

**Why Jesus...?**  
**The Resurrected Jesus**

**The Essentials of Apologetics**

# Introduction

What is the one way to destroy Christianity?

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# How to Destroy / Falsify Christianity in One Step

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Produce the body of Jesus of Nazareth

“For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and **if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless** ... If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, **we are of all men most to be pitied.**”  
- 1 Corinthians 15:16-17,19



# The Criticality of the Resurrection

- Christianity stands or falls on the resurrection of Jesus.
- If Jesus was not raised from the dead, then Jesus is a liar.
- Further, either all His disciples and the Apostle Paul are liars or else they were deceived.
- The one way to end Christianity once and for all is to produce the body of the Nazarene Carpenter.





# Basic Facts of the Resurrection

What facts do historians agree upon?

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# How to Approach the Question of the Resurrection?

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- From historical study, deliver factually-based claims that the vast majority of historical scholars agree upon.
- Support claims with good historical evidence and reason.
- Use (1) relevant sources; (2) responsible methods; (3) restrained results to help validate claims.



# Key Facts of Jesus' Resurrection



1. Jesus was murdered and buried.
2. Three days afterward, his body went missing.
3. There were appearances of Jesus over the course of many days to various people, including his disciples and unbelievers.
4. Christ's appearances transformed his followers and some previous skeptics, with his resurrection becoming the central focus of their teaching.



# Key Facts of Jesus' Resurrection

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~~disagree~~

- These four facts about Jesus' resurrection are agreed to by the vast majority of historians, Christian and non-Christian.
- What evidence exists to support them?

# Did Jesus Die and Was He Buried?

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“One of the most certain facts of history is that Jesus was crucified on orders of the Roman prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate.”

– Bart Ehrman



# Did Jesus Die and Was He Buried?

- Jesus' death and burial is recorded in all the gospel accounts.
- Jesus' death under Pilate is referred to in several extra-Biblical writings.
- The burial by Joseph of Arimathea in his own tomb is nearly universally held; Joseph was a Sanhedrin member: unlikely that this account would be made up by the gospel writers.
- The tomb would be known to all living in Jerusalem.
- Jesus' burial was witnessed by close friends.
- His tomb was guarded by soldiers.
- Jews never denied that Jesus was dead and buried.





# Did Jesus Die and Was He Buried?

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“That he [Jesus] was crucified is as sure as anything historical ever can be.”

– John Dominic Crossan



# Did Jesus' Body Go Missing After His Death?

- Jesus' body has never been found up to this day.
- Empty tomb first viewed / reported by a group of Jesus' women followers: Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, etc.
- Peter and John later reported the tomb was empty.
- Jewish leaders devised lie to cover up the resurrection. They never refuted the claim that the body was gone.
- Non-Christian historians record Christian's claims of Jesus being alive and the body being gone.





# Did Jesus' Body Go Missing After His Death?

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“All the strictly historical evidence we have is in favor of [the empty tomb], and those scholars who reject it ought to recognize that they do so on some other ground than that of scientific history.”

– William Wand  
Oxford Church Historian





# Did Jesus' Body Go Missing After His Death?



- Jesus was publicly executed in Jerusalem, his appearances took place there, and his resurrection was proclaimed there.
- If the body had still been in the tomb, it would have been very easy to stop Christianity's message in its tracks by simply going to a well-known tomb and producing the body.

# Did the Disciples and Paul Experience Appearances of Jesus?

	Appeared to	Where	When	References
1	Mary Magdalene	Jerusalem	Sunday	Mark 6:9-11; John 20:11-18
2	Other Women	Jerusalem	Sunday	Matt 28:9-10
3	Peter	Jerusalem	Sunday	Luke 24:32; 1 Cor. 15:5
4	Emmaus disciples	Emmaus	Sunday	Luke 24:13-35; Mark 16:12
5	10 disciples	Jerusalem	Sunday	Mark 16:14; Luke 24:26-42; John 20:19-25
6	11 disciples	Jerusalem	A week later	John 20:26-31; 1 Cor. 15:5
7	7 disciples	Galilee	?	John 21:1-25
8	500 brethren	Galilee	?	1 Cor. 15:6
9	James	?	?	1 Cor. 15:7
10	11 disciples	Galilee	?	Matt 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18
11	11 disciples	Jerusalem	40 days later	Acts 1:3-12
12	Paul	Road Emmaus	?	Acts 9



# Did the Disciples and Paul Experience Appearances of Jesus?

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"It is **historically certain** that Peter and the other disciples had experiences after Jesus' death in which Jesus appeared to them as the risen Christ."

