

OCTOBER 14, 2025

C.S. LEWIS INSTITUTE - BASIC APOLOGETICS COURSE

Small Group Participant Guide

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"This is a journey of faith and reason — learning to know why we believe, defend truth, and share Christ with grace."

SET 1 - Session 5 – CASE FOR RESURRECTION

Introduction (from CSLI)

The resurrection of Christ is at the center of our faith. If Christ is not raised we have believed in vain (I Corinthians 15). The evidence for the resurrection comes from several directions. It is agreed by almost all scholars (secular or Christian) that Jesus' tomb was empty. A majority also agree that there were appearances of Christ seen by disciples in many different settings. The greatest opponent of early Christianity, the apostle Paul, was converted by an appearance of the risen Christ on the Damascus road.

James, the brother of Jesus, was skeptical of his brother's claims but became a leader of the Jerusalem church because he saw the risen Christ. The early disciples were changed from a fearful group hiding in the upper room for fear of the Jews into world changers. Why? Because they saw the resurrected Christ. This lecture sets forth the evidence for the resurrection of the Son of God.

Synopsis

The resurrection of Jesus is the central sign and vindication of Christian faith: if true, the claims and salvation Jesus announced are of infinite importance; if false, Christianity collapses into mere cultural myth. The lecture distinguishes resurrection from mere resuscitation (e.g., Lazarus) and from cultural influence or legend — the New Testament claims a bodily, irreversible raising of Jesus into a new order of life. Historically, multiple independent attestations support the basic facts: Jesus' crucifixion, burial, the empty tomb, post-mortem appearances, and the dramatic transformation of his earliest followers. Extra-biblical writers (e.g., Josephus, Tacitus) and numerous early Christian testimonies attest to these events, while early creedal material (1 Corinthians 15:3–8) shows the proclamation of the death, burial, and third-day rising circulated extremely early. Common naturalistic explanations—wrong tomb, theft, swoon (resuscitation), hallucination, or later invention—fail on evidential grounds (practical improbabilities, enemy admission of the empty tomb, women as first witnesses being an unlikely invention, and group appearances being incompatible with hallucination). The resurrection appearances are reported as bodily encounters (meals, touching wounds), and opponents' eyewitnesses or skeptic conversions (e.g., Paul, James) strengthen historicity. The lecture closes by mapping implications across time: for the past (justification — the cross is vindicated), for the present (the Spirit who raised Jesus dwells in believers, empowering holy living), and for the future (hope of a transformed resurrection body; present labors are not in vain). In sum, the resurrection is the pivot of Christian truth and daily hope.

Ten Life Applications

Anchor your assurance in history, not feeling.

Description: Ground personal assurance of salvation in historical evidence for the resurrection (empty tomb, early creeds, appearances) rather than momentary emotion.

Practical example: When doubt hits, re-read 1 Corinthians 15 and list three historically rooted facts that support your trust; discuss these with a partner.

Treat evangelism as telling an event not only a message.

Description: The gospel is proclamation of what God did (death, burial, rising) — present both the facts and their meaning.

Practical example: Practice a 60-second gospel that names the resurrection as the proof of Christ's victory, then invite questions.

Live under the reality of justification.

Description: Because the resurrection vindicates Christ's atoning work, believers may live with the conviction that sins are forgiven and identity re-centered in Christ.

Practical example: Begin with a 2-minute confession+assurance moment: confess one failing, read Romans 4:25 aloud, thank God for justification.

Rely on the Spirit's present power.

Description: The same Spirit who raised Jesus empowers believers to resist sin and serve with courage.

Practical example: Before a difficult conversation or temptation, pray specifically: "Spirit who raised Jesus, enable me now," then act.

Cultivate steadfast hope in ministry.

Description: Knowing work for Christ is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58) sustains perseverance through discouragement.

Practical example: Keep a "seed" journal: record small acts of service and, later, note any fruit or stories that reveal unseen impact.

Use early creeds as discipleship anchors.

Description: Early summaries (e.g., "Christ died...was buried...raised on the third day") are tools for memory and defense.

Practical example: Memorize the short creed from 1 Corinthians 15 and explain its meaning in your own words.

Respond to skeptical theories calmly and charitably.

Description: Sensational claims can be answered with patient questions, historical facts, and open conversation rather than emotional rebuttal.

Practical example: When someone cites a conspiracy or novel, ask "How would that explanation account for X, Y, Z?" and offer brief historical counterpoints.

Value testimony and conversion stories.

Description: The conversion of enemies (e.g., Paul) shows the resurrection's persuasive force; encourage sharing testimonies that point to encounters with living Christ.

Practical example: Write a 5-minute testimony where you can explain how historical truth met you personally.

Worship with resurrection joy, not merely memory.

Description: The resurrection invites joy and worship because it demonstrates God's victory and present presence.

Practical example: In your quiet time, integrate a short time of sung or spoken praise focused specifically on the risen Christ.

Practice bold witness rooted in humility.

Description: Proclaim the resurrection confidently because it is historically grounded, but always with gentleness and respect for seekers.

Practical example: If a study-partner is available, role-play short dialogues: one person explains the resurrection in plain terms; the other practices asking honest questions. Swap roles.

