

Pentwater Bible Church

Gospel of Mark
Message 63
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The Resurrection of Christ by Rubens Cir 1611

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The Book of Mark
Message 63
The Burial & Resurrection Part II
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The Entombment By Caravaggio Cir 1602-03

PROVING THE BURIAL & RESURRECTION OF JESUS

There are accepted means of validating a historic event. We use these in courts of law and forensic laboratories and they are dependent upon evidence. Evidence enters our minds, we process it and it leads us to a conclusion.

LOGIC & REASON:

At birth each human is given the ability to communicate. It is the imparting of the logic & reason capability into each of us that allows us to verbalize, read and understand each other. Young children have this ability.

This is Kids Play!

We have all seen and heard children at play with one another. You may actually remember using these terms yourself. One makes a claim of some sort and another will respond with one of three challenges.

1. Who says?
2. How do you know?
3. So what?

As basic as these challenges are they are fundamental to our realization of how we receive, process and validate information that comes into us throughout our lives. "Who

says?" is actually a challenge to give an authoritative source for your assertion. "How do you know?" is actually a challenge to validate the channel through which you received the information. Finally, "So What?" essentially means how does this piece of information actually affect me?

Are We just Computers?

Computer technology was developed from the human model of our thought process and existing information that resides within each of us. We are not computers; we were used as a model to develop the computer. The Central Processing Unit (CPU) provides the logic that moves the data in some pre-determined manner much like our brain function. The hard drive (HD) is the location of the data that is stored in the computer similar to our experience base. The keyboard and mouse are input devices that are used to put information into the computer. The eyes and ears are referred to as gates through which information enters our mind. This is analogous to the keyboard and mouse of the computer. Finally, the output device of the computer is the monitor (screen), which compares to our speech.

1. CPU=What the Human Brain does
2. HD=The Information that we have Collected
3. Keyboard/Mouse=The Eyes and Ears of the Human.
4. Monitor or output device=Speech/vocal chords

We have collected an amount of information during the time we have been alive. Some call this our preconceived notions. Others refer to it as our worldview. Still others say it is our resident body of information. In any event we have collected some vast amount of information during our time here. When information comes in it is received and mingles with the data that we have collected over our lives. We deal with in one of three ways.

1. We accept it
2. We reject it
3. We decide not to deal with it now and defer any additional thought until a later time

If this information does not make sense to us we will reject it or defer a decision until we have better information. We, unlike computer have the ability to decide or to "choose" what we will accept and believe. There are known laws of logic that humans have discovered. We did not create them as they are given to each person at birth.

Within the laws of logic there are two fundamental concepts to be aware of.

1. **Syllogism** is Greek for "conclusion" It is a kind of logical argument in which one proposition (the conclusion) is inferred from at least two others (the premises) of a certain form.

All cars are red. I just bought a car. Therefore I have a red car

2. **Non sequitur** is Latin for "it does not follow." In formal logic, an argument is a *non sequitur* if the conclusion does not follow from the premise.

All cars are red. I just bought a house. Therefore my house is red.

Why do we care about some logic and reason concepts? Because this is how we prove the truth of Scripture. This is how we persuade people to understand that the Bible is true.

We don't usually think in these terms but if we are explaining the Bible to someone and it does not make sense, (i.e. the Non-Sequitur) then the person that we are talking to will fail to grasp what we are saying and lose interest and think that Christians are just robots that have no real independent thoughts like the cults. They might think that we simply believe in something that has limited value and is probably not true. Some appeal to others with an emotional exposition of "How I Became a Christian." Pure emotionalism will not prevail in a debate over the validity of Christ, the Bible and Christianity. Emotionalism might initially attract the unbeliever, but its appeal will fade fast if it is not supported with sound reason and logic.

There are two kinds of ways to prove a historical event. If it can be recreated such as a laboratory experiment then we use that. If not then we use the rules of evidence to validate the historical event through eyewitness accounts and external evidence. Many individuals who debunked the Bible as being unproven myth found after careful unbiased evaluation that it is true, correct and will provide a changed life.

Christianity is coherent. Christianity corresponds to the world the way the world truly is.

We have been given a will. This is not in a computer. There are some examples of "the will" to compare to. If a burro has a bridle on its head and its master is attempting to lead the burro somewhere, the burro is either going to comply, or dig in its hooves, and refuse to move. It is exerting its will.

As we move through our lives we acquire information about the Bible, Christ and Christianity. Some accurate but much of it is inaccurate. In this church you are provided with a clear exposition of the Bible. You will get correct information that is verifiable. If you are not able to accept this Bible after a careful evaluation of all the evidence, do so from a sound reason. Ask yourself the question: Why do I not believe this? It is important to satisfy this for a settled mindset. Our logic and reason demands it. The results of this choice will have an eternal effect on your destination after you leave these bodies we live in now. It is natural to ask questions to settle this in your mind. Believing or not believing is your choice. It is the biggest and most important choice you will make while you're on the planet.

