

The Resurrection of Jesus - Addressing Jewish scepticism:

Introduction:

Writing on the resurrection of Yeshua (Jesus) is a task that in some ways brings me full circle to where my life as a follower of Jesus began. I had grown up with a Christian heritage in that my parents sent me to Sunday School and I attended Christian Youth Group (which I enjoyed), through High School. Being part of the Uniting Church in New Zealand though meant I never really had the evangelical 'born again' message constantly, or even occasionally, in my face.

At university, I lived the 'high life' to a large degree and neglected or ignored any 'Christian' tendencies. So it was not until I was around 29-30 that I was really confronted with the question of whether Jesus really had come back to life 3 days after his death and then ascended into heaven. Of course this question in itself might not seem that vital; but the consequences drawn from the affirmative conclusion are absolutely earth-shattering and life changing.

When faced with seriously addressing this question, I at least knew enough to appreciate the impact of being convinced of the resurrection would mean my life would need to be re-evaluated and therefore I came to this question with some considerable trepidation and as the favourable evidence built up in my research and analysis, I found myself becoming increasingly angry!

On reflecting on that time some 25 years ago now, I realise that I was not as clever or thorough in my analysis as I could have been, and certainly didn't have the access to the resources and scholars that I have access to today but I look back and see that I am now even more convinced that I made the correct interpretation and conclusion from the evidence.

So today, some 25 years later, after a journey over a road that has been very rocky and difficult in places; the resurrection and all that it entails, has been bedrock to my life. Hence I have not needed to re-evaluate or really even revisit the question of the evidence for the resurrection.

So what has changed, why am I revisiting this issue now?

Almost 12 months ago, at the 2009 National Conference of Christian Restoration Fellowship I was most privileged to meet and begin dialogue and friendship with a most impressive Jewish man.

This man is a seeker of truth, which is what I like to consider myself. And yet, to date on his journey with God, with the God of his natural born fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob he has not found the evidence for the resurrection that he has seen to be of sufficient merit to win him over.

So in humbly attempting to more completely and compellingly present the evidence for the resurrection, this article begins with some assumptions that we both agree on; that is, with certain pre-suppositions we both hold dear.

Namely:

- The acceptance of the Creator, the One God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;
- The acceptance of the TaNaK, the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) as inspired and holy Scripture that, even today, has maintained its integrity with very little textual corruption evident,

- Thus, the acceptance of the ‘resurrection of the body’ as an act which God has declared to his prophets and which many of his prophets have spoken on and believed in, from Job & Daniel, to many in the Mishnah including during the Second Temple Period¹,
- Also that this ‘resurrection’ even if primarily referring to the ‘end of days’ was a resurrection of the righteous and thus of righteous Jews.

Therefore, if arguing for the resurrection of Jesus, a Jewish Rabbi of the Second Temple period, it should at least be accepted that such an event, while highly improbable was also anticipated to some degree and further, is at least theologically consistent with the basic tenets of the TaNaK and Judaism.

This should also introduce a note of question as to why so many within Judaism over the last 1900+ years have fought so hard against this ‘alleged’ event. Their reasons are not presumably because they see the event as impossible or ludicrous, but perhaps primarily because they don’t like the conclusions (both valid and contrived) that this ‘alleged’ event infers and that eventuated historically from the event or the belief in the event.^{2,3}

The, ‘contrived’ conclusions, (i.e not logically, or in any rationally valid way, derivable from the reality of this event) are most serious and explain to a great degree why there has been such fervent resistance and attempts at refutation from scholars within Judaism.

This event, the resurrection of Jesus, some 2000 years ago, along with some very unfortunate developments, has led to an almost maniacal and unbelievable degree of anti-Semitism in the world and especially within many circles inside Christianity (the religion that purports to follow a Jewish Messiah).

Further, this anti-Semitism lead mainstream Christianity to loose itself from its Hebraic roots and develop a doctrine of a ‘triune’ God (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit), that is as far removed from the One God of the TaNaK, as day is from night.

No true child of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, raised in the beliefs and traditions of his elders could, with full knowledge and obedience to the One God, even for a moment entertain such an idolatrous belief. If acceptance of the reality of the resurrection of Jesus meant that you must as a consequence also believe he is Almighty God, then I can fully appreciate why any of HaShem’s first born children, or for that matter any sane person would reject the resurrection.

The Hellenistic adoption and overthrow of Christianity has also led to a great many other beliefs that contradict the TaNaK such as the immortality of the soul. This article will not attempt to address any of these false conclusions but instead focus on the evidence for the resurrection while acknowledging that accepting the strength of this evidence should in no way be seen as an acceptance of any or all further deductions or doctrines that have supposedly been inspired by this event.

¹ Mishna: ‘We make mention of the mighty deeds of rain in [the benediction of] The Resurrection of the Dead’ (*M. Berakhot* v, 2). ‘The body is as necessary to the soul as a garment to the body, and if it is unseemly to walk about undressed, how much more so is it unbecoming to appear before the Creator naked; hence the soul must arise at resurrection clothed in a new and shining body. It may well be that belief in redemption actually found expression and a permanent formulation, which remained unchanged, while the Temple was still standing. That this was indeed the position can be definitely proved in the case of ‘resurrection’. There can be no doubt that in various passages of the Bible—in almost all its parts—there are to be found figures of speech and similitudes that recognize the possibility of the resurrection of the dead and the power of God— and even of the prophets—to revive the dead. But we are referring to the belief in the *general* resurrection of the dead at the end of days.

The subject is mentioned in the Mishna: ‘And these are they that have no share in the world to come: he who says that there is no resurrection of the dead, and (he who says that) the Torah is not from Heaven, and an Epicurean.’ -- from ‘The Sages’ by Ephraim Urbach

² It could also be asked, or at least acknowledged, that Judaism’s understanding of the destruction of the Second Temple (if condoned by God), is not well articulated (especially given the fervent prayers of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement) and that, when appropriately contextualized and understood, the resurrection and Messiahship of Jesus, is at least a Biblically significant event that presents a clear and consistent paradigm into which the Temple destruction is perhaps more satisfactorily contextualized.

³ I would also argue that the prophecies of Isaiah 49 do not sit at all well with a worldview in which there is no Messiah, but that it is Israel ‘herself’ who is a ‘light to the Gentiles’ (see my [commentary on Isaiah 49](#) for clarification of this).

Even if one comes to accept the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, it should be with just as great a degree of care and thoroughness, that all apparent induced beliefs and doctrines be examined on their merits.