Study Questions (from CSLI)

1. What's the difference between resurrection and resuscitation?

2. What are the reasons to argue that the tomb was empty?

3. What's the problem with the swoon theory?

4. What are the appearances of the risen Christ mentioned in the New Testament?

5. How does the conversion of a leading opponent or enemy of the Gospel, Paul, argue for the resurrection?

6. Why is hallucination an inadequate response to explain the resurrection appearances?

7. How radical was the transformation of the early disciples?

Building Faith Conversations

8. In what ways do the Gospel accounts present the risen Jesus as a bodily, physical presence rather than a mere spirit, and why does that distinction matter?

9. Which specific features of the evidence (empty tomb, multiple witnesses, women as first witnesses, early creeds, hostile reports) make naturalistic explanations especially implausible?

10. How does the early dating of creedal statements (e.g., 1 Corinthians 15) strengthen the case that the resurrection belief arose very soon after Jesus' death?

11. What would a plausible "best alternative" natural explanation of the data need to explain — and why do common alternatives (theft, swoon, hallucination, later invention) fail to meet those criteria?

12. How does the conversion of skeptics and persecutors (e.g., Paul, and the changed behavior of the Twelve) function as evidence in a historical case?

13. How does the resurrection vindicate Jesus' teaching and atoning work on the cross (theological implication for justification and victory over death)?

14. What pastoral implications does the resurrection have for grief, suffering, and facing death in our congregations?

15. How should the reality of a future bodily resurrection shape Christian ethics and priorities today (work, justice, evangelism)?

16. What short, clear way can you tell the resurrection “story” to a skeptic in 60–90 seconds that emphasizes its historical claims and implications?

17. Which objections from contemporary critics (books, media, or scholarship) most need a calm, historically-informed response in your context — and what single piece of evidence would you use first?



Links to Lectures and Notes: <https://srmatthews.com/tsg>

Set1-Lecture 5

(0:20 - 0:46) Let's start out with a word of prayer. Lord, we offer up this time to you, we pray for your presence, we pray for the Spirit to come and give us clarity. We pray that as we come to understand the truth of the resurrection, that you might help us see the implications of it and be able to live more consistently as a result of what we hear today.

(0:47 - 1:23) I pray that the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts might be acceptable to you, oh Lord, our strength and our redeemer. We have in the case for the resurrection or the resurrection of Jesus, a very important topic for the faith. The resurrection focuses as the great sign at the end of Jesus' life.

(1:23 - 1:35) There are bookends. There's the virgin birth on the one hand and the resurrection on the other. And so we have the great sign that Jesus is who he said he was.

(1:35 - 2:00) It's at the very core of the faith. It's of course one of the great holidays, we have Christmas and Good Friday, but Easter is the great holiday because if Jesus is raised from the dead, then what he says is true and the salvation that he comes to bring is real. So it's utterly crucial for us to understand that the resurrection happened.

(2:01 - 2:22) So what I'm going to give you in this time, in this talk, is a summary of the case for the resurrection. You can find it extensively documented. I have a bibliography of ten books, and of course there are many more, that you can look at and go further or deeper into these areas.

(2:22 - 2:38) But the resurrection is utterly crucial. There's a man, Frank Morrison, who was an atheist lawyer. He decided to write a book that would disprove the resurrection, and he studied for a year and then he ended up writing the book.

(2:39 - 3:04) And the first chapter of the book was titled, The Book That Refused to be Written. In the process of that year, he ended up becoming a believer and he wrote the book called, Who Moved the Stone? That's actually happened with several other people in history that have set out to look at the resurrection. They've ended up becoming believers in Christ as a result of studying this issue.

(3:04 - 3:32) What I want to look at is a very simple outline. First point is, what is the resurrection? Secondly, what are the evidences for the resurrection? And third, what are the implications of the resurrection? First of all, what is the resurrection? I want to emphasize first that it's not just resuscitation. For instance, Lazarus died and was in the tomb for four days.

(3:33 - 3:51) And Jesus came to that tomb and said, Lazarus, come forth. And he came waddling out of that tomb in his grave clothes. And Lazarus was alive, but presumably, Lazarus had his dying to do all over again.

(3:52 - 4:11) In fact, C.S. Lewis, towards the end of his life, slipped into a coma and he thought he was going to die as he was going into semi-consciousness. And he ended up, after that, and many, many other people, friends thought he was going to die. And he woke up after a while and just asked for a cup of tea.

(4:11 - 4:23) He said he was rather disappointed that he hadn't died because dying that way would be rather easy. And he didn't know what would happen the next time. He said, it's like Lazarus.

(4:23 - 4:38) He had his dying to do all over again. So Lazarus was resuscitated, but not brought to a new order of being, never to die again as Jesus was. The widow of Nain's son is another example.

(4:38 - 4:57) In Luke chapter 7, starting with verse 11, this young boy was resurrected or raised from the dead by Jesus, but he was resuscitated. Presumably he also had to die again. But Jesus was raised to a new order of being, never to die again.

(4:58 - 5:04) First Corinthians 15.23, it says he's the first fruits from the dead. He's the prototype. He's the leader.

(5:04 - 5:15) He shows us what's going to happen in our life, the type of the resurrection body that we are going to have. And he didn't die again. He ascended to heaven bodily.

(5:16 - 5:27) And presumably he still exists as the God-man forever and ever. Because that body is raised to a new order of being. So it's not just resuscitation.

(5:28 - 5:37) It's also not mere influence. Not just a memory. Not just that Jesus has a good memory and he lives on, so to speak, in his teaching.

