

SLIDE 1

What if it is true?

Easter 2010

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Introduction

Read Matthew 28:1-10 – **no slide**

Matthew 28:1-10 (ESV)

¹ Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” ⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

Have you ever asked, “How do I know that is true? Really? Did Jesus really rise from the dead?”

You see the central fact of Easter, indeed, the central truth of Christianity is that Jesus rose from the dead. Because if Jesus Resurrection isn't true, not only would we not be gathered here today, I think we can confidently say we would not even know the name Jesus today.

You say, well I'm not sure I can believe whole heartedly in the Resurrection, I have some questions, some doubts, but Jesus was a great teacher, that is clear, and what he taught has brought me peace, and that is why I am here.

Let's think about that a minute. So let's say you are right. Let's assume that the resurrection isn't true, but that Jesus was just an amazing human being, an amazing teacher—bar none.

When you think of the self help magazines on the shelf—how many subscribe to the teaching of this “greatest teacher of all time”? How many of these magazines point out that if you are going to find fulfillment and true happiness that this is what you must do.

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- Love your enemies.
- Pray for those who persecute you.
- Forgive those who are presently harming you.
- If they ask you for it, give it to them.
- Serve, don't seek to be served.
- If you have food and cheese and an over coat, then be content.

Any argument that that is what this great teacher Jesus taught? No that is it. Here are the historical references if you want to look them up.

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- Love your enemies. (Luke 6:27)
- Pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew 5:44)
- Forgive those who are presently harming you. (Matthew 18:22)
- If they ask you for it, give it to them. (Matthew 5:40)
- Serve, don't seek to be served.(Matthew 9:35)
- If you have food and an overcoat, then be content. (Matthew 6:25)

Jesus taught people at the heart of it, to be other centered like he was. But today's best selling books and magazines tell us to be me centered--they are self help books, not help others books.

SLIDE 4 Show slide with popular Books & Magazines with these statements

Ever see any of the great teachings of Jesus on the front covers of magazines of today's best selling magazines? Do you think if you did the magazine would sell? Why not, these are the statements of the greatest teacher in history, right?

You see, the reason we gather today is not because we think he is a great teacher, though He was. We are here because of one thing—The Resurrection.

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Because the essential question of all of life is: Did Jesus really rise from the dead? Is it true?!?

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Now how do we know this is the essential question? **Because it wasn't his teachings which transformed his followers—it was his resurrection.**

Now why can we say that?

Well, what happened in history the day after Jesus died? Did his followers go into the temple and start teaching, "You killed Jesus, but that doesn't mean that what he said wasn't true—we still need to embrace his teaching." No, they didn't do that they hid. And what did they do the day he was arrested. They ran to save their skin.

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They scattered and hid.

Mark 14:50 (GNT)

⁵⁰ Then all the disciples left him and ran away.

That is right. His closest friends, the men and women who saw him heal the sick, raise the dead, give sight to the blind, feed the 5000, and out teach the teachers of the law. Those folks—when Jesus was arrested killed, they scattered and hid—they cowered away.

You see his teachings did not give them what they needed to live fearlessly—but his resurrection did.

- When they saw that man they saw die, alive in front of them. That changed everything.
- When they ate with the man they saw die, alive in front of them. That changed everything.

It was then that they went boldly back into the Jerusalem and taught about Jesus resurrection. This timid man, Peter, who just days before had denied publically he even KNEW Jesus. After seeing Jesus risen from the dead, now goes boldly before all of Jerusalem and declares:

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Acts 2:14 (NIV)

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

Acts 2:22–24 (NIV)

²² “Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

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²³ This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

And what was their message. That was what they taught. That is what gave them courage. That is what gave them backbone. That is how they knew everything he said and did was true. They saw and believed.

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It wasn’t his great teachings that made him “like” Buddah, or Muhammad, or Joseph Smith or Aristotle, or Plato, or Socrates, or fill in the blank. It was his resurrection that made him like no one else. Everything he said, and everything he did, paled in comparison to his resurrection.

We are here today, we call ourselves Christians, not because we have ever been able to fully embrace and live his teachings. We are here today because 2000 years ago he was crucified, dead and buried, and on the third day he rose from the dead.

And if you believe that, Jesus said, “You will have everlasting life”

You say, “Well, I want to believe. Help my unbelief. How can I know this is true?”

