.

Mare, W. Harold. “I Corinthians” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol.10. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelin. London: Pickering & Inglis Ltd, 1976. Robertson, Archibald and Alfred Plummer. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1950.

Robinson, A. T. John. *The Human Face of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 131.

Session Two: The Eyewitnesses of the Post-Resurrected Christ

Introduction

The resurrection of Christ proves that Christian God is the only God who was powerful to raise Christ from the dead. But, the founders of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and many other religions remain dead. After Christ was resurrected from the dead, he lived with his disciples and followers for another forty days. (Acts 1:3) There are many authentic and plausible eyewitnesses of post-resurrected Christ, at least seven individuals and groups.

First, Mary Magdalene and several Female Disciples

- 1) The event is recorded in the four gospels (Matt 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:14-18).
- 2) “Now when he had risen early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went and told those who

had been with him, as they mourned and wept.” (Mark 16:9-10)

- 3) Mary Magdalene was not only the first to see the risen Jesus but she was also the first person in history to proclaim, ‘I have seen the Lord!’ (John 20:18)

Second, Simon Peter

- 1) The incident is recorded in Luke 24:34, I Corinthians 15, and John 21.
- 2) In John 21, the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples, including Peter.
 - a) Jesus even ate fish and bread with them (John 21:12-13).
 - b) Jesus asked Peter three times, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?” (John 21:15-17) in response to Peter’s three denials of Jesus. Peter’s answer is, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you,” and Jesus’s request to Peter is, “feed my lambs.”
 - c) For John, Peter is one of the most essential eyewitnesses of risen Lord; he could not complete his Gospel without the testimonies of Peter.

Third, other Apostles of Jesus such as James, John, Thomas, Nathanael and two Others

- 1) This incident happened at Tiberias’s sea, “After these things, [the risen] Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself this way. Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee and two others of his disciples were together” (John 21:1-2).
- 2) It was the third reveal of Jesus; the Bible says, “This is now the third time that Jesus was revealed to his disciples, after he had risen from the dead” (John 21:13).
- 3) They were had time catching 153 fish together, taking bread and fish together, and of course, Jesus also gave them his teachings about the kingdom of God as usual.

Fourth, the Whole Group of Eleven Disciples of Jesus Christ

- 1) When Jesus was about to ascend to heaven, he gave his Great Commission to his disciples. The incidence occurred at Galilee’s mountain: “Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go” (Matt 28:16).
- 2) Another incident occurred at the house where the eleven disciples were hiding,

“...when the doors were locked where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be to you.’ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord” (John 20:19-20)

Fifth, Cleopas and One Unnamed Disciple on the road to Emmaus

- 1) This incident happened on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, about sixty stadia (25 miles) in the distance.
- 2) On their way, Jesus explained the prophecies concerning himself in all the Scriptures, from Moses to all the prophets.
- 3) Jesus broke the bread for them, “...he took the bread and gave thanks. Breaking it, he gave to them. their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished out of their sight” (Luke 24:30-31).

Sixth, a Group of more than Five Hundred People

- 1) Paul wrote, “After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:6).
- 2) It seems that Paul knew most of them personally, and most of them were still alive at the time Paul wrote the *First Corinthians*.
- 3) Paul wrote the statement confidently because he was ready to give the names list of the five hundred eyewitnesses to whom he requested.

Seventh, Saul of Tarsus (Paul)

- 1) The incident occurred on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus.
 - a) Saul was an anti-Christian Jew, he went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, that if he found any who were of the Way, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
 - b) However, “as he traveled, it happened that he got close to Damascus, and suddenly a light from the sky shone around him. He fell on the earth, and heard a

- voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ he said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ The Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.’” (Acts 9:1-5)
- c) The encounter of the risen Lord Jesus Christ changed Paul’s life.

Session Three: The Biblical Truth of the Future Resurrection

Introduction

Christ’s resurrection leads to the guarantee of future resurrection. The future resurrection occurs in the second coming of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Those who believe in Jesus Christ will be raised again from the dead. There is some significant difference between the earthly body and resurrected body.

The Differences between Earthly Body and Resurrected Body (1 Cor 15:42-50)

- 1) Corinthians have a problem in believing in the bodily resurrection because they know that the dead body is “Susceptible to corruption—the condition of fallen creation; Dishonored—the condition of being subject to shame and shameful treatment; and Weak—the condition of being embodied in something that is subject to physical infirmities and deformities.” (Garland 2003, 733)
- 2) The differences between earthly body and resurrected body: the earthly physical body is natural and sown in corruption, dishonor, and weakness; but the resurrected body is raised as a spiritual body of incorruption, glory, and power (vv. 42-44).
- 3) In light of Genesis 2:7, the analogy of the first Adam and the second Adam (Christ) has two parts: First, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul. The last Adam (Jesus) became a life-giving spirit.” (v.45) Second, Adam by virtue of creation is “of earth” (“made of dust”); Christ by virtue of resurrection is “of heaven” (v. 47). Finally, in verse 49, Paul urges the Corinthians to bear the image of the heavenly, the last Adam or the risen Christ.

The Future Resurrection of Christ's Believer (1 Cor 15:51-54)

- 1) Paul reaffirms his three concepts of the future resurrection in 15:51-53: First, we will not all die before the *parousia*, but we will all be changed (v. 51)
- 2) Second, at the *parousia*, the dead believers will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed (v. 52)
- 3) Third, the corruptible and mortal must put on incorruption and immortality (v. 53)
- 4) God's divine transformation power occurs at the *parousia* so that "what is earthly becomes fit for heavenly existence," (Garland 2003, 734) and "Death is swallowed up in victory" (v. 54).

Book:

Garland, David E. *1 Corinthians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003.

Session Four: The Resurrection of Christ is Central in Peter's Apologetic Speech to a Jewish Audience (Acts 2:14-41)

The narrative of the Pentecost can be divided into four parts.

The Introduction to Peter's Apologetics Speech (Acts 2:14-15)

- 1) Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he asked his disciples not to depart from Jerusalem until the promised Holy Spirit was sent to them, "Don't depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which you heard from me" (Acts 1:4). Therefore, the disciples waited in Jerusalem for ten days until the Spirit came at the right time.
- 2) In the Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and filled all disciples and 120 followers of Jesus:
 - a) The Holy Spirit empowered them to bear witness for Christ boldly, Williamson says, "The same group of disciples who only weeks before were running in fear, denying, doubting, was now standing up boldly declaring their faith in the crucified and risen Christ." (Williamson 2013, 20)

- b) The Jewish diasporas were shocked when they heard the disciples speaking in their native languages, which the disciples had never learned before (Acts 2:5-8).
- c) Peter addresses the crowd, “You men of Judea, and all you who dwell at Jerusalem” (Acts 2: 14b). Peter spoke in Aramaic with spiritual power, as Marshall says, “Peter’s sermon is regarded as being the work of a man filled with the Spirit.” (Marshall 1980, 73)
- d) Peter clarified that they were not drunk but filled by the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:13).

