

Sunday, April 8, 2018—I Corinthians 15:5-8 The Post Resurrection Appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ

### **Introduction**

- The last two Sundays we have been looking at the reality of the resurrection as set forth by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15.
  - Verse 1—Paul is recapping in the present (declare) what he preached unto them in the past and which the Corinthians had received. Because of their past reception of Paul’s gospel, the Corinthians possessed a standing in that information in the present.
  - Verse 2—the Corinthians are saved from the hopeless of despair in the present by keeping in mind what Paul had preached unto them.
    - I Corinthians 15:12—some in Corinth had begun to deny the reality of resurrection.
    - I Corinthians 15:19—if there is no resurrection from the dead we are of “all men most miserable.”
  - Verse 3-4—Paul delivered unto them in the past that which he also received. This gospel included Christ’s death upon the cross for our sins as well as his burial and resurrection from the dead. So, the reality of resurrection was a core component of Paul’s gospel.

### **12 Agreed Upon Facts**

- Gary Habermas wrote a book titled *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* in which he investigates what scholars believe about the resurrection.
- Habermas reports that virtually all scholars from across the ideological spectrum—from ultra-liberals to Bible-thumping conservatives—agree that the following points concerning Jesus and Christianity are actual historical facts.
  - Jesus died by Roman crucifixion.
  - He was buried, most likely in a private tomb.
  - Soon afterwards his disciples were discouraged, bereaved, and despondent, having lost hope.
  - Jesus’ tomb was found empty very soon after his interment.
  - The disciples had experiences that they believed were actual appearances of the risen Jesus.

- Due to these experiences, the disciple's lives were transformed. They were even willing to die for their belief.
  - The proclamation of the Resurrection took place very early, from the beginning of church history.
  - The disciple's public testimony and preaching of the Resurrection took place in the city of Jerusalem, where Jesus had been crucified and buried.
  - The gospel message centered on the preaching of the death and resurrection of Jesus.
  - Sunday was the primary day for gathering and worship.
  - James, the brother of Jesus and a skeptic before this time, was converted when he believed he also saw the risen Jesus.
  - A few years later, Saul of Tarsus (Paul) became a believer, due to an experience that he also believed was an appearance of the risen Jesus.
- What people are not so quick to agree upon is what accounts for the empty tomb. Did Jesus really rise from the dead?
  - In I Corinthians 15 Paul emphatically declares that the answer is yes and uses the post resurrection appearances of Jesus to substantiate his claim.

### **I Corinthians 15:5**

- Luke 24:1-12—the women inform the apostles that they have found the tomb empty. Peter runs to the tomb and likewise discovers it empty and doesn't know what to make of it.
- John 20:1-10—according to verse 9, they still don't understand that Jesus must rise from the dead. This means that the resurrection of Christ was not part of the gospel of the kingdom.
  - Matthew 4:17
  - Matthew 4:23
  - Matthew 9:35
  - Matthew 10:5-8
  - Matthew 16:21—Peter believed the gospel back in chapter 4 and has been preaching it since chapter 10. Yet Peter has no idea about the resurrection of Christ.

- Luke 24:13-35—apparently Simon Peter was one the men with whom Christ spoke on the road to Emmaus.
- Luke 24:36-45
- John 20:19-23—Jesus appears to the apostles minus Thomas.
- John 20:24-29—Jesus appears to all of the 11 assembled together.

### **I Corinthians 15:6**

- This is the only record we have of Jesus appearing to many people at one time. Note, however, that Paul explicitly states that the greater part of this company was still alive as of the writing of I Corinthians. Paul is essentially telling the Corinthians that they don't to simply take Paul's word for but that there were still living witnesses who saw the Lord after his resurrection.

### **I Corinthians 15:7**

- Commentators disagree as to whether this is a reference to the James the son of Zebedee the bother of John (Matt. 4:21-22) or James the Lord's half-brother.
  - Galatians 1:19—explicitly calls James an apostle. We know from Acts 15 that at this point, this James who was the Lord's brother was the leader of the church at Jerusalem.
- I believe Paul is referring to James the Lord's bother in verse 7. First, Paul has already mentioned the twelve in verse 5 which would have included James the son of Zebedee. Second, if Paul's main point in this context is to set forth the reality of resurrection a post resurrection appearance to James the Lord's brother and leader of the little flock in Jerusalem would have carried a considerable amount of weight.

