

The Mind of Christ

The Resurrection

Part Four

INTRODUCTION:

- I. In 1985, a prominent New Testament scholar named Robert Funk founded a think tank in Southern California which he called THE JESUS SEMINAR.
 - A. The purpose of the Seminar was to uncover the HISTORICAL PERSON called Jesus of Nazareth using the best methods of scientific and biblical criticism.
 1. In Funk's view, the REAL historical Jesus has been distorted by legends and myths, and that the REAL Jesus is probably completely different from the figure of Christ that is presented in the gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
 2. Therefore, the goal of the Seminar was to strip away all the legends and myths, and rediscover the AUTHENTIC Jesus who lived and taught some two thousand years ago.
 3. And so, Funk and his organization set about to bring the world face to face with the REAL Jesus of history.

- B. Since the skeptics of The Jesus Seminar believe the gospel accounts in the New Testament are inaccurate, they decided to publish their OWN gospel account called THE FIVE GOSPELS.
1. It's called THE FIVE GOSPELS because their version adds the Gnostic writing of the third century called THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS.
 2. The Jesus Seminar believes THEIR gospel account is more accurate than the one found in the New Testament because THEIR account printed only about TWENTY PERCENT of the words of Jesus that often appear in RED LETTERS in many Bibles.
 - a. They somehow determined THESE words to be authentic, and believe they were the ONLY ONES actually SPOKEN by Jesus.
 - b. According to them, the remaining EIGHTY PERCENT of the words attributed to Jesus were ADDED by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and were NOT actually SPOKEN by Jesus.
 3. Therefore, the Jesus Seminar, has concluded that the so-called REAL, historical Jesus was nothing more than an itinerant, social critic, that he NEVER claimed to be the Son of God, nor did He

forgive ANYONE of their sins, NOR did He inaugurate a NEW COVENANT between man and God.

4. And finally, they conclude His crucifixion was an accident of history, and that His corpse was probably thrown into a shallow dirt grave along with all the others who were crucified as criminals, and either rotted away, or was eaten by wild dogs.
 5. Therefore, the whole resurrection story is only a myth.
- C. But the real FLAW in this so-called SCHOLARSHIP is that their CONCLUSIONS are based on a number of PRESUPPOSITIONS – or ASSUMPTIONS they made BEFORE looking at the evidence.
1. Presuppositions are dangerous because they NOT ONLY DISTORT the truth, BUT determine how a person will INTERPRET the evidence.
 2. And, the CONCLUSIONS that person reaches will be completely INFLUENCED and SKEWED by their PRESUPPOSITIONS.
 3. That's the equivalent of a juror determining the GUILT of a defendant BEFORE the trial even begins, and THEN interpreting all the EVIDENCE presented in court based on that juror's biased PRESUPPOSITION that the defendant IS guilty.
- D. In the same way, the PRESUPPOSITIONS of The Jesus Seminar have shaded their INTERPRETATION of all the evidence about Jesus. What

ARE THESE presuppositions? There are several, but here are two of their MAIN presuppositions.

1. First, and perhaps most important, the Seminar has concluded that the MIRACLES attributed to Jesus did NOT happen because the Seminar denies the SUPERNATURAL – or denies events with supernatural CAUSES. That presupposition allows The Jesus Seminar to deny the following SUPERNATURAL events:
 - a. The INCARNATION of Jesus (God the Son taking the form of a man)
 - b. The VIRGIN BIRTH of Jesus.
 - c. All the MIRACLES of Jesus.
 - d. And MOST importantly, their presupposition that says nothing of a supernatural nature exists allows them to deny the very RESURRECTION of Jesus.
2. The second presupposition of The Jesus Seminar is that the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are INACCURATE, and that the so-called APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS – or the GNOSTIC writings of the THIRD century – ARE accurate and are the KEY to correctly reconstruction the TRUE historical Jesus.
 - a. They believe the TRUE Jesus is found in the Gnostic writing called THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS – which was discovered in

Egypt after World War II as part of a collection of Gnostic writings dating back to the second and third century.