The task here is most challenging and actually made much more so by the great many failures of Christianity to walk as our Messiah walked. While the very poor witness of Christendom may not be well known to the world at large, to the Jewish world which knows its Hebrew Bible, the TaNaK, and knows it in the original Hebrew language, the witness they see is not good. They see a Christian world which has in many ways distorted 'their' scriptures as it has mistranslated them or miss used them in the New Testament and associated writings. They see a witness which has much 'bad fruit' and so quite correctly and perhaps justifiably, reply to Christendom to look in the mirror as they quote Matthew 7:16-20⁴ at us, as well as Luke 13:6-9 and then John 15:2-16.

A most significant portion of John 15 is verse 10: *"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."* From a Biblical and Jewish perspective, Christianity has little idea of what Jesus meant here, or of how to live this truth 24/7.

So how do we see past the tangled mess of good and bad fruit and see where the true roots of the good fruit lie? How do we help the natural born children of Abraham to see that true Biblical Christianity can and does bear 'good fruit', that true followers of Jesus and earnest seekers of truth, really have heeded Moses and Micah's call to walk humbly before God with circumcised hearts⁵?

Clearly, a large part of the answer to this question is centred on how we 'Christians' live and whether we are able to heed the call of the Apostle Paul to 'provoke them to jealousy'⁶ by our lifestyle and devotion to God.

Thus, no article like this one, no matter what facts and evidence and clever words it may contain can ever, in itself, overcome the poor witness that we 'Christians' have painted.

My fervent prayer then, is that my elder brothers, the natural born 'sons' of Abraham, may at least suspend judgement in this case long enough to look beyond the fruit they believe they see, and look more closely at this brother of theirs, this Rabbi Yeshua and try to assess him and his message and his life, purely on its merits.

The evidence:

In evaluating the evidence there are a number of approaches that can be taken. For example, if the 'alleged event' were put on trial we could look at what evidence would be acceptable in a court of law. If, instead we were to seek scientific proof we would need to look at how historical sciences establish 'proof' and how the evidence weighs up under this approach.

As an 'alleged' historical event we can also look at the impact of the event on history and evaluate whether this impact would still be likely if the event were fabricated or innocently mistaken.

Given that this 'alleged' event led to the composition of the New Testament or Messianic Writings, we can also evaluate these writings to determine if they are what would be expected if the event that they derive from was real versus being a contrived event or some form of conspiracy.

⁴ Matt 7: 16-20: *You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.*

⁵ Deut 10:16; Lev 26:41; Micah 6:8

⁶ Rom 11: 11-15 *'I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.'*

After summarising the evidence for the event and the clear and unquestionable conclusions, we should also try to address some of the more prominent and comprehensive arguments put forward by scholars and Rabbis within Judaism, that argue against the historicity of the event.

So what is the evidence?

A Court of Law:

Simon Greenleaf⁷, was a Professor of Law at Harvard University in the early 1800's. Having set out to refute the resurrection of Jesus using the legal approach taken by a Court of Law, he instead found the evidence for the resurrection proven beyond reasonable doubt and consequently became a believer.

Greenleaf's article is available and worth reading at the link below. Greenleaf starts with four 'rules of law';

- *In trials of fact, by oral testimony, the proper inquiry is not whether it is possible that the testimony may be false, but whether there is sufficient probability that it is true.*
- *A proposition of fact is proved, when its truth is established by competent and satisfactory evidence.*
- *In the absence of circumstances which generate suspicion, every witness is to be presumed credible, until the contrary is shown; the burden of impeaching his credibility lying on the objector.*
- *The credit due to the testimony of witnesses depends upon, firstly, their honesty; secondly, their ability; thirdly, their number and the consistency of their testimony; fourthly, the conformity of their testimony with experience; and fifthly, the coincidence of their testimony with collateral circumstances.*

His conclusions are well summarised by these quotes:

"Either the men of Galilee were men of superlative wisdom, and extensive knowledge and experience, and of deeper skill in the arts of deception, than any and all others, before or after them, or they have truly stated the astonishing things which they saw and heard... His business is that of a lawyer examining the testimony of witnesses by the rules of his profession, in order to ascertain whether, if they had thus testified on oath, in a court of justice, they would be entitled to credit and whether their narratives, as we now have them, would be received as ancient documents, coming from the proper custody. If so, then it is believed that every honest and impartial man will act consistently with that result, by receiving their testimony in all the extent of its import."

In more recent times Josh McDowell⁸, is another academic who similarly made a 180 degree turn and conversion as a result of his serious attempts to refute Christianity and the resurrection. Along with his short book 'More Than a Carpenter', (which had a huge and positive impact of me some 25 years ago), Josh McDowell also produced the extensively researched books 'Evidence that Demands a Verdict' and 'More Evidence that Demands a Verdict'. These books also give a lot more of the archaeological evidence for the historical accuracy of both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

Perhaps the best summary article on the 'proof of the resurrection' that I have read in recent years is a speech/paper by Juan Baixeras (presented at a One God Conference in the USA in 2009). Rather than summarise and paraphrase this article and risk losing its synergy and impact I have inserted it below with some minor edits only for improved brevity and in cognizance of my intended audience:

PROVING THE RESURRECTION

A lot of people who are not familiar with the facts think that Christianity is simply a blind leap of faith. This is just not the case. God does ask that we have faith in His promises, but He has left us a good amount of hard core evidence to prove that what He has told us is true. God does not want His family to be a bunch of brainless robots who worship Him because that is what they were told to do from childhood. He wants His family to consist of people who voluntarily and intelligently choose to follow Him. People who see the truth in His words and in His deeds, and because of them come to believe in Him and His promises.

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Testimony_of_the_Evangelist <http://www.bibleteacher.org/sgtestimony.htm>

⁸ <http://www.leaderu.com/everystudent/easter/articles/josh2.html>

Mark 12:29 says: "You shall love the LORD with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."

Use your mind. As the saying goes, "It's a terrible thing to waste."

In the Old Testament God performed many miracles, people could also listen to God's word through the prophets and then watch it come true. Nowadays, people do not see the Red Sea part down the middle, or people being raised from the dead. I do believe God still does miracles, but I think they are more on a personal level and not for the whole world to see. Why is this so? I think it is because in the old days God performed miracles in order for people to believe that He is the ONLY true God, as was the case with the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, or with Daniel and the den of lions, etc. In today's world we do not need miracles in order to believe in God and His promises because He has left us the greatest proof of all, the resurrection of His son, Jesus the Messiah.

