

Did Anyone Rise from the Dead?

"I haven't weighed myself lately, because I made a New Year's Resolution: to stay off the scales." -- Shelley Shannon

The Bible says Jesus rose from the dead.

So what?

If a book claims something is true, does that make it true?

That depends on who published it, how its allegations were tested before publication, and how critics reacted after publication.

Scientific journal articles are peer-reviewed before publication, and often critiqued after publication with attempts to duplicate the research to see if it bears the same results. If post-publication research reaches the same results the article usually becomes widely accepted.

It is simplistic to say "I don't believe the Bible, so prove whatever you want to prove without quoting the Bible".

In any court trial, the allegation is part of the evidence. No juror says "I don't believe the lead witness, so don't allow the lead witness to testify." It is the interaction of the witnesses and the circumstances that makes the case.

However, if you fear threats to your opinions, you will need to censor not only the lead witness, but all the rest of the evidence. You will need to make yourself as difficult to reason with as a letter from a bureaucrat. The choice is yours, but be warned: the evidence that Jesus died, beyond any possibility of natural resuscitation, and rose from the dead, is strong.

Before we come to that evidence, however, let's settle whether that claim is even unique. Some say it is not.

Jesus Christ is the only human being in history who died and rose from the dead according to documents of the time. (As opposed to speculations published centuries later.)

No one has even suggested that Abraham or Moses rose from the dead.

No one in Buddha's day ever saw Buddha rise from the dead.

The original accounts of Buddha never ascribe to him any such thing as a resurrection; in fact, in the earliest accounts of his death, namely, the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, we read that when Buddha died it was "with that utter passing away in which nothing whatever remains behind." (*Therefore Stand*, by Wilbur Smith, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1945, page 385.)

None of Sakya Muni's followers noticed him wandering around anywhere after he died. Smith continues,

"Professor Childers says, 'There is no trace in the *Pali* scriptures or commentaries (or so far as I know in any Pali book) of Sakya Muni having existed after his death or appearing to his disciples.'"

Mohammed died 632 AD at Medina. Certainly no Moslem is about to allege he rose from the

dead, since pilgrimages to Medina, to visit the occupied tomb of Mohammed, is a staple of Islam.

Confucius? Did anyone ever allege he rose from the dead? I came across the allegation, that he was seen carrying one shoe, in the literature of an obscure New Age group 35 years ago. But www.tspl.org/history2/820826.htm says it wasn't Confucius carrying that shoe, but Bodhidharma, a Buddhist missionary from Southern India to China, who died in 530 AD.

Fascinating allegation, that Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, died and is still in his tomb, but one of his missionaries rose from the grave leaving his tomb empty. Maybe the difference is that when Buddha died, before Jesus' resurrection, it never occurred to anybody to compete with such credentials; but after Jesus' resurrection, the Buddhists were feeling some competition and needed a better story. Of course, even with this motive, the idea of just silently carrying a shoe falls way short, in profundity, compared with Jesus' inspiring post-death teachings to hundreds.

I have no idea if the legend is found in 6th century documents or if it is a late invention. But obviously the documentation that Bodhidharma actually died before being seen alive is nothing like the documentation of Jesus' death.

Is there any doubt Jesus died?

It wouldn't necessarily require a miracle for a man like the Bodhidharma to revive after being assumed dead, and to walk out of his tomb, if it wasn't sealed too thoroughly. By contrast, there was consensus among early writers that Jesus was brutally tortured to death, followed by a spear to His heart, and then sealed in a tomb for three days and nights by soldiers. There was no non-miraculous return to consciousness in Jesus' case! Very little chance of regaining consciousness, after a spear thrust to the heart!

How do we know the spear reached Jesus' heart? Because water and blood poured out of the wound, a thing which doctors can explain today but which is rare enough that the Gospel writer said, in effect, "I know that is going to be hard to believe, but you are going to have to trust me." This is the only time John said anything like that in his Gospel, indicating John found this incident harder to explain than walking on water, feeding over 10,000 people out of one lunch box, raising the dead, or the many other miracles Jesus did. John would not have put the believability of his book at risk for an unbelievable detail, unless it were true, because John wanted his book to be believed, as John 19:35 articulates. (Had modern doctors been there to explain it for John, the incident would have been easier for John to believe, but his report would be harder for us to believe.) Notice verse 37, which quotes Zechariah 12:10, a prophecy that people would be amazed at what they saw when Jesus' side was pierced.