(5:38 - 5:54) But he actually lives physically, really. In South America, one time, there was a sign that said, Che lives. Che Guevara, the guerrilla terrorist leader there, lives.

(5:54 - 6:03) But it doesn't mean that he rose from the dead. It means that his influence lives on. The meaning of his message inspires future generations.

(6:03 - 6:08) That was the meaning of that idea. That's not the case with Jesus. It's not mere influence.

(6:08 - 6:23) The idea is that the resurrection claims that he physically has been raised from the dead. Third thing it's not, is it's not a mere story. It's claimed to be history.

(6:23 - 6:49) And there's much that reinforces that history, some of which we've addressed in other talks in this series. But there's some interesting facts that surround the crucifixion or surround the person of Jesus. I just want to review them quickly just to give you an understanding of the number of historical sources that back up who Jesus was or the nature of his crucifixion.

(6:50 - 7:09) Jesus is mentioned by 42 different authors prior to 150 AD. Some of those authors, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, Jude, and Hebrews are biblical authors. But there's still different authors that mention Jesus and the story about him and his death and resurrection.

(7:10 - 7:34) There are also 20 early Christian authors that write in the early years. Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, the Didache, Letter of Barnabas, Shepherd of Hermas, Papias, Diogenes, and others. There are four heretical writings, the Gospel of Truth, the Apocryphal of John, the Treatise on the Resurrection, and the Gospel of Thomas, one of the Gnostic Gospels.

(7:34 - 7:49) Now, some people have claimed that it's prior to 150 AD. I would actually say it's after 175 AD, but that's a debate that goes on in scholarly circles. There are at least nine secular sources that mention various aspects of Jesus' life.

(7:50 - 8:18) Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, Phagion, Lucian, Celsus, Suetonius, Thalassius, Mara Ben Serpion, and Talmud. It would be a great and interesting lecture to be able to go through and deal with the sections, deal with the different quotes that these authors make. But the crucifixion is mentioned in the four Gospels, also in Josephus, Tacitus, Lucian of Samasota, Mara Ben Serpion, and the Talmud.

(8:19 - 8:39) So there are a number of extra biblical sources that also mention the crucifixion. John Dominic Crossan, who's from the Jesus Seminar, but not exactly evangelical, very skeptical of the authority of scripture, says this. That he was crucified is as sure as anything historical can be.

(8:40 - 8:59) Again, John Dominic Crossan says that he was crucified is as sure as anything historical can be. And I think also the case for the resurrection is very solid as well. C.S. Lewis said, if these things are true, then faith in Christ is of infinite importance.

(9:00 - 9:13) If they're not true, it's of no importance except as a cultural artifact, a sociological phenomenon. But the one thing it cannot be is of moderate importance. Again, if it's true, it's of infinite importance.

(9:14 - 9:21) If it's not true, it's of no importance. But the one thing it cannot be is of moderate importance. And I think it is true.

(9:21 - 9:46) I just pointed to some of the lines along which you can deal with the historicity of Jesus and the crucifixion. And I think there's plenty of reason for the historicity of the resurrection as well. What are the evidences? I would say that most scholars, whether they're skeptical, non-evangelical, secular scholars, agree, as I just indicated, that Jesus was crucified.

(9:46 - 10:06) A great majority of them also believe that the tomb was empty. A great majority of scholars of any stripe believe that the disciples had claimed to have an experience with the risen Jesus somehow or another. That there was some kind of appearance, whatever the status of it is, people may disagree about what that is.

(10:07 - 10:25) But the disciples were changed and were revolutionized by something, experiences that they had, that they claimed to be with the risen Jesus. That's something that a great mass of scholars agree, whether believer or non-believer. Let's look at three basic evidences.

(10:25 - 10:40) Of course, there are many more we could develop. But first is the empty tomb, second, appearances, and third, the transformation of the early disciples. First of all, the idea that the tomb was empty.

(10:41 - 11:19) The gospel seems, for all intents and purposes, to start in Jerusalem very soon after the death of Jesus. Say, within more than 50 days after Jesus' death, the gospel is first preached in Jerusalem, not very long after the events that happened. If there was a tomb and a body in that tomb, any secretary, on their work break, could easily go and refute the resurrection by pointing to the tomb in which Jesus was buried.

(11:22 - 11:41) If Jesus had died and was in a tomb, and his body was still in that tomb, it would likely have been a place that would be venerated by disciples and visited. We know that people go to graves, even to this day, and put flowers by it. Any famous person, you want to go and see their grave.

(11:42 - 12:00) Now, I don't venerate C.S. Lewis, but one of the first things I wanted to do when I was in Oxford is go see his house, the kilns, and I definitely wanted to go see his grave. It's at the Headington Quarry Church, and it's a very obscure marker. You have to look around.

(12:00 - 12:15) There's no big signs pointing to it or nothing that makes it stick out. You've got to search around the graveyard to find it. And it has this little gravestone, talks to C.S. Lewis and gives his dates, and it says, men must endure their going hence.

(12:17 - 12:37) So, at least I wanted to go see the grave, the place where C.S. Lewis was buried, even though I don't venerate or worship him. That was just something that I wanted to do. Now, obviously, if Jesus had a grave and his body was in it, his followers would have gone to venerate it.