The Age of Fulfillment Has Come (Acts 2:16-24)

- 1) Peter cites Joel 2:28-32 (LXX, Joel 3:1-5). He declared that Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled here, and the last days had begun. The Pentecost events are “God’s long-awaited promise in fulfillment of new-covenant hope.” (Bock 2007, 112)
- 2) The Spirit of prophecy has arrived, as promised in Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:16-21).
 - a) Peter points out to his audience that they are now living in the last days, and “God’s final act of salvation has begun to take place.” (Marshall 1980, 73)
 - b) The first part of the quote from Joel, “that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh” (v. 17). “All flesh” (Gk. *pasan sarka*) means “all people”, including sons, daughters, young men, and old men (v. 17). Therefore, there is no distinction in the Pentecostal experience with regard to gender and age; men and women, young and old, were all baptized in the Spirit. (Horton 2001, 68)
 - c) It was prophesied that the Spirit even poured out “on my servants and my handmaidens” (v. 18). Two often ignored groups of people, servants and women are included here. (Bock 2007, 114) According to Horton, the word “servants” actually means “slaves,” about whom he adds, “Twenty percent of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves, and in many areas, slaves composed as high as eighty percent of the population.” (Horton 2001, 68)
 - d) This “era of last days” will be accompanied by visible signs and wonders: the earth beneath will have blood, fire, and billows of smoke (v. 19); and the cosmic

world will have solar and lunar eclipses: “the sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood” (v. 20). (Holladay 2016, 102) The outpouring and prophesying would continue until these signs came at the end of the age. (Horton 2001, 69)

- e) The Spirit will do his work of convicting in the world until the end of the age, and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved. (Horton 2001, 71)

The prophecy has been fulfilled in Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection (Acts 2:22-24)

- 1) Peter’s speech now focuses on Jesus the Nazareth, whom the people of Jerusalem knew well. Peter is explicit that Jesus was “approved by God to you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you” (v. 22), referring to all the miracles and works that God did through Jesus among the people.
- 2) Peter emphasizes that the Jews of Jerusalem are responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. (v. 23) Even if God planned that Jesus was “delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God” (v. 23a), those who were involved in his crucifixion of him still need to ask for God’s forgiveness.
- 3) Jesus was the one “whom God raised up” (v. 24a); his resurrection reversed the decision of the Jewish leaders and Pilate and removed the stigma of the cross.
- 4) By the resurrection, God freed Jesus “from the agony of death” (v. 24b). The word ‘agony’ (Gk. *odinas*) usually means ‘birth pangs,’ Horton said, “Just as labor pains are relieved by the birth of a child, so the resurrection brought an end to the pains of death.” (Horton 2001, 73)
- 5) God raised Jesus “because it was not possible that he should be held by it [death]” (v. 24c). And Jesus’s resurrection is “an anticipated part of the resurrection in the last day, brought forward in such a way that the rest of men might share in it by faith,” (Barrett 2004, 143) Paul also highlights it in 1 Corinthians 15.

Jesus is David's Promised Heir by His Resurrection (Acts 2:25-32)

- 1) David prophesies of a Lord who is Messiah, according to Psalm 16:8-11 (vv. 25-28).
Peter says David was speaking in the inspiration of the Spirit about Jesus the Messiah in Psalm 16:8-11. The psalm is a prayer in which David claims his faith in God and declares his confidence.
- 3) The prophecy has been fulfilled by Jesus's resurrection (vv. 29-32).
 - a) Peter claims the psalm could not possibly apply to the patriarch David (v. 29), because "he not only died and was buried; his tomb was still there in Jerusalem." (Horton 2001, 74), but Jesus has resurrected, and his tomb remains empty.
 - b) Being a prophet, David knew that "God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, he would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne" (v. 30). God's oath for David in 2 Samuel: "I will set up your seed after you, who shall proceed out of your bowels, and I will establish his kingdom" (2 Sam 7:12).
 - c) The risen King Jesus sits on David's throne and makes it eternal (cf. Luke 1:32-33, Gabriel's message to virgin Mary); therefore, he has fulfilled what the Old Testament prophesied about the Messiah.
 - d) What was prophesied in the Old Testament has been fulfilled in Jesus. The Messiah would rise from the dead; since Jesus rose from the dead, he must be the prophesied Messiah. (Marshall 1980, 77)

Jesus has Poured out the Spirit by His Exaltation (Acts 2:33-36)

- 1) Jesus is the exalted Lord who reigns and who pours out God's Spirit (vv. 33-35).
 - a) Jesus was "exalted by the right hand of God" (v. 33a) and placed at God's right hand. Now Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, and he shall remain there throughout this age to intercede for us (cf. Heb 7:25).
 - b) Peter explains the Pentecostal experience from the understanding of Jesus's exaltation. At his Father's right hand, Jesus "received from the Father the

promised Holy Spirit, [and] he has poured out this [Holy Spirit], which you now see and hear” (v. 33b).

- c) The results of this outpouring the crowd now saw and heard. The baptism in the Spirit is the promise of the Father, and Jesus is the one who pours the Spirit out, just as Horton concluded, “God is the Giver, but Jesus is the Baptizer.” (Horton 2001, 76) This Pentecostal baptism experience becomes an evidence to the crowd that Jesus is alive and still at work.
 - d) Peter’s third Old Testament quotation is taken from Psalm 110:1. This is a royal song composed by David, probably for his enthronement as king in Jerusalem. The “Lord” who speaks is Yahweh; the “Lord” who is addressed is not David, but the Davidic Messiah because David recognizes the superiority of this person as his own Lord. (Schnabel 2012, Chapter 4, Explanation). Therefore, the invitation, “Sit by my right hand” (v. 34b), is not made to David but to this superior King Jesus. Peter declares that Jesus, “as a result of his resurrection and ascension, is sitting at God’s right hand of his throne, as the Davidic Messiah.” (Schnabel 2012, Chapter 4, Explanation)
- 2) Jesus, who was crucified, is the Lord and Messiah of the prophecy (v. 36).
- 1) Peter wanted the crowd to know that this Jesus, whom the Jerusalemites crucified, is “both Lord and Christ [the Messiah]” (v. 36). In the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, Jesus is the Lord on whom all must call for salvation.
 - 2) Psalm 16:8-11 envisions a resurrected Messiah, and Psalm 110:1, an exalted Lord. In sum, each of the three quoted Old Testament texts point to a single person, “a resurrected Messiah, a Holy One, who as ‘Lord’ has been exalted to God’s right hand.” (Holladay 2016, 105) He is none other than the Lord Jesus.

The Reaction to the Speech by Three Thousand People (Acts 2:37-41)

- 1) When the crowd heard Peter’s presentation, they were “cut to the heart” (v. 37), which indicates how painful and regretful the people were.

- 2) The crowds immediately ask Peter and other apostles, “Brother, what shall we do?” (v. 37b). Peter says to them, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ” (v. 38). The twofold result of such repentance is “forgiveness of sin and receipt of the Holy Spirit.” (Chance 2007, 58)
- 3) The “promise” (v. 39) refers to the hope of receiving the Spirit, and it is extended to Jews (“you and your children”) and the Gentiles (“all who are far off”). (Holladay 2016, 106)
- 4) Peter urges the crowd to save themselves from this crooked generation (v. 40), meaning they should turn away from “the perversity and corruptness of those around them who were rejecting the truth about Jesus.” (Horton 2001, 81)
- 5) Consequently, many “received” Peter’s message and then testified to their faith by being baptized, and “there were added that day about three thousand souls” (v. 41).
- 6) Hence, every time the gospel is preached, the Spirit works in the audience’s heart, calling for repentance and accepting Jesus Christ the risen Lord.

Books:

- Barrett, C. K. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*. The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, vol. 34. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Acts*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Chance, J Bradley. *Acts*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Inc., 2007.
- Holladay, Carl R. *Acts: A Commentary*. The New Testament Library. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016.
- Horton, Stanley M. *Acts*. A Logion Press Commentary. Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2001.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *The Book of Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1980.
- Schnabel, Eckhard J. *Acts*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 5. Edited by Clinton E. Arnold. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Session Five: The Resurrection of Christ is Central in Paul's Apologetic Speech to a Gentile Audience (Acts 17: 16-34)

Introduction

The newly born Christianity needs to be planted among the pagan world of the Greeks and Romans. Paul's apologetic speech to the Gentile audiences is an authentic example of sharing the gospel with non-believers. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is central in Paul's apologetic speech to a Gentile audience. An examination of Acts 17:16-34 will support the thesis by demonstrating Paul's appeal to the resurrection of Jesus Christ as evidence that the Judeo-Christian God—rather than pagan gods—is the one true God and judge of the world. The narrative of Paul in Athens can be divided into five sections.

