

# Is Christianity Alone Fully True and Is Jesus Christ Really the Only Way to God?—Part 8

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Among many possible converging lines of evidence for Christianity we have selected two. We feel these will command the attention of any open-minded person. First, the existence of supernatural prophecy in the Bible cannot be denied except on the basis of philosophical (anti-supernatural) bias. For example, the internal and external evidence clearly supports a pre-neo-Babylonian composition for the book of Isaiah and a neo-Babylonian composition for the book of Daniel. <sup>1</sup> Yet Isaiah predicts and describes what King Cyrus will do (by name) over 100 years before he even lived (Isa. 44:28-45:6).

Isaiah described the specific nature and death of the Jewish Messiah 700 years in advance (Isa. 9:6; 53:1-12); and the Babylonian captivity of Judah 100 years in advance (Isa. 39:5-7). Indeed, the Assyrian-Babylonian captivities are hinted at as early as 1400 BC in Deuteronomy 28:64-66. Similarly, in 530 BC, hundreds of years in advance, the prophet Daniel (Matt. 24:15) predicts the Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman empires so clearly that antisupernaturalists are forced, against all the evidence, to date this book at 165 B.C. and thus imply it is a forgery (Daniel chs. 2, 7, 11:1-35 in light of subsequent Persian, Greek and Roman history and the dynasties of the Egyptians and Syrians). <sup>2</sup> First Kings 13:1-2 predicts King Josiah 300 years before he was born, and Micah 5:2 predicts the very birthplace of Jesus 700 years before He was born. How are we to account for such things if the Bible is not a book inspired by God? Nothing like this is found in other religions.

Second, the historical resurrection of Christ cannot logically be doubted and if true, based on the teachings of Jesus, proves Christianity alone is fully true. On the authority of accepted principles of historic and textual analysis, the New Testament documents can, as noted, be shown to be reliable and trustworthy. That is, they give accurate primary source evidence for the life and death of Jesus Christ. In 2,000 years the New Testament authors have never been proven unethical or dishonest, or to have been the object of deception. In the Gospel records, Jesus claimed to be God incarnate (John 5:18; 10:27-33); He exercises innumerable divine prerogatives, and fully *rests* His claims on His numerous and abundantly testified, historically unparalleled miracles (John 10:37-38) and His forthcoming physical resurrection from the dead (John 10:17-18). No one else ever did this.

In each Gospel, Christ's resurrection is minutely described, and for 2,000 years it has been incapable of disproof despite the detailed scholarship of the world's best skeptics. The resurrection cannot be rejected *a priori* on antisupernaturalist grounds for miracles are impossible only if so defined. The probability of miracle is determined by the cumulative weight of the evidence, not philosophical bias.

To illustrate the quality of the evidence for the resurrection, a public debate of two days duration was held between Dr. Gary R. Habermas, a Christian scholar, and Antony Flew, a leading skeptic of the resurrection. These men were the two primary debaters. Ten independent judges, all of whom served on the faculty of American universities, were to render a verdict: the first panel of judges was comprised of five philosophers instructed to evaluate the debate *content* and render a verdict concerning the winner. The second panel of judges was told to evaluate the *argumentation* technique of the debaters.

The results on content were four votes in favor of the Christian argument one vote for a draw. The decision on argumentation technique was 3 to 2 in favor of the Christian debater. The overall decision of both panels was 7 to 2 in favor of the Christian position, with one draw. The judges were often surprised that the outcome resulted so heavily in favor of the resurrection.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. William Lane Craig gives the following anecdote in *The Son Rises*:

“There ain’t gonna be no Easter this year,” a student friend remarked to me.

“Why not?” I asked incredulously.

“They found the body.”

Despite his irreverent humor, my friend displayed a measure of insight often not shared by modern [liberal] theologians. His joke correctly perceived that without the resurrection Christianity is worthless.

The earliest Christians would certainly have agreed with my friend. The apostle Paul put it straight and simple: “If Christ was not raised then neither our preaching nor your faith has any meaning at all.... If Christ did not rise your faith is futile and your sins have never been forgiven” (1 Corinthians 15:14,17, Phillips). For the earliest Christians, Jesus’ resurrection was a historical fact, every bit as real as His death on the cross. Without the resurrection, Christianity would have been simply false. Jesus would have been just another prophet who had met His unfortunate fate at the hands of the Jews. Faith in Him as Lord, Messiah, or Son of God would have been stupid. There would be no use in trying to save the situation by interpreting the resurrection as some sort of symbol. The cold, hard facts of reality would remain: Jesus was dead and anything He started died with him.

