***Big Questions: Looking to God’s Word for Answers  
“…always being ready to make a defense…” I Peter 3:15***

**Can I Trust the Resurrection?**

**Question: Why did Christianity emerge on the stage of world history and why did it take the form that it did? Answer: The initial followers of Christianity believed beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus Christ had been crucified and that three days later He rose again from the dead, thus proving that He was who He claimed to be, the Son of God sent into the world to save us from our sins.**

**I. The Testimony from the New Testament Writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, Jude**

* **Do the New Testament Writers Really Believe that Jesus Rose from the Dead?**
  + **Direct statements affirming the resurrection of Jesus**
  + **Indirect statements affirming the resurrection of Jesus**
* **Do the New Testament Writers Realize the Incredible Nature of Their Claim?**
  + **Luke the Physician**
  + **Paul the Theologian/Philosopher**

**II. The Testimony of the Original Disciples: They were absolutely and completely committed to the belief that Jesus Christ died and rose again**

* **Did the Early Followers of Jesus Really Believe in that Jesus Rose from the Dead?**
  + **Ten martyrs and one banished from the original disciples**
* **Did the Early Followers of Jesus Realize the Incredible Nature of Their Claim?**
  + **Thomas, “I will not believe unless…”**

**III. The Testimony of Skeptics**

* **Ancient: James, Paul**
* **Modern: C.S. Lewis, Lee Strobel**

**Next Week: Does Church History Destroy the Credibility of Jesus?**

**I Corinthians 15:3-8**

**3**For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

**4**and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

**5**and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

**6**After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;

**7**then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;

**8**and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

**Scripture Reading**

**Read I Corinthians 15:3-8 (Slides)**

* **Do the early followers of Christ believe that Jesus rose again from the dead?**
* **If so, why do they believe such an incredible claim that Jesus rose again from the dead?**

**Question: Why did Christianity emerge on the stage of world history and why did it take the form that it did? Answer: The initial followers of Christianity believed beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus Christ had been crucified and that three days later He rose again from the dead, thus proving that He was who He claimed to be, the Son of God sent into the world to save us from our sins.**

On what basis should we believe that Jesus was raised from the dead and is alive today, reigning as Son of God? That’s not mainly what my message is about today. But I begin with this question to make sure you know it is foundational; and to stress the fact that Christianity is based on historical events and facts, not just spiritual ideas and experiences. True or false, spiritual ideas and experiences are not the foundation or the sum of Christianity. Christianity is based on historical facts, or it is nothing. If Jesus Christ did not live and die and rise from the dead as a historical person at a point in time and in a particular place, then Christianity is a sham.

Christianity is built out of these truths: that God created the world; that he guides and sustains the world; that in his divine Son, Jesus Christ, he entered the world; that this Jesus Christ lived a perfect life and that he died for our sins on a particular day about 2,000 years ago, in a particular place just outside Jerusalem; and that God raised him from the dead the third day; and that he sent his followers throughout the world to make disciples of every nation; and that he ascended to heaven where he reigns at God’s right hand, and from which he will come again to establish his kingdom on the earth, and that all of human history and your life points in this direction. The outcome of your life, according to the early followers of Jesus Christ, hinges on this historical event and the reality of events still yet to come.

These are all objective, historical events, not just spiritual ideas or experiences. And if these events are false—if they did not happen or will not happen—then Christianity is false and no one should believe it.

**I. The Testimony from the New Testament Writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, Jude (Header Slide – Slide 1)**

* **Do the New Testament Writers Really Believe that Jesus Rose from the Dead?**
  + **Direct statements affirming the resurrection of Jesus: 19 New Testament books give explicit statements about Jesus rising again from the dead**
  + **Indirect statements affirming the resurrection of Jesus: The remaining 8 New Testament books give indirect statements about the resurrection**
  + **Things like – Jesus Christ is currently at the right hand of His Father and Jesus Christ is coming again in power and Jesus Christ IS right now the Lord and Savior of the world**
  + **Luke the Physician**
    - **We are going to read several texts in succession and ask the question, does Luke the Physician believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ?**
  + **Here are some examples: Read Luke 1:1-4 (Slides 2-3)**
  + **Read Luke 24:5-7 (Slides 4)**
  + **Read Acts 2:22-24 (Slides 5-6)**
  + **Read Acts 3:14-15 (Slide 7)**
  + **Read Acts 4:8-10 (Slide 8)**
  + **Read Acts 5:29-30 (Slide 9)**
  + **This next passage is Christianity 101, this is the task of the early church**
  + **Read 10:38-43 (Slide 10-12)**
  + **Jesus of Nazareth came doing good works, healing the oppressed, God was with Him and He did all these things in public**
  + **The leaders killed Him by hanging Him on a cross**
  + **God raised Him up on the third day, which was the divine plan from the beginning**
  + **That His resurrection was not to everyone in the world, but to specific witnesses, followers that saw Him, ate and drank with Him**
  + **And then He appointed these witnesses to preach this truth to the world as a fulfillment of what God said hundreds of years before hand and as a means to forgiveness of sins**
  + **Read Acts 13:28-32 (Slides 13-14)**
  + **Paul the Theologian/Philosopher**
* **Do the New Testament Writers Realize the Incredible Nature of Their Claim?**
  + **Read Acts 26:22-25 (Slide 15-16)**

**II. The Testimony of the Original Disciples: They were absolutely and completely committed to the belief that Jesus Christ died and rose again**

* **Did the Early Followers of Jesus Really Believe in that Jesus Rose from the Dead?**
  + **Ten martyrs and one banished from the original disciples**
* **Did the Early Followers of Jesus Realize the Incredible Nature of Their Claim?**
  + **Thomas, “I will not believe unless…”**

**III. The Testimony of Skeptics**

* **Ancient:**
* **James, the half-brother of Jesus at one point came to get Jesus to come home because he and his family believed Him to be mad, out of His mind**
* **Becomes the leader of the church at Jerusalem**
* **Paul, the philosophical and theological giant of the time of Christ was confronted by Jesus on the road to Damascus**
* **Modern:**
* **C.S. Lewis**
* **Lee Strobel**

**Conclusion: (blank slide) The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most incredible claim of history. People do not rise from the dead. This is not merely a modern understanding of life, this is an ancient understanding of life. Luke, Paul, Thomas, Peter, John, and others were very skeptical from the beginning. But something happened on that day 2000 years ago. 2000 years ago they saw, touched, spoke with, learned from Jesus Christ three days after Jesus had been crucified and killed in a very public way. The only explanation for their transformation is not that they were easily confused or were hallucinating, but that they all saw and experienced something they thought was impossible.**