The Proclamation of the Gospel in the Jewish Synagogue and the Greek Marketplace (Acts 17:16-17)

- 1) Paul was sightseeing among the cult statues in the city center, and “his spirit was provoked within him” (v. 16). ‘Provoke’ (Gk. *parozyneto*) can also denote outrage, anger, or infuriation; the LXX used the word to denote “God’s extreme anger and wrath due to people’s rebellion or false worship.” (Chance 2007, 305) Paul responded this way because “he saw the city full of idols” (v. 16b).
- 2) In Agora, Paul would have seen many Athenian religious statues and altars, such as the statue of Hermes Agoraies, the temple of Ares, the temples of Mother Goddess, Apollo Patios, and the Hall of the Twelve gods. (Chance 2007, 305)
- 3) Paul debated in the Jewish synagogue and the Agora (v. 17).
 - a) In Athens, Paul visited the Jewish synagogue and the Greek agora (the marketplace), where he engaged with three groups of people: Jews, God-fearers,

- and Greeks. “So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons” (v. 17a). Paul presented to these two groups of people that Jesus is the Messiah, or Savior, who was crucified and raised from the dead according to God’s plan revealed in the Scripture. (Schnabel, Chapter 31, Explanation)
- b) The second place Paul visited is the agora marketplace, the center of Athenian life and activity, where he debated “every day with those who met him” (v. 17b). Paul was ready to get anyone willing to debate, especially the Stoic philosophers who were good in Socratic dialectical method, which grew out of marketplace argument. (Barrett, 226)

The Conversation with Athenian Philosophers (Acts 17:18)

- 1) The encounter with Epicurean and Stoic Philosophers (v. 18a). “Some of the Epicureans and Stoic philosophers also were conversing with him” (v. 18a). Two leading groups of philosophical schools, the Epicureans and Stoic philosophers, were conversing with Paul. The Epicureans didn’t hold much belief in any god, but “they believed that the gods were remote from the world and didn’t particularly care about what was going on in it.” (Williamson 2013, 57). The Stoics were pantheists who believed that the divine spirit was present in all of creation. (Parsons 2008, 243)
- 2) The irritated reaction of some intellectuals (v. 18b).

When Paul mentioned the resurrection of Jesus, they thought that Paul was introducing new deities (v. 18c). This is because Athens was famous in promoting new gods in the Greek world. In Greek, the name “Jesus” is grammatically masculine and his consort, “Anastasia” (“Resurrection”) is grammatically feminine. (Parsons 2008, 243) They obviously misinterpreted Paul’s message as about two deities, Jesus and his consort, Anastasis (resurrection). (Williams 1990, 302)

The Invitation to Appear before the Areopagus Council (Acts 17:19-21)

- 1) Paul’s invitation to the Areopagus Council (v. 19a).
- a) The Areopagus Council was the most honorable institution in Athens. At one time,

- it was limited to cases of a capital crime; at others, it had to do with “a wide range of legal, political, educational, and religious matters.” (Williams 1990, 304)
- b) The Athenians assumed Paul was introducing “new gods” (Jesus and Resurrection) for the purpose of securing them a place in the Athenian Pantheon, so they “took hold of him, and brought him to the Areopagus.” (v. 19a)
 - c) The Council of Areopagus was “the governmental body responsible for adding any new deities to the pantheon of gods.” (Parsons 2008, 244)
- 2) Query concerning the foreign deities Paul is introducing to Athens (vv. 19b-21).
- a) The Council wanted to know Paul’s “new teaching,” which confused them; this is a common request of the Council.
 - b) The Athenians and the foreigners in Athens were always wanted to get the latest teaching of philosophical or religious ideas. “[They] spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing” (v. 21).

Paul’s Speech before the Council of the Areopagus (Acts 17: 22-31)

- 1) Perhaps no text in Acts has received more scholarly attention than the ten verses of Paul’s Areopagus speech.
- 2) Paul’s speech is biblical and thoroughly rooted in Old Testament thought. The central theme of Paul’s speech is God as Creator and the proper worship of the Creator God. Paul’s speech can be divided into five couplets that follow a chiasmic structure (an A-B-C-B-A pattern). (Polhill 1992, 345)
- a) Introduction: evidence of the ignorance of pagan worship (v. 22c-23).
 - i. To attract his audience, Paul begins by complimenting them: “You men of Athens, I perceive that you are very religious in all things” (v. 22). His evidence is from his tour of the city.
 - ii. Paul continued and said, “For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription: ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD’” (v. 23a). This gave Paul a good opportunity to

present his belief of monotheism to the polytheistic and pantheistic Athenians.

- iii. Paul criticizes, “what therefore you worship in ignorance, this I announce to you” (v. 23b). To worship an “unknown god” is to admit one’s ignorance: “If he is unknown to you, you are then in total ignorance of his true nature.” (Polhill 1992, 345). Paul uses “what” to indicate the objects the Athenians worshiped, stressing that the Athenians had been worshipping objects and not a personal God—a “what,” not a “whom.” (Parsons 2008, 246)
- b) The object of true worship is the one Creator God (vv. 24-25).
 - i. The object of true worship is the one Creator God, who is defined in a twofold way: (1) He is creator of all, and (2) the Creator God is not contained in a temple. Paul says, “The God who made the world and all things in it, . . . doesn’t dwell in temples made with hands” (v. 24).
 - ii. Paul also emphasizes that God is a sustainer and is not “served by men’s hands, as though he needed anything” (v. 25a).
- c) Proper relationship between humanity and God (vv. 26-28).
 - i. If God is the creator of heaven and earth, then he is the creator of human being as well. So, Paul begins with God’s creation of humanity: “He made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the surface of the earth” (v. 26a). Paul alludes to Adam, the ancestor of all nations of men. The Stoics similarly held ideas of humanity’s common kinship. (Chance 2007, 310)
 - ii. Paul assures that God is “not far from each one of us” (v. 27c), by which he implies that God is within our reach and is willing to be known by us.
- d) The relationship of persons to God (v. 28). God is not far from us, meaning he takes care of our lives. Paul claims, “For in him we live, and move, and have our

- being” (v. 28a), implying our very existence depends totally on God.
- e) The objects of false worship are idols of gold, silver, or stone (v. 29)
 - i. The false worship of idols: “Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold, or silver, or stone, engraved by art and design of man” (v. 29). Paul starts to condemn the idolatry problems.
 - ii. Paul was bases on Jewish traditional monotheistic thought to fight against the Greek pagan ideas of polytheism and pantheism. Paul affirms there is no image made by men’s skill (whether made from gold, silver, or stone) that could possibly be the image of the true God. Instead, the idols and those who make them distort the image of God. (Parsons 2008, 248)
 - f) Conclusion: the time of ignorance is now over (vv. 30-31).
 - i. Paul ends his speech by proclaiming that the time of ignorance is now over and calling for an eschatological repentance. (v. 30).
 - ii. It is clear that Paul does not want the Athenians to add any new gods to the Athenian Pantheon; he strongly wants them to repent before the Creator God, the only true God in the universe.
 - iii. The urgency of Paul’s calling for repentance is underlined by the fact that “he [the Creator God] has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained” (v. 31a).
 - iv. This ordained man is the risen Lord Jesus, through whom God “has given assurance to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead” (v. 31b).
 - v. Paul claims that the historical fact of Jesus’s resurrection has proved that Jesus is the divinely appointed judge of the world.

Mixed Responses to Paul’s Speech (Acts 17:32-34)

- 1) The responses to Paul’s speech were mixed: “Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked” (v. 32a). These were probably the

Epicureans, as they do not believe that any god would perform miracles.