John 19:34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. 35 And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. 36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. 37 And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

Here is a statement of a couple of doctors confirming what part of the body would contain a water-like fluid; that place is the membrane around the heart, proving the spear must have penetrated that far:

"It is now well known that the effect of long-continued and intense agony is frequently to produce a secretion of a colorless lymph within the pericardium (the membrane enveloping the heart), amounting in many cases to a very considerable quantity" [WEBSTER and

] WILKINSON]. Jamieson, Robert ; Fausset, A. R. ; Fausset, A. R. ; Brown, David ; Brown, David: *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. Oak Harbor, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, S. Jn 19:34

Here is another doctor's opinion:

Dr. W. Stroud (*Physical Cause of the Death of Christ*) argues that this fact proves that the spear pierced the left side of Jesus near the heart and that Jesus had died literally of a broken

heart since blood was mixed with water. Robertson, A.T.: *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Oak Harbor : Logos Research Systems, 1997, S. Jn 19:34

Although the water made no sense to anyone, The spear thrust settled any arguments whether Jesus thoroughly died, a debate begun in John's time:

At the time of the writing of this Gospel, Gnosticism and Docetism were current problems. These ideologies denied the reality of the Incarnation and of His death. But the blood and water are firm answers against those heresies. Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:340

Another Bible commentary mentions the Docetists:

Various explanations have been offered regarding the *blood and water*, but John's intention here is to affirm the physical reality of Jesus' death, in contrast to the views held by the Docetists, who claimed that he had only appeared to die. Carson, D. A.: *New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition*. 4th ed. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA : Inter-Varsity Press, 1994, S. Jn 19:17

Islam denies that Jesus died.

4.157 And their saying: Surely we have killed the Messiah, Isa son of Marium, the apostle of God; and **they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so** (like Isa) and most surely those who differ therein are only in a doubt about it; they have no knowledge respecting it, but only follow a conjecture, and **they killed him not** for sure.

4.158 Nay! God took him up to Himself; and God is Mighty, Wise.

Of course, if the Qu'ran were right, that Jesus neither was killed nor was crucified but was taken directly to God while it only *appeared* to everybody that He was crucified and resurrected, that would be almost as strong credentials for Jesus' knowing what He was talking about, and knowing how to preserve a record of what He said, as the Gospel version. Weird credentials, but still strong credentials.

Kyle Butt analyzes the "swoon theory", that Jesus was indeed crucified but later revived:

It is at this point in our study that some would suggest that Hugh Schonfield's infamous "Swoon Theory" should be considered. Schonfield (1965) postulated that Christ did not die on the cross; rather, He merely fainted or "swooned." Later, after being laid on a cold slab in the dark tomb, He revived and exited His rock-hewn grave. Such a theory, however, fails to take into account the heinous nature of the scourging (sometimes referred to as an "intermediate death") that Christ had endured at the hand of Roman lictors, or the finely honed skills of those Roman soldiers whose job it was to inflict such gruesome punishment prior to a prisoner's actual crucifixion. To press the point, in the March 1986 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, William Edwards and his coauthors penned an article, "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," that employed modern medical insight to provide an exhaustive description of Jesus' death (256:1455-1463). Sixteen years later, Brad Harrub and Bert Thompson coauthored an updated review ("An Examination of the Medical Evidence for the Physical Death of Jesus Christ") of the extensive scientific evidence surrounding Christ's physical death (2002). After reading such in-depth, medically based descriptions of the horrors to which Christ was exposed, and the condition of His ravaged body, the Swoon Theory quickly fades into oblivion (where it rightly belongs). Jesus died. Upon this, we all most certainly can agree. (www.apologeticspress.org, Apologetics Press: Reason & Revelation, Feb 2002 – 22[2]:9-15, by Kyle Butt, M.A.)

Ignatius was convinced that Jesus rose from the dead. He didn't just say it in his fund raising letters. He said it on his way to die for believing it. Many lie to impress others, in order to acquire more admiration, influence, or money. No one will die, like Ignatius did, for a lie.

Ignatius lived from 50-115 AD. He was a pupil of the Apostle John, and Bishop of Antioch. His letters which survive today were written during his journey to be martyred. On the road, he knew he would be given one more chance to live if he would just renounce Jesus. The conclusions he wrote down show that he was asking himself the same questions we would ask, in his shoes: "Now did Jesus

really die, or did it just *look* like it? Is Jesus *really* God, worthy of my worship, who died willingly, for me? Worth me dying for? Or just another man with some good ideas, who got himself in more trouble than he could get out of?”

He must have been recalling every interview he had ever had with anyone who said they saw him resurrected, or saw the miracles of Crucifixion Day, or heard the lame excuses of the Sanhedrin soldiers who couldn't keep the tomb sealed. Here are some of Ignatius' conclusions:

He was crucified and died under Pontius Pilate. He really, and not merely in appearance, was crucified, and died, in the sight of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth.

He also rose again in three days....On the day of the preparation, then, at the third hour, He received the sentence from Pilate, the Father permitting that to happen; at the sixth hour He was crucified; at the ninth hour He gave up the ghost; and before sunset He was buried.

During the Sabbath He continued under the earth in the tomb in which Joseph of Arimathaea had laid Him.

He was carried in the womb, even as we are, for the usual period of time; and was really born, as we also are; and was in reality nourished with milk, and partook of common meat and drink, even as we do. And when He had lived among men for thirty years, He was baptized by John, really and not in appearance; and when He had preached the gospel three years, and done signs and wonders, He who was Himself the Judge was judged by the Jews, falsely so called, and by Pilate the governor; was scourged, was smitten on the cheek, was spit upon; He wore a crown of thorns and a purple robe; He was condemned: He was crucified in reality, and not in appearance, not in imagination, not in deceit. He really died, and was buried, and rose from the dead. (“Ignatius' Epistle to Trallians”, *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers*. Ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Vol. 1. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1867, p. 199-203.)