(12:37 - 13:02) Early women went to the tomb as well, but we don't see any tradition of that at all. What we see in a number of the Gospels is that Jesus was buried in a tomb, the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man and also a member of the Sanhedrin, with the help of Nicodemus. Now, Nicodemus was the one who came to Jesus at night, and Jesus spoke to him about being born again.

(13:03 - 13:16) He was also a leader of the Sanhedrin, a couple of the Jewish religious leaders. Now, that's a very important story. First of all, you had people that had a lot at stake to identify with Jesus, but both of them did.

(13:17 - 13:38) And we also have, at all different levels, not only in the Gospels, but in 1 Corinthians 15, the idea that Jesus was buried in a tomb. Any attempt to invent a story of an empty tomb within 50 days would be refuted. Also, the Jews admit that the tomb was empty.

(13:39 - 14:38) In Matthew 28, the guard that was there at the tomb said, the disciples stole a body while we slept. Now, if you were a defense attorney, not that the disciples were actually caught or put on trial, but if you were a defense attorney for the apostles, what would you have said to the guard? If their excuses, the disciples stole a body while we slept, well, first of all, you have the problem that their lives were at stake, and if they would have gone to sleep and the body was stolen, they'd be dead. But even if they weren't killed, the second major thing is, how do you know what was happening while you were sleeping? And if you woke up, do you mean to say that a few disciples carrying a dead body could move faster than an elite guard that are well-armed? You'd think there'd be fewer disciples, or at least they'd be missing arms or legs along the way.

(14:40 - 15:07) But the guard admitted indirectly that these things happened, I believe, that the tomb was empty. Also, as we'll see later, would the disciples, knowing the resurrection is a lie, suffer and die for it. A third basic explanation for the empty tomb that people sometimes make is that the women went to the wrong tomb.

(15:07 - 15:34) But it's very interesting that women were the first witnesses to the resurrection. If you were going to invent a story or make it up, a myth or create a legend back in that time, you definitely would not make women in that culture, in that time, in that place, the first witnesses. Because according to Jewish law and practice, women were not allowed to be legal witnesses.

(15:34 - 15:55) Now, I think this is appallingly sexist, but you see these kinds of statements in Jewish writings. In the Talmud, the Sotah says, sooner let the words of the law be burnt than delivered to women. In the Talmud, Kiddushin says the world cannot exist without males and females.

(15:56 - 16:16) Happy is he whose children are males, and woe to him whose children are females. It's also a prayer that the Pharisees used to pray, that they used to thank God that they were not either a Gentile or a woman. In Josephus' Antiquities, it says this.

(16:16 - 16:32) But let not the testimony of women be admitted on the count of the levity and boldness of their sex. Another quote from the Talmud, Rosh Hashanah says this. Any evidence which a woman gives is not valid to offer.

(16:33 - 16:54) So you have a tradition within the Jewish setting that says women were not allowed to be witnesses, and the fact that the New Testament, in that culture, in that time, and in that place, claims that women were the first witnesses seems true. You would not invent that. It would actually go against the credibility of your story, if that was the case.

(16:54 - 17:22) And you notice in Luke 24, verse 11, that the disciples would not initially believe the women until they actually saw it for themselves, saw Jesus, the risen Jesus themselves. So again, unless it was true, you would not invent the initial testimony of women. Well, what are some of the other alternatives that people have offered to the resurrection? One is, that I mentioned, alluded to earlier, that the women went to the wrong tomb.

(17:23 - 17:39) All you'd have to do there is go to the right one, and you could easily refute the resurrection. Another possibility is that the Jews or Romans stole the body, but all they would have to do is produce it. If they could have produced the body, they would have.

(17:39 - 18:07) They desperately wanted to end Christianity in its infancy, and if they had taken the body to keep it in safekeeping so that it wouldn't be a claim for the resurrection, all they had to do was produce the body, or even claim that they had taken the body.

And we see no allusion to that, either. Another thing that people have raised, although it really wasn't until the 19th century that people raised this possibility.

(18:07 - 18:25) In the early church, in the first centuries, nobody raised this possibility. But one possibility people have raised is called the swoon theory. There's a book, say, 30 years ago, 20, 30 years ago, called *The Passover Plot*, that maintained this kind of scenario.

(18:26 - 18:41) But it seems very unlikely. I don't know if you've seen *The Passion of the Christ*, but if you've seen it, you see something of the blood and gore that Jesus went through. He endured a beating.

(18:42 - 19:04) The lashes and the whip that was used had stones and glass and other jagged things in it. They used to limit, in many cases, the whipping to 39 lashes, because you couldn't endure and actually live through more than that. We don't know how many lashes Jesus received.

(19:04 - 19:21) He could have received easily beyond the 39 lashes. Even the 39 would not only rip deeply into skin and muscle and bone, but even sometimes leave organs exposed. So that was how brutal it was.

(19:22 - 19:37) So that Jesus was whipped. Then a crown of thorns was put on his head. As I've looked around the culture, we don't know exactly what the thorns were like, but there are some thorns that are, say, an inch or two long that are in that area.

(19:37 - 19:54) And it's possible that those thorns were thorns that were put in Jesus' head. Now, I don't know if you've had anything, any kind of head injury. Remember one time I just bent over and I got just a tiny little thorn in my head, and it was amazing the amount of bleeding that came out of that one little thorn.

