

## Easter 2019

### I. ME

- A. Welcome/Online
- B. First time in church for a while or ever?
  - 1. **Thanks for being here.** I know it means a lot to the person who invited you.
  - 2. You're safe- 7 exits.

### II. WE

- A. Tell you two important things...
  - 1. **God loves you and God is for you...** and so are we
- B. Something I know about most of us (Jesus-follower or not)...
  - 1. There's some kind of pushback to that idea.
  - 2. Something in you that says either... "that'd be nice but there's no proof there even is a God"
  - 3. "Doesn't seem like he cares about me. Look at my life."
  - 4. "You don't know what I've done, he's definitely not FOR me."
- C. Respectfully... **You're wrong**
- D. How do I know? **EASTER.**
  - 1. **Easter is proof that God loves you and is for you.**
  - 2. Easter is proof that God loved you enough to come into human history and do something about the pain, hurt, fear, emptiness, loneliness, sadness that we experience and see all around us and in us.
  - 3. No matter who you are, where you've been, what you've done, or who you've done them with, or what's happened to you...
  - 4. Easter proves that He loves you and is FOR you.
  - 5. He is not against you, mad at you, waiting to smite you.
  - 6. He is for your happiness, fulfillment, and peace.
  - 7. He wants to give you a life of purpose, confidence, and joy.

- E. But if Easter isn't a true, historical fact... if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then everything I just said is a lie. And Jesus is nothing.
  - 1. Just one of thousands of people executed by Rome
- F. **The authenticity of the resurrection is the most important question in human history.**
  - 1. If it's not true... then really I and everyone like me is fooling you and every penny and hour ever given in the name of Jesus by people like you was swindled from you by people like me.
    - 2. But if it is true... everything changes
      - a. There is a God.
      - b. He loves you and he is for you
      - c. And you can have a full life now and forever.

### III. GOD.

- A. So how do we know if the resurrection is historical fact?
  - 1. Historians agree there was a Jesus that was executed by the Romans in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine
  - 2. And that his first followers (who were originally devote monotheistic Jews) claimed that he had risen from the dead and was divine.
- B. It's undeniable that SOMETHING happened but was it really Jesus coming back to life?
  - 1. Obviously not everyone at that time and not all scholars today say that Jesus actually rose from the dead.
  - 2. So what are some other explanations of what happened?
  - 3. **If the resurrection is not true there should be a logical explanation for what actually happened.**
  - 4. What else could have happened? Let's look at the 4 most popular alternative explanations

C. **Explanation #1: Jesus didn't really die.**

1. He appeared to his followers after his crucifixion... b/c he was never actually dead... he was only MOSTLY dead.
2. He passed out on the cross and his body was either put in a cold tomb or thrown into a pit or shallow grave.
3. When he woke up, he started walking around claiming to be resurrected.
4. Most legitimate scholars write this off immediately.
5. That's not how Romans executed criminals
6. They were experts at executing people... the soldiers job was to kill people... sometimes up to 6000 in a single day.
7. They knew the difference between a dead man and a mostly dead man.
8. **The Romans crucified people to death until they were dead.**
9. There's no way they simply messed up.

**10. John 19:28-35**

11. Not to mention there's no way someone just gets up and walks around like everything is normal after the whipping, beating, and crucifixion, and spear in the side that Jesus endured.
12. AND... if he did survive all of that there's no way he's showing himself to people... the Romans would just arrest him and execute him again.
13. Jesus really died.

14. Ok then...

D. **Explanation #2: They went to the wrong tomb.**

1. In their grief, Jesus' followers took a left instead of a right and went to the wrong tomb.
2. Which was of course empty b/c no one had been put in it yet.
3. Again, no historian takes this seriously.
4. They could have simply asked Joseph of Arimathea where the tomb was.
5. **Mark 15:42-47**
6. Also, the Jewish and Roman authorities would have been more than happy to simply give free tours of the real tomb... "Hey dummies it's over here."
7. But they didn't... **Nobody produced any body.**
8. And if it is ever found everyone agrees... Xianity is done.
9. But they haven't and even the officials of the time didn't know where it was
10. Which brings us to the oldest alternative explanation for Jesus' missing body...