Here is the account of Josephus, the non-Christian hired by the Roman government to write a history of the Jews. Being on the payroll of a government busy persecuting Christians, it is hard to imagine what would motivate him to make up details like these:

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. he drew over to him many Jews, and also many of the Greeks. This man was the Christ. And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross, upon his impeachment by the principal men among us, those who had loved him from the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive on the third day, the divine prophets having spoken these and thousands of other wonderful things about him. And even now, the race of Christians, so named from him, has not died out. (Josephus, AJ, 18.3.3.)

The entire New Testament was written by men who lived during Jesus' generation. The dates assigned by scholars do not vary by more than a few years. The books were quickly regarded as Scripture: we know this not only because Peter described Paul's writings as “Scripture” in 2 Peter 3:16, but also because of the accurate way it was preserved: by scribes taking all the care taken to pass down the Old Testament over 4,000 years – so that by the 3rd century, when the copies were made which are the earliest copies we have today, there was not found a discrepancy from one copy to the other so dramatic as a single phrase.

The only exception is the small number of earlier Egyptian manuscripts, not discovered until about a century ago, which uniformly leave out several whole sentences found in the “majority texts”. But even these minority texts do not vary by so much as a phrase from all the other Greek texts, in those verses which all reproduce. Nothing like this is true of any other literature besides the Bible. Shakespeare is only 400 years old, yet entire sections of it are in doubt as to the original scenes. There

is no other ancient literature of which we have copies even 1,000 years old.

The fact that these writings were regarded as Scripture very early, plus the large number of copies which survived, shows that they were widely distributed. The fact that these writings were widely distributed among people who had lived through the events written about shows they must have been accurate, or witnesses would have risen to denounce their accuracy, which would have torpedoed their status as the Word of God.

Buddha was born a prince. He may have renounced his kingdom and lived as a pauper, but he could not renounce his status. He had star power. He was not persecuted for his faith. He was safe and secure, and his followers added to their status, safety, and security by believing him, so they had nothing personal to gain by being critical of him, and probably something to gain by overlooking any flaws they perceived.

Mohammed was a ruthless military leader obsessed with swordpoint conversions and gruesome tortures of “unbelievers” in himself. His followers had, therefore, every personal reason to overlook any discrepancy in his writings or life. To this day any serious criticism of Mohammed or Islam may generate a “fatwah”, an order from Muslim clerics justifying anyone willing to kill the critic.

But the first Christians had nothing personal to gain, and everything personal to lose, by believing the New Testament or any of its claims. They had every personal reason to find any fault with it they could, any excuse they could muster to renounce Jesus and deliver themselves from lions or worse.

Yet they found no fault with it.

They, rather, regarded it as Scripture, after comparing its words with their memories of what they had lived through.

They not only believed it but gave their lives for its hope.

Not just a few nutcases, but martyrs by the hundreds of thousands, including the cream of society, including powerful generals and political leaders.

All this is extremely powerful evidence that the events reported by the New Testament were real historical events which occurred just as the New Testament reports.

Kim Jong Ill 2, the self proclaimed God who ruthlessly rules North Korea, fills his land with literature about his divinity and there are probably people who actually believe him. Extremely few who do not believe him dare to say so publicly. The only reason the literature exists is because he controls police who enforce its distribution and reverence.

The opposite incentives existed after the resurrection of the Son of God.

Most men will embrace a myth to save their skins. No man will embrace a myth in order to watch his skin peeled off his bleeding, screaming body.

Romans 14:7-8 makes the same point: no Christian lives for Christ (in any society where Christianity is punished) who cares only about himself; and no one, not even a pagan, will give up his life to please himself! So the very fact that someone is “taking arrows” for Jesus proves he believes in something greater than himself.

Ro 14:7 For none **of us** [Christians] liveth to [for] himself, and *no* man *dieth* to [for] himself.

Now look at some of the statements the first Christians believed, for which they joyfully gave “the ultimate sacrifice”.

Acts 1:3 ...he shewed himself alive [to His apostles] after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

There could not be a clearer statement that the evidence Jesus gave that it was really Him in His resurrected body, not some ghost or vision, was of the highest quality by any courtroom or scientific standards. These statements were accepted as not merely accurate, but infallible – worthy to be classified as Scripture – by the first Christians, who lived through these events. And not merely infallible, but worth dying for.

Here is a similar statement about the factual foundation of the New Testament:

Luke 1:1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2 Even as they delivered [reported] them unto us, **which from the beginning were eyewitnesses**, and ministers of the word; 3 It seemed good to me also, **having had perfect [complete] understanding of all things from the very first**, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

Luke says, in other words, that he based his writing on thorough, scrupulous investigative reporting, relying on eyewitness reports.

His claim, by itself, proves nothing. I could write my own version of Jesus' ministry and claim I was there. My claim wouldn't prove I was.