(19:54 - 20:19) But you can imagine the amount of blood loss it would cause if you had a large crown of very deep thorns just shoved down on your head. So there'd be significant amount of blood loss on top of the whipping that he had endured. He was so weak that someone who was in his middle 30s, it was a carpenter.

(20:19 - 20:41) Carpenters are often very strong, very fit, who was used to walking, was not able to carry his cross or the beam on which he would be crucified. And so someone else had to be recruited to do so. So he walked through that and he, on top of everything else, had nails put into his hands and feet.

(20:42 - 21:10) Finally, after hanging on the cross for hours, they wanted to make sure he was dead. So a centurion put a spear into his side and it said out of his side came water and blood, which doctors say is an indication that the pericardial sac was broken and you couldn't live and have that be the case. So that would be an indication of death.

(21:10 - 21:28) And the centurions were experienced at seeing when real death occurred. But then after that, he was taken down and wrapped in clothes. In the Gospel of John, it says there were something like 100 pounds of spices that were wrapped into his grave clothes.

(21:28 - 21:58) So he was tightly wrapped in grave clothes with tons of spices around him, taken to the tomb, put in the tomb. A big stone that took more than one person to roll into place was rolled in front of that tomb. And the scenario of the swoon theory would be this, that somehow Jesus woke in that cool of the grave, somehow pushed aside the stone in his weakened condition that took more than one person to roll into place from the outside.

(21:58 - 22:10) I don't know how you do it from the inside. And then somehow skipped around the Roman guard without being noticed. They could have easily heard the stone roll if that were to happen.

(22:10 - 22:25) And walked miles and appeared to the disciples as a risen savior, not one in need of help and bandaging and hospital care. He certainly would have been. Here's what David Strauss said to sum it up.

(22:26 - 23:04) It's impossible that one, this is from the 19th century, David Strauss said, it's impossible that one who had come forth from the grave half dead, who crept about weak and ill, who stood in the need of medical treatment, of bandaging, strengthening and tender care, who at last succumbed to suffering, could have ever given the disciples the impression that he was conqueror over death in the grave, that he was the prince of peace. This lay at the bottom of their future mission. Such a resuscitation could only

have weakened the impression he made on them in life and death, or at most given it a shaky voice, but could by no means have changed sorrow into enthusiasm or reverence to worship.

(23:05 - 23:14) So these are some of the alternatives that people have proposed. And they seem to me to be dead ends. Now, I suppose you could think of some other scenario that might be there.

(23:15 - 23:48) For instance, John Dominic Crossan from the Jesus Seminar said that Jesus perhaps was put into a shallow grave and his body was eaten by dogs. But that blows right by the tradition that seems to be solid and true and not something you would invent in the Gospels, and also 1 Corinthians 15, that he was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, that he was buried in a tomb. So that seems to go against a very solid historical tradition that's held forth.

(23:48 - 23:58) But you could come up with various other scenarios, perhaps. But then you have over against that the check of the appearances. You have the empty tomb.

(23:59 - 24:12) It seems to be empty. And then you also have the appearances of Jesus. Let me just read one account of these appearances in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 1 to 8, says this.

(24:13 - 24:39) Now, I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, which also you stand by, which also you're saved. If you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain, for I delivered to you as a first importance what I also received. That Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day, according to the scriptures, that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

(24:40 - 25:29) After that, he appeared to more than 500 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. Now, notice the appearances that are here to Peter, to the twelve, to the apostles, and it seems that he appeared to the apostles at least twice, to the twelve, once in the upper room without Thomas, and then a later appearance with Thomas, because Thomas refused to believe the report of the earlier report of the apostles because he was absent, and he demanded to see Jesus' wounds.

(25:30 - 25:52) And it seems that in Gospel of John, John 20, that he offered, Jesus offered at the second appearance for Thomas to feel his wounds. We don't know whether Thomas actually did that, but he said, my Lord and my God. So this doubter believed.

(25:52 - 26:26) We have here in the first Corinthians 15, he appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep. You have this appearance to the 500, but the idea is that some have died, but some at this point remain alive, and you could go talk to them, ask them questions about what they had experienced, what they had seen. We also have an appearance on the road to Emmaus, where the two disciples are walking, and Jesus comes by their side.

(26:26 - 26:50) They don't immediately recognize him. They're not a couple of the twelve, and they see Jesus, and Jesus did some substantial teaching to them. He taught them everything from the law, prophets, and writings that pertain to himself as they were walking on the road, and later he was there with all the disciples towards the end of Luke 24.

(26:50 - 27:12) And he taught them everything in the law, prophets, and writings that pointed forward to him. I would have loved to have been there and be able to get that teaching. I think we see a lot of it reflected in, say, Matthew and the other passages of the New Testament, but you can imagine that teaching that was present.

(27:12 - 27:38) He also appeared by the seashore towards the end of John, and he was actually cooking a meal on the shore, and he called to Peter and some of the other disciples who were out fishing, and they hadn't caught anything, and they caught a great catch of fish. He even gives a particular number of fish, and then they came in. Peter jumped into the water and swam.

(27:38 - 27:55) He said, it's the Lord, and they actually ate breakfast with Jesus, and presumably Jesus ate as well. He ate food with them. All different circumstances, encounters that were up close and personal.

(27:56 - 28:08) Times were not just often a distance, a hazy vision, but you could actually touch his hands or his side. He had the women at the tomb. You have a couple of appearances.