– **Gerd Lüdemann**  
Atheist Historian





# Did the Disciples and Paul Experience Appearances of Jesus?

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“Why, then, did some of the disciples claim to see Jesus alive after his crucifixion? I don’t doubt at all that some of the disciples claimed this. . . .Paul, writing about twenty-five years later, indicates that this is what they claimed, and I don’t think he is making it up. And he knew at least a couple of them, whom he met just three years after the event.”

– Bart Ehrman



# What Happened to Jesus' Followers After His Death?

- The New Testament records the embarrassing details of how Jesus' disciples abandoned Him and fled during His arrest.
- The writer of Acts records how these same disciples stood before the exact same leaders who murdered Jesus (Annas and Caiaphas) after His death and proclaimed Jesus' resurrection from the dead.
- Various accounts record that the disciples and Paul were martyred for their proclamation that Jesus was alive.





# What Happened to Jesus' Followers After His Death?

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“On any showing the crucifixion should have put an end to the Jesus movement once and for all in an honor and shame culture like early Judaism.”

– Ben Witherington III





# What Happened to Jesus' Followers After His Death?

“At Rome, Nero was the first who stained with blood the rising faith. Then is Peter girt by another, when he is made fast to the cross.”

– Tertullian

~A. D. 200



# What Happened to Some Skeptics After Jesus' Death?

- "For not even His brothers were believing in Him." (John 7:5).
- In the first century, it was embarrassing for a Rabbi to have his family not be followers.
- "then He appeared to James" (1 Corinthians 15:7).
- "Festus was now dead, and Albius was but upon the raid; so he assembled the Sanhedrin of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered him to be stoned" - Josephus Antiquities 20.9.1.





# What Happened to Some Skeptics After Jesus' Death?

“What do we need to say concerning Paul, who preached the Gospel of Christ from Jerusalem to Illyricum, and afterwards suffered martyrdom in Rome under Nero? These facts are related by Origen in the third volume of his Commentary on Genesis. . . . You have thus by such an admonition bound together the planting of Peter and of Paul at Rome and Corinth. For both of them planted and likewise taught us in our Corinth. And they taught together in like manner in Italy, and suffered martyrdom at the same time. I have quoted these things in order that the truth of the history might be still more confirmed.”

- Eusebius

Church History, Book 2, 25.8; Book 3, 1. AD 324.





# Review - Key Facts of Jesus' Resurrection



1. Jesus was murdered and buried.
2. Three days afterward, his body went missing.
3. There were appearances of Jesus over the course of many days to various people, including his disciples and unbelievers.
4. Christ's appearances transformed his followers and some previous skeptics, with his resurrection becoming the central focus of their teaching.

# Foundation for the Undisputed Facts



1. Multiple independent, early sources support the facts.
2. Attestation by enemies of Christianity support the facts.
3. Embarrassing admissions support the facts.
4. Eyewitness testimony support the facts.
5. Early testimony support the facts.

# Explaining the Facts of the Resurrection

Appealing to the Best Explanation

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# What Best Explains the Facts of Jesus' Resurrection?



**EXPLANATION**

I demand one

- Examine resurrection hypotheses with the philosophical “appeal to the best explanation” approach.
- Also called the “cumulative case” or “abductive argumentation” method.

# Universally Accepted Historiographical Criteria



History

- Ask what explanation is best at:
  - Explanatory power.
  - Explanatory scope.
  - Not being ad-hoc.
  - Plausibility.
  - Not contradicting accepted beliefs.
  - Far exceeding its rival theories in meeting those conditions.

# Most Common Resurrection Hypotheses

- Legend
- Hallucination
- Stolen body
- Wrong tomb
- Swoon theory
- Spiritual only
- Mistaken identity
- Act of God





# Legend Hypothesis

- The early dating of the gospels ensures they were written during lifetime of the eyewitnesses who could refute legend.
- Nearly all scholars agree that the gospels we have today are what were written in the first century.
- Historians demonstrate that it takes at least two generations to pass from an event before legend can enter and corrupt an account.
- Event can be historically traced back to the disciples.
- Legend hypothesis cannot explain the historically validated transformation of James or Paul.
- The disciples went to their deaths for a truth, not a myth.
- The empty tomb is validated by non-Christian sources.