But in court, when all the witnesses agree with the defendant, that is accepted as pretty strong evidence that the defendant is telling the truth. Many witnesses to Jesus' ministry lived long enough to read Luke's account of it, and accepted it as not merely accurate, but inspired.

In other words, Luke's writings were not merely accepted, but revered.

Luke claimed not only to be an accurate reporter, but an insider. Indeed, many of the events Luke reports in Acts are in second person, showing he was one of the participants in the events. This, too, was accepted by the great majority of his readers as fact, we may infer from the reverence for his writing.

(Exactly how early Luke's writings were accepted as Scripture, we don't know. But Luke's statements about the resurrection were corroborated by Paul, whose writings were accepted as "Scripture" by no less than Peter, as we shall soon see.)

The people of the time, who lived through the events reported by Luke, read Luke's books and must have agreed that he had interviewed many eyewitnesses and was an honest, fair reporter of the highest quality, and also an "insider". They had so much reverence for it that they faithfully hand-copied hundreds or thousands of copies – a tedious, expensive process – and distributed it to readers who trusted it so thoroughly that they risked being tortured for believing it.

Had Luke written only philosophical statements, without all the talk of witnesses and "infallible proofs", his writing might have passed as Scripture without anyone thinking his stories were historically accurate. After all, many New Age religions offer to tell you what God thinks, without describing any testable historical details. Or at least without insisting that the stories they tell really happened. They are taken as myths, or analogies.

But when Luke spoke of investigative reporting by an insider with access to eyewitness reports and infallible proofs, there was no possibility that the first Christians could dismiss Jesus' resurrection as a myth – just a story with a lesson which never actually happened. Either they had to accept the resurrection as historically accurate, or they had to dismiss the writings as certainly not inspired by God. (And, therefore, not worth dying for.) The fact that they accepted Luke's writings as the Words of God proves they literally believed Jesus thoroughly died, with no physical way to ever revive; but yet that he then rose again in the very same completely physical body, yet far more glorious than before.

The fact that Luke's reports survived, at such terrible personal cost, proves people believed them. And they didn't just believe them because Luke, Paul, and others wrote about it, but because what they read lined up with what they themselves witnessed.

All of this we can know just by knowing when the New Testament books were written, and by appreciating their very early status as Scripture which is confirmed by the almost superhuman care with which such a large number of copies were made with such remarkable consistency.

The Resurrection: Central to New Testament Writings

Next we can observe that the resurrection of Jesus was the cornerstone of everything taught in the New Testament. Jesus' death was reported in far greater detail in the Gospels than any other event

or teaching of Jesus, and His death and resurrection, more than anything Jesus taught, are the hinge upon which all New Testament teaching turns. For example,

1 Corinthians 15:12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: 14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. 15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. 19 **If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.** 20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.... 30 **And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? 31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. 32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.**

Romans 10:8 ... the word of faith, which we preach; 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt *believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

If the resurrection were an obscure sidebar in the New Testament, we might be able to imagine the thousands of witnesses to Jesus' life, death, and the hundreds of witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, accepting the rest of the New Testament as Scripture even if they didn't agree that He rose from the dead. But with the Resurrection the central theme of the New Testament, it is impossible that all those witnesses could accept the New Testament as Scripture, unless it was confirmed by what they had lived through.

Acts 2 reports a time when the 120 disciples, along with the 11 apostles, (Acts 1:15), all began miraculously speaking in languages which people from all around the world were able to understand in their mother tongues. That was a pretty spectacular event! If that really happened, there were a lot of people who remembered it for a long time; and if it never happened, there is no way a statement that it happened could be widely distributed and accepted as the Word of God.

Now look at the speech which Peter is reported to have given at that event. Peter is alleged to say that Jesus' resurrection was prophesied, that Jesus did rise, and that "we all are witnesses". The fact that witnesses to these events and to that speech were still alive as Acts was being circulated, yet that Acts was counted as Scripture, shows the report must be accurate. The miracle of Tongues really did happen, and Peter really did tell the crowd what is reported here.

Acts 2:29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, **he would raise up Christ** to sit on his throne; 31 He seeing this before spake of **the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.**

Now consider what that proves, if Peter really did deliver such a speech, 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead. 1 Corinthians 15:6, also counted as Scripture by those early witnesses, says Jesus appeared to 500 people at just one of His appearances. And now the crowds, from all over the world, there to celebrate the Pentecost in the Holy City, are told that Jesus rose from the dead and was seen by all the people preaching in those miraculous tongues.

How would the crowds have responded, if they had seen or heard no credible evidence of the resurrection claim? They had to know about the evidence, because, told this astonishing claim, that a man who had been thoroughly killed and mutilated had risen from the dead in a physical yet now glorious body, a thing never before, in all the history of the world, been even imagined, and was dangerous to imagine given the hostility of the Sanhedrin, they did not mock but were “pricked in their heart”. Here is the conclusion of Peter’s speech, and their reaction:

Acts 2:33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool. 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. 37 Now when they heard this, **they were pricked in their heart**, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

The Empty Grave

Had it been a myth – had Jesus’ body still been in the tomb 50 days after His death – the easiest thing in the world for the Sanhedrin to do, to put a quick stop to all this nonsense, would have been to open the tomb and show these dreamers Jesus’ dead, stinking body! The only *possible* reason why that never happened, was that the tomb was open, and Jesus was gone!

