

Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?

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Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)



Blaise Pascal's *Pensees*

- Imagine a number of men in chains, all under sentence of death, some of whom are each day butchered in the sight of the others; those remaining see their own condition in that of their fellows, and looking at each other with grief and despair await their turn. This is an image of the human condition. (434)

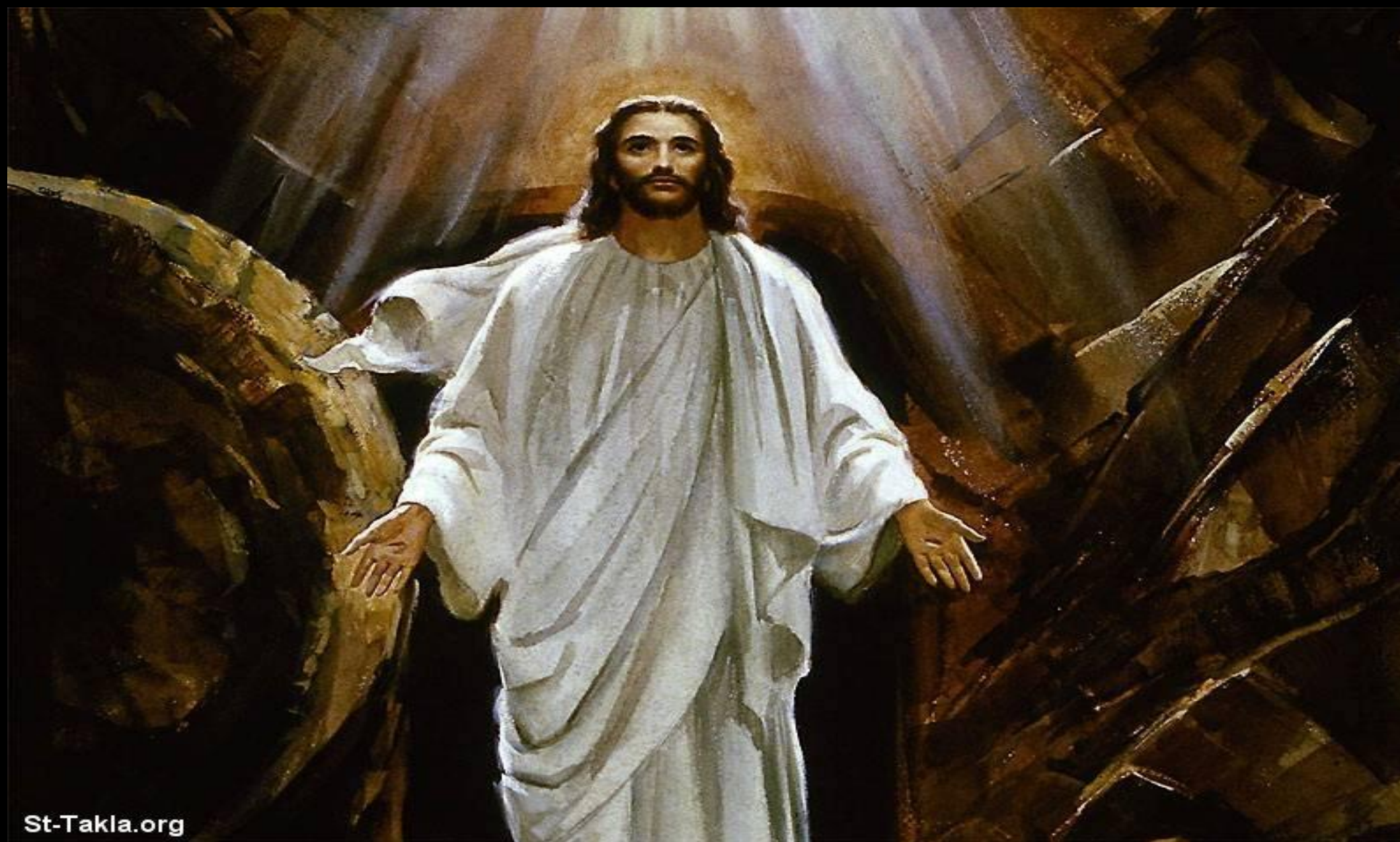
1 Corinthians 15:14, 17, 32

- And if Christ has not been raised. . . .
 - Our preaching and faith are futile
 - We are still in our sins
 - Let us eat & drink, for tomorrow we die

If Jesus Did Not Rise. . . .

- Then human history is one cruel joke
- In the end, death wins
- But, if Jesus rose, then death has been defeated

Did Jesus Rise?



What is at Stake?

