

## INTRODUCTION:

### N.T. Wright

The message of Easter is that God's new world has been unveiled in Jesus Christ and that you're now invited to belong to it.

### *John 20:1-18*

On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark. She saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!"

At that, Peter and the other disciple went out, heading for the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and got to the tomb first. Stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying there, yet he did not go in. Then, following him, Simon Peter came also. He entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. The wrapping that had been on His head was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a separate place by itself. The other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, then entered the tomb, saw, and believed. For they still did not understand the Scripture that He must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went home again.

But Mary stood outside facing the tomb, crying. As she was crying, she stooped to look into the tomb. She saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet, where Jesus' body had been lying. They said to her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"Because they've taken away my Lord," she told them, "and I don't know where they've put Him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, though she did not know it was Jesus.

"Woman," Jesus said to her, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Supposing He was the gardener, she replied, "Sir, if you've removed Him, tell me where you've put Him, and I will take Him away."

Jesus said, "Mary."

Turning around, she said to Him in Hebrew, "*Rabbouni!*" —which means "Teacher."

"Don't cling to Me," Jesus told her, "for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brothers and tell them that I am ascending to My Father and your Father—to My God and your God."

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them what He had said to her.

## ***MESSAGE:***

### **I. The Friction of the Resurrection of Jesus**

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#### **Richard Dawkins**

Presumably what happened to Jesus was what happens to all of us when we die. We decompose. Accounts of Jesus's resurrection and ascension are about as well-documented as Jack and the Beanstalk.

### **II. The Fact of the Resurrection of Jesus**

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#### **Gary Habermas**

There is an important difference between the apostle martyrs and those who die for their beliefs today. Modern martyrs act solely out of their trust in beliefs that others have taught them. The apostles died for holding to their own testimony that they had personally seen the risen Jesus. Contemporary martyrs die for what they believe to be true. The disciples of Jesus died for what they knew to be either true or false. —

#### **William Lane Craig**

“These three great facts—the resurrection appearances, the empty tomb, and the origin of the Christian faith—all point unavoidably to one conclusion: The resurrection of Jesus. Today the rational man can hardly be blamed if he believes that on that first Easter morning a divine miracle occurred.”

#### **Timothy Paul Jones**

The central claim of the NT is that Jesus was physically resurrected after being crucified. If this claim arose from decades of embellishment instead of historical truth, then Jesus is dead, the apostles were liars, and our faith is worthless (*1 Cor. 15:14–17*). But evidences from the first and second centuries reveal that eyewitness testimony about Jesus emerged rapidly and circulated reliably. The NT

texts relied on testimonies from apostolic eyewitnesses, and all of these texts were completed while the eyewitnesses were still alive. That's why we can declare with confidence: **Don't worry; I read the book. He didn't stay dead.** —

### **Nabeel Qureshi**

After studying the historical origins of the Christian faith, I came to these conclusions: that Jesus died on the cross is as certain as anything historical can be; that he rose from the dead is by far the best explanation of the events surrounding his death; and that Jesus claimed to be God is the best explanation for the immediate Christian proclamation of Jesus' deity. Putting it all together: Jesus claimed to be God, and he proved it by rising from the dead. The case for Christianity is powerful. Despite my ardent desire to believe in Islam, I had to admit that history was in favor of Christian claims, and even more reluctantly, that it challenged Islamic teachings.

### **Chuck Colson**

The real cover-up [of Watergate], the lie, could only be held together for two weeks, and then everybody else jumped ship in order to save themselves. Now, the fact is that all that those around the President were facing was embarrassment, maybe prison. Nobody's life was at stake. But what about the disciples? Twelve powerless men, peasants really, were facing not just embarrassment or political disgrace, but beatings, stonings, execution. Every single one of the disciples insisted, to their dying breaths, that they had physically seen Jesus bodily raised from the dead. Don't you think that one of those apostles would have cracked before being beheaded or stoned? That one of them would have made a deal with the authorities? None did. Jesus is Lord: That's the thrilling message of Easter. And it's an historic fact, one convincingly established by the evidence—and one you can bet your life upon. Go ahead researchers—dig up all the old graves you want. You won't change a thing. He has risen.

## **III. The Future in light of the Resurrection of Jesus**

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### ***Romans 8:11***

And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then He who raised Christ from the dead will also bring your mortal bodies to life through His Spirit who lives in you.

***Revelation 1:17-18***

“Don’t be afraid! I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I was dead, but look—I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hades.

**N.T. Wright**

Easter was when Hope in person surprised the whole world by coming forward from the future into the present....All our language about the future ... is like a set of signposts pointing into a bright mist ... the New Testament image of the future hope of the whole cosmos, grounded in the resurrection of Jesus, gives as coherent a picture as we need or could have of the future that is promised to the whole world, a future in which, under the sovereign and wise rule of the creator God, decay and death will be done away with and a new creation born, to which the present one will stand as mother to child.

**CONCLUSION:**

**1 Corinthians 15:12-19**

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say, “There is no resurrection of the dead”? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is without foundation, and so is your faith. In addition, we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we have testified about God that He raised up Christ—whom He did not raise up if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Therefore, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone.

**C.S. Lewis in *Miracles***

The New Testament writers speak as if Christ’s achievement in rising from the dead was the first event of its kind in the whole history of the universe. He is the ‘first fruits,’ the pioneer of life,’ He has forced open a door that has been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten the King of Death. Everything is different because He has done so. (*Miracles*, Chapter 16)