

# The Mind of Christ

## The Resurrection

### Part Five

#### INTRODUCTION:

- I. In our last lesson, we took some time to briefly examined the historical and Biblical evidence that supports the story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
  - A. Every Christian must admit that the ENTIRE BASIS for our faith is that Jesus Christ WAS the Son of God as He claimed, and that as PROOF of His claim, He was BODILY RESURRECTED from the dead three days after His crucifixion.
    1. If it could somehow be PROVEN that Jesus did NOT rise from the dead, as the writers of the New Testament have claimed, then Jesus is NOT the Christ, the Son of God, and the WHOLE BASIS for our faith as Christians would collapse into dust.
    2. I want to remind you ONCE AGAIN of how the apostle PAUL put this WHOLE PROPOSITION in his fist letter to the Corinthians.
      - a. **1 Corinthians 15:12-17** – *Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ*

*is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up – if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!*

3. Paul put it about as simply as anyone could.
  - a. If there is no such thing as a resurrection from the dead, then Christ is not risen.
  - b. If Christ is not risen, our preaching is empty and we are false witnesses (liars) because we testified that Jesus was resurrected from the dead.
  - c. If our preaching is empty and we are false witnesses (liars), then your faith is empty (without any substance) and futile (pointless).
  - d. If your faith is empty and futile, you are still in your sins.
4. Conversely.
  - a. If Jesus WAS, in fact, resurrected from the dead, then the testimony of the apostles is TRUE.
  - b. And if the testimony of the apostles is TRUE, then our faith HAS substance – it's not a BLIND faith, but rather a faith

based on SUBSTANTIAL, CREDIBLE DOCUMENTED EVIDENCE that Jesus IS the CHRIST, the SON of the LIVING GOD.

- c. And BECAUSE we have faith in Jesus Christ as being the Son of God, we can have eternal life through His name by the forgiveness of our sins.
5. And, THAT brings us back to where we began.
  - a. All I ask of ANYONE who doubts the existence of God, or who doubts the deity of Jesus Christ – all I ask is that you use your God-given INTELLECT, and FAIRLY and HONESTLY examine the EVIDENCE – WITHOUT any PRESUPPOSITIONS.
6. And so, let's continue examining the evidence supporting the resurrection of Jesus.

**BODY:**

- I. To begin, there are three propositions we need to examine in an effort to either AFFIRM or DENY the bodily resurrection of Jesus.
  - A. The first proposition is this: Jesus of Nazareth is, in fact, a historical character who lived and died during the first century.

1. For SOME, this proposition poses an immediate problem because they DENY there was a real Jesus of Nazareth, believing that Jesus is only a MYTHICAL character.
2. However, there are numerous ancient writings that speak of Jesus as a real person, and also speak of events surrounding the crucifixion. Since we are limited on time, here are just a few:
  - a. **Tacitus:** (c. 55-120 CE), a renowned Roman historian and author of *Histories* and *Annals*, wrote, *"Christus ... was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also."*
  - b. **Celsus:** (wrote c. 175-180 CE), a Greek writer in the second century who lived during the time of Marcus Aurelius and openly criticized Christianity as a threat to Roman peace and security. He wrote: *Jesus had come from a village in Judea, and was the son of a poor Jewess who gained her living by the work of her own hands. His mother had been turned out of doors by her husband, who was a carpenter by trade, on being convicted of adultery [with a soldier named Panthéra (i.32)]. Being thus driven away by her husband, and*

*wandering about in disgrace, she gave birth to Jesus, an illegitimate son. Jesus, on account of his poverty, was hired out to go to Egypt. While there he acquired certain (magical) powers which Egyptians pride themselves on possessing. He returned home highly elated at possessing these powers, and on the strength of them gave himself out to be a god.*

- c. **Thallus:** (c. 50-100 CE), a Greek historian is quoted by 3rd century historian Julius Africanus, and attempted to explain the three hours of darkness during the crucifixion of Jesus as nothing more than an eclipse of the sun: *"In the third book of his history, Thallus calls this darkness an eclipse of the sun-- wrongly in my opinion."* Most historians agree that Thallus viewed the crucifixion of Jesus as an accepted historical fact.
- d. **Mara Bar-Serapion:** (d. post-70 CE), a Syrian nobleman, facing execution, wrote a letter to his son after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (manuscript in the British Museum), mentions the execution of Jesus: *"What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their king? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished... the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion."*