Kyle Butt, in “Fact – the Tomb of Christ was Empty”, quotes two Jewish sources. The first is second hand, the second is first hand:

A godless and lawless heresy had sprung from one Jesus, a Galilaean deceiver, whom we crucified, but his disciples stole him by night from the tomb where he was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceive men by asserting that he has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven. (“Dialogue with Trypho” by Justin Martyr, A.D. 165, chapter 108, quoting a letter circulated by the Jewish community about the empty tomb of Jesus)

A diligent search was made and he [Jesus] was not found in the grave where he had been buried. A gardener had taken him from the grave and had brought him into his garden and buried him in the sand over which the waters flowed into the garden. (“Toledoth Yeshu”, 6th Century. This treatise claimed Jesus was the illegitimate son of a soldier named Joseph Pandera. This quote comes near the end of the treatise, under a discussion of His death.)

Here again is perhaps the most irrefutable evidence in the Bible that Jesus really did rise again from the dead:

1 Corinthians 15:6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

This statement was written by Paul, whose writings were very early regarded as Scripture. He wrote that almost all the 500 witnesses, who saw Jesus after His crucifixion, were still alive! Were that statement not true – if in fact not one witness were still alive, so that readers would not be able to locate one single witness to Jesus’ resurrection – that statement alone would have torpedoed Paul’s status as a spokesman for God.

Yet look who endorsed Paul’s status as an author of Scripture: Peter himself!

2 Peter 3:15 ...**our beloved brother Paul** also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; 16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also **the other scriptures**, unto their own destruction.

Peter, the man whom Paul publicly humiliated not so long before, according to Paul’s description in Galatians 2:11-14! Here is Paul publicly humiliating Peter, and telling the Galatians all

about it, and Peter reading Galatians and calling it Scripture! And not only that, but Peter says he loves Paul!

Peter was the leader of the apostles. How could a letter attributed to Peter become accepted as Scripture if it was a forgery? Wouldn't it have quickly come to Peter's attention, and wouldn't his denouncement of it have quickly spread? Peter did write that letter. Peter really did call Paul's writings "Scripture". That "Scripture" written by Paul really did say there were still almost 500 living witnesses to Jesus' resurrection.

There were, in fact, over 500 living witnesses to the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead, and not just from any death. From the most irreversible death imaginable.

Here's how it was put by Ambrose Fleming, outstanding English scientist, emeritus professor of Electrical Engineering at the University of London, recipient of the Faraday medal in 1928:

...we can ask ourselves whether it is probable that such a book, describing events that occurred about thirty or forty years previously, could have been accepted and cherished if the stories of abnormal events in it were false or mythical. It is impossible, because the memory of all elderly persons regarding events of thirty or forty years before is perfectly clear.

No one could now issue a biography of Queen Victoria, who died thirty-one years ago, full of anecdotes which were quite untrue. They would be contradicted at once. They would certainly not be generally accepted and passed on as true. Hence, there is a great improbability that the account of the resurrection given by Mark, [the earliest New Testament book written], which agrees substantially with that given in the other Gospels, is a pure invention. This mythical theory has had to be abandoned because it will not bear close scrutiny. (Ambrose Fleming, quoted in "Therefore Stand: Christian Apologetics", by Wilbur M. Smith, pub. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1965, p. 427-28; which was in turn quoted in "The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict" by Josh McDowell, pub. Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1999, p. 218.)

Here's how it was put by Thomas Arnold, author of the well known three-volume "History of Rome", Chair of Modern History at Oxford, a man trusted around the world to discern the difference between historical fact and fable:

The evidence for our Lord's life and death and resurrection may be, and often has been, shown to be satisfactory; it is good according to the common rules for distinguishing good evidence from bad. Thousands and tens of thousands of persons have gone through it piece by piece, as carefully as every judge summing up on the most important cause [court case]. I have myself done it many times over, not to persuade others but to satisfy myself. I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead. (Quoted in "Therefore Stand" by Wilbur Smith, *ibid*, p. 425-26.)

Let's see how Simon Greenleaf (1783-1853) put it. Greenleaf understood evidence. He was Dane Professor of Law at Harvard University, and one of the law school's principal founders. He wrote "A Treatise on the Law of Evidence" which is still today "considered a classic of American jurisprudence" according to the online "Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia". Greenleaf also wrote "An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice." Wikipedia says this book "set the model for many subsequent works by legal apologists." In this book, he wrote,

The great truths which the apostles declared, were, that Christ had risen from the dead, and that only through repentance from sin, and faith in Him, could men hope for salvation. This doctrine they asserted with one voice, everywhere, not only under the greatest discouragements [such as being stoned and left for dead, Acts 14:19], but in the face of the

most appalling errors [perversions of justice in court] that can be presented to the mind of man. Their master had recently perished as a malefactor, by the sentence of a public tribunal. His religion sought to overthrow the religions of the whole world. The laws of every country were against the teachings of His disciples. The interests and passions of all the rulers and great men in the world were against them. The fashion of the world was against them.