- 2) Many Greeks also believed in “an immoral soul that existed in a shadowy Hades after death,” believing the body was a “prison and [having] little regard for its being resurrected.” (Horton 2001, 302)
- 3) Some desired to hear Paul speak again, and others “joined with him, and believed, among whom also was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them” (v. 34).
- 4) Tradition holds that Dionysius became the first bishop of Athens. (Williams 1990, 309) Marshall agrees and says it is “a fair inference since the first converts often became the leaders of the church.” (Marshall 1980, 291)
- 5) The thrust of Paul’s speech is a theology that sees God in his most basic roles: (1) He is the creator and sustainer of human life, and (2) He ordained Jesus and raised him from dead as the judge of the world. Therefore, the Greek Gentiles need to repent from worshiping false gods and turn to worship the true God, the creator.

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Session Six: Patristic Apologist and the Resurrection of Christ

Introduction

In session six, we will examine five famous patristic apologists' works as an external evidence of Christ's resurrection. The five patristic apologists are Justin Martyr, Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, and Tertullian. The examination will prove their appeal to the bodily resurrection of Christ.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the Central Message of Apologist Justin Martyr

An examination of Justin's works will support the thesis by demonstrating his appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection.

1) The Background of Justin Martyr (AD c. 100-c. 165).

- a) Justin was born in Flavia Neapolis. Justin was a great philosopher who "undergoes instruction from a Stoic, a Peripatetic, a Pythagorean, and finally a Platonist teacher." (Falls 2003, 15). However, Justin's life was changed after he met an old Christian. The old Christian shared the gospel with Justin, and he was inspired by the truth of the gospel and kindled a flame in his soul.
- b) After Justin became a Christian, he started to defend his Christian faith and spread the gospel. Justin was martyred in the reign of Marcus Aurelius between AD 162 and 167. (Barnard 1997, 3)
- c) Justin wrote openly to Roman emperors and diaspora Jews at length. The three-great works of Justin are *The First Apology*, *The Second Apology* (these two books were written between AD c. 150 and c. 155), and *the Dialogue with Trypho* (written sometime later than AD c. 155). (Shotwell 1965, 1)

2) Justin Martyr Defends the Christian Faith

- a) Justin was the pioneer apologist who defended his Christian faith against the false accusations from the pagans. Simultaneously, he also spread the newly formed Christianity, especially emphasizing the deity and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- b) Justin argues Christians are not atheists, “We are called atheists for not worshipping the so-called [pagan] gods. However, we are worship the true God, father of all virtues, [and] His Son who taught us these things.” (Marcovich 1994, 12) Justin explains that the way that Christians worship God is different from the sacrifices to pagan gods.; he says, “He has no need of blood and libations and incense, ... [We worship Him] through the word of prayer and thanksgiving for all things that we receive... [and] with thanksgiving to Him celebrating our solemnities in hymns and speech.” (Barnard 1997, 30)
- c) The Christian Eucharist is not cannibalism. Justin wrote, “The Apostles ... have handed down what Jesus ordered them to do: that he [Jesus] took bread and, after giving thanks, said, ‘Do this in remembrance of me, this is my body.’ In like manner, he also took the chalice, gave thanks, and said: ‘This is my blood, and to them only did he give it’” (*The First Apology* 66.3). (Parvis and Foster 2007, 77)

3) Justin Martyr Proclaims the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

- a) The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is one of the central teachings of Justin. He mentions Jesus’s crucifixion in his *First Apology*: “[Jesus Christ] was crucified under Pontius Pilate, the procurator of Judea at the time of Tiberius Caesar” (*The First Apology* 13.3). (Minns and Parvis 2009, 111)
- b) Justin claims that Christ’s sacrifice is for the redemption of sinners, he says, “Not because He needed such sacrifices [crucifixion] but because of the sins of your people, especially their sins of idolatry” (*Dialogue* 22.1). (Falls 2003, 35)

4) Justin Martyr Proclaims the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

- a) Justin points out that Christ had risen from the dead after he had been crucified by

- the wicked Jews, he says, “He had risen from the dead and had ascended into heaven.” (*Dialogue* 17.1). (Falls 2003, 29)
- b) Justin writes, “[Jesus Christ] being born of a virgin, and growing to manhood, and healing every disease and every illness . . . and being crucified, and dying and rising again, and going to the heaven” (*The First Apology* 31.7). (Minns and Parvis 2009, 167)
- c) Justin appealed to the bodily resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week (Sunday). He writes, “And it is on Sunday that we all make assembly in common, since it is the first day, on which God changed darkness and matter and made the world, and Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead on the same day. For they crucified him on the day before Saturday, and on the day after Saturday, which is Sunday, having appeared to his apostles” (*The First Apology* 67.8). (Minns and Parvis 2009, 263)
- d) Justin also points out that the resurrected Jesus Christ will conquer his enemies and reign forever. He says, “God the Father of all was going to lead Christ to heaven after he raised him from the dead and keep him there until he had struck the demons who were his enemies” (*The First Apology* 45.1).

The Resurrection of Christ is the Central Message of Apologist Clement of Rome

An examination of Clement’s works will support the thesis by demonstrating his appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection of the believers of Jesus Christ.

1) The Background of Clement of Rome (AD c.30-c.100)

- a) Clement of Rome (AD c. 30-c. 100) was a bishop of Rome, traditionally believed the third in succession from the Apostles, as Eusebius and Irenaeus claimed.
- b) According to Tertullian, Clement was ordained by St. Peter as the bishop of the Jewish Church of Rome (from AD 69 to 83) (Chevallier 1846, 25),

- c) The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians (known as *1 Clement*). Although Clement did not put his name on this letter, (Chevallier 1846, 25) Eusebius confirms that Clement was the author of this letter to the Corinthians.

2) Clement Proclaims the Crucifixion of Christ

- a) Clement emphasized the atonement of Christ's crucifixion, as he says, "Let us fix our eyes on the blood of Christ and understand how precious it is unto his Father because being shed for our salvation it wins for the whole world the grace of repentance" (*1 Clement* 7). (Jackson 1879, 30)
- b) Clement also emphasized the High Priest position of Christ, he says, "This is the way, dearly beloved, wherein we found our salvation, even Jesus Christ the High Priest of our offerings, the Guardian and Helper of our weakness" (*1 Clement* 36). (Jackson 1879, 44)

3) Clement Proclaims the Resurrection of Christ

- a) Clement says, "Let us understand, dearly beloved, how the Master [God the Father] continually showed unto us the resurrection that shall be hereafter; whereof he made the Lord Jesus Christ the first-fruits when he raised him from the dead" (*1 Clement* 24). (Jackson 1879, 38)
- b) Clement gives some examples of resurrection and restoration. First, he shows the natural restoration of daytime and night. He says, "The resurrection which happen at its proper season. Day and night show unto us the resurrection. The night fall asleep, and the day arise; the day depart and night cometh on" (*1 Clement* 24). (Jackson 1879, 38)
- c) Second, the biological cycle of fruits. He explains, "Let us mark the fruits, how and in what manner the sowing taketh place. The sower goeth forth and casteth into the earth each of the seeds; and these, falling into the earth dry and bare, decay [dead]: then out of their decay the mightiness of the Master's providence raiseth them up [resurrection], and from being one they increase manifold and

- bear fruit” (*1 Clement* 24). (Jackson 1879, 38)
- d) Third, a great sign of a kind of bird called phoenix, which can be found in Arabia. Clement discloses that the phoenix could live for five hundred years before it died. (*1 Clement* 25) (Jackson 1879, 39)

The Resurrection of Christ is the Central Message of Apologist Irenaeus of Lyons

An examination of Irenaeus’s works will support the thesis by demonstrating his appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection of the believers of Jesus Christ.