Everything hangs on the resurrection. It is the single most important fact in Christianity. If the resurrection of Jesus is true, then we must accept that Jesus is whom he said he was, the Messiah of God, which logically gives validity to the existence of God.

If we accept that Jesus is the Messiah by proof of his resurrection, then this also confirms the validity and accuracy of the Old Testament because Jesus himself states that everything in the Law, in the prophets, and in the Psalms must be fulfilled (Lk 24:44).

"These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled."

The New Testament is also validated because it was written primarily by those whom Jesus chose personally.

Without Jesus' resurrection there is no way to know that the Bible is actually the word of God as opposed to stories of a particular people. It all comes down to the resurrection. If it is true, then Christianity **as it was taught by Jesus** (my emphasis) is true. If it is not true, then Christianity is the most successful hoax in the history of mankind. The big question is, can we prove the resurrection of Jesus Christ almost 2000 years after it happened? The answer is, absolutely yes! You just have to use what God gave you in the first place, your mind.

A successful businessman once said, "Do not accept any deal until you have all the facts, but do not reject any deal until you have all the facts."

Well, here are the facts.

Nobody seriously disputes that a man named Jesus of Nazareth actually existed. The few that do fall into the same category as those that claim that there was no holocaust in WW2. It is really just ridiculous. There is more written about Jesus than any other individual or event in the history of mankind. If Jesus did not exist then how can we say that Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington or anybody else for that matter ever really existed. He is mentioned by Roman Historians Suetonius in AD 49 in Claudius, 25,4, and by Tacitus AD 115-117 in Annals, XV,44, and by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus in the first century AD in Josephus Antiquities, XX,200. Roman historians had absolutely nothing to gain from mentioning him in their records and neither did Josephus who was a Jew.

The dispute is in whether he actually resurrected, thus proving that he was the Messiah, the Son of God.

Atheists will say that he was just a good man. Other religious groups will claim that he was just another prophet. During his ministry, Jesus performed many miracles, from healing the sick and the blind, to raising Lazarus from the dead. But miracles are not sufficient to prove that you are indeed the long awaited Messiah, many Old Testament prophets also performed great miracles such as Moses and Elijah. Performing miracles does not prove that you are the Messiah, but defeating death does. No prophet, religious leader, or any other person in history has ever predicted that he would come back from the dead, and then actually returned from the dead. None except Jesus. Let's take a look at the groups of people involved.

In Jerusalem after Jesus' death, there were three main groups that were interested in his body. They were the Sanhedrin, which were the Jewish political and religious government of Judea, the Romans, and Jesus' disciples.

After his death on the cross, Jesus was placed in a tomb that was closed off by a huge stone. Jewish tombs of that time had an entrance of 4 1/2 to 5 feet high. Modern engineers have taken the type of stone used in that time and calculated the size of the stone needed to roll against a 4 1/2 to 5 foot doorway. Their calculations estimate that a stone of those proportions would have to weigh a minimum of 1 1/2 to 2 tons. These stones were placed in front of the tomb in a slight incline and were held in place by a wedge. When the wedge was removed the stone rolled slightly forward and sealed the tomb (see 'Evidence that Demands a Verdict' by Josh McDowell). In order to enter the tomb after it had been sealed required that the stone be removed,

which required a lot of effort and man power.

The Sanhedrin was aware of Jesus' claim that he would return from the grave after the third day. They definitely did not want to find an empty tomb after three days. They wanted to open the tomb up after three days and produce Jesus' body and end all the talk of Jesus being the Messiah. Since they did not believe (for the most part) that Jesus was the Messiah, their biggest fear was that Jesus' disciples would come during the night and take his body away and then claim that he had indeed resurrected. In order to prevent this, they went to the Roman Governor himself, Pontius Pilate, and asked him to place a guard detachment at the tomb so that nobody could remove Jesus' body. The Governor agreed, and a guard detachment was placed at the tomb and the Governor's seal was then put on the tomb's entrance (Matthew 27:62-66).

The penalty for anyone breaking the Governor's seal was by upside-down crucifixion. This form of death was even more gruesome than the regular crucifixion because death was caused by your internal organs eventually dislodging from their normal places and then moving towards your throat causing you extreme pain, and eventually choking you to death slowly. There would have to be an extremely good and desperate reason for someone to break the Governor's seal and risk upside-down crucifixion.

Before going on, something must be said about the Roman guards. The Romans at this point in history controlled much of the known world. Their armies were considered to be the best in the world because the Roman soldier was considered to be the best in the world. This was due mostly to excellent training and harsh discipline. The Roman guards that were placed at Jesus' tomb were probably the Governor's Custodian Guards, which were the elite of the elite in the Roman army. It would be today's equivalent of the Green Berets or Navy Seals. (Smith, RE., *Service in the Post-Marian Army - Manchester, 1958*). These were the ones that were usually chosen for special assignments such as this, but any Roman unit would have been a most formidable force, especially for men such as the disciples who were not trained in the art of war.

One of the customs in the Roman army as well as in most armies of that day, was that if you were ordered to guard a prisoner and he escaped, the penalty was death. In Acts 12:19 when Peter escapes from jail, Herod questions the guards and then has them executed. This might sound harsh, but it was just the way it was in those days. In the Roman army, the penalty of death for this offense was carried out by stripping the guard of his clothes, and then burning him alive with a fire started with his own garments (Speidel, MP., *Guards of the Roman Armies, Bonn, 1978*). This was a harsh punishment, but it produced incredible vigilance and also discouraged bribery. After all, you cannot spend bribery money if you are dead.

These guards were ordered by none other than the Governor himself, so one can deduce that these guards were highly motivated to perform their duty. They knew their lives depended on it!

Roman procedure required each Roman guard to be able to defend 6 feet of ground. Using this fact, and knowing the size of most Jewish tombs, there were probably about sixteen Roman guards assigned to guard Jesus' tomb. Sixteen very disciplined, and very motivated Roman Custodian Guards. Roman procedure for standing guard at night was the following: with sixteen guards, four guards would stand in front of the tomb's entrance, while the other twelve would sit six to each side in front of the entrance, forming a sort of parenthesis in front of the tomb. These twelve would sleep while the four in front of the tomb would stand watch. Every hour they would rotate the guards that were in front of the entrance so that there would always be four alert guards, with all the others a few feet away in case of trouble (Speidel, MP., *Roman Armies Studies 2 (Stuttgart, 1992)*, MAVORS 8 reviewed in JRS84 (1984).