- If Jesus bodily rose from the dead, He is who He claimed to be:
 - He is God, Savior, & Messiah
 - He has conquered death

An Ancient Creed (early 30's ad)

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Ancient Creed (Continued)

- After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

(1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

Core Historical Facts

- Accepted by virtually all the world's leading New Testament scholars (based on the research of Dr. Gary R. Habermas of Liberty University)

Fact #1—Jesus' Death by Crucifixion



Jesus died by Crucifixion

- This refutes the swoon theory
- Flow of blood & water from His side (John 19:34)
- Journal of the American Medical Association
- Jesus was dead before taken down from the cross

Fact #2—Paul's transformed life

- He had been the leading persecutor of the Church
- He claimed Jesus appeared to him on the Road to Damascus
- His life was radically changed
- He became the leading missionary & theologian of the Church (persecution & martyrdom)

Fact #3—James' Transformed Life

- He mocked his brother during Jesus' earthly ministry
- Immediately after Jesus' ascension he was already one of the key leaders of the Jerusalem church
- What made him change?
- He suffered martyrdom in 62 ad

Fact #4—the Apostles' Transformed Lives

- They preached Jesus even to the point of persecution & martyrs' deaths
- Men do not die for what they know to be a hoax
- This refutes the stolen body theory
- Not hallucinations—Jesus appeared to groups

Fact #5—the Empty Tomb

- About 75% of New Testament scholars acknowledge the empty tomb
- But, a strong circumstantial case can be made for the empty tomb

Evidence for the Empty Tomb

- The first witnesses were women
- Joseph of Arimathea's tomb (a Sanhedrin member)
- Resurrection preached in Jerusalem in early 30's ad (Acts 1-12; primitive, undeveloped theology)
- No body produced by Jewish leaders

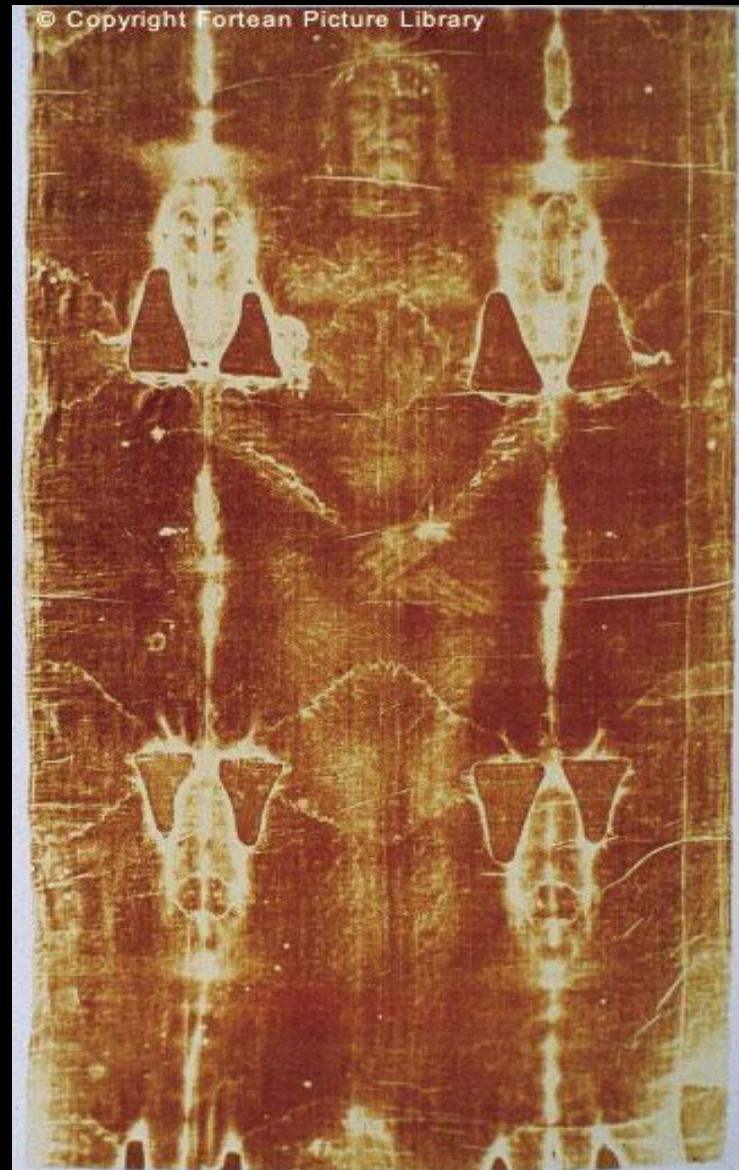
Fact #6—Worship day Changed

- The primary worship day was changed by orthodox Jews (i.e., the early church) from Saturday to Sunday
- The Sabbath Day was instituted by God (Exodus 20)
- The early church began to call Sunday the Lord's Day & began to worship on Sunday

Fact #7—Growth of Early Church

- Dead Messiah = Dead Messiah Movement
- Why did Jesus' Messiah movement come back to life?
- Because Jesus Himself came back to life

Another Possible Evidence: The Shroud of Turin?



Failure of Naturalistic Explanations

- Swoon Theory (side pierced—blood & water)
- Stolen Body (apostles died martyrs' deaths)
- Hallucination Theory (Jesus appeared to groups, easy to talk people out of hallucinations)
- Wrong Tomb Theory (appearances, religious leaders who have produced body)

The Options

- The accounts were not legends (eyewitnesses)
- The Apostles were not lying
- The Apostles were not deceived
- The Apostles told the truth—Jesus rose from the dead!

Conclusion

- Jesus bodily rose from the dead
- He is therefore God, Savior, & Messiah
- He has conquered death & life has meaning
- Our work for God's Kingdom is not in vain

(1 Corinthians 15:58)