For some there is no amount of quality information that will result in a decision to believe. Mathematicians call this concept *asymptotic*. An asymptotic situation is one where a curved line continually approaches an upper horizontal straight line on the Y axis of a graph but never actually touches it. In our situation it means that no amount of evidence or information given over time ever provides conclusive proof (curved line meeting the straight line) to the individual so they can make a decision. Something blocks the individual from a belief in proven concepts. Some have been hurt in a prior church setting. They received poor or corrupt information and decided that "none of this" had any value. Denominational, seminary or family influences can provide corrupt information.

RELYING ON THE BIBLE AS FACT

The Bible has been proven by the standards of the sciences of evidence, archaeology and prophecy to be reliable. So what means are available to us to ascertain the authenticity of the Bible? There are several. They all flow from the science of evidence. Society uses this scientific evidentiary process to identify truth. For example we use it in courts of law and forensic laboratories. The science of evidence is appropriate to utilize for a fair evaluation of the Biblical text in order to validate its authenticity and truth. One of the chief proponents of the field of evidence was Dr. Simon Greenleaf. He was a decorated Professor of Law at the Harvard University School of Law in 1846. A known expert in the field of evidence, Greenleaf's well-known work, *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence*, is considered a classic of American jurisprudence. It was a standard textbook in American law throughout the nineteenth century. However, his contribution to biblical Christianity is the authoritative treatise, *The Testimony of the Evangelists Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice* that remains an accepted primer in modern Christian apologetics. ¹

Greenleaf began his book by arguing for the elimination of prejudices and allow the evidence tell the story. This is simply placing a reliance on evidence. He stated that one should, " follow the truth wherever it may lead us."² He further stated that Christianity from a purely legal sense does not "bring irresistible evidence" but offers sufficient evidences for "the serious inquirer."³ He focused his book to an inquiry "to the testimony of the Four Evangelists, bringing their narratives to the tests to which other evidence is subjected in human tribunals." His specific inquiry was concerned with testing "the veracity of these witnesses by the same rules and means" employed in human tribunals. Greenleaf argued the case by first inquiring as to the genuineness of the four gospels as ancient writings. Here he applied what is technically known in law as the "ancient documents rule." He stated:

"Every document, apparently ancient, coming from the proper repository or custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise."⁴

Greenleaf maintained that the four gospels do not bear any marks of being forgeries and the oldest extant copies can be received into court as genuine documents. In other words unless there is compelling evidence to the contrary we must accept the gospels as fact. Frequently in an attempt to discredit the biblical accounts of Christ detractors will engineer specious arguments that have no basis. Because there is no evidence for their weak arguments they fail to persuade the critical thinker. Only those with a sloppy thought process will be persuaded to accept an argument that has no foundation.

¹ Strobel, Lee. *The Case for Christ-A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI. Zondervan Publishing House 1998 45-46

² Greenleaf, Simon. *Testimony of the Evangelists Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice*, 1846. Reprint Newark, NJ: Soney & Sage, 1903, 1.

³ Ibid, 2.

⁴ Ibid, 7.

The second step in Greenleaf's argument is: "In matters of public and general interest, all persons must be presumed to be conversant, on the principle that individuals are presumed to be conversant with their own affairs."⁵ On the basis of this legal rule Greenleaf then briefly profiled the traditional authors of the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, concerning their first hand knowledge of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, or as in the case of Mark and Luke their intimate personal links with the apostles. Greenleaf then built a cumulative case by conducting a shadow cross-examination of the oral testimony of the evangelists in their accounts of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Greenleaf developed his case on the basis of the following tests:

"The credit due to the testimony of witnesses depends upon, firstly, their honesty; secondly, their ability; thirdly, their number and the consistency of their testimony; fourthly, the conformity of their testimony with experience; and fifthly, the coincidence of their testimony with collateral circumstances."⁶

Greenleaf then argued that the gospel writers can be shown to be honest in their character and do not show any motives to falsify their testimony.⁷ He claimed that Matthew and Luke related keen observations and meticulous details, and he concluded this demonstrated their ability.⁸ Greenleaf noted that there are parallel accounts from the evangelists concerning the central events of Jesus the Christ' life and that these accounts are not verbally identical. He maintained that discrepancies in their accounts are evidence that the writers are not guilty of collusion, and that the discrepancies in their respective accounts can be resolved or harmonized upon careful cross-examination and comparison of the details.