- b. As you already know, these Gnostic writings teach that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married and had a daughter through whom the bloodline of Jesus can be traced to ROYALTY and OTHER noble persons of history.
- c. And most importantly, GNOSTICISM believes the whole concept of a supernatural RESURRECTION is ABSURD, and that the accounts of the resurrection are based on HALLUCINATIONS, and is nothing more than a MYTH.
- d. And even though the Gnostic writing called the GOSPEL OF PETER actually describes the death and burial of Jesus, AND speaks of the resurrection, most skeptics believe the so-called GOSPEL OF PETER speaks of the resurrection of Jesus as a LEGEND that arose following the death of Jesus.
- e. And so, the Jesus Seminar has concluded, without ANY EVIDENCE to SUPPORT their claim, that the GNOSTIC GOSPELS – particularly the Gospel of Thomas – present the TRUE historical Jesus, and that the BIBLICAL accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are based on MYTH.

- II. I'm sure, by this point, you're wondering WHY I'm spending time discussing the views of The Jesus Seminar.
 - A. The reason is very simple. THESE views about Jesus are being taught in virtually every HIGH SCHOOL and COLLEGE level world religions class, or history class that covers the beginning of the Christian era.
 - 1. Your high school age and college age sons and daughters, or grandchildren have either ALREADY encountered this teaching, or WILL encounter this teaching in the very near future.
 - 2. Furthermore, this concept of who the REAL Jesus was has been the subject of NUMEROUS television programs and news-style documentaries dealing with the question of the historical Jesus.
 - 3. And, one of the most popular and most widely read fictional novels, authored by Dan Brown, called THE DA VINCI CODE is based on the assumption that the Roman Catholic church and various secret societies have been hiding evidence that allegedly PROVE that the New Testament picture of Jesus is nothing more than MYTH, and that these same hidden documents and special cryptic codes present the REAL truth about Jesus.
 - a. Although the novel THE DA VINCI CODE is FICTION, many BELIEVE the stories about secret societies, and hidden documents and cryptic codes.

- b. Even some credible scholars believe there are secret hidden documents and cryptic codes kept hidden deep in the Vatican that PROVE the Jesus found in the BIBLE is a MYTH.
 - c. They believe the REAL, AUTHENTIC Jesus was crucified, buried in a shallow grave, but NEVER resurrected from the dead, and is therefore NOT the Son of God.
 - d. And if these alleged documents were someday made public, Christianity would collapse, along with the entire Roman Catholic Church.
- B. And so, with all this in mind, let's turn our attention toward the EVIDENCE that clearly shows the BIBLICAL ACCOUNT of Jesus is TRUE and BELIEVABLE.
- 1. Although we will only have time to SCRATCH THE SURFACE of all the evidence, let's begin by examining some of the EXTERNAL EVIDENCE for believing in a RESURRECTED CHRIST, then look at some convincing INTERNAL EVIDENCE from the testimony of a man who perhaps knew Jesus better than anyone else.

BODY:

- I. So, what about the EXTERNAL historical evidence concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

A. IS there any? Is there ANY historical evidence that supports the claims of Jesus being resurrected from the dead – evidence that would suggest the GOSPEL ACCOUNTS of Jesus are TRUE and ACCURATE?

1. That's a FAIR AND HONEST question. And the ANSWER is a resounding YES!
 - a. There is a VAST amount of literature that speaks of Jesus as a REAL historical figure.
2. Both secular AND biblical history affirms the facts that Jesus of Nazareth – the SAME JESUS of the New Testament – was:
 - a. A living person – not some myth created over the centuries – but an actual person who lived and died two thousand years ago.
 - b. And, that He was a MAN AMONG MEN – although He was MORE than just a man.

B. In fact, everything CONNECTED the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus are ESTABLISHED and PROVEN HISTORICAL FACTS.

1. The principal characters involved in the death of Jesus actually lived – everyone from Annas and Caiaphas to Pontius Pilate.
2. The method by which Jesus was executed is supported by historical fact – crucifixion.

3. The manner of His burial is supported by historical records – being bathed with perfumes, and then wrapped with linen cloths, saturated with spices.
 4. The tomb where He was buried is supported by history – tombs hewn out of solid rock and sealed with a circular wheel-like stone so heavy that 20 men could hardly move, were all very common in that day.
 5. The man who owned the tomb – Joseph of Arimathea – is also a historical character.
 6. The disciples who all claimed Jesus was resurrected from the dead and personally appeared to them were ALSO all historical figures who actually lived.
- C. But what about the testimony OUTSIDE the New Testament? Is there any evidence from SECULAR HISTORY that would support the story of the resurrection?
1. **Ignatius:** (c. 50-115 AD), Bishop of Antioch, a native of Syria and pupil of John was said to have been thrown to wild beasts in the Coliseum in Rome.
 - a. On his way to Rome he wrote this of Jesus: "He was crucified and died under Pontius Pilate. He really, and not merely in appearance, was crucified, and died in the sight of beings in

heaven and on earth and under the earth... He also rose again in three days..."

