

they are derived from different textual families.

- The New Testament copies are much earlier—that is, closer to the original writings—than the classical texts. Most of the New Testament is available from copies that are only 100-150 years after its completion, while a copy of the entire New Testament dates from about another 100 years after that. In contrast, the classical counterparts generally date from 700-1400 years after their original compositions. This enormous difference significantly closes the distance between the authors and the earliest copies, placing the dates of the New Testament copies much closer to the events themselves. This makes it at least possible that the biblical writers were in a better position to know what actually occurred.
- Generally speaking, critical scholars readily admit these initial two points of manuscript number and date. John A. T. Robinson agrees that, “The wealth of manuscripts, and above all the narrow interval of time between the writing and the earliest extant copies, make it by far the best attested text of any ancient writing in the world.” Even the skeptical Helmut Koester attests: “Classical authors are often represented by but one surviving manuscript . . . . But there are nearly five thousand manuscripts of the NT in Greek . . . .”
- So we have excellent pointers that we have essentially what the various authors originally wrote. John

Wenham thinks that the overall biblical text is 99.99 percent pure, without any of the differences affecting doctrine.

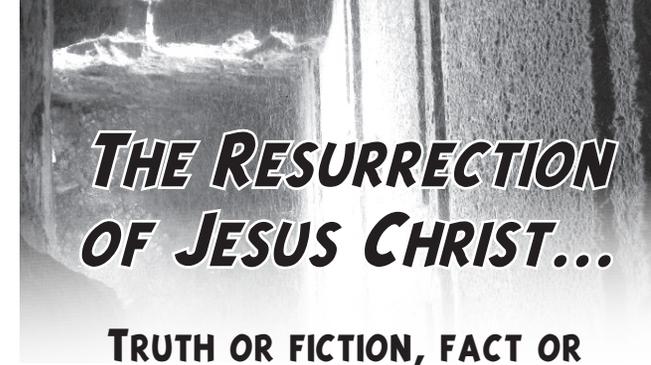
- Additionally, approximately one and a half dozen non-Christian, extra-biblical sources confirm many details from Jesus’ life and teachings as found in the Gospels. Early Christian writers like Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp provide even more confirmation, writing just ten years or less after the completion of the New Testament. While archaeological sources do not contribute as much corroboration as they do in Old Testament studies, there are a number of indications that, when the details can be checked, the New Testament is often confirmed.
- Especially when taken together, much data are available which confirm the traditional picture regarding the life and teachings of Jesus...the available evidence from a variety of angles confirms the strong foundation on which the general reliability of the New Testament reports of the historical Jesus can be based.<sup>1</sup>

Now that we have placed the Bible in its proper historical context in regards to the overwhelming evidence of its reliability and veracity, let’s turn specifically to Jesus’ resurrection. The following points are facts regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ which scholars & scientists, even the most skeptical, agree upon.

1. Jesus died due to the rigors of

- crucifixion
2. Buried
3. Psychological fact—the disciples were in a state of despair—anxiety, anger, depression, hatred
4. Tomb was found empty
5. Jesus’ disciples & over 500 people believed they had witnessed a bodily appearance/resurrection. (Gert Lüdemann, perhaps the most prominent current critic of the resurrection, admits, “It may be taken as historically certain that Peter and the disciples had experiences after Jesus’ death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ.”<sup>2</sup>)
6. Lives were transformed—they were willing to die. Jerusalem is the last place you would want to preach the message of the resurrection—empty tomb—if not empty, the body would have been produced. No body—proof of empty tomb
7. James & Paul—they both came to Christ after they experienced what they believed to have been the appearance of the risen Jesus.
8. Resurrection is the center of early teaching/proclamation.<sup>3</sup>

Richard Swinburne, emeritus professor of philosophy at Oxford University gives the following analysis of the evidence for the resurrection, “Evidence about what happened on a particular occasion is provided by memory, testimony, physical traces, and background evidence (whether the world as a whole shows that sort of thing very likely to occur). Apparent testimony claims should be taken as genuine



# THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST...

## TRUTH OR FICTION, FACT OR FABLE, HISTORY OR MYTH?

Let's get right to the point—are the Biblical accounts of Jesus' life on earth and His death and resurrection fiction or myth? Or, are they factual and historically sound? Is the veracity of the Bible's historical accounts on the same level historically as other accounts of history which we've studied in our high school & university classes and have considered credible & even factual? Let us follow the evidence & see where it leads.