1) The Background of Irenaeus of Lyons (AD c. 130-c. 202)

- a) Irenaeus of Lyons is one of the greatest theologians since the apostles’ time.
- b) One of Irenaeus’s significant and influential works is *Against Heresies: A Refutation and Subversion of What is Falsely Called Knowledge*. It is “the first major defense and presentation of the Christian faith.” (Payton 2011, ix)
- c) Irenaeus became bishop of Lyons around the late 170s or early 180s. He was also one of the greatest Christian writers.
- d) Besides the five volumes of *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus has written many other works. Behr has a chronological list of the works of Irenaeus: “*Against Heresies* 1-11; *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*; *Against Heresies* III; *Letter to Florinus*, on the Sole Sovereignty; *Letter to Blastus*, on Schism; *Against Heresies* IV; *Letter to Victor*, on the Ogdoad; *Against Heresies* V; *Letter to Vitor*.” (Behr 2013, 69)
- e) The first two books of *Against Heresies* deal with Gnosticism’s problems and false teaching. Gnosticism is a general movement focused on the dualistic distinction of flesh and spirit. (Payton 2011, 6)
- i) Gnosticism divided humankind into two distinct categories of flesh and spirit.

Gnostics view flesh (the material realm) as meaningless and hopeless; it will never arise to loftier realms.

- ii) Gnosticism views spirit (the immaterial realm) with great hope and glory. Although the spirit is temporary in this material world, it never belongs to this material world. One day, “the spirits would ultimately manage to totally escape matter and be absorbed into ultimate spirit.” (Payton 2011, 7)

2) Irenaeus Proclaims the Crucifixion of Christ

- a) For Irenaeus, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was God’s love toward humankind, as he says, “He bound the strong one and loosed the weak ones and gave salvation to His handiwork by destroying sin. For the Lord is most kind and merciful and loves humankind” (*Against Heresies* III 18.6). (Irenaeus 2012, 91)
- b) Ignatius added, “The Son, Word of God that He (Jesus) is, accomplished both, by coming down from the Father and becoming incarnate, and descending even to death, and bringing the economy of our salvation to completion” (*Against Heresies* III 18.2). (Irenaeus 2012, 88)
- c) Besides, Irenaeus emphasizes the suffering of Christ, he says, “Paul did not know another Christ besides Him [Jesus] alone who suffered and was buried and rose again who was also born, whom he also called man” (*Against Heresies* III 18.3).

3) Irenaeus Proclaims the Resurrection of Christ

- a) Irenaeus strongly believed in the bodily resurrection, as Mackenzie says, “To deny the resurrection in the flesh is effectively to deny the reality of the flesh which the Word assumed, Irenaeus argues.” (Mackenzie 2002, 216)
- b) Irenaeus wisely linked Jesus’s incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection together, saying, “So, if He was not born, neither did He die; and if He did not die, neither was He raised from the dead; and if He was not raised from the dead, He has not conquered death, nor is its reign abolished” (*Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 39). (Irenaeus 1952, 72)

- c) Irenaeus even further linked the incarnation body to the second coming Jesus's body. He asserts that "[Jesus Christ] will come in the same flesh, in which He suffered, revealing the glory of the Father" (*Against Heresies* III 16.8). (Lawson 1948, 280-81)
- d) Irenaeus says, "For if the flesh were not in a position to be saved, the Word of God would in no wise have become flesh" (*Against Heresies* V 14.1, 31.1). (Olson 2007, 92)
- e) Irenaeus gives the examples of the bodily resurrection of the widow's son (Luke 7:12) and Lazarus (John 9:30), as both were bodily resurrected by Jesus.

The Resurrection of Christ is the Central Message of Apologist Ignatius of Antioch

An examination of Ignatius's works will support the thesis by demonstrating his appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection his believers.

1) The Background of Ignatius of Antioch (died AD c.110)

- a) Ignatius of Antioch (died in AD 110) succeeded the apostle Peter as the second bishop of Antioch. Ignatius tells us nothing about his birth and life before his departure from Antioch of Syria to Rome for religious trial. (Brent 2007, 14)
- b) On his way to Rome, Ignatius was so badly treated that he complained of the ill-treatment by a squadron of Roman soldiers. He complains, "From Syria all the way to Rome I am fighting with wild beasts, on land and sea, by night and day, chained to ten leopards, a squadron of soldiers, who become worse even though some benefaction" (Ignatius, *The Epistle to Rome* 5.1). (Brent 2007m 14)
- c) From Antioch to Rome, Ignatius wrote seven letters. At Smyrna, he wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Epistle to Magnesia, the Epistle to Tralles, and the Epistle to the Romans. At Troas, he wrote the Epistle to Philadelphia and the Epistle to Smyrna, and another one is his personal letter to the bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp. (Howell 2008, 12)

2) Ignatius Proclaims the Crucifixion of Christ

- a) Ignatius points out that Christ's sufferings were for our sakes, to save us from the punishment of our sins, as he says, "For all these sufferings He endured for our sakes [that we might be saved]. And He truly suffered [and died], as also He truly raised Himself up." (*The Epistle to the Smyrnaeans 2*) (Srawley 2018, 92)
- b) In another letter to the Trallians, Ignatius aligned his claim, as he says, "Jesus Christ, who died for our sakes, that believing in His death you might escape death" (*The Epistle to the Trallians 2*). (Srawley 2018, 63)
- c) Ignatius emphasizes how crucial the suffering of Jesus was, as Howell says, "For Ignatius, any denial or mitigation of the passion is in effect to relinquish the message of the gospel." (Howell 2008, 20) Ignatius claimed that only the true suffering and crucifixion of Christ brings forth the true resurrection of Christ, as he says, "All these things he (Jesus Christ) suffered for our sake to save us. And truly he suffered just as he also truly raised himself" (*The Epistle to Smyrnaeans 2:1*). (Srawley 2018, 92)

3) Ignatius Proclaims the Resurrection of Christ

- a) Ignatius confirmed that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was "in the flesh" (*The Epistle to the Smyrnaeans 3:1*), which means bodily resurrection, as Isacson says, "Ignatius both 'knows and believes' that Christ existed 'in the flesh' even after the resurrection." (Isacson 2004, 160)
- b) For Ignatius, there is not separation between Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection. Romanides also agree with him, saying "they are necessarily united and inseparable. The denial of the one lead to the rejection of the other." (Romanides 1956, 5)
- c) Ignatius believes the resurrection of Jesus has brought reconciliation between the Jews and the Gentiles, as he says, "He might raise up an ensign to the ages through His resurrection, for His saints and believers, whether among Jews or

Gentiles, in one body of His Church” (*The Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* 1). (Srawley 2018, 92)

- d) Finally, Ignatius believes that he would be raised again in Christ after he was martyred, as he says, “If I suffer, I will be liberated for Jesus Christ, and I will rise again free in him” (Ignatius, *The Epistle to Romans* 4:3). (Howell 2008, 12)

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the Central Message of Apologist Tertullian

An examination of Tertullian’s works will support the thesis by demonstrating his appeal to the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection of his believers.

1) The Background of Tertullian (AD c. 169-c. 225)

- a) Tertullian (AD 169-225) is well known as the first Western Church theologian (Latin father). He was highly educated (in both Latin school and Greek school); therefore, he had a wide knowledge of Greek and Roman history and thought.
- b) To Tertullian, we “owe the first formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity . . . [and] owe a great part of the Christian Latin vocabulary.” (Souter, 1922, xi.)
- c) Tertullian explained the reason Christians only worship one and true God. He defends, “We cease to worship your gods from the time when we discover that they are not gods” (*Apologetic and Practical Treatises* X). Tertullian points out that the pagan’s gods were made out of men. (*Apologetic and Practical Treatises* X). (Tertullian 1854, 25)

2) Tertullian Proclaims the Crucifixion of Christ

- a) Tertullian describes how Jesus Christ was put-on trial and finally crucified on the cross (*Apologetic and Practical Treatises* XXI). (Tertullian 1854, 51)
- b) For Tertullian, all events of Jesus’s trial, crucifixion, and burial were genuine and authentic; many political figures (both Jews and Romans) were involved.
- c) For Tertullian, Christology is that “The Son [Christ] is of the substance of the Father, is the Agent of the Father in the creation. . . . He became incarnation,

being as such both God and man. He suffered, died, and rose from the dead, and is exalted to the Father's right hand, [and] He is coming again to judge the world."