- b. He also wrote that the substance of the Christian's belief is "faith in Him and love toward Him, in His passion and resurrection."
- c. Finally, Ignatius said Jesus is, "OUR hope through the resurrection."

2. **Justin Martyr** (c. 100-165 AD), a philosopher schooled in the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato, who became a believing Christian.

- a. Concerning his belief in the resurrection, he wrote: "I found this philosophy alone to be safe and profitable."

3. **Polycarp** (d. 110 AD), died in the Roman arena after being given an opportunity to deny his faith in Jesus and live.

- a. Before his death he wrote of Jesus, saying the Lord: "endured to come so far as to death for our sins, Whom God raised, having loosed the pains of death."
- b. He also wrote that God, "raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and gave Him glory and a throne on His right hand, to Whom were subjected all things in heaven and on earth."

4. **Josephus** (c. 37-100 AD), Jewish historian living in Rome, who wrote his history of the Jews around the end of the first century.
 - a. "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many Jews, and also many of the Greeks. This man was the Christ. And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross, upon his impeachment by the principle man among us [Annas, the former High Priest], those who had loved him from the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive on the third day, the divine prophets having spoken these and thousands of other wonderful things about him. And even now, the race of Christians, so named from him, has not died out."
 - b. Various critics have attempted to claim that Josephus could not have written this about Jesus.
 - c. However, these words of Josephus were quoted by Eusebius in the fourth century, and were credited to Josephus even then.

- d. Furthermore, remember that Josephus was writing his historical account of the Jews to please the Romans, not Christians.
 - e. And since THESE words would NOT have been pleasing to most Romans, Josephus would NOT have written them UNLESS he was CONVINCED they were TRUE and could be supported by EVIDENCE.
- II. So, what about INTERNAL evidence proving the deity of Jesus? Of all the writers of the New Testament, the one who presents the most impassioned and logical evidence for believing in Jesus is none other than JOHN.
- A. The Bible tells us a great deal about the apostle John.
 - 1. He was the son of Zebedee, a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, whose mother was named Salome – she was the mother of John and his brother James.
 - 2. It's believed that John was probably a disciple of John the Baptist, but became a follower of Jesus and one of the Lord's closest and most trusted disciples.
 - a. John was one of the three men who formed the most intimate inner-circle of Jesus' disciples, and was frequently named along with Peter and James, the brother of John.

3. This is the same John:
 - a. Who was present with Jesus when the Lord raised Jairus' daughter.
 - b. Who was also present at the transfiguration of Jesus.
 - c. Who accompanied Jesus all the time, along with all the other apostles, and witnessed first-hand all the miracles of Jesus, and heard with his own ears the wonderful teachings of the Lord.
 - d. Who sat with Jesus and the other apostles on the Mount of Olives as the Lord prophesied about the eventual destruction of Jerusalem.
 - e. Who was asked by the Lord, along with Peter, to prepare the Passover meal – the last Passover Jesus would ever celebrate with His disciples.
 - f. Who was asked by the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane to watch and pray, along with Peter and James.
 - g. Who was the ONLY apostle present at the crucifixion, standing at the foot of the cross with Mary, the mother of Jesus, John's own mother, and the other women.
 - h. Who was asked by Jesus to care for Mary, the Lord's mother, and become a son to her.

- i. Who ran to the tomb with Peter upon hearing that the body of Jesus was no longer in the tomb.
- j. Who, upon entering the tomb, saw the evidence of the resurrection and believed.
- k. Who, along with the other apostles, was with Jesus on a number of occasions following the Lord's resurrection from the dead.
- l. Who, along with the other apostles, witnessed the Lord's ascension into heaven.
- m. Who, after the establishment of the church, was arrested with Peter and brought before the Sanhedrin for preaching a resurrected Jesus, and later brought before the Sanhedrin along with all the other apostles for disobeying the Council's command to not teach or preach Jesus anymore.
- n. Who was regarded as one of the pillars of the church in Jerusalem.
- o. Who, wrote the gospel of John – which has as it's sole purpose to provide evidence proving Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, and that He was resurrected from the dead.
- p. Who also wrote the letters of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John.

q. And finally, who was exiled to the Island of Patmos where he wrote the Revelation of Jesus Christ to the seven churches of Asia – describing his visions of the victorious Christ enthroned in heaven and bringing judgment upon Rome, and eventually upon the whole world following the Lord's return and the resurrection of ALL dead souls.