(28:09 - 28:30) You have the appearance to the 500. You have the appearances by the seashore, and many different times and places, different times of the day or night, but these appearances abruptly stopped within 50 days after these events. You also have, and it's very interesting, an enemy witness.

(28:31 - 28:51) It's one thing when people that would have a propensity to believe have these appearances, but it's another thing to be an enemy of the gospel and of Christ, and to become convinced by an appearance of Jesus. This was the case with Saul, who became the apostle Paul. He persecuted the church.

(28:51 - 29:41) You'll see in Acts 7. He was at the stoning of Stephen. He held the cloaks of people that stoned this early deacon, and he was on the way to Damascus to persecute, presumably kill or imprison Christians there, and he had a vision of Jesus on the Damascus road, where Jesus said to him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? And he was blinded, and he went for three days. He waited later in Damascus, and Ananias came to him and told him about the gospel, laid hands on him, and his sight was restored, and he was baptized, and he became the apostle predominantly to the Gentiles.

(29:42 - 30:02) But the fact that a skeptic was converted by an appearance of the risen Jesus is also something to note. Another skeptic was James, the brother of our Lord. He was not one of the original 12, and his brothers were ones that didn't believe in him.

(30:02 - 30:20) It says a prophet is without honor in his own town and in his own country, and that was the case with his brothers. We see his brothers in the Gospels are James, Joseph, Judas, Simon, and Simon. His sisters, he has other sisters, and the sisters are unnamed.

(30:21 - 30:52) If you want to look up the passages, it's in Mark 3:21 and verse 31, Mark 6, verses 3 and 4, and John 7, 5. In John 7, 5, it says, for even his brothers were not believing in him. They were all skeptical about the claims, and about the prominence, and the fame that Jesus was getting, and the claims as to what he had done. But we hear in 1 Corinthians 15, 7, the passage I just read, that he appeared to James.

(30:53 - 31:12) So the reason that James, the brother of our Lord, became a believer was an appearance of Jesus to him, and he very soon became a leader in the Jerusalem church. He was one of the most prominent people there. We see that in Acts 15, verses 12 to 21.

(31:13 - 31:56) And later, Josephus, the Jewish historian, claims that he died a martyr, stoned, close to Jerusalem, stoned, interestingly, like Stephen was stoned. So we have the conversion of James, someone who did not believe, a skeptic who doubted, and the reason for his conversion is given to be an appearance of the risen Christ. Also, you have, very interestingly, at the very beginning of this passage, in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 1, 2, and 3, especially in verse 1, Paul says, Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, which you also received.

(31:59 - 32:17) And it seems that Paul went down and received this message. And here's what he says, For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received. Now, when did Paul receive it? Seems that he received it within three years, at least.

(32:18 - 32:41) Within three years after his conversion, seems initially after his conversion, he stayed and was with the disciples in Damascus and preached. In that setting, and then later he went down and met with the other apostles. Of course, they were fearful that perhaps he was a turncoat or undercover agent that was there to get inside and destroy the early church, so they checked him out very thoroughly.

(32:42 - 32:59) But he talks about the gospel which he had received. Now, obviously, he'd received his gospel from others and knew it to be true, but he received the right hand of fellowship from the apostles, it says in Galatians. He says, For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received.

(33:00 - 33:25) And this seems like an early creed of believers, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures. So you see, again, that he died, and that's according to prophecy. He was buried, again, underlining of that burial tradition, and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.

(33:25 - 33:38) It was a fulfillment of prophecy. It's a combination of the miracle of the resurrection and prophecy that points forward to it. You see the fulfilling of prophecy in Jesus being raised from the dead.

(33:38 - 33:59) But this seems to be a very, very early tradition. If Jesus was born, I'd say somewhere between 4 and 6 BC, that's what some people estimate, we'll say, I just heard another person claim recently it was 3 BC, in any case, it wasn't zero. The person who set up the years got it wrong.

(34:00 - 34:10) But he was born somewhere BC. He started his ministry, it says in Luke, when he was about 30. Doesn't mean exactly 30 necessarily.

(34:10 - 34:19) Perhaps it is, perhaps it isn't. And presumably he had a two and a half, three year ministry. He would be about 33 when he died.

(34:19 - 34:44) Many people think that the date of Jesus' death, although you can't absolutely prove it, would be April 7, 30 AD. So it could be that within three years after that, Paul received his tradition, which he echoes here in 1 Corinthians 15 verses 3 and 4. It goes back very early in terms of what's claimed. It wasn't just way late.

(34:45 - 35:07) You have a very early echo of the tradition and the teaching of the earliest believers that were present. What are some other alternatives that are given to the appearances? Well, probably the greatest rival claim is that these things were hallucinations. But the more you think about it, that doesn't seem to make sense at all.

(35:08 - 35:33) Because hallucinations are not something, you can have individually hallucinations if you were to take a psychogenic drug. But you're not going to be able to share the hallucination with someone else in a group. For instance, just think, I was dreaming of a trip to Florida or to Mexico or to the Caribbean or somewhere else, the Mediterranean.

(35:34 - 35:56) If I were to wake up and ask my wife, Connie, why don't you come and join me on the dream and we can save the cost of a vacation? You know, you can't do that because you can't share dreams. Or you could think of someone back in the 60s or later taking LSD. And many of the trips were bummers or bad trips.

(35:56 - 36:04) But you can imagine someone perhaps having a good trip and saying, hey, come and join me on my trip. Take this LSD and we can have a lot of fun. We can play together.