# Hallucination Hypothesis

- Currently the number one explanation given by skeptics.
- Does not explain the empty tomb; body still missing.
- Hallucinations are generally experienced by people wanting to see something. The gospel accounts all confirm the disciples did not expect Jesus to be resurrected.
- Jewish belief only looked forward to the end of time for a resurrection and not to the Messiah being resurrected.
- Skeptics would in no way be psychologically expecting to see Jesus return from the grave.
- Argument of cognitive dissonance fails to explain the empty tomb and appearances to skeptics.





# Hallucination Hypothesis – Jesus Appeared...

- Not just once, but **multiple times**.
- Not just to one person, but to **different persons**.
- Not just to individuals, but to **groups of individuals**.
- Not just at one location, but at **multiple locations**.
- Not just in one circumstance, but in **multiple circumstances**.
- Not just to believers, but also to **unbelievers, skeptics, and even enemies**.





# Stolen Body Hypothesis

- Cannot explain the transformed lives of the disciples.
- Cannot explain the transformation of the skeptics James and Paul; their conversion was based on appearance.
- No one dies for what they know to be false.
- Empty tomb, on its own, would not convince many (if any).
- New Testament records precautions enemies took to prevent this possibility.
- First eyewitnesses thought body was taken; appearances later convinced them otherwise.



# Wrong Tomb Hypothesis

- Too easy for the religious opponents of Christ to refute – just go to the right tomb and produce the body.
- Does not account for the appearances to the disciples.
- Does not account for the conversion of James and Paul.
- Joseph's burial site likely known to all those involved in Christ's death.





# Swoon/Apparent Death Hypothesis

- Jesus was scourged to the point where He was completely disfigured (Is. 52:14).
- Death recorded in all four gospels.
- Death viewed by close eyewitnesses.
- Roman soldiers did not allow their victims to live.
- Spear wound described in John 19:34-35 tells of the rupturing of the pericardium.
- Jesus would have to revive in the tomb, push back the stone, overpower the Roman guards, and then appear to his followers and skeptics.
- Worship described by disciples would have been unlikely if Jesus was crippling about and in a greatly wounded state.
- Was seen in glorious form by Paul.





# Spiritual Only Hypothesis

- The Gospel accounts record that the disciples disbelieved – even on Easter morning. It was the physical appearances of Christ that transformed them.
- Thomas doubted the resurrection and only believed once he touched Christ
- Christ took food and ate it in their presence (Luke 24:42-43).
- James was converted via a physical encounter with Jesus.



# Mistaken Identity/Twin Hypothesis

- No mention in any historical document of Jesus' twin; only very thin assertion is in one of the Gnostic gospels (Thomas).
- Would have had to mutilate himself to carry the crucifixion scars.
- Would be suicide; the 'twin' would have to know what Rome did to his brother and that the same fate would await him.
- Bottom line: absolutely no evidence for this theory whatsoever.





# Act of God/Resurrection Hypothesis

- Jesus predicted His death and resurrection multiple times in the presence of believers and skeptics.
- Core facts of resurrection present in all gospel accounts, written during the lifetime of the eyewitnesses.
- Offers best explanation for the empty tomb, the appearance stories, the transformation of the disciples and skeptics, and the growth of Christianity in the first century.