Christian philosopher and theologian, Gary Habermas provides the following points of comparison between that of the historical narratives found in the Bible and those of other historical texts. As you will see, the Biblical narratives, with special focus on the New Testament, the events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, are sound historically and exceed the criteria set forth by historians in establishing reliable and verifiable historical accounts and narratives.

- Recent indications are that the New Testament is supported by more than 5500 copies and partial copies in Greek and other languages, while most ancient classical Greek and Roman texts have fewer than 10 each. Moreover, there is comparatively little significant variation between these manuscripts, even when

on the evidence—my prayer is, that you do:

“I humbly come before You, the personal God who created both the heavens & the earth, acknowledging my need for You, my Creator. I accept Your Son, Jesus Christ through Whom all things were created and by Whom all things consist—the One Who came to this earth to reconcile me to You, through His death & resurrection. I turn to You now, Jesus, & ask You to enter my heart, and illuminate my mind and open it to Your thoughts & truth so that I may understand and know the reason & purpose for my life within Your marvelous universe. Thank You for manifesting Yourself to me through both the Bible and the understanding of Your nature that Your Spirit brings into my life.”

“He who finds Jesus finds a rare treasure, indeed, a good above every good, whereas he who loses Him loses more than the whole world. The man who lives without Jesus is the poorest of the poor, whereas no one is so rich as the man who lives in His grace.”<sup>6</sup>

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(Endnotes)

- 1 Gary Habermas, *Recent Perspectives on the Reliability of the Gospels*, 2005—www.garyhabermas.com
- 2 Gerd Lüdemann, *What Really Happened to Jesus?*, trans. John Bowden (Westminster John Knox Press, 1995)
- 3 Gary Habermas, *Jesus' Resurrection and Contemporary Criticism: An Apologetic*, *Criswell Theological Review*, 1989
- 4 Swinburne, Richard; *The Resurrection of God Incarnate*, 2003
- 5 Blaise Pascal; excerpts from *Pensées*, part III, note 233
- 6 Thomas A Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, 1418-1427

claims and should be believed in the absence of counter-evidence. If Jesus rose from the dead, this was a miracle—a violation of natural laws brought about by God. If there is no God, there cannot be such a violation. If there is a God, violations can occur but in general do not. But, in so far as the evidence of natural theology suggests that there is a God, and that he has reason to bring about this sort of miracle on this occasion, then positive evidence for the Resurrection from the testimony of witnesses may make it overall very probable that Jesus rose from the dead.”<sup>4</sup>

In what and who do you believe? Where does your faith lie? You may be saying, “I don't have faith in anything or anybody, only myself and what my five senses can attest to.” Considering the above evidence, don't you think that you may be short changing yourself by discounting the evidence? Fifteenth century French mathematician, physicist, and Christian philosopher, Blaise Pascal likened this decision to a wager and stated, “God is, or He is not... You must wager [make the decision]...it is not optional. Wager, then, without hesitation that He is...there is here an infinity of an infinitely happy life to gain...”<sup>5</sup>

The majesty of free choice is now before you. Won't you make the wager? Going “all in” in wagering your finite life, heart and mind, for that which is eternal? Surely it is worth the “gamble” to win the ultimate prize of a direct connection and personal relationship with the personal God who created it all, both in this life and the life to come. As Christian missionary Jim Elliot so aptly put it, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, too gain that which he cannot lose.”

The following is how to make your wager