Lastly, Greenleaf examined the problem of uniform testimony among false and genuine witnesses, and found there is sufficient circumstantial evidence to support the accounts of the Four Evangelists.

Greenleaf summed up his argument with the following plea:

"All that Christianity asks of men on this subject, is, that they would be consistent with themselves; that they would treat its evidences as they treat the evidence of other things; and that they would try and judge its actors and witnesses, as they deal with their fellow men, when testifying to human affairs and actions, in human tribunals. Let the witnesses be compared with themselves, with each other, and with the surrounding facts and circumstances; and let their testimony be sifted, as if it were given in a court of justice, on the side of the adverse party, the witnesses being subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. The result, it is confidently believed, will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability and truth ... Either the men of Galilee were men of superlative wisdom, and extensive knowledge and experience, and of deeper skill in the arts of deception, than any and all others,

⁵ Ibid, 9.

⁶ Ibid, 28.

⁷ Ibid, 28-31.

⁸ Ibid, 31-32.

before or after them, or they have truly stated the astonishing things which they saw and heard."⁹

By using the standards of evidence he proved the Bible to be an accurate historical document. Greenleaf argued for the elimination of prejudices allowing evidence to tell its story. This is simply placing a reliance on evidence. He stated that one should, " follow the truth wherever it may lead us."¹⁰

Legal reasoning as a means to determine religious truth is of tremendous value because Christianity is the only religion in the world in which truth-claims can be tested by legal reasoning, that is, by evidence.

EVIDENCE FOR THE RESURRECTION

Here are some of the facts relevant to the resurrection:

1. Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish prophet who claimed to be the Messiah prophesied in the Jewish Scriptures, was arrested, was judged a political criminal, and was crucified. Three days after His death and burial, some women who went to His tomb found the body gone. In subsequent weeks, His disciples claimed that God had raised Him from the dead and that He appeared to them various times before ascending into heaven. From that foundation, Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire and has continued to exert great influence down through the centuries.
2. The New Testament accounts of the resurrection were being circulated within the lifetimes of men and women alive at the time of the resurrection. Those people could certainly have confirmed or denied the accuracy of such accounts. No such denial was reported for more than 300 years.
3. The writers of the four Gospels either had themselves been witnesses or else were relating the accounts of eyewitnesses of the actual events. In advocating their case for the gospel, a word that means "good news," the apostles appealed (even when confronting their most severe opponents) to common knowledge concerning the facts of the resurrection. If it did not happen the opponents would have been sure to refute any claims of Jesus resurrection. The Apostles either were lying, hallucinating or actually saw Jesus in His resurrected body. If they were hallucinating it does not account for the precise written accounts and all eleven could not simultaneously hallucinate together for the rest of their lives. If they were lying they all died as martyrs proclaiming a lie. They must have been telling the truth.
4. Because the New Testament provides the primary historical source for information on the resurrection, many critics during the 19th century attacked the reliability of these biblical documents. By the end of the 19th century, however, archaeological discoveries had confirmed the accuracy of the New Testament manuscripts. Discoveries of early papyri bridged the gap between the time of Christ and existing manuscripts from a later date. Interestingly no one for the first three hundred years denied the resurrection. That is because everybody knew it.

⁹ Ibid, pg. 46-53

¹⁰ Greenleaf, Simon. *Testimony of the Evangelists Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice*, 1846. Reprint Newark, NJ: Soney & Sage, 1903, 1.

