

# Lesson Five—Level 4 Evidence: The Resurrection

## Outline Summary

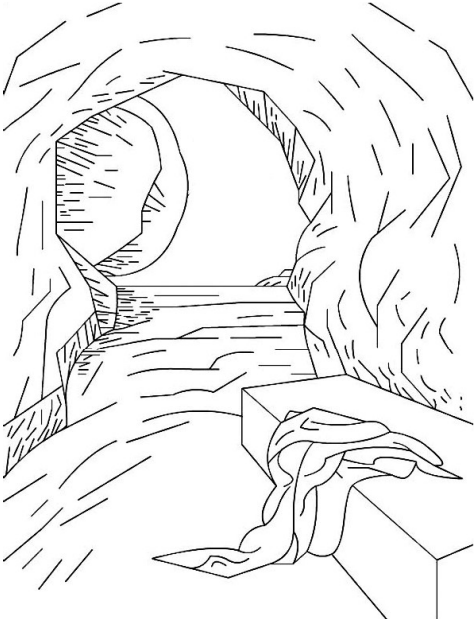
We looked at near-death experiences and the evidence they show about the soul and the afterlife. These correlate with the teachings and Resurrection of Jesus. Jesus said the afterlife will be eternal and that we will be brought to a state of unconditional love. But Jesus offered a more direct support for his teaching in his own Resurrection. Naturally, much study has been done on the evidence for Jesus' Resurrection.

## I. Saint Paul and the Resurrection's Witnesses

### The List of Witnesses

The offering of evidence for Jesus' Resurrection begins with Saint Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians, written about 20 years later around A.D. 54. He gives an extensive list of witnesses who saw Jesus after the Resurrection, beginning with Saint Peter, then the other apostles, then five hundred disciples. He mentions that most of them are still living at that point, so readers can verify the story for themselves.

NOTES





## Lesson Five—Level 4 Evidence: The Resurrection

### The Best Kind of Witness

Saint Paul's conclusion, of course, is that all these sacrifices the witnesses made are meaningless if they are lying. If there's no resurrection, you might as well just "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Since they had nothing to gain and everything to lose by lying, it's more credible to believe they are telling the truth, since they have no incentive to make up the story.

The same techniques are used in our court systems today. Attorneys will try to prove that their witness has nothing to gain.

### NOTES


“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that **he was raised on the third day** in accordance with the Scriptures, and that **he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.**

Then he appeared to **more than five hundred brethren** at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.”

— Saint Paul, *First Letter to the Corinthians 15:3-6*



## Lesson Five—Level 4 Evidence: The Resurrection

### The Messianic Movement

#### The Life Cycle of a Messiah

Due to the political turmoil in Judea at the time of Jesus, there were actually several Messianic movements. Every time one of these messiah figures was humiliated and publicly executed by the government, the movement would simply die away, no matter what steps were taken by followers to try to keep it going.

#### The Growth of Christianity

Christianity, instead of disappearing, actually exploded in growth at such a rapid rate that in a few generations it would become the state religion of the empire that was trying to persecute it.

#### The Difference—the Resurrection of Jesus

It's hard to imagine a more striking way Christianity could go against the pattern of Messianic movements. What was the difference? The execution of a messiah meant failure and proved they did not have the power they claimed to change history.

The narrative is different if you have witnessed your Messiah rise from the dead. Preaching the Resurrection gave a reason to continue the movement, since Jesus had proven his power over death itself and his ability to keep his promise of eternal life to humankind. Indeed, he was still keeping it through the many miracles his disciples were performing in his name.

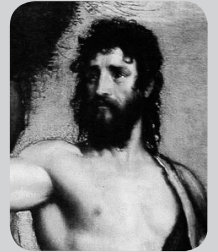
It explains the rapid growth in the face of persecution instead of rapid death. If the Resurrection was a lie, finding the motive that explains this growth becomes much harder.



**Saint John the Baptist**  
(d. circa A.D. 31)

*Prophet*

He preached the coming of the Messiah and repentance through Baptism. He was imprisoned by King Herod and beheaded. After his death, some of his disciples became followers of Jesus, believing him to be the promised Messiah.



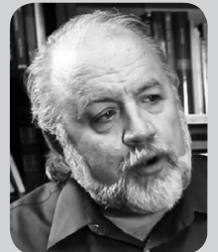
### NOTES




**Dr. Gary Habermas**  
(Living)

*Scripture scholar*

He received his doctorate from Michigan State in History and the Philosophy of Religion. The author of 35 scholarly books and over 100 scholarly articles concerning the historical Jesus, he is currently a research scholar at Liberty University.







## Lesson Five—Level 4 Evidence: The Resurrection

### III. Scholarly Consensus



#### Consensus in Survey of Scripture Scholars

A more recent case of doctrinal agreement is found in Dr. Habermas' survey of Scripture scholars. He found that the majority of Scripture scholars today agree on these two principles:

1. **Historicity of Resurrection**—The Resurrection is a real historical event, not a story invented later.
2. **Transformed Spiritual Body**—Jesus rose with a transformed body.

#### Any Consensus Is Very Rare

It is unusual for these scholars, who hail from various denominations and beliefs, to reach consensus on a major doctrinal point such as this. Even those scholars who are personally agnostic or atheist acknowledge that the reports of the Resurrection can be credibly traced all the way back through history, to within a year of the event itself.

#### NOTES


“Eat, drink, and be merry,  
for tomorrow we **die**.”

— Traditional saying describing the limits of life

“Behold, I tell you a **mystery**:  
We shall not all sleep, but we  
shall all be changed.”

— Saint Paul, *1 Corinthians 15:51*



## Lesson Five—Level 4 Evidence: The Resurrection

### IV. Conclusion: Why Does It Matter?

Episode Timecode  
**28:20**

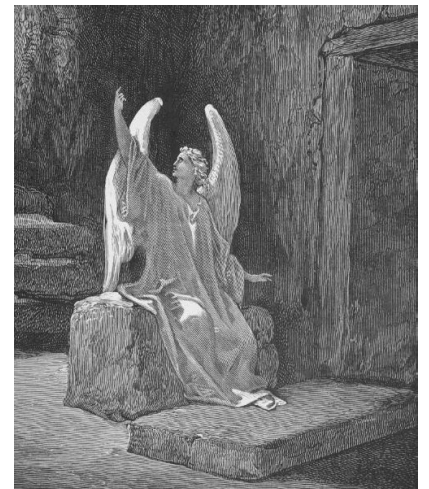
#### Life after Death

The historicity of Jesus' Resurrection is important on a personal level in the same way the evidence from near-death experiences was—when confirmed, it provides evidence of life after death, evidence that there is something transcendent about us beyond just our bodies, something that continues to live.

#### Jesus' Role

Moreover, Jesus promised that he would rise from the dead, and that we would as well. When he rose, it showed that he could keep his promises and that he knew what he was talking about.

If Jesus was right about the existence of our eternal future, what else was he right about? He preached a God of love and a transcendent afterlife that seems to match the evidence of the near-death experiences we've seen. The next lesson will examine more closely what He had to say about the way we ought to live our lives and now the loving Father waiting for us, and how this can bring ultimate good even out of the most difficult suffering in life, which leads us ultimately to transcendent happiness.



#### NOTES