Out of the three groups that were interested in the body of Jesus, the disciples were definitely not interested in taking his body. They were themselves skeptic. They were waiting to see if what Jesus had predicted would happen. It seems highly illogical that the Apostles would want to take his body and thus deny themselves of that certainty. The Apostle Thomas (now known as doubting Thomas) did not believe that Jesus had resurrected even after the other ten Apostles told him that they had seen the resurrected Jesus.

When they told him, he said in John 20:25: "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

A week later he got his chance.

The Romans wanted to find his body after three days and put all this behind them, they definitely did not enjoy all this talk of a Jewish King and his kingdom. To the Romans, talk of a kingdom and king sounded too much like rebellion.

A resurrection would also compromise their whole belief system of multiple gods, which in time, is exactly what happened.

The main argument against the resurrection is that the disciples took Jesus' body from the tomb. This argument is very weak to say the least. Let us review the facts.

The Bible states in Matthew 28:2-15 that the guards at the tomb felt an earthquake and saw an angel of the Lord roll back the stone. It says his appearance was like lightning and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid, they shook and

became like dead men (maybe paralyzed with fear). It then states that afterwards some of the guards went into the city and reported what had happened to the chief Jewish priests. When the priests had devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money and told them to say that Jesus' disciples came in the night while they were sleeping and stole the body. Also in return, the chief priests would talk to the Governor and keep the guards out of trouble. Remember that this is exactly what the Pharisees were trying to prevent by having guards placed at the tomb.

This argument is logically flawed from every direction. If the disciples had indeed decided to take Jesus' body for whatever irrational reason, how could they have gotten past the Roman guards. They would have had to wait until ALL the guards had fallen asleep, which because of their training and procedure for standing watch at night makes this option almost impossible. Let us suppose for arguments sake that all the guards somehow did fall asleep, I would then have to believe that the disciples quietly stepped past the guards, and moved a two ton stone without the guards waking up. This possibility is almost laughable!

A final contradiction to this argument is that if we use the excuse that all the guards did fall asleep, then how do the guards know that it was the disciples that took the body. It would stand to reason that if one of the guards had awakened and seen the disciples, he would have sounded the alarm and awakened the rest of the soldiers. You can't have it both ways.

It would have been a much better argument if the guards had been found dead. Then one could argue that the disciples had killed the guards and taken the body. But that is not what happened, all the guards were perfectly alive.

And what about the Governor's seal? Do you honestly think that a group of ordinary men would risk death at the hands of the guards, or worse, by upside-down crucifixion for breaking the Governor's seal for the sole purpose of stealing his body? For what purpose? To create a hoax?

So basically, if you do not believe that Jesus resurrected, you are left with the choice that sixteen Roman Custodian Guards placed personally by the Governor under a penalty of death for failure to carry out their duty, all fell asleep, and did not wake up as the Apostles moved a two ton stone, or did wake up to see them, but did nothing to stop them. I personally find these options extremely hard to believe, if not just plain insulting to one's intelligence.

But there is still one more piece of evidence that is even more convincing than what has already been presented. This is the Apostles themselves. Not in what they said or wrote, but in what they did.

The Bible tells us that in a period of forty days, Jesus appeared to his apostles together and individually nine times. The lives of the Apostles has been documented by Roman and Christian historians. Nobody disputes their evangelistic journeys. You can still go to Rome and see where Paul was imprisoned and later beheaded.

The proof of the resurrection is in the lives of the Apostles. It is in how they lived and in how they were treated. I use to ask myself, "Why didn't God help the Apostles during their journeys?" They went through such hardships. All of them were beaten, tortured, imprisoned, and all except John were brutally killed. Let us take a quick review of some of their lives starting first with Paul.

Paul is probably the most powerful witness to the resurrection of Christ. One must carefully analyze the steps that he took after that fateful day on the road to Damascus. You MUST ask yourself WHY? Why what, you might say?

WHY would someone who was openly against the followers of Jesus Christ to the point of standing by and condoning the stoning of another human being (Stephen), someone who as a Pharisee held an esteemed position among his people, WHY would this person suddenly want to be one of those people that he was persecuting, knowing that because of his choice to follow Jesus he would be considered an outcast by his family, friends and the community. That his choice would be socially and economically devastating.

Imagine if that happened to you today. You must ask yourself, 'What would it take for me to be willing to give up my family, all my friends and my livelihood?'

Let me put it in an easier way to understand. If you were at a criminal trial in which a defendant was accused of murder and the defense attorney came up to you and said that the defendant was not guilty, would that convince you? Of course not, defense attorneys are supposed to say that, that is their job. But what if the defense attorney came up to you and said that his client was really guilty, would that convince you? It would me, the reason is because the defense attorney has nothing at all to gain by saying this. On the contrary, he has everything to lose by saying this. This is why it is so believable. And this is the same reason Paul's testimony is so powerful. Paul had everything to lose and nothing to gain (except salvation) by suddenly switching sides. Do you have any alternate suggestions as to why Paul did what he did? I have none. Let us now take a look at some events in Paul's and the other Apostle's lives.

(1Corinthians 4:11-13) Paul - To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clad and roughly treated, we wander

about homeless and we toil, working with our hands. When ridiculed, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we respond gently. We have become like the world's rubbish, the scum of all, to this very moment.

Paul was whipped at least five times, beaten countless times (2 Corinthians 11:23), imprisoned at least twice for years (2 Corinthians 6:4), left for dead after being stoned (Acts 14:19), and finally beheaded during the persecution under Emperor Nero.

Peter was also martyred during Nero's persecution. He was crucified upside down at his request, because they were going to crucify him the same way as Jesus, and he did not feel he was worthy to die in the same manner as his Lord.

Andrew went to the "land of the man eaters," in what was formally known as the Soviet Union. Christians claim him as the first to bring the gospel to their land. He also preached in modern-day Turkey, and in Greece, where he is said to have been crucified.

Thomas was most active in the area east of Syria. Tradition has him preaching as far east as India where the ancient Marthoma Christians revere him as their founder. They claim that he died there when he was pierced through with the spears of four soldiers.

Philip had a powerful ministry in Carthage in North Africa and then in Asia Minor, where he converted the wife of a Roman proconsul. In retaliation the proconsul had Philip arrested and cruelly put to death.

Matthew the tax collector and writer of a gospel, ministered in Persia and Ethiopia. Reports say that he was stabbed to death in Ethiopia.