David C. K. Watson tells the true story of another man who understood this, with tragic consequences. The man was a retired clergyman who in his spare time began to study the thought of certain modern theologians on the resurrection. He read books on the resurrection and watched television talk shows on the subject. In his old age, he felt sure that the highly educated professors and writers knew far more than he did and that they were surely right when they said Jesus had not literally risen from the dead. He understood clearly what that meant for him: his whole life and ministry had been based on a bundle of lies. He committed suicide.

I believe that modern theologians must answer to God for that man’s death. One cannot make statements on such matters without accepting part of the responsibility for the consequences. The average layman probably expects that theologians would be biased in favor of the resurrection, when in fact exactly the opposite is often true. It has not been historians who have denied the historical resurrection of Jesus, but theologians. Why this strange situation? According to Carl Braaten, theologians who deny the resurrection have not done so on historical grounds; rather theology has been derailed by existentialism and historicism, which have a stranglehold on the formation of theological statements. Hence, the statements of many theologians concerning the resurrection of Jesus actually are not based on fact, but are determined by philosophical assumptions. That makes statements that deny that Jesus’ resurrection was a historical fact all the more irresponsible, for their conclusion has not been determined by the facts, which support the historicity of the resurrection, but by assumptions.

The point is that the Christian faith stands or falls with the resurrection of Jesus. It is no use saying, as some theologians do, “We believe in the risen Christ, not in the empty tomb!”... If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then He was a tragedy and a failure, and no amount of theologizing or symbolizing could change the situation.”<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Craig concludes with the following comments:

1. The resurrection of Jesus was an act of God.... Anyone who denies this explanation is

rationaly obligated to produce a more plausible cause of Jesus' resurrection and to explain how it happened...

2. The resurrection of Jesus confirms His personal claims...

3. The resurrection of Jesus shows that He holds the key to eternal life.”<sup>5</sup>

If Jesus rose from the dead, something no one else has done, this strongly infers His claims to be God-incarnate are valid. If so, Jesus is an infallible authority. Yet it was Jesus Himself who taught He was the only way to God (John 14:6). If no one else in history ever rose from the dead, on what *logical* basis can the claims of Jesus be doubted?

Edward John Carnell once commented that, “The incongruity between man’s desire for life and the reality of physical death is the most maddening problem of all. Although he sees the handwriting on the wall, man yet refuses to think that death is his final destiny.... Man wills to live forever; the urge is written deep in his nature.”<sup>6</sup> Dr. Francis Beckwith observes:

Death is man’s most obvious enemy. Therefore is it not reasonable to assume that if the world’s religions, which offer the human race countless abstract utopias in the afterlife, cannot deal with man’s ultimate dilemma in this mortal realm, they are indeed unworthy to be considered alternatives to the awful truth that [in the words of Albert Camus] “the world itself...is but a vast irrational”?

In other words, a religion that is true would be one that defeats death, man’s most detestable foe. Of all the religious leaders previously discussed, only one, Jesus of Nazareth, has conquered the Grim Reaper. Though we will all inevitably die, the fact that Jesus defeated death gives us assurance that His pronouncements on the nature of God, His own Deity, salvation, the afterlife, judgment, sin and righteousness are to be taken most seriously.<sup>7</sup>

Certainly, death puts us all in our place. Yet because God has also “set eternity in [our] heart” (Ecc. 3:11), all men hope to live forever and the thought of death is only rarely considered. As J. C. Ryle noted, “Death is a great fact that all acknowledge, but very few seem to realize”; while Ugo Betti wrote in *Struggle Till Dawn* (Vol. 2, 1949), “Every tiny part of us cries out against the idea of dying and hopes to live forever.” Biblically, of course, all men will live forever; the only question is where they will live.

Our conclusion is that both the miraculous nature of the Bible itself, which speaks for its divine inspiration, Christ’s own resurrection and His infallible pronouncements as God incarnate concerning the true way of salvation are more than sufficient reason to accept the Christian view.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, “The Date of the Book of Daniel,” in Roy B. Zuck (gen. ed.), *Vital Apologetic Issues: Examining Reason and Revelation in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1995), pp. 194-203; for Daniel and Isaiah see Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, Rev. 1974).

<sup>2</sup> See the commentaries on Daniel by John F. Walvoord, Charles Lee Feinberg and H. C. Leupold.

<sup>3</sup> The details are given in Terry L. Miethe, ed., *Did Jesus Rise From the Dead? The Resurrection Debate* (Harper & Row 1987).

<sup>4</sup> William Lane Craig, *The Son Rises* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), pp. 135-36.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>6</sup> In Francis Beckwith, *Baha’i* (Minn., MN: Bethany 1985), citing E. J. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, (Eerdman’s, 1948), pp. 24-25.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.