(Roberts 1924, 166)

- d) Tertullian is the first theologian to use the word "Trinity," even though it never occurs in the Bible. Despite his tendency to complain of multi-deity teaching, Tertullian asserted that the Trinity is the way to understand one God. For Tertullian, "Trinity is never a mere multiplication of heavenly beings; there must be one God. Trinity is the faith of the gospel." (Osborn 1997, 117)
- e) Tertullian believed that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are one unique God; "they are the object of the same faith and adoration" (*Adversus Praxean* 18.5, 19.5, 22.11). (Osborn 1997, 117)

3) Tertullian Proclaims the Resurrection of Christ

- a) Tertullian describes the historical event of Christ's resurrection saying, "Him (Jesus) being taken down from the cross, and buried in a sepulcher, they caused moreover to be surrounded with great diligence by a guard of soldiers. . . . On the third day, the earth was suddenly shaken, and the massive body [big rock] which closed the sepulcher being rolled away . . . nothing was found in the sepulcher save the grave clothes only of the buried" (*Apologetic and Practical Treatises XXI*). (Tertullian 1854, 51)
- b) For Tertullian, all resurrection must be bodily resurrections, as Robert E. Roberts says, "Tertullian's view of the subject of resurrection is that unless the body rose, there could be no resurrection, even for Christ" (*Adversus Marcionem* III 18). (Roberts 1924, 177)
- c) Tertullian also mentions the life of the resurrected Jesus in order to prove that Jesus is genuinely bodily resurrected, saying, "But He continued forty days with certain disciples in Galilee, a region of Judea, teaching them what things they should teach. After that, having ordained them to the office of preaching

- throughout the world, He was taken from them into heaven in a cloud which covered Him” (*Apologetic and Practical Treatises XXI*). (Tertullian 1854, 51)
- d) Tertullian also believed in the future resurrection of all believers of Jesus Christ. Tertullian claimed that if God could create this world (including humans) out of emptiness, it would be even more straightforward for him to raise believers from death. He says, “The power of God . . . has produced this great body of the world out of what did not exist, which is no less than to produce it out of the death of emptiness and void” (*Apology 48.7*). (Tertullian 1950, 119)

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Session Seven: The Islamic View on Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection

Introduction

Most of the materials in this session are taken from the work of Ibrahim Ag Mohamed, *God's Love for Muslims: Communicating Bible Grace and New Life* (London: Metropolitan Tabernacle, 2015.)

Some Important facts on Islamization

- 1) The cities of the seven churches in the book of Revelation (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea) – in modern-day Turkey – are all under Islamic control today.
- 2) Many well-known Bible lands and places are now under Islamic rule.
 - a) Egypt, the mother land of Christian monasticism and a theological center from Origen to Athanasius, is under Islamic domination.
 - b) North Africa, where all Western theology has its roots, where the Latin Fathers Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine ministered, has been incorporated into the Islamic world.
 - c) The Asia Minor, the region of Paul's early missionary journeys and much of the Patristic (early Christian), have become provinces of Islam.
 - d) Of the five great cities of the ancient church – Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem – only Rome has remained free from Muslim domination.
(Mohamed 2015, 13-14)

What is the Islamic View on Christ's Crucifixion and Death?

- 1) The crucifixion of Christ is a central dispute between Christianity and Islam. No one before Muhammad had denied the death of Christ on the cross.
 - a) Islam has consistently opposed the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary for centuries.
 - b) Part by part, Islam denies the fundamentals of Christianity, but especially the cross, the very center of our faith. Islam insists: "But they [the Jews] killed him

- not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them” (Surah 4.157).
- c) Muslims see the cross as a defeat, when actually the death of Christ and His resurrection together was the greatest victory in all the history of this universe. Christ conquered death, sin and the devil on behalf of those who repent and trust in His precious blood.
 - d) Any doctrine of substitutionary atonement is absent from Islamic belief: ‘No bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another’ (Surah 53.38; 17.15; 39.7).
 - e) How do we deal with the Islamic insistence that the Lord Jesus did not die on the cross? We should point to Old Testament passages which predicted the sufferings of the Messiah, and also the passages in the New Testament where the Lord Jesus Himself predicted His own death. Then we point to the historical evidence of the Lord’s death, particularly the testimony of the Gospels (internal evidence) and the works of the patristic apologists in the post apostolic church (external evidence).
 - f) Muslims believe in a ‘swap or replacement theory’.
 - i) Muslims say Jesus was quickly taken up to Heaven by Allah before His crucifixion, and Judas (Simon of Cyrene) died on the cross instead of him.
 - ii) In other words, it was not the Lord Jesus Christ dying for men, but a man (Judas the betrayer) dying on the cross for the Lord Jesus Christ; this is a direct denial of Christ’s atonement.

(Mohamed 2015, 65-66)

The Islamic view on the Resurrection of Christ

- 1) With the denial of Christ’s crucifixion, Islam also denies the resurrection of Christ.
 - a) Even though there is a blunt denial of Christ’s death in the Qur’an, there are other verses which seem to say that the Lord was killed (Surah 4.157-158; 3.55; 5.117). “And peace is on me the day I was born and the day I will die and the day I am raised alive. That is Jesus, the son of Mary – the word of truth.” (Surah 19.34).
 - b) Though Islam denies the crucifixion of the Lord, how could these verses speak

about the resurrection of someone who is not dead?

- 2) Christ 'will destroy the Evil one and live on the earth for forty years and then die' (Abu Dawood, 37.4310, narrated by Abu Huraira). By tradition, Muslims believe that Christ will come again and that He will die and be buried near Muhammad, having married and sired children and having slaughtered all Christians who do not convert to Islam. He will then break every cross and reign over all Muslims (which contradicts Surah 5.69, which says the opposite). Christ, then, is the only prophet in Islam who will play a paramount role in the end times and in the world to come. (Mohamed 2015, 46-50)

Salvation in Islam is by Good Works Outweighing Evil Deeds

- 1) Muhammad had no certainty of salvation – 'By Allah, though I am the apostle of Allah, yet I do not know what Allah will do to me' (Surah 46.9; Hadith 5.58, 266).
- 2) Islam leaves the world unsaved. No Muslim can ever be sure of his salvation, not even Muhammad: 'nor do I know what will be done with me or with you [my followers] ...' (Surah 46.9; cf. 32.17-18). His followers are left hopeless, completely uncertain about their fate until the Day of Judgement.
- 3) Salvation is summed up in one expression: *Insha Allah*, 'If Allah Wills' (Surah 18.23-24). Allah has not committed himself to anyone. Unlike the God of the Bible, Allah is not a covenant-keeping God, but is a being of arbitrary and total power whose inscrutable will cannot be known or predicted.
 - a) There is no personal conversion in Islam. Everyone must strive alone.
 - b) Salvation in Islam is by good works outweighing evil deeds (Surah 2.23; 19.96). It is all about trying rather than about faith alone and grace.
 - c) Heaven must be gained by keeping rules and regulations, through jihad and martyrdom, or dying while going or coming back from the Haji.
- 4) However, the Bible teaches that it is impossible to earn entry into Heaven by good works (Galatians 2.16; Ephesians 2.8-10) or by martyrdom (1 Corinthians 13.3). God

does not merely require the individual 'to be good in order to be saved.

5) We need the justifying grace of God, as displayed in the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

The only way is to come to Him by repenting sin and seeking forgiveness by His grace. Without this, the doors of Heaven will be shut forever. Heaven is too pure and precious to be 'bought' by anything we might offer or do.

(Mohamed 2015, 46-50)

How to share the gospel to Muslims?

It is possible to reach Muslims for Christ. We have unprecedented opportunities to interact with Muslims from around the world, and there is a new paradigm – they come to us. So here are some approaches that Christians can use to engage Muslims in conversation.