Bartholomew had widespread missionary travels attributed to him by tradition: to India with Thomas, back to Armenia, and also to Ethiopia and Southern Arabia. There are various accounts of how he met his death as a martyr for the gospel.

James the son of Alphaeus is one of at least three Jameses referred to in the New Testament. There is some confusion as to which, but this James is reckoned to have ministered in Syria. The Jewish historian Josephus reported that he was stoned and then clubbed to death.

Simon the Zealot, ministered in Persia and was killed after refusing to sacrifice to the sun god.

Matthias was the apostle chosen to replace Judas. Tradition sends him to Syria with Andrew and to death by burning (Christian History Institute, Whatever Happened to the Twelve? Glimpses Issue #8).

It stands to reason that if the Apostles had stolen Jesus' body from the tomb, then they would surely have known that he had not resurrected. Why then would they go through years of incredible hardship for? Because they enjoyed getting a beating or being imprisoned? Do you think they would have done it for a lie? Would you (as Paul did) be ostracized by everyone you know and love, and then go into towns for about thirty years, getting whipped, tortured, stoned, and imprisoned every time you preached the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ if you knew it was a lie?

Would you, like Peter watch your wife be killed and then request to be crucified upside-down because you did not feel worthy to die in the same manner as Jesus, if you knew that he had not really resurrected and thus was not truly the Messiah? Of course not!

I cannot think of any reason why these men did what they did unless what they claim is true, that Jesus Christ after his death appeared to them. Would you go through what they went through if you knew it wasn't true? I for one would not! If I went into a town knowing that Jesus Christ had not resurrected and said to the people, "Jesus of Nazareth has resurrected," and someone put me to the whip, you can bet your life that I would never say that again.

The reason that the Apostles lived such a hard life, and died such gruesome deaths is because they had to. It was part of God's plan. This is the indisputable proof that God left for future generations. You see, if the Apostles had walked into towns and people had welcomed them in, fed them, given them money, and treated them as important and distinguished people, then people in the future would look back and say that they did it for their own selfish reasons, because it was a good way of life.

God designed it so that the Apostles would live the kind of lives that they for our benefit, in order for us to have proof of the resurrection in the years to come. There was absolutely no human reward for what they did. There is no logical explanation of how you could get these men to do what they did for so many years unless they had really seen the risen Jesus.

Think about it, what would it take to get you to do what they did? I certainly would not do it for a lie! Can you think of another reason why they did what they did? I have tried, and I have come up with zero. As a matter of fact, nobody that I have ever asked this question to has been able to come up with a plausible explanation.

This is the beauty of God's plan, a natural act proves a supernatural act. Have you ever wondered why Jesus appeared to only a few men? Why didn't he just appear to all of Jerusalem and end the argument once and for all? There are two reasons why.

First, if had appeared to everyone in Jerusalem, then everyone in Jerusalem would have believed in him as the Messiah. Their proof would have been their own eyes. The Apostles would not have been necessary, anyone could have spread the news to other Jews living outside of Jerusalem. This would have eliminated the proof for future generations that we mentioned above, the lives of the Apostles.

Now as soon as a few generations pass and there are no more people left alive who actually witnessed the supernatural event of Jesus' resurrection, people will start to question it. They will say, "Can you prove it really happened?" Or, they will say that it is just a myth like the Greek myths of old. It is basically impossible to prove a supernatural act in itself. Can you prove the Red Sea actually parted? Unfortunately no. This is what would have happened had Jesus appeared to all of Jerusalem. It would eventually have become a myth with no concrete proof that it actually happened. In order to believe it people would have to have blind faith, which is a very weak faith.

By the majority of the Jewish people rejecting Jesus and his message, it made his name and his following, 'Christianity' a less nationalistic religion, and perhaps therefore one more acceptable to the world at large.

These are the reasons why the Apostles had to live such harsh lives, it was necessary for us and for all future generations. This proof has no time limit. It is plain to see today as it will be plain to see in 50,000 years. God's plan is truly perfect. Everything has been worked out to the smallest detail.

Conclusion:

God through the prophets, the Apostles, history, and logic, testify to the fact that God resurrected Jesus Christ. Christianity is based on faith, but a faith that is based on hard evidence. The Bible itself is full of fulfilled prophecies, and prophecies that God will fulfill in the future. This is where faith comes in. We know that God is true because of what he has shown us, therefore we believe in his promises for the future as well.

Jesus Christ did resurrect from the dead, and the secular evidence agrees with this fact. And if Jesus resurrected from the dead, then so will his followers. See you at the resurrection!

By Juan Baixeras

- original article at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Olympus/5257/proving.htm> (used with permission)

The scientific methodologies of the historical sciences:

There are a number of descriptions that illustrate how historical sciences attempt to prove their hypotheses. For example the famous evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould stated that historical sciences test their theories by evaluating their explanatory power⁹.

Historical scientists essentially proceed by inferring history from its results, that is they reason from clues back to causes. Further than this they investigate various hypotheses to see which hypothesis, if true, would best explain the known data.

This may sound simple but where there are a number of possibly adequate competing hypotheses, this can prove very difficult. In summary then, to establish a casual claim, an approach is used which requires the identification of three things:

- 1) Evidence that the cause proposed was present;
- 2) Evidence that on other occasions it has demonstrated the capacity to produce the effect under study, and
- 3) That there is an absence of evidence, despite a thorough search, of any other possible causes.¹⁰

On studying Greenleaf's and McDowell's approach to this topic it appears to me that they have generally followed a similar methodology.

⁹ Gould, 'Evolution and the Triumph of Homology'

¹⁰ Scriven, 'Causes, Connections and Conditions in History' p 249-250

To meet the requirements of section 1 above, we need to establish that Jesus did actually exist at the time in question and that 'resurrection' was an event, that within his culture and religion, was seen as at least plausible and possibly predictable.

Further on this point, recent evidence from the Qumran Scrolls especially suggests that not only was the death of a 'Messiah' anticipated before the time of Jesus, so was the possibility of the resurrection of this 'Messiah'.