5. Coinciding with the papyri discoveries, an abundance of other manuscripts came to light (over 25,000 copies of early New Testament manuscripts are known to be in existence today). The historian Luke wrote of "authentic evidence" concerning the resurrection. William M. Ramsay, a Scottish archaeologist tried to refute Luke's account and could not find the evidence to do so. After a lifetime of study, however, he concluded: "Luke's gospel has been found to show excellent knowledge and minute accuracy which comes from the faithful report of an eye-witness and participator in the action"¹¹
6. The New Testament witnesses were fully aware of the hostile perpetrators of Christ's crucifixion. The body of Jesus, in accordance with Jewish burial custom, was wrapped in a linen cloth. About 100 pounds of aromatic spices, mixed together to form a gummy substance, were applied to the wrappings of cloth about the body. After the body was placed in a solid rock tomb, an extremely large stone was rolled against the entrance of the tomb. Large stones weighing approximately two tons were normally rolled (by means of levers) against a tomb entrance. Roman guards who were strictly disciplined fighting men were stationed to guard the tomb. These guards affixed on the tomb the Roman seal, which was meant to prevent any attempt at vandalizing the sepulcher. Anyone trying to move the stone from the tomb's entrance would have broken the seal and thus met with death by the guards. But three days later the tomb was empty. The followers of Jesus said He had risen from the dead. They reported that He appeared to them during a period of forty days, showing Himself to them by many "infallible proofs." Paul the apostle recounted that Jesus appeared to more than 500 of His followers at one time, the majority of whom were still alive and who could confirm what Paul wrote. So many security precautions were taken with the trial, crucifixion, burial, entombment, sealing, and guarding of Christ's tomb that it becomes very difficult for critics to defend their position that Christ did not rise from the dead.
7. The tomb was empty. Both Jewish and Roman sources admit an empty tomb. Those resources range from Josephus to a compilation of fifth-century Jewish writings called the "Toledoth Jeshu." Evidence from a hostile source is the strongest kind of historical evidence. In essence, this means that if a source admits a fact decidedly not in its favor, then that fact is genuine."
8. Christ appeared alive on several occasions after the cataclysmic events of that Passover. When studying an event in history, it is important to know whether enough people who were participants or eyewitnesses to the event were alive when the facts about the event were first published. To know this ascertains the accuracy of the published report. If the number of eyewitnesses is substantial, the event can be regarded as fairly well established. For instance, if we all witness a murder, and a later police report turns out to be a fabrication of lies, we as eyewitnesses can refute it.
9. A theory advanced by Kirsopp Lake in 1907¹² assumes that the women who reported that the body was missing had mistakenly gone to the wrong tomb. If so, then the disciples who went to check up on the women's statement must have also gone to the wrong tomb. We may be certain, however, that Jewish authorities, who

¹¹ Ramsay, William M. *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on The Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, New York, Toronto 1915 p.79. Accessed at Internet Archive April 6, 2012 <http://archive.org/stream/bearingofrecentd00ramsuoft#page/78/mode/2up>

¹² Kirsopp Lake, *The Historical Evidence For The Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (New York: Putnam's, 1907), 250-253.

asked for a Roman guard to be stationed at the tomb to prevent Jesus' body from being stolen, would not have been mistaken about the location. Nor would the Roman guards, because they were there! If the resurrection-claim was merely because of a geographical mistake, the Jewish authorities would have lost no time in producing the body from the proper tomb, thus effectively quenching for all time any rumor resurrection. Further, Joseph of Arimathea the tomb owner knew which tomb was his and so did Nicodemus who helped him bury the body. They never affirmed the soldiers were at the wrong tomb or the women went to the wrong one either.

10. But the most compelling testimony of all must be the lives of those early Christians. We have to ask ourselves: What caused them to go everywhere telling the message of the risen Christ? Had there been any visible benefits to them in doing so? Did they receive wealth, increased social status or material benefits? As a reward for their efforts, however, those early Christians were beaten, stoned to death, thrown to the lions, tortured and crucified. Every conceivable method was used to stop them from talking. Yet, they laid down their lives as the ultimate proof of their complete confidence in the truth of their message. After the crucifixion, Jesus' apostles hid behind locked doors, terrified they would be executed. But something changed them from cowards to bold evangelizers. People do not change that much without some major influence. That influence was seeing Jesus, bodily raised from the dead. Christ appeared to them in the locked room, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and on the Mount of Olives. After seeing Jesus alive, Peter and the others left the locked room and preached the risen Christ, unafraid of what would happen to them. They quit hiding because they knew the truth. They finally understood that Jesus is God incarnate, who saves people from sin.
11. James, the brother of Jesus, was openly skeptical that Jesus was the Messiah. Later James became a courageous leader of the Jerusalem church. He was the first of the early Christians to be martyred by Herod in 62 AD. Why? The Bible says the risen Christ appeared to him. What a shock to see your own brother, alive again, after you knew he was dead. James and the apostles were effective missionaries because people could tell these men had touched and seen the risen Christ. With such zealous eyewitnesses, the early church exploded in growth, spreading west from Jerusalem to Rome and beyond. For 2,000 years, encounters with the resurrected Jesus have changed lives.
12. The conversion of Paul records the most drastically changed life in the Bible. As Saul of Tarsus, he was an aggressive persecutor of the early church. When the risen Christ appeared to Paul on the Damascus Road, Paul became Christianity's most determined missionary. He endured five floggings, three beatings, three shipwrecks, a stoning, poverty, and years of ridicule. Finally the Roman emperor Nero had Paul beheaded because the apostle refused to deny his faith in Jesus. What could make a person willingly accept—even welcome—such hardships? Christians believe the conversion of Paul came about because he encountered Jesus Christ who had risen from the dead.

NEXT MESSAGE: MARK: JESUS ' PATH FROM THE CROSS TO HEAVEN

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

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