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**Blog post**

            In this blog post I will be looking at the evidence, both scholarly and biblically, for the life, death, and specifically resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Throughout the gospel’s, specifically the book of john, we see Jesus’s divinity claimed from even the first verse: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God… And the Word became flesh and lived among us” (john 1:1, 14). This is the basis of Christianity: That Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the God in the flesh. This is who he is, this is why he was killed, and more specifically, why he rose. There are numerous reasons to believe the resurrection of Christ to be true. The evidence is outstanding. I’m not sure what more evidence one would need than what I will provide. To those who still don’t believe after reading, I say to them as Jesus said in John 4:48: “‘Unless you people see signs and wonders,’” Jesus told them, “‘you will never believe.’”

The argument for whether the bible is ethical, moral, or whether you agree or not is irrelevant to my case. This is simply an analysis of evidence and argument for why the resurrection is the best explanation for the evidence presented with the life and death of Jesus Christ. The historical facts about Jesus Christ of Nazareth that is undisputed among scholars is that: Jesus Christ lived and was crucified under Pontius Pilate in AD 30-33. There is no dispute among this and is the foundation for where the argument for the resurrection is built. We will observe several New Testament, non-biblical, Christian based, non-Christian (atheist) based evidence for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Historians say that if you have evidence within 100 years of events that long ago, it is considered “incredible”. The earliest writings we have of Alexander the Great are 280 years after he lived. In the New Testament, all the letters we have were written within 70 years of Jesus’ death. From a scholarly point of view, this is incredible. Among these, the message that is preached is consistent throughout all: Jesus Christ lived, died, and was resurrected. We are able to build foundation, truth, and conviction on this fact. After these 70 years and throughout the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd centuries, we have countless writings about the books of the New Testament and people of the New Testament concluding that what we have in our bible today, is true and reasonable. Beginning with the life and crucifixion of Christ, the evidence is undisputed. Atheist New Testament Scholar Bart Ehrman says, “one of the most certain facts of history is that jesus was crucified on orders of the roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate”. Atheistic New Testament professor at Gottingen says “Jesus’ death as a consequence of crucifixion is indisputable”. Lastly, John-Dominic Crossan, scholar in the skeptic Jesus Seminar says, “That [Jesus] was crucified is as sure as anything historical can ever be, since both Josephus and Tacitus… agree with the Christian accounts on at least that basic fact”. The life and death by crucifixion of Jesus Christ is not a matter of debate. Critics of the bible hold certainty on this fact. When looking at ancient, non-Christian writers, there are also several key examples beginning with the Roman Historian Tacitus in the year AD 109. He speaks on an event where Nero blamed Christians for a fire in the city in July of AD 64 saying: “But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called "Chrestians" by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate”. We have Lucian, a greek satirist between the year AD 115-200 saying, “The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day… and was crucified on that account… they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage.” Finally, we have Talmud, in Jewish literature between the year AD 200-400, “On the eve of the passover Yeshu [Jesus] was hanged.” These are only a few of the countless sources both scholarly and ancient speaking on the death of Jesus Christ. To those who may possibly say he didn’t die on the cross, well… he did. Crucifixion was the romans ultimate, most severe, excruciating form of killing and we even see to make sure he was dead, “the soldiers pierced his side with a spear and at once blood and water came out” John 19:34 (The blood for redemption and water for life ;), yet without breaking his legs (verse 33), because he was dead (fulfilling psalms 34:20, “He keeps all their bones; not one of them will be broken”, as well as exodus 12:43,46 and numbers 9:12”;).

The next major point of significance in the death of Jesus is based upon his cause for crucifixion. Throughout scripture we see countless times the reason for Jesus’s reason for death: Blasphemy. In the roman times, crucifixion was the most severe form of punishment and a form of capital punishment. In Mark 14:61-65 it says, “Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Messiah, the son of the Blessed One?’ ‘I am,’ said Jesus. ‘And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.’ The high priest tore his clothes. ‘Why do we need any more witnesses?’ he asked. ‘You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?’ They all condemned him worthy of death by crucifixion.” This is the plainest account of why Jesus was crucified. We see several other instances of Jesus claiming to be God, one of which sparked just as much outrage. In John 8:55-59 it says, “though you do not know him. But I know him; if I would say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him and I keep his word. Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad.” Then the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.” So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.” This is without a doubt, the reason for Jesus’s crucifixion. Now that we have established the foundation for the life, and death by crucifixion for blasphemy of Jesus Christ, we look at the evidence for the resurrection.