Prof. Flusser writes in 'Judaism and the Origins of Christianity' (p 429):

"The Oracles of Hystaspes¹¹ and the Book of Revelation reflect the idea that the eschatological prophet will be killed; they also speak about his resurrection. It was almost inevitable that such a belief arose: the idea of resurrection became for many part of the Jewish faith; at that time not only Jews believed that a wondermaker could raise a man from the dead; one could learn from the Bible that Enoch and Elijah were brought up to heaven, and there were some Jews who thought that this was also true of Moses' end. As it was difficult to accept that at the End of Days the great prophet will come to a tragic end, it was easier to assume that he will finally resurrect and ascend to heaven. There existed a living faith that the prophet of the Last Days, having been killed, will rise to life, as can be seen from the example of John the Baptist. He was executed by Herod Antipas, but many believed that he was the prophet Elijah who was to reappear at the End. "It was at that time that reports about Jesus reached the ears of Prince Herod. This is John the Baptist', he said to his attendants, 'John has been raised to life' " (Mt. XIV: 1-2 and parallels). Not only Herod believed it. One day Jesus asked his disciples: "Who do the people say I am?" They answered: "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, others one of the prophets" (Mt. VIII: 27-8 and parallels). Here also we find the belief that John the Baptist, who had been killed by Herod, was raised to life. It is also clear enough that the people thought that Jesus was the eschatological prophet. Later, as we know, Jesus himself was killed, and, as Christianity believes, "he was buried and was raised to life on the third day according to the scriptures" (I Cor. XV:3-4)... The cases of John the Baptist and of Jesus show that the motif of the violent death and resurrection of the prophet was then well known among the Jews."

If Flusser is correct here, as I believe he is, then it could perhaps be argued that the resurrection was pre-planned and fabricated given that the Jewish community was already predisposed to such an event's likely occurrence. However, the actions of the disciples immediately after the death of Jesus show that such a fabrication was far from their thoughts. Instead, they were totally devastated, despite the fact that Jesus had predicted his death and his resurrection, his disciples displayed the behaviour and actions of people totally crushed and heart-broken. Even if, out of such great despair, they had come up with a plan to fabricate the resurrection their dramatic transformation and the strength of their convictions defy logic and rationality if only the actions of 'actors' not witnesses to the miraculous.

The evidence for the actual existence of Jesus 2000 years ago is well established, as is the evidence that 'resurrection' was an event that the Hebrew Bible and proto-rabbinic Judaism (the main Jewish sect at that time) saw as both a historical reality and a future expectation.

Clearly though, as the specific resurrection in question involves no subsequent death it is a unique event so it cannot be evaluated based on section 2 above. The nearest approach that we can possibly make is to study other 'resurrections', that is, other instances where people have been restored to life (although they have subsequently died at some later date).

Even a cursory examination of such events or alleged events should demonstrate that they have a most significant impact of those who witness them and even on those who are only indirectly witnesses to these 'miraculous' events.

Meeting the requirements of section 3 is perhaps the most difficult. Many alternative hypotheses need to be fairly evaluated to determine if the resurrection of Jesus 2000 years ago is the best explanation

¹¹ Written around 40 BCE, Flusser is quite certain that this book is of Jewish not Zoroastrian origin – see page xxii)

(i.e. has the most explanatory power), of the 'results' witnessed today.

The 'results' of this causal claim range from the creation of the New Testament, to the last 2000 years of human progress that has largely developed based on the underlying Judaeo-Christian ethic and mindset. The 'results' are especially the amazing tales of individual lives totally 'turned' to God, from examples like the slave trader, Isaac Newton; to the founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth; to the unknown drug addict turned tireless servant to some societal outcasts.

Almost all alternative hypotheses to the actual resurrection of Jesus fall very short in their explanatory power when reviewed against the backdrop of the last 2000 years of the spread of Christianity.

For example, the Jewish scholar, and Professor at Hebrew University, the late Joseph Klausner in 'Jesus of Nazareth His Life, Times and Teaching' (1926, p358-359), argues that Jesus did not rise from the dead but that all 500 witnesses only saw a vision.

While there are many problems with this alternative, the major issue appears to be that such an event or 'cause' has no precedent or antecedent that provides any 'results' that come even close to the incredible 'results' and impact of this particular 'vision'.

Among the more well known movements or religious cults that have been founded on 'visions' and 'apparent' miracles is the Mormon Church. While this cult may still have a relatively sizable following, thanks in no small part to very aggressive marketing and soliciting techniques, and to some very questionable use of the real miracle of the resurrection, the archaeological 'evidence' upon which this 'vision' of Joseph Smith and his cultic following was founded has been shown to be false.

Despite the very impressive scholarship of Klausner, this 'vision hypothesis' is one of the least credible of alternatives, to the point where a number of other leading Jewish scholars have refuted it. For example, the late Yehezkel Kaufmann, (also a Professor at Hebrew University) states:

"There are scholars who opine that the belief in Jesus' resurrection derived wholly from his appearance before the disciples (that is, in a vision unconnected with bodily resurrection), which opinion is, however, in error. Jesus' appearance was considered a miracle; it brought renewal of faith after the disappointment of Golgotha — and reunited the scattered disciples. The appearance, on the other hand, of the "spirit" or ghost of a departed in a vision would not have been a miracle." (Kaufmann., 'Christianity & Judaism – Two Covenants' p133)

Intriguingly, Kaufmann didn't seem to realise that his own explanation or attempt to provide an 'alternative hypothesis' was just as unacceptable and lacking the miraculous that is so clearly needed to explain the momentous impact of this event down through the ages.

It is not impossible that the miracle is to be explained like thousands of instances of "rebirth" of the dead which have occurred from ancient times to the present; that Jesus did not die on the cross, but lost consciousness, and then revived and rose from his grave and fell in some other place. Whatever the facts, the legend of the resurrection instilled the faithful with new hope. (Kaufmann – p 133)

A legend or myth rarely gives the strength and courage to sane men and women to stand and accept the most heinous deaths for simply professing such 'myths'. In fact, as Juan Baixeras points out, any past miraculous event such as the parting of the Red Sea, can easily be dismissed as a myth if there is little supporting evidence.

The incredible and enduring impact of the resurrection then, is in fact evidence that it was not a myth, because, despite a most diligent search by a great many disbelieving men and women over the last 2000 years, they have failed to come up with any plausible alternative hypothesis and these 'deniers' have instead needed most often to resort to accusing those who accept the evidence for the resurrection as fools or insane or mad. We should always treat with great caution any debater or

proponent of any theory who is unable to rationally challenge his opponents but instead resorts frequently and increasingly to vitriolic condemnations of his/her opponent's personalities and intellect. The infamous Richard Dawkins is a classic case in point.

No such accusations could be levelled at the scholarship and efforts of such impressive scholars as Klausner or Kaufmann. Neither of these great men though had the same level of access to the relatively recent discoveries and deciphering of the Dead Sea Scrolls, that one of their successors at the Hebrew University, the orthodox Jewish scholar, Professor David Flusser has had.