- e. **Josephus:** (c. 37-100 CE), Jewish historian living in Rome, who wrote a history of the Jews (*Antiquities*) near the end of the first century, wrote this about Jesus: *"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."*
- f. **The Babylonian Talmud:** (c. 6th Century), a collection of Jewish Rabbinic teachings on the Scriptures handed down from generation to generation, viewed Jesus as a heretic, and contains this description of His crucifixion (described as being "hanged" – as in "hanged on a tree" cf. Acts 5:30; 10:39; Gal 3:13): *"On the eve of Passover they hanged Yeshu [Jesus]. And an announcer went out in front of him for forty days, saying: 'He is going to be stoned, because he practiced sorcery and enticed and led Israel astray. Anyone who knows anything in his favor, let him come and plead in his behalf.' But not having found anything in his favor, they hanged him on the eve of Passover."*

3. We know that the BIBLE certainly affirms the fact that Jesus was a living historical figure.
  - a. The gospel accounts of Matthew and Luke provide a detailed genealogy of Jesus.
    - (1). Matthew's account records the genealogy of Jesus down from Adam. **(Matthew 1:1-17)**
    - (2). Luke's account records the genealogy of Jesus in reverse order back to Adam. **(Luke 3:23-38)**
4. Even **Albert Einstein**, 1921 Nobel Laureate in Physics, was asked in an article, published in the *Saturday Evening Post* on October 26, 1929 if he believed in the historical Jesus.
  - a. Einstein replied: *Unquestionably! No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life.*
5. Even the most AVID CRITICS of the BIBLICAL account of Jesus agree that Jesus of Nazareth WAS in fact a historical character, such as the various scholars and critics who comprise the organization known as The Jesus Seminar.

5. To deny that Jesus WAS a historical character simply ignores the fact that first-century historians, who were NOT Christians, speak of Jesus as a REAL PERSON.
- B. The SECOND proposition is this: Jesus of Nazareth actually DIED by crucifixion, and his death by crucifixion was an accepted FACT by first-century historians.
1. Surprisingly, there are STILL a few scholars who hold the view that Jesus did not actually DIE on the cross, but rather had a near death experience, and later revived.
  2. But some of the nation's leading forensic pathologists have examined the medical evidence surrounding death by crucifixion, and have concluded that the evidence OVERWHELMINGLY supports the conclusion that Jesus actually DID die.
  3. **W. D. Edwards, M.D.**, et al; Departments of Pathology, and Medical Graphics, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn.; *JAMA*; Vol. 255 No. 11, March 21, 1986, pp. 1455-1463): *Jesus of Nazareth underwent Jewish and Roman trials was flogged and was sentenced to death by crucifixion. The scourging produced deep stripe like lacerations and appreciable blood loss and it probably set the stage for hypovolemic shock as evidenced by the fact that Jesus was too weakened to carry the crossbar (patibulum) to*



*Golgotha... The major pathophysiologic effect of crucifixion was an interference with normal respirations. Accordingly death resulted primarily from hypovolemic shock and exhaustion asphyxia. Jesus death was ensured by the thrust of a soldier's spear into his side. Modern medical interpretation of the historical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead when taken down from the cross. (JAMA 1986;255:1455-1463)*

4. **Frederick T. Zugibe, M.D., Ph.D.**, Former Adjunct Associate Professor of Pathology, Columbia University, College of Physicians & Surgeons, N.Y.; Former Chief Medical Examiner, Rockland County, N.Y.; in a lecture entitled, *Experimental Studies in Crucifixion*, said: *An evaluation of the above factors and a forensic medical reconstruction of all the factors from Gethsemane to Calvary clearly demonstrated that traumatic and hypovolemic shock were the harbingers of death.*
5. **Dr. Adam Brochert, M.D.**, author of numerous medical books, MD, Memorial Health University Medical Center, Savannah, Georgia, wrote: *Hypovolemic shock is a condition in which the body doesn't have enough blood volume to circulate throughout the body... When there is a severe decrease in blood or total body*