(36:04 - 36:23) Well, that's absurd because hallucinations are individual things. You can't join somebody else on a hallucination. Another example of that would be Navy SEALs are put through their hell week or two where they're sent out.

(36:23 - 36:38) And I have a friend, a young man who's going to, I hope, very soon start that kind of training for the SEALs. But you're pushed to the edge. You're deprived of food and sleep.

(36:39 - 36:50) And you're just exhausted in terms of the activity that's going on. And during that hell week, most of the SEALs hallucinate. For instance, one saw an octopus waving.

(36:51 - 37:05) Another, a train coming across the water. Another, a large wall that the raft was going to crash into. But interestingly, and perhaps not surprisingly, none of the others had the same hallucination.

(37:06 - 37:14) None participated in the other's experience. None of the others saw these hallucinations. Hallucinations just don't happen in groups.

(37:15 - 37:30) We have many different appearances in groups that happen. Again, not just out in the distance, but up close and personal. Sometimes visions are mentioned, but I won't spend very long on that.

(37:31 - 37:53) But perhaps the visions are either to be visions that are objective, in which case the question is, is it physical or not? Or subjective. But then if it's subjective, it seems to be individual. In any case, I don't think it's a solid explanation for things.

(37:53 - 38:19) Usually hallucination is the most often given alternative. Third part of the evidence is the transformation of the early disciples. What changed the disciples from fearful people hiding in the upper room for fear of the Jews into world changers? People that turned the world upside down.

(38:19 - 38:35) The initial disciples were huddling with the door locked or closed. And they were struggling. What changed them into courageous people? They were not naturally courageous.

(38:36 - 38:51) They all, except for Peter, fled the scene of his arrest. And even Peter, who followed him, denied him three times with curses and swearing. So these were not naturally courageous people.

(38:52 - 39:17) What changed them from very fearful, timid people into world changers? Well, I would suggest it was an experience of the risen Christ that caused that change. They claimed to see the risen Christ. And if what they said was a lie and they knew it, that's not easily understandable.

(39:18 - 39:46) Now, we've seen in terms of suicide bombers, in more recent times, that suicide bombers will go to their death for that which they believe to be the truth. Certainly people will die for what they believe to be the truth. But I don't know if anybody or certainly a group of people where they go to death for that which they know is a lie, especially undergo torture and death.

(39:48 - 40:01) And yet Peter is said to be by Tertullian, early church father, crucified upside down. Tertullian says that Paul was beheaded. Josephus says that James, as I mentioned earlier, the brother of our Lord, was stoned.

(40:02 - 40:19) And we have other traditions that talk about the other apostles, except for John, that were put to death for what they believed. And some say torture, like Peter crucified upside down. And others went through real difficulty for the sake of their faith.

(40:19 - 40:45) But we don't see anybody cracking under the pressure of this kind of torture and giving another story or alluding to the, in quotes, lie that they had told. If they would have, do you think there would be some echo? You think it would not have been trumpeted widely by people that had witnessed it? Obviously, yes, it would be. They also were transformed so much so to give up cherished beliefs because of the resurrection.

(40:45 - 40:58) For instance, the Sabbath was moved from Saturday till Sunday. The Sunday was the Lord's Day. And why is that? Because of the resurrection of Jesus, you have that transformation.

(40:58 - 41:24) So very early, the early believers met on the Lord's Day, which is a whole different day than these were Jews. They were meeting on a different day. What could have changed their mentality, their mind, the things that they'd been brought up dealing with, except for the resurrection of Christ? There were also no more sacrifices to be made, as in the temple, because Jesus had come to give a sacrifice once and for all.

(41:24 - 42:01) There's no need for more sacrifices in light of Jesus' sacrifice. What could have led them to that? Well, certainly the crucifixion, but then particularly the understanding of the crucifixion as being a sacrifice and the resurrection that vindicated it, as we'll soon see. Also, the sacraments that were observed very early, our testimony to Jesus' death, having the bread and the wine that represent and symbolize in some way or another, convey Christ's presence to us.

(42:03 - 42:40) They point to Jesus' death and resurrection, the way the Apostle Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 11, that we proclaim in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Jesus' death until he comes again. So there's both a past reference to what Jesus has done, his death and resurrection, and his coming again, which means he ascended and he will come again bodily in the end time. So that's very significant to see these great changes, these great symbols of the resurrection happening in the practices of the very earliest church.

(42:41 - 44:38) Well, finally, what are the implications of this, the resurrection for our lives? First of all, there's implication for the past, and then secondly for the present, and third for the future. First of all, with respect to the past, in Romans 4.25, it says that Jesus was raised for our justification. That's a very compact phrase, that Jesus was raised for our justification.

Now, what does that mean? Well, it means that Jesus' death on the cross, if it was merely that, would be viewed as a defeat rather than a victory. And you might wonder whether the atonement for our sins happened without the resurrection. But the great sign

that proves that Jesus' death was actually a victory over sin, and that on the cross, to use Gustav Alleen's book title, he's the victor, his book title is *Christus Victor*, that Christ is the victor on the cross over sin and death, the sign for that is the resurrection.