So, one might ask where the Professor Flusser (who died only a few years ago) stood on this issue. Flusser had made it his lifetimes work to study the Jewish Rabbi Jesus. His intimate appreciation of what Jesus was like and what he said and didn't say is most impressive. When it comes to the reality of the resurrection though I have struggled to find a definitive statement by Flusser. He has said the following though:

'The fact of the resurrection is often mentioned: it is both an historical experience and a cornerstone of Christ's metahistorical biography.' 'Judaism and the Origins of Christianity', David Flusser, p 621

'Is it indeed credible to suggest that when the Synoptic Gospels are studied scientifically they present a reliable portrayal of the historical Jesus' 'Jesus', Flusser p 21

'Hence, Luke and Matthew together provide the most authentic portrayal of Jesus' life and teachings' 'Jesus', p 22.

It should not really be necessary to state that the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark & Luke clearly state that Jesus was resurrected.

So, it would appear from these quotes that Flusser did in fact accept the reality of the resurrection. Interestingly though, he did not seem to accept that this confirmed the Messiahship of Jesus even though no-one else, whether laying claim to this role or not have ever been brought back to life and not known death subsequently.

The unquestionable impact of the resurrection story on world history can be seen in the conclusions of historians like HG Wells who said:

"I am an historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very centre of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history."--H.G. Wells

Perhaps though, even more compelling is the conclusion of Pinchas Lapide, an orthodox Jewish scholar, (1922- 1997) that Jesus' resurrection actually occurred.

Lapide stated that , *"against all plausibility, his adherents did not finally scatter [and] were not forgotten,"* and that *"the cause of Jesus did not reach its infamous end on the cross."* *"His disciples, who by no means excelled in intelligence, eloquence, or strength of faith, were able to begin their victorious march of conversion only after the shattering fiasco on Golgotha—a march which put all their successes before Easter completely into the shadow."*

During that fateful feast of Unleavened Bread; that pivotal Passover, something happened. What was it? Lapide's answer: *"The resurrection of Jesus from the dead."*¹²

¹² Lapide however denies that Jesus was the Messiah of Israel - *"I do accept the fact that he is the Saviour of the Gentile church. I do not think that his being the Saviour of the church and not being the Messiah of Israel is necessarily a contradiction."*

Lapide argues that if Judaism and Christianity both derive from the same God, then Christianity could not be founded upon a lie. And since it "stands or falls" with the Easter story, Lapide concludes that the church was *"born out of an act of the will of God, which all the New Testament authors call the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead."*¹³

"When this frightened band of apostles suddenly could be changed overnight into a confident mission society... Then no vision or hallucination is sufficient to explain such a revolutionary transformation."
Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective* (Fortress Press, 1988), p. 125

Another excellent example of the explanatory power of a real resurrection is the life of one of Jesus' brothers: *'The Lord's brother, James, came to believe as a result of a resurrection appearance. In 62 AD James died for his faith in his brother; he was murdered by a Sadducean high priest. The other brothers were later converted to faith, and with their wives they accepted the hospitality of the congregations.'* 1 Cor. 9:5; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 2:9; - see E. Hennecke & W. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha I, Gospels and Related Writings* (Westminster, 1991), pp. 470-88

James had grown up with Jesus, he knew him better than most, but as a brother he was perhaps too familiar and consequently rejected the notion that his elder brother Jesus was the prophet that Moses had spoken of. The resurrection changed James. It dramatically altered his life to the point where he became one of the pillars of the church in Jerusalem. No explanation other than the literal, physical resurrection of his brother appears to offer a satisfactory explanation of this great change in James.

More of the explanatory power of the resurrection:

If it could be shown that God had always planned to give a King, his Son as a sacrifice on His Holy Hill of Zion, while at the same time state that this King would rule the earth and have the whole earth as his heritage, we would be extremely hard-pressed to understand how this might be possible (at least without that amazing eye-opener, hindsight).

Also, in looking at the history of the world to date we would have to acknowledge that no-one has fulfilled this destiny while very few 'contenders' have even potentially met the first part of this plan.

Let us then turn to Psalm 2 and start at verse 6 (with Strong's numbers).

6Yet have I set^{H5258} my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

The word translated 'set' (or installed in many versions – Strong's # H5258) is the Hebrew word 'nacak', which is a primitive root; meaning primarily 'to pour out', especially a libation¹⁴, or to cast; or by analogy to anoint a king, that is to set or install a king. Why did the translators follow the Septuagint's lead in translating this as 'set or 'installed' when these are not the normal or main use of this word?

¹³ Two centuries before Jesus was born, Lapide points out, Judaism began believing in a future, generalized resurrection of believers, which became a tenet of Orthodoxy. In addition, the Jewish tradition includes six accounts of God reawakening the dead, three of them in the Old Testament (I Kings 17: 22, II Kings 4: 35 and 13: 21). Lapide sees no religious reason why Jesus could not have been the seventh "dead Jew revived by the will of God," although the New Testament describes Jesus' resurrected body as having a changed nature. The Jewish resurrective tradition, he contends, provided the basis for the Christian Apostles' faith. "This certainty of the future rising of the dead and the possible reawakening by God of some dead before the end of days was the precondition for their hope against hope that their beloved teacher and master had not been abandoned by the God of Israel." However Easter is interpreted, says Lapide, "one thing is certain: since all the witnesses of the resurrected Jesus were sons and daughters of Israel, since, moreover, he appeared only in the land of Israel, his Resurrection was a Jewish affair which must therefore be judged by Jewish standards if we are to gauge its authenticity." By Jewish standards, Lapide explains, a certain skepticism about Jesus' Resurrection is understandable. He notes that New Testament accounts tell of more than 500 Jews who saw the resurrected Jesus (I Corinthians 15: 5-8), so it was not a universal experience among Jews. But, Lapide argues, "if the Disciples were totally disappointed and on the verge of desperate flight because of the very real reason of the Crucifixion, it took another very real reason in order to transform them from a band of disheartened and dejected Jews into the most self-confident missionary society in world history." He concludes that a bodily resurrection could possibly have been that reason.
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,920335-1,00.html>

¹⁴ Libation : The pouring of a liquid offering as a religious ritual. The liquid so poured.

Perhaps because the context seemed nonsensical when read some 130 years before the crucifixion of Jesus.