B. Listen to the words of this disciple of Jesus – listen to how HE describes the Lord.

1. **John 1:1-5** – *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*
2. **John 1:14** – *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*
3. **John 2:11** – After Jesus performed His first recorded miracle of turning water into wine, John writes: *This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples BELIEVED in Him.*

4. John repeatedly declared Jesus to be the ONLY BEGOTTEN Son of God.
 - a. **John 1:18** – *No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.*
 - b. **John 3:16** – *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*
 - c. **1 John 4:9** – *In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.*

5. And, more than any other writer, John recorded the numerous instances when Jesus declared Himself to be ONE with the Father in heaven – meaning Jesus claimed to be GOD THE SON.
 - a. **John 10:30** – *"I and My Father are one."*
 - b. **John 10:37-38** – *"If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."*

- c. **John 12:44-45** – *"He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me."*
 - d. **John 14:7-10** – *"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?"*
6. In fact, John says this about the evidence he presents about Jesus being the Son of God.
- a. **John 20:30-31** – After writing about the Lord's appearance to His disciples after His resurrection, John concludes: *And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*
 - b. **John 21:24-25** – Finally, as he concludes his gospel, John writes this of himself: *This is the disciple who testifies of these*

things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

7. But perhaps the most impassioned words John wrote concerning the resurrected Christ are those found in the opening of his epistle of 1st John.
 - a. **1 John 1:1-4** – *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life – the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us – that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.*
8. There was NEVER any doubt in the mind of John about the DEITY of Jesus Christ, NOR about the Lord's RESURRECTION from the dead.

- a. He HEARD the resurrected Lord speak with his OWN EARS.
- b. He SAW and LOOKED UPON the resurrected Lord with his OWN EYES.
- c. He TOUCHED and HANDLED the resurrected Lord with his OWN HANDS.
- d. You may be able to HEAR and SEE a hallucination, but you can't TOUCH and HANDLE one.
- e. To John, the resurrected Christ was NO HALLUCINATION. He was REAL and TANGIBLE.

III. And so, there IS EXTERNAL and INTERNAL evidence.

- A. There is EXTERNAL HISTORICAL evidence from those who lived within a generation or two of those events, and who wrote about the resurrection as a historically accepted FACT.
 1. Although not every historian personally accepted the resurrection of Jesus as fact, they at least recognized that those close to those events DID believe it to be a fact.
 2. And when you add the writings of those men who are often called the "church fathers" – some of whom personally KNEW the apostles who saw Jesus after His resurrection – the evidence becomes even MORE compelling.

- a. These men were willing to DIE for their faith!
 - b. Would YOU died for YOUR faith in Jesus if you knew there was even a SHREAD OF DOUBT that He might NOT have been resurrected from the dead?
 - c. Of course not. And neither would these men. But their willingness to be martyred is testimony to the GENUINENESS of their faith – a faith that is based on CREDIBLE, BELIEVABLE EVIDENCE.
- B. And, there is overwhelming INTERNAL BIBLICAL evidence supporting the claim that Jesus was resurrected from the dead.
1. And THIS evidence is the EYEWITNESS testimony of those who HEARD, and SAW, and TOUCHED the resurrected Christ.

CONCLUSION:

- I. Do YOU believe the BIBLICAL and HISTORICAL evidence that the story of the resurrection of Jesus is TRUE?
 - A. Remember, the apostle John put it this way: *"these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."*
 1. Do YOU believe that JESUS is the CHRIST, the SON OF GOD?
 2. Do YOU have LIFE through His name?

3. Have YOU given your life to Christ, by coming to Him in faith, repenting of your sins, and being baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins, being raised to walk in a newness of life, JUST AS HE was RAISED FROM THE DEAD by the power of the Father in heaven?
4. You have? That's wonderful. But have you REMAINED faithful? Do you STILL have that same INTENSITY of faith? Are you STILL walking with the Lord – faithfully serving Him as a TRUE DISCIPLE?
5. If you HAVEN'T COME to Christ, or if you HAVEN'T REMAINED faithful, you need to do something about that right now. Don't let another moment pass.
6. Don't put yourself in jeopardy of losing your ETERNAL SOUL, and miss OUT on being resurrected from the dead someday to join all the OTHER redeemed in heaven forever.