*fluid, hypovolemic shock occurs. If this situation is not corrected right away, the person will die.*

6. And, don't forget the HISTORICAL references to the death of Jesus:
  - a. **Tacitus:** (c. 55-120 CE), *"Christus ... was put to death by Pontius Pilate..."*
  - b. **Mara Bar-Serapion:** (c. post 70 CE), *"What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their king? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished."*
7. Once again, the BIBLE certainly accepts the death of Jesus as a factual event.
  - a. **Matthew 27:50** – *And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.*
  - b. **Mark 15:37** – *And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.*
  - c. **Luke 23:46** – *And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last.*
  - d. **John 19:30** – *And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.*

- e. And, you can add to these hundreds of other Old Testament prophecies, and New Testament accounts of the death of Jesus.
8. Therefore, ANYONE who tries to DENY that Jesus DIED by crucifixion must explain:
- a. Why some of the nations top medical doctors and forensic pathologists, who have examined EXTENSIVELY the physical effects of crucifixion on the human body, have come to the conclusion that Jesus DIED.
  - b. And why the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) would even PUBLISH an article dealing with the physical effects of the crucifixion of Jesus, if the editors of JAMA didn't ALSO accept the death of Jesus by crucifixion as an established medical and historic fact.
  - c. And finally, why first century historians spoke of the death of Jesus as an ACCEPTED historic fact.
- C. But perhaps the most important proposition is this: The body of Jesus was buried in a tomb following his death, and three days later the tomb was empty.
- 1. Aside from the BIBLICAL accounts of the resurrection of Jesus, and His appearances over a period of 40 days to more than 500

people, what evidence is there that would support the proposition that the tomb of Jesus was empty three days following his burial.

2. Perhaps the GREATEST proof of the empty tomb comes from the fact that there is absolutely NOTHING in Jewish writings of the first through the twelfth centuries that attempts to SPECIFICALLY and DIRECTLY DENY the resurrection of Jesus – there ARE writings designed to DISCREDIT Jesus, but none to DENY the fact that His tomb was empty three days following His crucifixion.
  - a. It isn't until the 6th century CE that a derogatory story of the life of Jesus began to surface in Jewish society in an attempt to respond to the claims of Christians about the resurrection. But, it wasn't until about the 12th century that these stories were finally recorded in a writing of unknown authorship called the TOLEDOTH YESHU (Family History of Jesus).
  - b. The TOLEDOTH YESHU is an anonymous 12th century writing that not only attempts to DISCREDIT Jesus but to also DENY His resurrection.
  - c. TOLEDOTH YESHU (Family History of Jesus): *Yeshu was put to death on the sixth hour on the eve of the Passover and of the Sabbath... They buried him outside the city.*

*On the first day of the week his bold followers came to Queen Helene [probably the wife of Aristobulus II] with the report that he who was slain was truly the Messiah and that he was not in his grave; he had ascended to heaven as he prophesied.*

*Diligent search was made and he was not found in the grave where he had been buried. A gardener had taken him from the grave and had brought him into his garden and buried him in the sand over which the waters flowed into the garden.*

*Queen Helene demanded, on threat of a severe penalty, that the body of Yeshu be shown to her within a period of three days. There was a great distress. When the keeper of the garden saw Rabbi Tanhuma walking in the field and lamenting over the ultimatum of the Queen, the gardener related what he had done, in order that Yeshu's followers should not steal the body and then claim that he had ascended into heaven.*

*The Sages removed the body, tied it to the tail of a horse and transported it to the Queen, with the words, "This is Yeshu who is said to have ascended to heaven." Realizing that Yeshu was a false prophet who enticed the people and led them astray, she mocked the followers but praised the Sages.*