Propagating this new faith, even in the most inoffensive and peaceful manner, they could expect nothing but contempt, opposition, revilings, bitter persecutions, stripes, imprisonments, torments, and cruel deaths. Yet this faith they zealously did propagate; and all these miseries they endured undismayed, nay, rejoicing. As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors only prosecuted their work with increased vigor and resolution. The annals of military warfare afford scarcely an example of the like heroic constancy, patience, and unblanching courage. They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith, and the evidences of the great facts and truths which they asserted; and these motives were pressed upon their attention with the most melancholy and terrific frequency.

It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact. If it were morally possible for them to have been deceived in this matter, every human motive operated to lead them to discover and avow their error. To have persisted in so gross a falsehood, after it was known to them, was not only to encounter, for life, all the evils which man could inflict, from without, but to endure also the pangs of inward and conscious guilt; with no hope of future peace, no testimony of a good conscience, no expectation of honor or esteem among men, no hope of happiness in this life, or in the world to come.

Such conduct in the apostles would moreover have been utterly irreconcilable with the fact that they possessed the ordinary constitution of our common nature. Yet their lives do show them to have been men like all others of our race; swayed by the same motives, animated by the same hopes, affected by the same joys, subdued by the same sorrows, agitated by the same fears, and subject to the same passions, temptations, and infirmities, as ourselves. And their writings show them to have been men of vigorous understandings. If then their testimony was not true, there was no possible motive for its fabrication. (Greenleaf, Simon. *The Testimony of the Evangelists, Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965; reprinted from 1847 edition. P. 28-30).

Lord Darling, a *Chief Justice* of England a century ago, is widely quoted as saying:

The crux of the problem of whether Jesus was, or was not, what He proclaimed Himself to be, must surely depend upon the truth or otherwise of the resurrection. On that greatest point we are not merely asked to have faith. In its favour as living truth there exists such overwhelming evidence, positive and negative, factual and circumstantial, that **no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true.**

(Green, Michael. *Man Alive*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1968, p. 53-54.)

Had Jesus actually not risen from the dead, how easy it would have been for the Pharisees or the Romans to, at any time, disprove all this nonsense – all these books circulating around the Roman Empire alleging that 500 people had seen Jesus alive after His crucifixion! All they would have had to do would be to have gone into the tomb, brought out His body, and shown it to people! That would have been a pretty easy way to stop this growth of this new religion that challenged all others and was growing, despite all their lions and crucifixions, to something like 10% of the population!

The Roman Caesar was incredibly determined to stamp out Christianity! He wanted everyone to worship *him!* It would have been so *easy* for him to *just bring out Jesus' body!* So much easier than all

those crucifixions, consuming so many soldier-hours! So much easier than losing merchants, jailers, community leaders, famous generals, etc., to the extent that after only three centuries the entire empire fell to Christians! *The only thing any of them ever had to do was produce the body!* The fact they did not, though they would have dearly loved to, *proves it was not there!*

You say “But how can a scientist be unscientific?”

Oh, pul-leeze. That’s like saying how can someone who has read the Bible not act like a Christian! I know musicians who have been trained to be ABLE to play music, but instead they play heavy metal. So just because someone has been trained in the scientific method, which was formalized by a Christian, by the way, doesn’t mean he is automatically honest.

But you know the most overwhelming evidence that evolution is a fraud with no evidence stronger than wishful thinking? Not the evidence that photographs, bones, skeletons, fossils, proved to be frauds decades ago, are still in High School science text books. Its the fact that this man, Jesus, who proved that everything He said is true by rising from the dead, said, shortly before he rose, that the books written by Moses are stronger evidence than seeing someone rise from the dead. Luke 16:31.

John Peter Zenger trial, 1735, established Freedom of the Press by arguing before the jury that the truth of a statement ought to be a defense against a charge that it is libel. In other words, it shouldn’t be against the law to tell the truth.

Expansion: It shouldn’t be unacceptable, or inappropriate, or outrageous, or politically incorrect, to tell the truth.

For Christians who believe the Bible is the Truth: it shouldn’t be unacceptable, or inappropriate, or outrageous, or heretical, or impractical, or unworkable, to urge a Christian to obey the Bible.

Writings of Others

Documentation of Resurrection Details:

Jesus Was Crucified.

[Talmud, b. Sanhedrin 43a: On the eve of the Passover Yeshu \[Jesus\] was hanged \[or crucified\]. ... Since nothing was brought forward in his favor he was hanged on the eve of the Passover.](#)

In addition to Roman sources, early Jewish rabbis whose opinions are recorded in the Talmud acknowledged the death of Jesus. According to the earlier rabbis,

Jesus of Nazareth was a transgressor in Israel who practised magic, scorned the words of the wise, led the people astray, and said that he had not come to destroy the law but to add to it. **He was hanged** on Passover Eve for heresy and misleading the people (Bruce, 1953, p. 102, emp. added).