When it comes to the resurrection of Jesus, majority of scholars and skeptics accept this following evidence as reliable: how soon the resurrection was taught after the crucifixion, the disciples having real experiences claiming they had seen the risen Jesus, their lives being transformed and willing to die for faith in the resurrection message, the life of Paul-the once persecutor, the life of James-the brother and unbeliever. Beginning with the testimony of the resurrection, I want to begin with scholarly evidence outside the New Testament. In reference to Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, we see something, which in a scholarly sense is remarkable. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Paul says, ““For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. “Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.” According to several scholars, what Paul is saying here is a creed. New Testament scholar, Gary Habermas says, a creed is a formal statement of faith and that the language of “received” and “delivered” are technical rabbinic terms, indicating he’s passing along holy tradition. He goes on saying how this passage uses primitive phrases “the Twelve” and “he was raised” that is not typical throughout the rest of Paul’s writing, indicating it is not his original thought and that its “stylized” content indicate that it is a creed. Biblical scholars know that Paul wrote this book around 50-55 AD. Since we know that Jesus rose between 30-33 AD, we immediately know this creed is within 20 years after the death of Christ. What is even more, atheist professor at Gottingen says, “the elements in the tradition are to be dated to the first two years after the crucifixion of Jesus, no more than 3 years.” As well, theologian Hans von Campenhausen writes, “"This account meets all the demands of historical reliability that could possibly be made of such a text.” Finally, professor of New Testament A. M. Hunter states, “The passage therefore preserves uniquely early and verifiable testimony. It meets every reasonable demand of historical reliability." This provides us clear cut evidence that immediately after the crucifixion, Christ’s resurrection was being preached.

Tragically, with these apostles and several others who preached, we see them killed for refusing to renounce the truth. However, this provides us profound and significant evidence. We know, that TEN. Yes, “all but one of Jesus’s eleven faithful followers was martyred” (Atheist New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman). The disciples were fully convinced that they had witnessed the risen Jesus and were willing to die for their belief. After seeing Jesus crucified, we know that the disciples had lost hope. After the crucifixion the disciples had deserted the faith, and the future was hopeless. Yet here we are today with over 2 billion claimed Christians. How? Because Jesus “appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. The he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.” Paul, once a feared persecutor of the Christians, who had seen the risen Jesus (Acts 9:1-9), converted, and eventually beheaded for holding this truth. James, the brother of Jesus who was an unbeliever even with Jesus (John 7:5) was convinced and was martyred for standing firm in truth (Acts 12:1-2). Ten of the apostles were martyred for this truth. They, and hundreds of others, were fully convinced they had seen the risen Jesus. This is agreed upon by nearly all scholars. Biblical scholar Reginald Fuller refers to the disciple’s belief in Jesus’ resurrection as “one of the indisputable facts of history.” New Testament scholar E.P Sanders, “declares that the ‘equally secure facts’ indicate that Jesus’ disciples ‘saw him (in what sense is not certain) after his death… Thereafter his followers saw him.’” As well, New Testament Scholar, Gary Habermas says that the disciples had experiences believing they had seen the risen Jesus. Paul has a clear conscious on the issue saying, “And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave.” They were certain, to the point of rejoicing after persecution, “As they left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name. And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. (Acts 5:41-42). Throughout the New Testament we see this consistent message from several different sources preaching one message: Christ crucified and resurrected. We even see reliability of testimonies through examples like Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, a nonbiblical source in AD 100-140 saying “Mark (from the gospel) became Peter’s (the apostle) interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered.” Irenaeus, in the 2nd century stating the same thing, ““Matthew composed his gospel among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter and Paul proclaimed the gospel in Rome and founded the community. After their departure, Mark, the disciple, and interpreter of Peter, handed on his preaching to us in written form.” As well as Clement, Eusebius, and Tertullian who all state the same thing. The evidence for truth and reliability is overwhelming in this case. Too add more, one can read about Polycarp saying that Paul taught truth in 120 AD. I’m not sure how much more verification one would need. There exists no other explanation for what occurred in these events other than the truth: Jesus was raised from the dead.

The New Testament, being several different sources, is a key, and reliable piece of evidence for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. If one would like even more proof of the evidence for the life of Christ, the prophecies are countless. An entire book could be written on how many fulfilled prophecies there are… Oh wait, there is! I will only list a few but it is reliable and powerful evidence. Isaiah, written in 700 BC, which we can confirm was written before Jesus’s life through the dead sea scrolls which included an Isaiah manuscript dating to being 140 BCE, 100 BCE being conservative. It is stated in chapter 53, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). For context, the Jewish people wanted the Messiah to come in glory, take over the throne, save them, and rule forever. Which is exactly what he has done. However, the idea of a dying messiah was unheard of even to the disciples, like peter, who says, “This must never happen to you,” after Jesus tells him he will be killed and on the third day be raised (Matthew 16:22). It wasn’t until after Jesus’ death and as we see throughout Acts and the rest of the New Testament, that “God had fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets that his messiah would suffer” (Acts 3:18). In 700 BC, Hosea 6:2 says, ‘On the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.” Isaiah 53:7, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter.” Fulfilled throughout the gospels, more specifically Mark 14:60-61 “Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?’ But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.” These are just three prominent prophecies of the 400 fulfilled throughout the Old Testament, often in Isaiah.

Through this overwhelming evidence. It would be unreasonable to conclude anything else other than Jesus Christ being risen from the dead. From early resurrection preaching within two years of Christ’s death, the disciples fully believing they had seen the risen Christ and willing to die for it-- namely Paul who once persecuted the faith and James who was a known unbeliever, as well as hundreds of prophecies throughout scripture, one would be considered foolish to not believe in the evidence at hand. But I guess scripture proves that as well: For the message about the cross is **foolishness** to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the **power of God** (1 Corinthians 1:18).

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