1) First, Know you Bible thoroughly.

- a) It is necessary to thoroughly know the Bible's truth, and some theology faith.
- b) Let your Muslim friends know what it means to be a Christian. Establish the distinction between Western society (nominal) and true Christianity.
- c) Prove to them that the Bible, even though it has been translated into hundreds of languages, but the Bible remained authentic, inerrant, trustworthy, and truthful.

2) Do not be threatened

- a) The fear of man is one of the biggest impediments to witnessing to Muslims. Fear of man has paralyzed many Christians, and Satan uses it as a weapon to blind us and prevents us from witnessing Muslims. It must be overcome and replaced by the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of knowledge (Prov 1.7; 2 Cor 5.11)
- b) We must trust in the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit to approach and witness our Muslim friends.

3) Be Kind and Friendly

- a) The gospel is not something; it is someone. Live a life that shows the love of Christ to your Muslim friends. Show your love in sincerity, not out of duty.

- b) Be open-hearted in expressing your Christian faith to your Muslim friends, who may feel rejected by Westerners. Remember, love overcomes hatred, and distrust.
 - c) Be caring and helpful whenever and wherever possible to them daily.
 - d) Our task is to win the person, not the argument. There is no point in winning the argument but losing the soul. Apologetics without the gospel is useless.
 - e) Try to visit your Muslim neighbors and speak with them. Build a relationship with your Muslim colleagues so that you may be a better witness.
 - f) Deeds are more important than words for Muslims; therefore, show your love to them in actions and take each opportunity as it arises.
- 4) Always be ready to give your testimony
- a) Share our testimonies with Muslim friends. Never underestimate the power of testimony.
 - b) Muslims like to hear about God's transforming power in a person's life. Give some examples of how God has answered your prayers. Let them know how to find peace with God (Isaiah 26.3; John 14.27; Romans 5.1; Colossians 1.20).
- 5) Avoid Stereotypes or Generalizations
- a) See Muslims without prejudice. We should not assume that all Muslims are not interested in the gospel or they are reluctant to hear anything about it.
 - b) Prevent stereotypes; we must acknowledge that not every Muslim is an extremist, intolerant, or polygamist. Likewise, we also let the Muslims understand that there is a difference between true Christianity and Western ethos.
- 6) Use the Word of God
- a) Don't give Muslims the impression that you believe the Qur'an is revealed by God.
 - b) Read from the Bible; do not just quote it. We want people to hear the gospel, so only refer to the Qur'an if really necessary.
 - c) Invite Muslims to read the Bible (the four Gospels). Most Muslims who have

found the Lord have been converted, not by aggressive argument, but by reading God's word.

- d) We can invite Muslim friends to buy a Bible if necessary. To the Muslim mind, if the Bible is so precious, it must cost something. It is better when someone asks for it and far better when someone buys it. That way, it will be valued. Of course, we can give them the New Testament and some portions of the Scriptures.
 - e) Do not use a defaced Bible. Muslims like to see how we show respect to the Bible. Therefore, please do not put it on the floor, take it to the bathroom, or casually cast it on the table after using it, or they will be offended and not listen to you. Avoid using a red-letter Bible with Muslims, or they might think only the words in red are from God and the others are not. (Bible should certainly never be taken to the rest room and left there.)
 - f) The Gospel of Matthew is best known among Muslim scholars because it contains the Beatitudes and the whole sermon on the Mount.
- 7) Ask thought-provoking Questions
- a) Questions help avoid ambiguity and lead straight to the point. For example: Do you know where you will spend life after death? Who is God? Why would a holy God let you into Heaven? What do you understand by the assertion that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? Can you ensure that you are saved? Are your sins forgiven? Do you have an answer for why there is suffering in the world? Why can't a person live a holy life? Why is evil in the world? May I show you what the Bible teaches? Have you heard about the real Lord Jesus?
 - b) Ask Muslims what they understand about the creation, the Fall, and sin. Do they know that one sin is enough to send a sinner to hell?
Sin and death relationship?
 - c) As Christians, we should know how to answer those questions. The Bible has all the answers. Show how sin pollutes all human beings and we really need a Savior.

- d) In speaking about Christ, always use one of His titles or offices: Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus, Jesus the Savior or the Redeemer, etc. it shows respect to Him. They do the same to every prophet they name. If you pray in their presence, close your prayer with the same respectful titles or offices: Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus, Jesus the Savior or the Redeemer, etc. It shows respect to Him.
- 8) Explain to Muslims that we do not believe in or worship three gods.
- a) Help them see that to believe in Christ is not apostasy and that Christ is entirely what and who He says He is.
 - b) Actually, Muslims have unconsciously elevated Muhammad to the level of deity.
 - c) Tell them that salvation is only by grace through faith (Ephesians 2.8-10). Explain what ‘grace’ is and what ‘faith’ means.
 - d) Point out the importance of repentance of sin. Christianity is the faith of the broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51.17), not of spiritual complacency or spiritual pride generated by self-righteousness.
 - e) Explain to them what is “Trinity”? God the Father is not God the Son, God the Son is not God the Spirit, God the Spirit is not God the Father; while God the Father is God, God the Son is God, and God the Spirit is God. They are three persons but the same and only God.
- 9) Do not engage in useless debates
- a) We must avoid confrontational discussions. Be ready to listen and do not rush to answer, but politely ensure you are also listened to (James 1.19; cf. Proverbs 15.28; 18.13; 29.20).
 - b) Do not be drawn into an eye for an eye; always be prepared to answer wisely and with humility (1 Peter 3.15). Our aim is not to win the debates; it is by God’s grace that souls are won for him. Keep focused, and do not get distracted or carried away.
 - c) Explain the biblical concept of God’s love, holiness, forgiveness, hope, and

salvation instead of arguing. Avoid the vicious circle of questions, and remember that the Bible and the gospel are self-authenticating.

10) Use one-to-one interaction

- a) Muslims have strong family bonds, live as a community, and belong to one another. Each one is afraid that his friend will report his interest in the gospel to the Imam or his parents and relatives.
- b) So, they will need to defend Islam in the presence of other Muslims. Therefore, individual contact is always the best way because people are often sensitive to pressure or the possibility of losing face.
- c) The ideal is for men to speak with men and women to talk with women because Islamic societies often impose restrictions on contact between unmarried men and women. In addition, Muslim women are not used to making decisions because their fathers or brothers usually decide for them. Some women will not shake hands with men.

11) Take initiative to invite or visit your Muslim friends

- a) No offense if you invite Malay friends for dinner. But please serve Halal food.
- b) Do not use your left hand to hand them food (considered unclean). Pork is prohibited.
- c) If you have a dog, keep it out of Muslim friends because it is considered unclean.
- d) Visit them in their home, and your uninvited visit will signify friendship. You can honor a Muslim friend by visiting him. Time is not so crucial for most Muslims.

12) Limit the discussion to one or two subjects that always lead to a definite conclusion.

When necessary explain any theological terms used, for instance, reborn, salvation, the blood of Christ, Son of God, atonement, the Holy Spirit, the gospel, Trinity, etc.

- a) Don't avoid the terms "Son of God" and 'Trinity'. Explain these terms with simple words because Muslims misunderstand them. Make it clear that we don't believe that Mary is the 'Wife' of God or that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God in a

physical sense.

- b) Speak about Christ's miraculous and sinless life, the many prophecies about Him; the meanings of His names; where He is now, and His return will bring the end of the world.

13) Pray and persevere

- a) We are involved in a spiritual battle; therefore, prayers are strongly needed.
- b) Take the initiative to reach out to Muslim friends in a humble spirit. We must earnestly ask the Holy Spirit to guide us.
- c) Be patient in witnessing the same people more than once. As with most sinners, Muslims need to hear the gospel more than once before it is understood and before the Holy Spirit brings them to a deep conviction of sin and their need for the Savior.
- d) Be prayerfully dependent upon the Lord for every opportunity.
- e) Be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove (Matt 10.16). Use every opportunity to witness wisely and gently in and out of season (2 Tim 4.2). Be humble and speak kindly.