Well, as I alluded to, the first irrefutable proof is what happened to these wimpy, fearful disciples, after they saw him risen from the dead—they became fearless. You see there is nothing you can’t do when the fear of death is removed.

You see at the philosophy schools of our great colleges and universities—they can teach the great philosophies, but not one of them, not one of the philosophies they teach can remove the fear of the death.

Show me a Professor of Philosophy at one of our secular colleges or universities who is willing to die for the philosophies of Socrates, Plato or Aristotle-- Machiavelli, Descartes, Locke, Hobbes or Spinoza!

They won't do it. Why? Because their philosophies are just opinions. Theories. Not one of the philosophers proved their truth by rising from the dead. Everyone of them has returned to dust. And not one of their philosophies offers what every person really needs. Eternal Life.

The only "philosopher" in history that proved what he taught was true by conquering death was Jesus. The only philosopher in history who died publically before a whole city, was buried in that city with guards at his tomb, was sealed in a tomb with a rock so big it took a small squad of soldiers to secure it, and rose from the dead on the third day and was seen by all his disciples and over 500 people was Jesus. Jesus proved his truth by rising from the dead.

And we know it is true because his resurrection changed the lives of his followers. Those who were once fearful now were willing to give everything, even give up their lives to get this truth of the resurrection of Christ to the world. We know it is true, because the resurrection transformed his followers.

But there is another very significant way we know the resurrection is true.

We have the most complete historical account of the resurrection of Jesus of any event in Ancient history. Now you say, just wait a minute. Prove that. OK, I will.

The resurrection of resurrection was documented by 9 different historians, who lived during the time of Christ and who wrote down what they saw. They are James, Peter, Jude, , Paul, John, Luke, Mark. Matthew, and the author of the book of Hebrews. They came from all walks of life, doctors, fisherman and tax collectors. They recorded what they say from first person account. And as a result, no event in ancient history is as documented from so many different authors who lived when the events took place.

That is how we know the resurrection of Jesus happened.

Now what do I mean? Let me illustrate.

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Let me ask you a question, "How many of you believe there really was a Roman Emperor named Julius Caesar?"

Now upon what are you basing your belief?

You say, "Historical documents." Right?

But did you know that we do not have one document written by one historian who lived during the time of Julius Caesar and recorded what Caesar did. Not one book. Not one author. Not one letter. Not one fragment.

Now just a minute you say. That is ludicrous. How would we know anything about Julius Caesar if that was true?

There is only one history of Caesar in existence today. And it was written a man name Suetonius, who was born 113 years after Julius Caesar died.

There are writings attributed to Caesar, but we don't have copies of any of them dated earlier than 1000 years after they were written, so there is no way to verify their source.

Other than existence of several coins and busts with the image of Caesar, and inscriptions on cornerstones, you are basing your belief on the life of Julius Caesar on the writing of just one Roman historian, and believe me, I am using the term historian very loosely. Let me explain.

Julius Caesar reigned from October 49 BC to 15 March 44 BC. Or just under 5 years.

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The main source for this information is a Roman historian, Suetonius, who lived from 69 AD to 122 AD. In other words, this historian who wrote most of what we know of Julius Caesar was born 113 years after Julius Caesar died.

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But he didn't even begin writing his history of Julius Caesar until 110 AD when he was 51 years old. That is 154 years after Caesar died.

To put that in perspective, imagine that there was only one historian who ever wrote about Revolutionary war history, and that they first began writing about the Revolutionary War in 1930, the year the Depression began, and Herbert Hoover was president. Now imagine further, that the only thing we knew about George Washington, the Writing of the Declaration of Independence, John Adams, the Liberty Bell, the Battle of Bunker Hill, and there is not Mount Vernon, and every other event of the birth of our nation was only from this one historian who began writing in 1930. Now imagine further that this historian was actually hired by President Hoover himself, with instructions to write a glorious history of the American Presidency. And that this writer was only allowed to go to the national archives to look at any historical accounts of the birth of our nation and then all of the national archives were lost in a fire. So that here in 2010, the only thing we know about the birth of our nation was from this one Historian.

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That is essentially all we have for the life and work of Julius Caesar. One author, who began writing his history 154 years after the fact .

