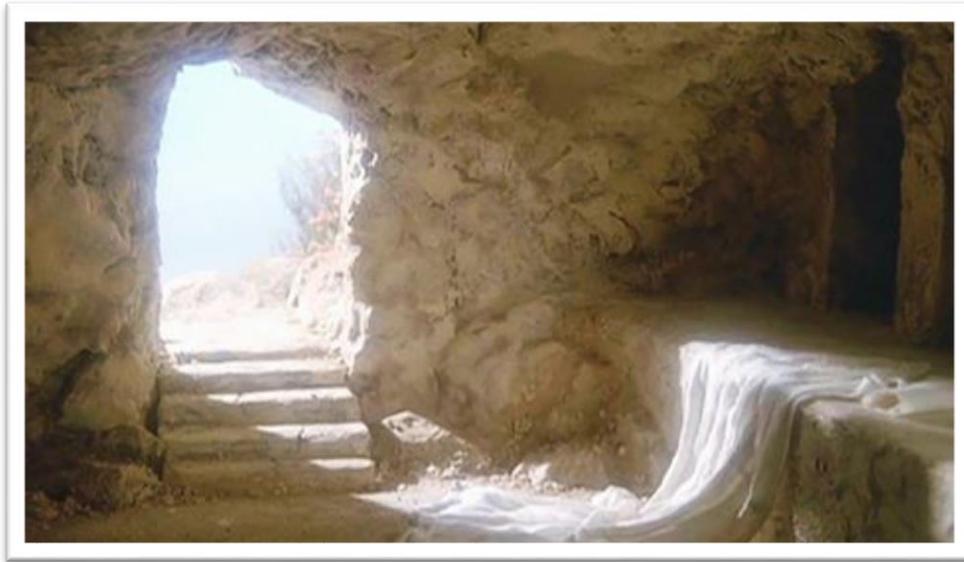


## EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION?



No proof, in the sense of repeatable trials, but there is a LOT of circumstantial evidence. The circumstantial evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is actually quite good – certainly good enough to win in court.

When we lived in LA, a man in my church was a district attorney for Los Angeles County. During the OJ Simpson trial, I asked him about the importance of circumstantial evidence in a murder trial. He laughed and said, “Almost ALL murder convictions are based on circumstantial evidence. We hardly ever have eye-witnesses.”

In the case of the resurrection we do have eye-witnesses. A lot of them in fact – over 500. A few actually wrote down what they saw when they met with Jesus in his resurrection body. Some protest that those records are in the Bible, as if that made their written testimony less valid. Folks, the Bible is not a book of fables. Read the four Gospels for yourself. You will see what I mean.

Some people dismiss the Gospel accounts because of their antiquity. “They were written SO long ago,” objectors say, “I have to assume a lot of errors crept in.” Well, do a Google search on the reliability of the New Testament documents. You will discover they are by far the most well attested of ANY works of antiquity.

For example, there are just seven Greek manuscript copies of Plato’s works in existence. Everything we understand about what Plato wrote comes from those seven manuscripts. Contrast that with the 5,686 existing Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Then throw-in the multitude of other ancient language versions, such as Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, as well as Latin, together with numerous quotations by the early Church Fathers, and you have an embarrassingly large amount of ancient copies to confirm the accuracy of the Gospels.

Okay, so even if we are sure about the ACCURACY of what they wrote, how do we know they were telling the truth – or lying?

We have written evidence outside the Bible for the crucifixion of Jesus. Josephus, a Jewish historian writing in 93 AD, and Tacitus, a Roman senator and historian writing in 116 AD, both

wrote about Jesus' crucifixion by Pontius Pilate. The written evidence we have for the resurrection though, obviously comes from those who claimed to have seen Jesus raised from the death – namely the Gospel authors.

So one has to decide if those eye-witnesses were lying or telling the truth.

Everything about Christianity hinges on the resurrection. As the Apostle Paul himself said, "If Jesus was not raised from the dead then I myself am bearing false witness about God." Paul, a scholar in Jewish Law, knew full well the penalty for bearing false witness was death.

For me, the truthfulness of the eyewitnesses is the most convincing evidence for the resurrection. **WHY WOULD THEY LIE?** Think about it. When I was a kid about to get a spanking for hitting my brother, why did I lie and say he started it? I lied to get **OUT** of trouble. Is that not why any of us lie – to get **OUT** of trouble? So why would these eye-witnesses lie about seeing Jesus resurrected if it meant getting **INTO** trouble?

If you know the story, after the crucifixion, the Apostles hid, terrified that what happened to Jesus would happen to them. But a few days later, they joyfully came out of hiding, in spite of the danger, publicly proclaiming they had seen, talked with, and touched, Jesus alive from the dead! Incredible.

Every one of them (except perhaps John) was later executed for continuing to hold the claim they had seen Jesus risen from the dead. If they were lying, why would they submit to torture and death to preserve that lie? That would be crazy.

I remember reading what Charles Colson, of the Nixon White House, said after he was in prison and then converted to Christ, "What helped convince me of the resurrection was my own experience of lying to protect the most powerful man in the world. Once the Justice Department started coming after us, we in Nixon's inner circle only lasted **DAYS** before we admitted the lie."

I will be the first to say there is not scientific "proof" about the resurrection. At that level of proof, you would have to see Jesus risen yourself – but even then, others would doubt **YOUR** word – just as others doubt the original eyewitnesses.

But for most things in life, we choose to believe those we consider trustworthy. I find the Gospel authors trustworthy – and now having spent 40 years **ACTING** as if what they saw is true – I am more convinced than ever of the present - day, resurrected reality of Jesus Christ. I commend him to you.