Likewise, Jewish historian Josephus wrote:

[T]here arose about this time Jesus, a wise man.... And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross on his impeachment by the chief men among us, those who had loved him at first did not cease (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.3.3).

The fact that Pilate condemned Christ to the cross is an undisputed historical fact. As archaeologist Edwin Yamauchi stated:

Even if we did not have the New Testament or Christian writings, we would be able to conclude from such non-Christian writings such as Josephus, the Talmud, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger that...he [Jesus—KB] was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius (1995, p. 222).

www.apologeticspress.org, Apologetics Press: Reason & Revelation, Feb 2002 – 22[2]:9-15, by Kyle Butt, M.A.

Apologetics Press :: Reason & Revelation

February 2002 – 22[2]:9-15

Jesus Christ—Dead or Alive?

by [Kyle Butt](#), M.A.

In all likelihood, most of you reading this month's issue of *Reason and Revelation* already have made up your minds about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Truth be told, the majority of you probably believe that Jesus Christ lived on this Earth for approximately 33 years, died at the hand of the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, was buried in a new tomb owned by Joseph of Arimathea, and miraculously defeated death by His resurrection three days later.

But there may be some of you who have lingering doubts about the truthfulness of the resurrection of Christ. In fact, many people have much more than lingering doubts; they already have made up their minds that the story of the resurrection happened too long ago, was witnessed by too few people, has not been proven scientifically, and thus should be discarded as an unreliable legend.

Regardless of which position best describes your view of Christ's resurrection, what we all must do is check our prejudice at the door and openly and honestly examine the historical facts attending the resurrection.

FACT—JESUS CHRIST LIVED

Determining whether Jesus Christ actually lived is something that must be established before one can begin to discuss His resurrection. If it cannot be proved beyond reasonable doubt that He did walk this Earth, then any discussion about whether or not He arose from the dead digresses quickly into an exercise in yarn stringing based on little more than guesswork and human imagination. Fortunately, the fact that Jesus lived is practically universally accepted. A host of hostile witnesses testified of His life, and the New Testament documents in intricate detail His existence. [Even if one does not accept the New Testament as inspired of God, he or she cannot deny that its books contain historical information regarding a person by the name of Jesus Christ Who really did live in the first century A.D.] The honest historian is forced to admit that documentation for the existence, and life, of Jesus runs deep and wide (for an in-depth study on the historicity of Christ, see Butt, 2000). Thus, knowing that Jesus Christ existed allows us to move farther into the subject of His resurrection.

FACT—JESUS CHRIST DIED

For most people, coming to the conclusion that Jesus died is not difficult, due to either of two reasons. First, the Bible believer accepts the fact that Jesus died because several different biblical writers confirm it. Second, the unbeliever accepts the idea, based not upon biblical evidence, but rather on the idea that the natural order of things which he has experienced in this life is for a person to live and eventually die. Once evidence sufficient to prove Christ's existence in history has been established, the naturalist/empiricist has no trouble accepting His death. However, in order to provide such people with a few more inches of common ground on this matter, it would be good to note that several secular writers substantiated the fact that **Jesus Christ did die**. Tacitus, the ancient Roman historian writing in approximately A.D. 115, documented Christ's physical demise when he wrote concerning the Christians that "their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius' reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilatus" (1952, 15.44).

In addition to Roman sources, early Jewish rabbis whose opinions are recorded in the Talmud acknowledged the death of Jesus. According to the earlier rabbis,

Jesus of Nazareth was a transgressor in Israel who practised magic, scorned the words of the wise, led the people astray, and said that he had not come to destroy the law but to add to it. **He was hanged** on Passover Eve for heresy and misleading the people (Bruce, 1953, p. 102, emp. added).

Likewise, Jewish historian Josephus wrote:

[T]here arose about this time Jesus, a wise man.... And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross on his impeachment by the chief men among us, those who had loved him at first did not cease (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.3.3).

The fact that Pilate condemned Christ to the cross is an undisputed historical fact. As archaeologist Edwin Yamauchi stated:

Even if we did not have the New Testament or Christian writings, we would be able to conclude from such non-Christian writings such as Josephus, the Talmud, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger that...he [Jesus—KB] was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius (1995, p. 222).

It is at this point in our study that some would suggest that Hugh Schonfield's infamous "Swoon Theory" should be considered. Schonfield (1965) postulated that Christ did not die on the cross; rather, He merely fainted or "swooned." Later, after being laid on a cold slab in the dark tomb, He revived and exited His rock-hewn grave. Such a theory, however, fails to take into account the heinous nature of the scourging (sometimes referred to as an "intermediate death") that Christ had endured at the hand of Roman lictors, or the finely honed skills of those Roman soldiers whose job it was to inflict such gruesome punishment prior to a prisoner's actual crucifixion. To press the point, in the March 1986 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, William Edwards and his coauthors penned an article, "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," that employed modern medical insight to provide an exhaustive description of Jesus' death (256:1455-1463). Sixteen years later, Brad Harrub and Bert Thompson coauthored an updated review ("An Examination of the Medical Evidence for the Physical Death of Jesus Christ") of the extensive scientific evidence surrounding Christ's physical death (2002).