But it gets worse. He wasn't really an independent historian. He was hired by the then Roman Emperor Hadrian to compile this history of the 12 Caesars in order to help Hadrian support his claims as Caesar. But **Suetonius** was fired by Hadrian because he evidently took the side of the

Senate in his “history.” As a result, he lost all access to the Roman Archives after he was fired, the rest he wrote down from memory.¹

But sadly, if you believe in Julius Caesar, it gets worse. And here is why. I told you we have only this one primary author of Caesars life, but equally significant, all of his original writings have been lost to history. And the closest ancient copy of Suetonius’s work is dated 950 AD. Fully 1000 years after Caesar lived.

Compare that to the historical account of the resurrection? We have 9 different authors, who lived during the time, wrote during the time, who agree with each other in all the major points of Jesus life, teachings, death and resurrection. And just recently we believe we have discovered with the (Dead Sea) scrolls, a copy of Chapter 26 of Matthew that was written with the same ink, the same quill stroke, as a Dead Sea scroll found with it which bears the date 65/66 AD. That means we have a chapter written by one of these historians written during the time they lived. An original ancient document.

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So in summary this is what we know:

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy we have in a museum dated:	Time Span between the date of the earliest copy in a museum and the actual event in history
Secular Manuscripts:			
Suetonius (Roman History)	70 - 140 AD	950 AD	More than 800 years
Biblical Manuscripts:			

¹ Ancient History Sourcebook: Suetonius (c.69-after 122 CE): De Vita Caesarum, Divus Iulius (The Lives of the Caesars, The Deified Julius), written c. 110 CE

Magdalene Ms (Matthew 26)	1st century	50-60 AD	co-existent (?)
John Rylands (John)	90 AD	130 AD	40 years
Bodmer Papyrus II (John)	90 AD	150-200 AD	60-110 years
Codex Vaticanus (Whole Bible)	1st century	325-350 AD	275-300 years

(Total New Testament manuscripts = 5,300 Greek MSS, 10,000 Latin Vulgates, 9,300 others = 24,000 copies) (Total MSS compiled prior to 600 AD = 230)²

Do you see the account of Julius Caesar was written more than 150 years after it happened?

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But the account of Jesus resurrection was written by 9 eye witnesses, within years of the event occurring.

And today we have discovered 24,000 ancient copies that you can travel to libraries this day and read in the original languages.

Conclusion

So let me ask you. Who are you going to believe more—that Caesar existed, one source, 154 years after the event? Or are you going to believe that Jesus rose from the dead—documented by 9 different historians—many of whom gave their lives to tell the truth of Jesus resurrection was spread throughout the world?

You see the resurrection is historically verified. If this is true, and I hope today I have shown you that you can truly believe it historically is. Then that changes everything. And it has changed everything.

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² The Bible's Manuscript Evidence, <http://debate.org.uk/topics/history/bib-qur/bibmanu.htm>

Easter make true Hope Possible!

You see if it is true, that Jesus conquered death then you can stop fearing death, and embrace the fact that death is no longer the end for you.

You can stop feeling guilty about your sins and shortcomings, and know you are forgiven.

You can stop holding a grudge against those who have hurt you and forgive them, because you know the number one thing in life is that they believe in Jesus Christ and you don't want anything to be a stumbling block to that—not your anger, not your hurt, not your resentment, not your wounds, not your justifications, because you have been saved not because you believe in the teachings of Jesus, but because you believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

SLIDE 20 Worship Team Comes Forward now.

Mark 16:14–16 (ESV)

¹⁴ Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. ¹⁵ And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

If it is true, you can give up a philosophy of life based on trusting crystals, or stars, or horoscopes, or evolution, or the teachings of philosophers who are now dead and gone, or that everyone goes to heaven or there is no heaven, or what ever philosophy directs your life now.

If the resurrection is true, which I hope I have show you today there is more than one reason to believe, then you can pitch those philosophies, and instead embrace faith in Jesus Christ—the one person in history who was crucified, dead and buried and on the third day rose from the dead, and now sit on the right hand of God the father almighty.

Believe that and you will be saved. Refuse to believe and Jesus says you will be condemned.

So today if you are deciding to doubt your doubts and embrace the truth: Christ is risen! I would like to meet you at the cross and give you a copy of this history by these nine authors to commemorate and remember this day.