- d. You really need to read the entire story to fully appreciate this OVERLY dramatic and somewhat COMICAL account of the life of Jesus.
  - e. However, while Jewish scholars offer OTHER explanations for the empty tomb, no CREDIBLE Jewish Scholar believes THIS story – they agree that there is NO EVIDENCE WHATSOEVER that a body of Jesus was EVER discovered and produced as evidence to DENY His resurrection.
2. But is there any HISTORICAL evidence that Jesus was resurrected from the dead – any ancient SECULAR NON-CHRISTIAN historian who actually WROTE about the resurrection of Jesus?  
ABSOLUTELY!
- c. **Josephus:** (c. 37-100 CE), Jewish historian who was with the Roman general Titus, as the armies of Titus crushed the Jewish rebellion and destroyed the city of Jerusalem. Josephus spent his final days living in Rome, where he wrote his 20 volume ANTIQUITIES, and the XX volume WARS OF THE JEWS. Josephus was also a friend of the emperor's Vespasian, Titus and Domitian. Here is what HE wrote about the resurrection of Jesus.

(1). *"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..."*

(2). Keep in mind that this is the SAME Josephus who ALSO described Jesus as MORE than just a man, but said he was THE CHRIST – the ANOINTED ONE (the MESSIAH).

3. We would ALSO expect devout Jews TODAY to DENY the resurrection of Jesus, but the TRUTH is there are HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS Messianic Jews, who WHOLEHEARTEDLY believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that He was RESURRECTED from the dead.
3. Even some prominent Jewish SCHOLARS and RABBIS have come to ACCEPT the historical and Biblical evidence that Jesus was very possibly resurrected from the dead.
4. One such scholar was featured in the religion section of *Time Magazine*, May 7, 1979. His name is Rabbi Pinchas Lapide.
  - a. Rabbi Lapide, a HIGHLY respected Orthodox Jewish rabbi and noted Hebrew Scholar, wrote a book entitled *The*

*Resurrection of Jesus*, in which he claimed that the resurrection was a TRUE historical event. He wrote: *I accept the resurrection of Easter Sunday not as an invention of the community of disciples, but as a historical event.*

b. Although Rabbi Lapide has never converted to Christianity, he's had to admit that the evidence is overwhelming for believing in the resurrection of Jesus.

c. He stated several reasons for his conclusions:

(1). **The belief in a resurrection has it's basis in Judaism:**

The students of first century rabbis Hillel and Shammai all believed in bodily resurrection, and debated over how best to prove this doctrine from the Torah. The Talmud later reflected this early attitude: *"These are they that have no share in the life to come: he that says no resurrection of the dead is taught in the Torah . . ."* (Sanh 10:1).

(2). **There is no evidence that any of the disciples**

**believed Jesus would be resurrected:** The women in the New Testament account were returning to the tomb to complete the burial process – not expecting the tomb to be empty. When Jesus died, Lapide notes, all his



disciples deserted him. Even Peter, James, and John returned to fishing.

- (3). **The gospel accounts exhibit extreme honesty:** Lapede says the gospel accounts do not attempt dramatize the life of Jesus, nor portray the disciples of Jesus as heroic figures, but rather as frightened cowards. Even Peter, one of the most trusted of all his disciples, denied Jesus three times.
- (4). **The radical transformation of the disciples following the resurrection:** Lapede wrote, *"When this scared, frightened band of apostles which was just about to throw away everything in order to flee in despair to Galilee; when these peasants, shepherds, and fishermen, who betrayed and denied their master and failed him so miserably, suddenly could be changed overnight into a confident mission society, convinced of salvation and able to work with much more success after Easter than before, then no vision or hallucination is sufficient to explain such a revolutionary transformation."* (p.125)