After reading such in-depth, medically based descriptions of the horrors to which Christ was exposed, and the condition of His ravaged body, the Swoon Theory quickly fades into oblivion (where it rightly belongs). Jesus died. Upon this, we all most certainly can agree.

www.apologeticspress.org, Apologetics Press: Reason & Revelation, Feb 2002 – 22[2]:9-15, by Kyle Butt, M.A.

Apologetics Press :: Reason & Revelation

February 2002 - 22[2]:9-15

Jesus Christ—Dead or Alive?

by [Kyle Butt](#), M.A.

<http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/121>

FACT—THE TOMB OF CHRIST WAS EMPTY

Around the year A.D. 165, Justin Martyr penned his *Dialogue with Trypho*. At the beginning of chapter 108 of this work, he recorded a letter that the Jewish community had been circulating concerning the empty tomb of Christ:

A godless and lawless heresy had sprung from one Jesus, a Galilaeen deceiver, whom we crucified, but his disciples stole him by night from the tomb where he was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceive men by asserting that he has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven.

Somewhere around the sixth century, another caustic treatise written to defame Christ circulated among the Jewish community. In this narrative, known as *Toledoth Yeshu*, Jesus was described as the illegitimate son of a soldier named Joseph Pandera. He also was labeled as a disrespectful deceiver who led many away from the truth. Near the end of the treatise, under a discussion of His death, the following paragraph can be found:

A diligent search was made and he [Jesus—KB] was not found in the grave where he had been buried. A gardener had taken him from the grave and had brought him into his garden and buried him in the sand over which the waters flowed into the garden.

Upon reading Justin Martyr's description of one Jewish theory regarding the tomb of Christ, and another premise from *Toledoth Yeshu*, it becomes clear that a single common thread unites them both—**the tomb of Christ had no body in it!**

<http://www.kirjasilta.net/artikkelit/santala/how1.html>

How can we be convinced that Jesus is the Messiah? I/III

© [Risto Santala](#) 1992

Bible talks given in Moscow to Messianic Jews, Autumn 1992

The New Testament deals with historical facts. Something drastic happened the same year that Jesus

died. Even the main Jewish source, the Talmud, speaks about the discontinuation of the sacrificial system before the destruction of the Temple. Something mysterious happened 40 years prior to its destruction. There are three different discussions about it (in [Sanh.](#), [Abodah Zarah](#) and [De Yomah](#)). According to them, the sacrifices lost their power, the Presence of God left the Temple and the gates of the Holy of Holies opened by themselves. The friend of Nicodemus, Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai, who was rescued from beleaguered Jerusalem in a coffin by his disciples, handed down this tradition in Mas. Yomah: "FORTY YEARS PRIOR to the destruction of the Temple... the western candle did not burn and the gates of the Temple opened by themselves; and thus Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai rebuked them saying: 'Temple, Temple, why do you grieve so? I KNOW that you are about to be destroyed.' "

All this occurred 40 years before the destruction of the Temple, in the year 30 A.D., which is considered the year of Jesus' death. We also have this story in three of the Gospels, how the veil of the Temple was rent in two from top to bottom when Jesus died. Three times the Epistle to Hebrews interprets these occurrences: we now have a new hope that enters through the veil to the Holy One. The Messiah entered by His own blood into the Holy of Holies to atone for our sins. And thus he opened up for us "a new and living way" through the curtain to our God, so that we can draw near to Him "in full assurance of faith".

It is most interesting to know that even the Jewish historian Josephus described a similar sign from the same period. Once the heavy gates of brass facing east from the Temple opened by themselves although they had been locked by iron bolts. The Temple guard hastened to notify the commander about the matter and he succeeded in locking them only with great difficulty.

Many religions are philosophies – guessing about God. The major religions based on a person are

July 20, 1969

Another category of evidence proves the universe is only a few thousand years old, not a few billion years old. The Bible is the only holy book that makes that claim.

Hinduism and its children claim it is billions of years at the very least. The Qu'ran, written by a man surrounded by Jewish and Christian influences, has flashes of the Genesis creation account but instead of "six days" or any other definite period of time, says "God...created the heavens and the earth in six periods of time. (Surah 7:54. Also Surah 10:2, 11:7, 25:59, 32:4, 41:9-12, 57:4.)

I'm pretty sure some of you think the evidence of evolution is just overwhelming. I'm also pretty sure that is because you have ignored the evidence set forth by Creation Scientists. All you listen to are the newspaper scientists and their intellectual peers in High School classrooms, who set forth their theories without even telling you there *are* alternative views. By contrast, the Creation Scientists will tell you all the alternative views and then explain, point by point, what evidence evolutionists ignore.

Notes to myself: Examples: from "Deadline" by Randy Alcorn
Response to my Defensive Action Statement,
Responses to 1 cor 14