A photograph of a large, circular stone rolled away from the entrance of a tomb. The stone is positioned to the left of the dark, arched opening. The surrounding rock is weathered and textured. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting daylight.

The Resurrection Of Jesus Christ

Mark 16:1-9

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ --The Focal Point of Gospel Preaching

- 29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day.
- 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, **he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;**
- 31 He seeing this before spake of ***the resurrection of Christ***, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.
- 32 ***This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.***
- 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.
- 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,
- 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.
- 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that **God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.**
- 37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (Acts 2:29-37)

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ --The Focal Point of Gospel Preaching

- Acts 3:15 → And killed the Prince of life, whom **God hath raised from the dead**; whereof we are witnesses.
- Acts 4:2 → Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.
- Acts 17:30-31 → And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that ***he hath raised him from the dead.***
- I Cor. 2:2 → For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Implications of the Resurrection

- Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. His claims are validated. (Jn. 2:19-22; Rom. 1:3-4)
- Jesus was victorious over Satan as had been promised and prophesied. (Gen. 3:15; Heb. 2:14-15)
- Jesus is now reigning as King on his throne. (Acts 2:30)
- Death is not the end. (I Cor. 15:19-20)
- We must live as those who will also be raised with an eternal destiny. (Col. 3:1-2)

Challenges To The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

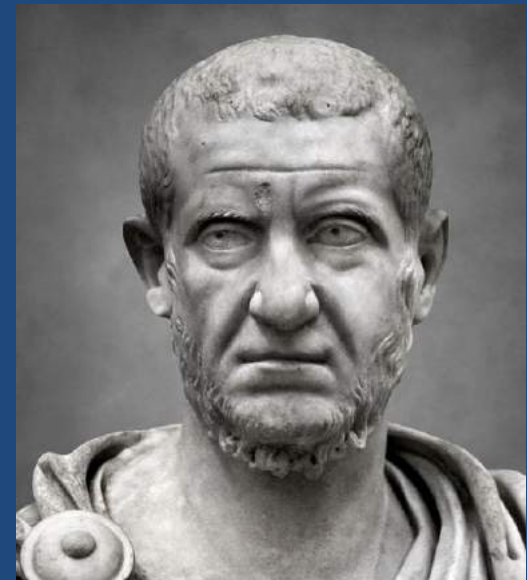
- The claim that Jesus lived, taught, was a good man and great teacher, but did not perform miracles and was not raised from the dead.
- The allegation that the gospel were written long after the life and death of Jesus, not by eyewitnesses and contemporaries; and contain myths and fables passed down by his disciples.
- The notion that one has to sift through the “myths” to see the “real Jesus”.
- Outright denials of Jesus and his resurrection from the dead.

Challenges To The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

- The challenge to provide an answer to those who would question the hope of a child of God.
 - I Pet. 1:3-4 → Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,
 - I Pet. 3:15 → But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Secular Witnesses To The Life of Christ...

- Tacitus (Roman Senator/Historian, 52-120 A.D.)
 - “...*Christus*, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.
- Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind.



Secular Witnesses To The Life of Christ...

- Suetonius (Roman historian → A.D. 69 - A.D. 140)
 - Lives of the Caesars - Claudius, sec. 25:
 - Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome.
 - Lives of the Caesars - Nero, sec. 16
 - Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition.



Secular Witnesses To The Life of Christ

- *Flavius Josephus (Jewish Historian – 37-100)*
- ***About this time there lived Jesus***, a wise man if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many *Jews and many* of the Greeks. *He was the Messiah. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified*, those who had in the first place come to love him did not *cease*. On the third day *he appeared to them restored to life*. For the prophets of God had prophesied these and myriads of other *marvellous things about him*. And the tribe of *the Christians*, so called after him, has still up to now, not disappeared. **(Antiquities 18.63)**

Secular Witnesses To The Life of Christ

- *Pliny the Younger* → 61-113 A.D.; Proconsul of Bithynia under Trajan (98-117)
- It is my practice, my lord, to refer to you all matters concerning which I am in doubt. For who can better give guidance to my hesitation or inform my ignorance? *I have never participated in trials of Christians. I therefore do not know what offenses it is the practice to punish or investigate, and to what extent.* And I have been not a little hesitant as to whether there should be any distinction on account of age or no difference between the very young and the more mature; whether pardon is to be granted for repentance, or, *if a man has once been a Christian, it does him no good to have ceased to be one; whether the name itself, even without offenses, or only the offenses associated with the name are to be punished.*
- Meanwhile, in the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have observed the following procedure: I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; *those who persisted I ordered executed.*

Secular Witnesses To The Life of Christ

- Soon accusations spread, as usually happens, because of the proceedings going on, and several incidents occurred. An anonymous document was published containing the names of many persons. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the gods in words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ--none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do--these I thought should be discharged. Others named by the informer declared that they were Christians, but then denied it, asserting that they had been but had ceased to be, some three years before, others many years, some as much as twenty-five years. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the gods, and cursed Christ.