Is there though any support for the possibility that this verse is indeed referring to the crucifixion of Jesus, that is, did Jesus see this verse in this way or did his disciples or the New Testaments writers perceive it this way, perhaps thanks to Jesus' instructions?

We have no explicit statement in scripture that Jesus understood that Psalm 2 v6 should be read as referring to a sacrifice of a 'king' and 'Son' of God. We do however have a fairly strong inference in Acts 13 v 29:33:

When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

"We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:

"You are my Son; today I have become your Father."

Note the connection and inference Luke makes here. He states that by 'raising up Jesus', Jesus has become the Son of God as per Psalm 2. The context of the previous few sentences makes it abundantly clear that this 'raising' he is referring to, is from the dead, not from the womb or from some other situation. That is, this raising is a result of or part of the whole prophecy of Psalm 2. In fact, it is the key that unlocks the seeming impossibility of 'nacak' referring to a sacrifice rather than an installation of a King (not that installing a king is not a plausible or even secondary meaning).

I believe Luke is telling us that Psalm 2 predicted the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection of the Son of God, the King of Kings¹⁵.

So here is a further strengthening of the explanatory power of the resurrection of Jesus. No other potential Messianic figure has been sacrificed on the Holy Hill of Zion and then had his followers argue that this sacrifice and subsequent resurrection was a part fulfilment of Psalm 2.

More recent Jewish rejection:

Rabbi Tovia Singer is a very well known and highly respected Jewish Rabbi and radio host who has a very popular and informative show on Israeli radio and regular columns in Israeli newspapers such as Arutz Sheva. As part of his anti-missionary efforts, Tovia Singer has written at length an attempt at refuting the resurrection story¹⁶.

One of Singer's main points of contention is that the gospels are not consistent even on the date of the resurrection. Unfortunately, Singer's discussion of this point only shows his lack of thoroughness as the apparent conflicting dates can and have been harmonised by many scholars including orthodox Jewish scholars such as the late Prof. Flusser.

The crucifixion clearly occurred on the 14th Nisan. The 'Last Supper' occurred the night before which was, using Hebrew reckoning, also the 14th Nisan. Whether the 'Last Supper' was a Passover Seder or not is certainly open to conjecture (Flusser's article 'The Last Supper and the Essenes' is quite revealing on this issue). Rather than repeat my own exposition on this topic, may I suggest reading my article 'Our Passover Lamb'¹⁷ in which I also go into some detail on this issue.

¹⁵ For more of Ps 2v6 see my article at <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Christian%20site/Psalm%202%20verse%206%20commentary.pdf>

¹⁶ Some of his writing is online here: <http://www.outreachjudaism.org/resurrection.html>

¹⁷ Available from www.charismacomputers.com.au

Rabbi Singer is certainly correct that the Synoptic Gospels as translated today do appear to make some significantly contradictory statements on the dating of the 'Last Supper' and the crucifixion. However, many scholars have critically examined these apparent conflicts and shown how they can be reconciled, some because they are later redactions (editorial changes by later translators) and some because of our limited understanding of these historical events (this issue has been reduced in recent years thanks to the Qumran Scrolls).

While there may be much in Singer's analysis of the errors of Christianity in general and some clear mis-appropriations or misunderstandings of Hebrew Scripture, overall his refutation of the resurrection is far from convincing.

Conclusion:

What is the most compelling answer or solution to the power of the resurrection story, a story and historical event that has led to the founding of whole nations; that sits as the foundation stone to the incredible technological and societal success of the Western World; that by its very success highlights the desolation and despair that alternative belief systems such as Islam engender.

Can the world believe a lie? Yes, the majority of the world can be easily duped it seems into believing in such falsehoods as Darwinian evolution and anthropogenic global warming. However, close inspection of such lies will reveal their lack of utilitarian success. Some scientists have shown that virtually no breakthroughs in scientific understanding and technological improvements can be traced to any research based on Darwinian principles, even though the researchers may have given lip service to Darwinian evolution in their scientific papers¹⁸.

However, when truth whether scientific, historical or biblical is the basis for action and progress, then such action and progress is much more likely to be successful. Thus, the practical, technological and societal success of the Judeo-Christian ethic and of all who commit themselves and their lives to the God of Jacob, and His only begotten Son, Jesus should be a powerful witness to the veracity of the resurrection. After all, the Apostle Paul said that if the resurrection is a lie, those who profess to believe in it are to be the most pitied of men. In contrast to this, if it is true, then the Apostle Paul argues that it brings life from death!

Nothing is more incredible and miraculous than returning the spark of life to something dead. Not only did this occur with the resurrection of Jesus but it has symbolically occurred in many thousands of lives when they have recognized the truth of this event, repented of their folly and trusted Jesus as their Saviour. In fact, the most miraculous outpouring of such power, which will dwarf that incredible Shavuot (Pentecost) described in Acts 2, is still before us and will have a two fold outpouring, first with the resurrection of the dry bones of Israel¹⁹ and second with the resurrection and transformation to immortality of all who have the faith of Jesus.

In conclusion, to refute the resurrection story is a most momentous task when the absolutely earth shattering impact of this event is recognized and acknowledged. But what is required is much more than the rejection of the witness of over 500 Jewish men and women of the raising from the dead of a Jewish man; because the empty tomb must also be explained; the life changing impact on his followers and disciples; the miracles witnessed through the apostles; the enduring impact on all who accept Jesus' Lordship, and so on.

¹⁸ See for example, Philip Skell's 'Why do we invoke Darwin' <http://www.the-scientist.com/2005/8/29/10/1/>

¹⁹ See my article 'Your daughters will be carried on their shoulders' at <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/OneGod/meetings.html>

To refute this event it would seem is to, in reality, bring into question the whole authority of the Hebrew Scriptures and the One God of Israel. But here we also have the revelation of nature and of the long history of the Jewish people; a history and story which in itself is miraculous.

The resurrection of Jesus is very much a Jewish expectation and a Jewish story, but a story which is only half told.

It will only be fully told, and the Messianic prophecies all fulfilled, when the Messiah returns and *“Then Adonai will be king over all the earth. On that day Adonai will be one and his name one.”* Zec 14:9.

Paul Herring
May 2010

‘Oh God, we followers of Yeshua have made such a mess of the most wonderful message ever presented to us, please forgive us and grant us the humility to walk before you, as taught in Micah 6:8. All I want is to be known by you as I try with all my heart to put your truth, your righteousness and your love into action on a daily basis. Let your Word be a lamp for my feet and a light for my path and may the words of my mouth, as well as the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in your sight, O LORD!’