14) Never say anything Negative about the Qur'an, Muhammad, and Muslims

- a) We do not want to embarrass Muslims so should not criticize their religion.
- b) Do not question Muhammad as a prophet, his many wives, or his cruelty and life. And if you attack Mohammed's morality, you will lose your hearer.
- c) Do not enter into political discussions. Avoid controversial secular matters (such as Palestine and Israel) and all trivial matters.
- d) Present the facts, the evidence, and the Bible's promises for all who trust the Lord Jesus.

15) How do I explain Jesus's resurrection to Muslims who don't even believe in his crucifixion?

- a) It is true that Muslims do not believe in Jesus's crucifixion. According to the

Qur'an, Jesus was not been crucified on the cross, "but they [the Jews] killed him not, nor crucified him, ..." (Surah 4.157). Muslims believed that Jesus actually directly ascended to heaven alive; instead, it was Judas the betrayer (or Simon of Cyrene) who was crucified on the cross. Muslims are taught that Allah has interchanged Jesus's face with Judas' face (known as the "swap" or "replacement theory"), so the Roman soldiers captured and crucified the wrong person instead of Jesus. We can see how seriously it deviated from the canonical Gospels.

- b) In dealing with this kind of problem, we could invite Muslims to read the four canonical Gospels with us so that they could have a clear and genuine knowledge of Jesus's life, including his virgin birth, miraculous ministries, divine teachings, redeeming crucifixion, bodily resurrection, and post-resurrection life for forty days. We have some good reasons to invite them to read the four canonical gospels. First, Muslims believe that the Gospels are one of Allah's revelations; according to the Qur'an, Allah has revealed 100 holy books to humans, but the majority of them are already lost. Now, only the Qur'an, the Gospels, the Holy Book of Moses (the Hebrew Talmud), and the Psalm remain. Second, Muslims respect Jesus as one of the prophets of Allah, so they have the obligation to learn more about the life of Jesus as well. A good Muslim shouldn't neglect the opportunity to learn more about the lives of Allah's prophets. In fact, the Qur'an mentions Jesus's name more frequently than Mohammed's. In addition, according to the eschatology of Qur'an, there will be only one prophet returning to the world, and he is none other than Jesus Christ. Third, for a basic logical reason, if Christians want to learn more about prophet Mohammed's life, we must study the Qur'an, not the Bible (in fact, Mohammed's name does not appear in the Bible at all); and vice versa, if Muslims want to learn more about Jesus's life, they must study the Bible, not the Qur'an.
- c) With these three good reasons, we should not be afraid or hesitate to invite our

Muslim friend to study about Jesus's life from the Gospels. Moreover, we could also invite them to study the Old Testament, where many prophets prophesied Jesus's birth, crucifixion, and resurrection. Besides, Jesus also prophesied his own death and resurrection many times in the Gospels. Hence, as we work with the Holy Spirit, we strongly believe that the Holy Spirit will touch our Muslim friends' hearts with his revealed words (the Bible), and they will become Jesus's believers and followers in the days to come.

16) Do not Anticipate Instant Conversions. Conversions are the work of the Holy Spirit; we do not expect instant conversions. Evangelism requires prayer, patience, and perseverance.

(Mohamed 2015, 84-94)

Book:

Mohamed, Ibrahim Ag. *God's Love for Muslims: Communicating Bible Grace and New Life*. London: Metropolitan Tabernacle, 2015.

Session Eight: The Risen Christ and the Great Commission

Introduction

The risen Lord Jesus Christ has conquered all enemies, including death (1 Cor 15: 23-26, 53-57). Therefore, we should stand firm and give ourselves entirely to the work of the Lord (1 Cor 15: 58). The risen Lord sent the church to make disciples for all nations (the Great Commission), including the unreached group, Muslims (Matthew 28: 16-20).

The Risen Lord Jesus has conquered All Enemies, including Death (1 Cor 15:23-26, 53-57)

1) Paul says, "But each in his own turn: Christ, the first-fruits, then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power. For he must

reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is Death." (15:23-26)

- 2) Our Lord Jesus Christ has conquered all enemies through the resurrection. He destroyed all dominion, authority, power, and the last enemy – death.
- 3) Christianity is unique because the founder Jesus is the only religious founder resurrected from the dead. But not Muhammad (Islam), Buddha (Buddhism), Confucius (Confucianism), Lao Zi (Daoism), Brahma (Hinduism), etc. Upon Jesus's resurrection, God as put everything under his feet.
- 4) Because of Jesus's resurrection, every knee except God should bow him, of those in heaven, those on earth, and those under the earth, "and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil 2:11).

Death is swallowed up in the victory of Jesus's resurrection (1 Cor 15:53-57)

- 1) The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an unchallengeable truth; therefore, "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (v.54), and that victory is undoubtedly pointed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the first fruit.
- 2) Upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Paul dares enough to challenge and yells to the death, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (v.55)
- 3) Paul answers his questions, "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law." Indeed, without sin, we won't have to face the punishment of sin. And the punishment of sin is death, as Paul mentioned in his epistle to Romans, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 6:23)
- 4) Paul's challenge to death is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as Paul says, "But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (v. 57)
- 5) Finally, Paul encourages the Corinthians, "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." (v. 58)
- 6) Paul brought forth three important exhortations that every Christian should know.

First, we must stand firm in the truth of resurrection because they are skeptics who ignore the truth of the resurrection, for instance, the Muslims. Muslims are ignoring both the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

7) The second exhortation of Paul is 'we must give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.' Brothers and sisters, the most crucial work that we need to do in urgently is the work of witnessing resurrected Christ.

8) The third exhortation: our work in Christ will never be in vain because our risen Lord will never die again; he knows what we have done for him and gives us rewards.

9) We will also be resurrected, and the risen Lord shall reward us with an immortal crown for all the good works and ministries we have done for him.

The Great Commission of the risen Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 28:16-20)

1) The risen Lord appeared to his disciples, some still doubting his resurrection.

2) After his resurrection, Jesus has all the power given by God in heaven and earth.

3) With the given resurrection power, the risen Lord sends the disciples, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples for all nation."

4) The risen Lord commands all his disciples to baptize the believers in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

5) Besides, the risen Lord also commands his disciples to teach them to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded them.

6) The risen Lord promises to be with them always, even unto the end of the world.

7) This is the Great Commission of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. It is given to all Jesus's believers (including SCAC and SIAC) to be his witnesses in all nations (including Malaysia) and among all peoples (including the Malay Muslims).

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ABSTRACT

TRAINING THE MALAYSIAN CHURCHES OF THE SARAWAK CHINESE ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN APOLOGETICS

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This project seeks to train the Chinese Christians and Iban Christians of the Bahasa Malaysia Ministry congregation of Gloria Methodist Church (GMC) in Apologetics. Chapter 1 presents the background and ministry context of SCAC of this project. Chapter 2 provides biblical and theological foundations of the truth of the resurrection, an exegesis of three passages of the Scriptures (1 Cor 15; Acts 2:14-41; Acts 17:16-34) to show that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to the apostle's apologetic presentations. Chapter 3 provides historical knowledge of the resurrection and presents the five Patristic arguments to show that Jesus Christ's resurrection is the center of the early Church Fathers' apologetic works. Chapter 4 describes the implementation of the project, the development and teaching of the apologetics curriculum, and the analysis of the pre- and post-survey. Chapter 5 evaluates the project's efficacy based on the completion of the specified goals. Ultimately, this project seeks to train the Chinese Christians and Iban Christians of the BMM congregations of GMC for effective defense of the Christian faith and the proclamation of the gospel among Muslims, respectively.

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BD, Trinity Theological College of Singapore, 1996
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