Secular Witnesses To The Life of Christ

- They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food--but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they had ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden political associations...

Challenges To The Resurrection

- False theories regarding the body:
 - ***The women went to the wrong tomb.***
 - It was identified as Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. The women saw it. (Matt. 27:57-61)
 - ***Someone stole the body.***
 - It was where the enemies wanted it. They could have stopped the gospel by producing it. (Acts 4:1-2)
 - That the disciples stole it is the lie the guards were paid to tell. (Matt. 28:11-15) The disciples were doubting at first. (Matt. 28:17; Jn. 2:20-22)
 - Does not explain their proclamation and radically changed lives.
 - ***Swoon theory.***
 - Jesus did not really die on the cross – revived in the coolness of the tomb and claimed that he was resurrected from the dead.
 - This absurdity requires one to believe that Jesus endured the scourging, crucifixion, piercing of his side with a spear, rolled away the stone and over came the guards...

The Testimony of The Eyewitnesses

- The gospels are inspired historical documents providing eyewitness accounts of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.
- The gospel accounts are written with great specificity – not fearful of investigation -- as they provide names and other details that were verifiable. (cf. Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1ff)
 - Mk. 10:46 → Bartimeus, the son of Timeus.
 - Mk. 15:21 → Simon of Cyrene, father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.
 - I Cor. 15:5-8 → Paul's wrote of over 500 who were witnesses of the resurrected Jesus.

The Testimony of the Eyewitnesses

- Consider the women who were eyewitnesses (note the verbs of “seeing”) of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.
 - Matt. 27:55-56 → 55 And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: 56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.
 - Matt. 27:61 → **And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulcher** (opposite the tomb –NET)

The Testimony of the Eyewitnesses

- Matt. 28:1 → In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, **came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.**
- 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. **Come, see the place where the Lord lay.**
- 7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. ...
- 9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

The Testimony of the Eyewitnesses

- Mk. 15:40 -47 → There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; ... 47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.
- Mk. 16:1-9 → “...Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome...when they looked they saw that the stone was rolled away...behold the place where they laid him...he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.”

The Testimony of the Eyewitnesses

- John 20:1,11,16,18 → “The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early ...and seeth the stone taken away...looked into the sepulcher...Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say Master...Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.”

The Testimony of the Eyewitnesses

- Interesting aspect of this testimony in view of first century culture: Women were not highly regarded as witnesses.
 - Josephus → “but let not the testimony of women be admitted on account of the levity and boldness of the gender...since it is possible that they may not speak truth, either out of hope of gain, or fear of punishment.” (Antiquities 4.8.15)
 - The Jewish Talmud → “any evidence which a woman gives is not valid to offer.”
 - Observations:
 - If you were fabricating a resurrection story in the first century, you would not use women as your chief witnesses.
 - The foremost of those witnesses would most likely not be a woman with a history of demon possession.
 - This would have happened only if you were accurately recording the events: The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

The Circumstances In Which This Message Was Proclaimed and Flourished

- ***In the face of political opposition:***
 - A Roman Caesar who demanded to be acknowledged as god. (Rev. 6:9-10; 13:1-7; 1:18)
- ***In the face of cultural opposition:***
 - The gospel was considered foolish by the “wise”. (I Cor. 1:22-23; Acts 17:18,32)
- ***In the face of religious opposition:***
 - From the Sadducees – Acts 4:1-3, 17; 5:40-42
 - Others: Acts 7:58-60 – Stephen is stoned to death.
 - Saul’s persecution of the church – Acts 8:1-4

The Circumstances In Which This Message Was Proclaimed and Flourished

- From Tacitus (Roman Senator and Historian – 56-120)
 - “...Nero...falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their abominations. Christus, the founder of the name, 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 in Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also.” (Annals XV. 44)

The Integrity of the Witnesses...

- The witnesses of the lives early Christians lived as a result of their faith...
- Their willingness to suffer material losses, persecution, mocking and even death. (I Cor. 4:9-13)
- Objection: there are many willing to suffer for what they believe.
 - These were willing to suffer and die not merely for what they believed to be true based on the word of others, but for what they knew to be true because they were present and were eyewitnesses.
 - The apostles either saw Jesus alive or did not...
 - If they did not and said they did, they died for a lie, with absolutely nothing to gain.
 - That is not the action of a sane individual.
 - They had every motive from a worldly standpoint to deny that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Yet, they affirmed it and died for it because it was true.

What Does The Resurrection of Jesus From The Dead Mean For Me Today?

- Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and the only way to the Father and eternal life. (Jn. 14:6)
- I must be die to sin, be buried with him in baptism and raised to walk in a newness of life. (Rom. 6:1-4)
- Having been raised with him, I must seek those things which above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. (Col. 3:1-2)