It's the great marker that when you put your trust in Christ and believe that his death atoned for your sin and you admit that you're a sinner, that you become a believer. And the resurrection is the sign that you are justified, that you're now accepted, that Christ's righteousness covers you, your sin is placed on Christ, and his righteousness is placed on you. That's what the idea of justification means in a nutshell, and that your sin is placed on Christ, and his atonement and his righteousness is placed on you, that kind of double transfer that happens.

(44:39 - 45:31) The resurrection shows that you are justified when you put your trust in Christ. He was raised for our justification. Because he is raised, we can rejoice that our sins are forgiven and that we are justified.

Salvation has come. Christ's death on the cross has been a victory and not a defeat. Not that his life was over and he was crushed under the wheels of time, as Schweitzer said, but his death leads to victory.

Secondly, implication for the present. In Romans 8 11, it says this, that the same spirit who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you. Again, the same spirit who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you.

(45:32 - 46:11) That's a very interesting issue, that the Spirit, the Holy Spirit is the one who raised Jesus from the dead. And if you're a believer and you've been born from above, born of the Spirit, then the Spirit dwells in you. And if the same Spirit dwells in you that raised Christ from the dead, then you have power available to you to accomplish things, to overcome temptation, to deal with difficulties in life.

You have a resource of real power. *Dunamis* is the word that's often used. The gospel is the power of God, the Apostle Paul says in Romans 1 16 and 17.

(46:11 - 48:08) The power of God for salvation for everyone who believes. It's dynamite because, again, the same Spirit who dwells in you raised Christ from the dead. That means there's real power available for us in the present because of this Spirit.

There's also implications for the future. In 1 Corinthians 15 58, at the very end of a long chapter, I read the first several verses of that chapter, and later in the chapter it talks about the resurrection body. And then towards the very end of 1 Corinthians 15, it talks about, oh death, where is your sting? Oh grave, where is your victory? And it talks about, it's a great chapter on the resurrection and the resurrection body.

But here's the conclusion and the implication for our life. If Christ is raised, 1 Corinthians 15 58, therefore be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. Therefore, if Christ is raised, we're to be steadfast, we're to be like the rock of Gibraltar, immovable in the storms of life and in the winds that blow and in the waves that grow very massive at times.

Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. That we're to be energetic, always motivated to go out and serve, put our lives on the line for the sake of the gospel, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. One of the things that is a refrain all the way through 1 Corinthians 15, is if Christ is not raised, then our lives are in vain, that you're believing in vain.

(48:09 - 51:51) If Christ is not raised, the Apostle Paul says, we are of all people most to be pitied. He says, to paraphrase him in 1 Corinthians 15, that if Christ is not raised, I'm going to sleep in tomorrow. Well, what am I doing going through beatings and whippings and all kinds of difficulties if Christ is not raised? So the resurrection is essential right at the very foundation of belief in Christ, knowing again that your toil is not in vain, and that everything you do, the Lord remembers.

That means your life is not only meaningful in general, but the specific things you do are meaningful. There's a moral structure to the universe, and every negative thing you do is remembered by the Lord, and if you believe in him, it's covered by his righteousness. So you could say before the throne, not guilty, but everything you do positively for the Lord, even the cup of cold water, even the cup of cold water that's given to someone will receive its reward.

Even the smallest little thing you do for someone else, the Lord remembers. Nothing you do in the Lord is in vain, even the smallest things. Even if you think what you do in the Lord's name is futile or in vain, it's not in vain in the Lord.

I've had many cases where I thought I had failed in a particular act of ministry, and yet later I found out I succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. Perhaps one talk I can think that I gave at a Young Life Club. I could give you probably 20 instances of this, but I'll just give you one.

A talk I gave at a Young Life Club. I had maybe 40 people there at that point. I gave a talk on being born again, and I felt it went well, but nothing happened.

I saw no response. I asked people to come up afterwards if they wanted to talk. Nobody came up, and so I thought, well, what's the use of this? I don't know.

Was that something I did in vain? Does this count? Does it make any difference in anybody's life or not? And so a period two years later, I was speaking at a college, at university, about an hour from Pittsburgh called Indiana University, and a young woman came up and said, you know, one time a couple years ago, I was back at a Young Life Club at Peter's Township Young Life, and you spoke on being born again, and I committed my life to Christ that night. I didn't talk to anybody. I just left immediately, but I've been pursuing the Lord ever since.

When I got to Indiana University, I joined the Christian fellowship there. I've been pursuing Christ ever since, and I thought, you know, I would have never known. I would have never known.

I would have gone to my grave thinking perhaps that day was in vain, and I found many, many other instances where what I thought was worth nothing actually had way more impact than I ever dreamed it had on people's lives. So knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord, what you do right now counts forever. What you do right now, every little action you do right now, counts forever.

(51:53 - 53:10) That's because there is going to be a life after death, that Christ is the first fruits of the dead, is the prototype of the resurrection body. He shows us what we will be. Our lives are going to go on forever and ever as believers.

You put your trust in Christ, your life is going to go on forever in fellowship with Christ, and Christ shows us the way, and we can know, because of who he is, because of the promises that are given, that nothing we do in the Lord is in vain. So the resurrection has profound implications for the past, how we view our lives in light of the past. It has profound implications for the present in the way we actually live, and it has profound implications for the future in how we view the future, and the trust that we place in Christ for the future of our lives, and including our death and beyond death as well.

So the resurrection, if it's true, I believe it is. It's of infinite importance. If it's not true, it's of no importance, but the one thing it cannot be is of moderate importance.