

Sunday, March 31, 2013—The Skeptics Question and the Resurrection

Introduction

- Easter is an interesting holiday. It highlights both the religious mind of man and the skeptic's rebellion against God.
- For many Easter is the only day of the year they go to church. For others the weeks surrounding Easter are filled with discussions about how unreliable the Bible is or how religious faith is outdated in the modern world.
- I Corinthians 15:3-4—is very clear why Jesus Christ died. For our sins. It is also clear that he rose from the dead.
- I Corinthians 15:12-19—Christianity hinges upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead we are among all men most miserable.
- This year I want to look with you at the resurrection of Christ from a slightly different angle.
- Not one recognized religious leader, not Moses, Paul, Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, etc., has ever claimed to be God; that is with the exception of Jesus Christ. Christ is the only religious leader who has ever claimed to be deity and the only individual ever who has convinced a great portion of the world that He is God.
- Secular history affirms that Jesus lived on earth and that He was worshiped as God. He founded a church which has worshiped Him for 1,900 years.
- Mark 14:61-64—Jesus of Nazareth was condemned to death, not upon the statements of His accusers, but upon the admission extorted from Him under oath. Jesus trial was the culmination of three years of challenging the religious authorities in Israel.

Jesus Foretells his Own Death and Resurrection

- John 2:13-17—Jesus casts the money changers out of the temple.
- John 2:18—the Jews demand to see a sign that Jesus had the authority to act in this fashion.
- John 2:19—“destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”
- John 2:20—that's impossible it took forty six years to build the temple.
- John 2:21-22—the Bible tells us that Jesus was speaking about his own death. Consequently, Jesus predicted his own death and resurrection.

- John 10:17-18
- Matthew 16:21-22—not even Jesus closest followers understood that Christ had to suffer, be killed, and raise again on the third day.
- Matthew 16:1:4—after just feeding the four thousand in chapter 15:32-39 the leadership of Israel comes and demands to see an additional sign. Jesus says that only sign that will be given to them is the sign of the prophet Jonah.
- Matthew 12:38-41—after arguing with Jesus in verses 24-30 about what power Jesus was using to cast out devils the leadership of Israel demands an additional sign. Jesus again says that only sign of the prophet Jonah will be given.
- Jonah 1:17—how long was Jonah in the whale’s belly? Three days and three nights.
- Jonah 2:1-2-6—Jonah died and went to hell. After three days and three nights God brought up Jonah’s life “form corruption.”
- Acts 2:31—when Jesus died he also went to hell for three days and three nights only to rise from the dead and not see corruption.

The Skeptics Question

- John 2:18—we see the question and position of the skeptic. I need more proof before I can believe.
 - Matthew 12:41—in short Jesus is saying that a message in itself won the hearts of the pagans in Ninevah but those in Israel who claimed spiritual fervor were fleeing from the implications of what they already know to be true.
 - “Jesus is charging that the very motivation that impelled them to demand a sign revealed not only that they were not genuinely seeking the truth; their resistance to truth, though they were religious, made the hardened pagans look better than they. In other words, it was not the absence of a sign that troubled them. It was the message behind the signs that provoked their discomfort.”
 - Trough these exchanged Jesus proved that it was not evidence they were looking for, but control of their enterprises, even at the cost of truth.
 - Luke 7:30-35—in the passage Jesus powerfully exposes the bent of the human will. When John warned them of the severity of the law, they called him demon-possessed

because they wanted more liberty. When Jesus came and mingled with the outcasts of society, they called him a hedonist because they wanted a tighter reign over the law.

- Famous skeptic David Hume once said, “if we take in our hand any volume of divinity or school of metaphysics, for instance let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames. For it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.
- In short, truth is only that which can be proven scientifically.
- Hume’s statement does not stand the test of mathematics or science. Hume’s grand statement is neither scientific nor mathematical. It is a philosophical statement that cannot be scientifically proven.
- The person who demands a sign and at the same time has already determined that anything that cannot be explained scientifically is meaningless is not only stacking the deck; his is losing at his own game.
- How tragic that so many are living in the darkness of unreason, clinging to their absolute skepticism. The prophecies, person, and work of Christ, His resurrection from the dead, and numerous other affirmations do have points of verification in history. Christianity is not a blind leap of faith into the dark. Rather it is a well placed faith in the light of the world.
- John 2:19—we see the content of Christ answer.
 - What greater proof could He offer than to rise from the dead? Naturalism is compelled to believe that death is the cessation of life, the irreversible ceasing of one’s brain activity.
 - Jesus gave the greatest proof of His authority by accurately predicting His death and the time of His bodily resurrection. Of all people, the temple authorities should have been alert to His promise, but they never dreamed that it would actually happen.
 - Jesus did not predict merely a spiritual resurrection but a physical verifiable resurrection.
- John 2:21—we see the context of Christ answer. He was speaking of the temple of his body, which He called the temple of God. Christ lifted their sights beyond bricks and mortar to the place where Christ seeks to dwell within every human being.
 - Think of all the evil that has resulted from the naturalistic position that all life is reducible to sheer matter.

- New Age religions that attempt to keep the body sacred while denying the Creator’s hand are in the same boat as skeptics who try to protect life while saying it is nothing more than matter.
 - We trivialize the body in our indulgences. We treat it as a means to an ends. But when death comes, we grasp at it and cling to it because it is all we have left.
 - In no other religious world view is this connection made between the body on the temple. In fact, in every other world view the body is distinct from the temple. Rules are laid out for the body before it can enter the temple. A litany of prerequisites surrounds entry into so-called “holy places” of worship.
- I Corinthians 3:16-17
 - II Corinthians 6:16
 - Ephesians 2:22
 - II Corinthians 4:10-12—it is God’s desire to live his life out through your mortal flesh.

The Facts of the Gospel

- All of this was made possible because Jesus laid down his life and took it up again.
- Jesus not only claimed to be God but demonstrated it conclusively by raising from the dead.
- I Corinthians 15:3-4—the facts of the gospel are simple.
 - Jesus Christ died for our sins (II Corinthians 5:21)
 - Jesus Christ was buried as proof that he was dead (Matthew 27:57-66)
 - Jesus Christ rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (I Corinthians 15:5-8)
- Romans 3:24-25
- Ephesians 2:8-9
- Faith in the Biblical sense is substantive, based on the knowledge that the One in whom that faith is placed has proved that He is worthy of that trust. In its essence, faith is a confidence in the person of Jesus Christ and in His power, so that even when His power does not serve my end, my confidence in Him remains because of who He is. Faith for the Christian is the response of trust based on who Jesus Christ claimed to be, and it results in a life that brings both mind and heart in a commitment of life to Him.

- This is not an irrational or unreasonable response based on who Christ claimed to be.
- Jesus Christ laid his temple down and three days later took it back up so that he could establish your body as his holy habitation. The son of God became one of the sons of men so that the sons of men might become the sons of God.