### E. Explanation #3: The disciples stole the body.

1. This whole thing is an elaborate hoax that was planned and carried out by Jesus' disciples.
2. Was it a hoax?
3. The disciples thought so... at first **John 20:1-2**
4. Origin: **Matthew 28:11-15**
5. All of the disciples were willing to die for their accounts.
6. Criminals turn on each other all the time for less prison time. School kids even do the same for less time in detention.
7. Many of Jesus-disciples and early followers were eventually tortured for their testimony that Jesus rose from the dead... but they never took it back.
8. Not human nature... someone would have cracked if they made it up... what would be the point of keeping the lie intact if you're going to die for it?
9. Who goes through that for something they know they made up?
10. Even Jesus' brother, James, was tortured and killed for saying and maintaining that he saw his older brother alive after his death.
11. **No one would willingly die for their own lie.**

### F. Explanation #4: The disciples borrowed existing stories of resurrection.

1. Popular idea... Early church adapted stories of Mithras, Osiris, Dionysus and put them onto Jesus.
2. Interesting, but it's a myth.
3. No one in those cultures actually believed in a present-day human resurrection.
4. **Greco-Roman** culture mostly followed the ideas of Homer and Plato. They were dualists
  - a. The ultimate goal was to escape the material world to go to the spiritual/real world.
  - b. To return to the material world in a new body was completely undesirable.
  - c. Once someone was gone and dead they had finally escaped the body that was imprisoning their soul
  - d. They never wanted to return to this physical world.
5. For the **Jews** at the time, resurrection was a real hope for all people of Israel.
  - a. But they believed in a resurrection of everyone at the same time at the end of time.
  - b. There was no room in their theology for one person resurrecting eternally in the middle of time.
  - c. **Luke 24:1-12**
  - d. It's why nearly all of Jesus' followers were freaked out when they saw him.
  - e. **Luke 24:36-44**
6. **The resurrection was unthinkable in that time and culture.**
7. The early church didn't borrow the idea of resurrection b/c that idea didn't fit in the world-view of the time.

2. "Come and see."

G. None of the most plausible alternative explanations for Jesus' missing body hold up under scrutiny.

**1. The only logical and historically accurate answer is Jesus really did rise from the dead.**

H. Which means what he said was true.

#### IV. YOU

A. God loves you and is for you

B. And he really does want **a relationship** with you

1. And he did everything to make it possible.
2. We can't do it ourselves... can't earn it and don't deserve it.

C. B/c we have sinned (**Law of Love**)

1. Nothing we do can change or take away our guilt.

D. **God** made a way to punish evil and destroy its effects without destroying us.

E. He sent **Jesus**. 100% God and 100% human to pay the penalty for all of us

1. He rose again proving that he has power over sin and death... actually conquered them.

F. And we can be restored to a perfect relationship with God simply by **trusting** that he paid everything and did everything for us. That there is nothing left for us to do to be right with God.

G. **Jesus-Follower**... enjoy that relationship. It is real. There is historical proof that Jesus is alive and that you can be confident in his love for you.

H. **Not a Jesus-Follower**... Just consider it.

1. Like the angel said... **Matthew 28:5-6**.

#### V. WE

A. What if it's all true?

B. What if Jesus really was who he said he was (God) and can give you not just a fresh start but a new life like he said he would?

C. His resurrection proves he can do it.

D. Just accept the angels' invitation... come and see.

E. Take your time. Explore. Examine. Ask.

F. What you'll find is **the resurrection is proof that you are loved more than you'll ever know.**

#### CROSS BLOSSOMING

**CONNECTION CARD OR WELCOME CARD? They're different now :)**

#### KID PICK-UP

## QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of your favorite things and/or family traditions about Easter? Least favorite?
2. Which explanation for the resurrection seems most likely to you? Why is that? What evidence would you need to change your mind?
3. Read John 20 as a group. What stands out to you?
4. Jon said, "The resurrection is proof that you are loved more than you'll ever know." If you truly believed that and remembered it every day, how would your daily life/relationships be different?
5. What questions do you still have about the resurrection?