### **I Corinthians 15:8**

- Paul was the last person to whom the Lord appeared.
- Acts 9:4-6
- Acts 22:6-10
- Acts 26:12-18
- We will deal next week with the “born out of due time” portion of verse 8.

- Despite the testimony to the reality of Christ's resurrection skeptical theories abound to try and explain the empty tomb.

### **Skeptical Theories About the Resurrection**

Note: *I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*, pages 299 through 324 by Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek was used as a resource in preparing this section of the notes.

#### *Hallucination Theory*

- This theory states that the disciples were all deceived by hallucinations.
- Hallucinations are not experienced by groups but only by individuals.
- Jesus did not appear to just one person—he appeared on a dozen separate occasions, in a variety of settings to different people over a 40-day period.
- Jesus was seen by men and woman, inside and outside, eating and talking.
- Jesus was seen by more than 500 people and they were not all experiencing the same hallucination.

#### *The Witnesses Went to the Wrong Tomb*

- This theory states that the disciples went to the wrong tomb and then assumed that Jesus had risen.
- First, if the disciples had gone to the wrong tomb, the Jewish or Roman authorities would have gone to the right one and paraded Jesus' body around the city. The tomb was known to the Jews because it was their tomb (it belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin). And the tomb was known to the Romans because they placed guards there to secure it.
  - Matthew 27:62-66
- Second, even if the disciples did go to the wrong tomb, the theory does not explain how the risen Jesus appeared twelve different times. In other words, the appearances must be explained, not just the empty tomb. The empty tomb was not enough to convince most of the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead it was the post-resurrection appearances of Christ that persuaded them.

### *Swoon or Apparent Death Theory*

- This theory states that Jesus didn't really die on the cross. In other words, he was still alive when he was placed in the tomb, but he somehow escaped and convinced his disciples that he had risen from the dead.
- Enemies and friends alike believed Jesus to be dead. The Romans, who were professional executioners, whipped and beat Jesus brutally to the point of collapse prior to his crucifixion. They then drove heavy, wrought-iron nails through his wrists and feet, and plunged a spear into this side. If the Romans were good at anything it was killing people and knowing when they were dead.
- Moreover, would Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus have made the mistake of embalming a living Jesus (John 19:40).
- Even if everyone had been wrong, would someone who had been as badly beaten as Jesus still be alive 3 days later?
- For this theory to be true Jesus would have had to unwrapped himself, move the two-ton rock away from the inside of the tomb, and overpower the elite Roman guards (who would have been killed for allowing the breach of security) and then convince everyone that he had risen from the dead. Jesus would have been a battered, bleeding pulp of a man whom the disciples would have pitied not worshiped.

### *The Disciples Stole the Body*

- This theory states that the disciples stole Jesus' body.
- This theory takes the untenable position that the New Testament writers were all liars. For some inexplicable reason, they stole the body in order to get themselves beaten, tortured, and martyred!
- Matthew 28:11-15—this was the original explanation the Jews offered to explain the empty tomb. Did the disciples overpower the elite Roman guards who were dispatched to guard the tomb against this exact eventuality?

### *A Substitute Took Jesus' Place on the Cross*

- This theory states that Jesus was not crucified, but someone like Judas was killed in his place. Many Muslims offer this theory.
- Are we to believe that scores of people who witnessed some aspect of Jesus' death—the disciples, the Roman guards, Pilate, the Jews, Jesus' family and friends—were all mistaken about who was

killed? If Jesus wasn't really killed, then why was the tomb of the man who really was killed found empty?

### **Explanations for the Empty Tomb**

- Option 1—it was a human work.
  - Removed by enemies—No Motive
  - Removed by friends—No Power
- Option 2—it was a divine work.
  - Most Logical Explanation
  - Scriptures Teach that Jesus Miraculously Rose from the Dead