- d. Although Rabbi Lapedi believed God raised Jesus from the dead, NOT because he was the MESSIAH, but because Jesus was a faithful follower of God and was killed unjustly.
  - e. But Rabbi Lapedi DOES believe that the resurrection of Jesus IS an accepted and credible historical fact because the EVIDENCE for the resurrection is overwhelming.
5. But perhaps the GREATEST evidence that Jesus was resurrected from the dead is the very existence of CHRISTIANITY itself.
- a. Within 50 days following the crucifixion of Jesus, his disciples were preaching that Jesus was resurrected from the dead – and the RESULT of that preaching was the IMMEDIATE conversion of THOUSANDS of Jews.
  - b. Why would so many Jews believe the story of the resurrection? The answer is simple. The tomb of Jesus was empty!
  - c. The apostle Peter, and the other apostles, affirmed that fact in their sermon on Pentecost, and concluded: *This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.* **(Acts 2:32)**
  - d. The location of the tomb was well-known to Jewish authorities, since Joseph of Arimathea, a well-known and respected member of the Sanhedrin, requested the body of Jesus so that

he could bury Jesus in his own tomb, AND since the Jewish authorities asked Pilate to post a guard around the tomb to keep the disciples of Jesus from possibly stealing the body.

- e. If the tomb of Jesus still CONTAINED the body of Jesus, then all the Jewish authorities had to do was to open the tomb, produce the body, and prove beyond any doubt that the claims of Jesus being resurrected were FALSE.
  - f. But the body of Jesus WAS never produced – despite the futile efforts of the 12th century writing TOLEDOTH YESHU to say otherwise.
  - g. Producing the body of Jesus would have brought the spread of Christianity to a screeching HALT. But the CONVERSION of thousands to Jesus Christ was IMMEDIATE and OVERWHELMING.
  - h. WHY? Because the EMPTY TOMB of Jesus is supported by the EYE-WITNESS TESTIMONY of more than 500 PEOPLE who saw Jesus following His resurrection from the dead – including the disciples who not only SAW Him, but TALKED with Him, TOUCHED Him, and even ATE with Him.
6. In the **15th chapter of 1 Corinthians**, the apostle Paul offers THIS evidence for believing in the resurrection of Jesus.

- a. **1 Corinthians 15:3-8** – *For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.*
- b. **1 Corinthians 15:12-22** – *Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up — if in fact the dead do not rise. 16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have*

*perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. 20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*

## **CONCLUSION:**

- I. I've only been able to barely scratch the surface of the wealth of historical and Biblical evidence that supports the three propositions we've just examined.
  - A. But anyone who HONESTLY evaluates the evidence will ALSO come to the conclusion that:
    1. Jesus of Nazareth is, in fact, a historical character who lived and died during the first century...
    2. And that Jesus of Nazareth actually DIED by crucifixion, and that his death by crucifixion was an accepted FACT by first-century historians...
    3. And finally, that Jesus was placed in a tomb following his death, and three days later the tomb was empty.

- B. The empty tomb is WITHOUT DOUBT the most important piece of evidence supporting the claim that Jesus was resurrected from the dead.
  - 1. And in our next lesson we will examine more closely the PHYSICAL and FORENSIC evidence for believing in the resurrection of Jesus.
  - 2. We'll go back to the tomb of Jesus and examine it as though we were detectives examining a crime scene – because if the body of Jesus WAS stolen, then the tomb of Jesus is the scene of the greatest crime in the history of the world.
  
- II. I hope you're beginning to see the evidence slowly adding up for believing Jesus' claim to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead.
  - A. The Hebrew writer explained our faith this way: **Hebrews 11:1** – *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*
    - 1. In other words, our faith is the SUBSTANCE – that which UPHOLDS and provides the SUPPORTING FOUNDATION for – things hoped for (such as HEAVEN ITSELF).
    - 2. And our faith is the EVIDENCE – the CONVICTION and ASSURANCE – of things not seen (God, Christ, and heaven itself).

- B. But friend, the Christian's faith IS NOT BLIND.
  - 1. The CHRISTIAN'S faith is based on SOLID and IRREFUTABLE evidence that Jesus IS the Christ, the Son of the living God.
  - 2. It's a faith with SUBSTANCE because Jesus left behind an empty tomb.
  
- C. Does YOUR faith have substance, or is your mind still filled with DOUBTS and UNCERTAINTIES?
  - 1. No one can make you SEE what you don't want to see, or BELIEVE what you don't want to believe.
    - a. That's a choice YOU will make concerning the TRUTH about Jesus.
  - 2. But for those of you who DO see and DO believe, there's a wonderful HOPE that awaits you – the ASSURANCE of HEAVEN.