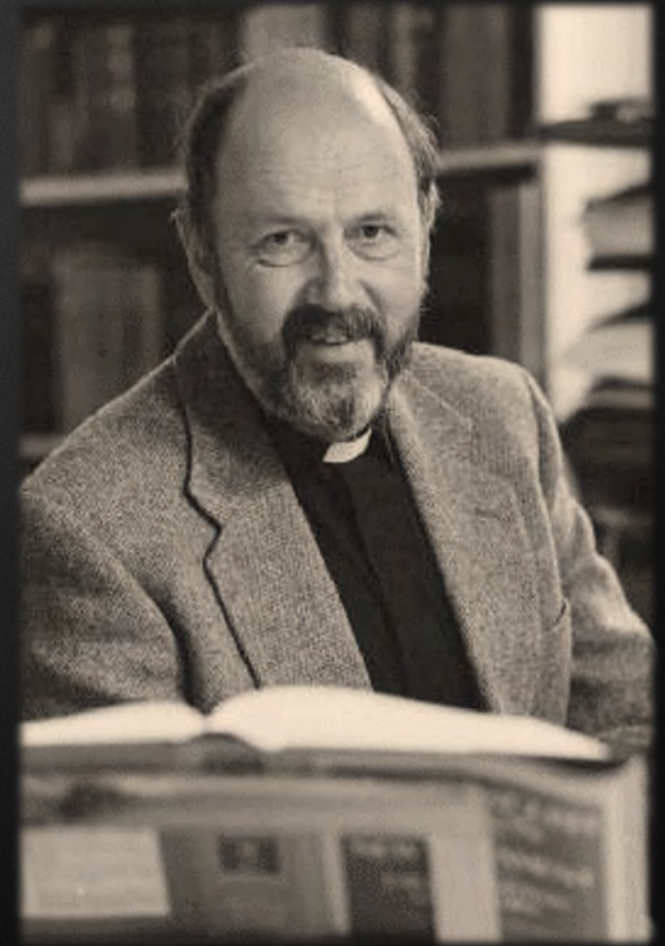




# Act of God/Resurrection Hypothesis

“The proposal that Jesus was bodily raised from the dead possesses unrivalled power to explain the historical data at the heart of early Christianity.”

– N. T. Wright



# Resurrection Hypothesis – Why Rejected?



- The primary reason this option is rejected by critics is because, following their anti-supernatural bias, they rule God out in an a priori manner.
- It is not a review of the evidence, but rather a commitment to naturalism that causes skeptics of the resurrection to exclude the resurrection hypothesis.

# The Resurrection – A Miracle in One of Three Ways

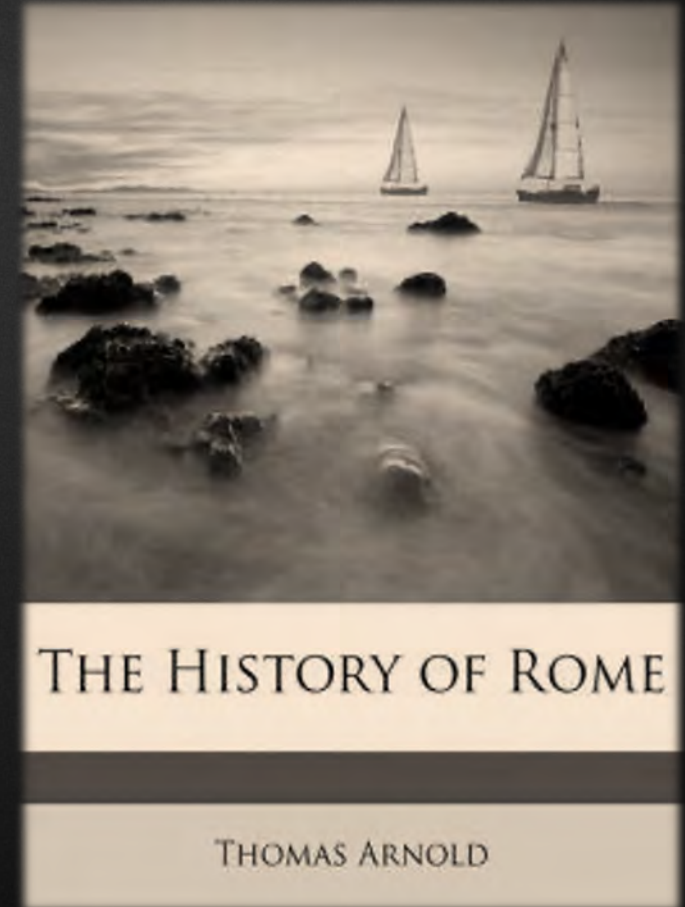
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1. **Psychological**: The disciples and others imagined a risen Christ, changed from unbelieving cowards into courageous evangelists, and went to their deaths for being deceived or for something they knew to be untrue.
2. **Biological**: Jesus survived the beatings, scourging, cross, and spear thrust into the heart, fooled his executioners, recuperated in the tomb, rolled away the stone, and had his 'resurrection' falsely proclaimed.
3. **Theological**: Christ's resurrection was a true, historically valid, and divine miracle where Jesus died and came back to life three days later, which is in keeping with the theme of miracles in the gospels.



“I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead.”

– **Thomas Arnold**  
Professor of History Oxford  
Author of the three-volume History of Rome



# Conclusions

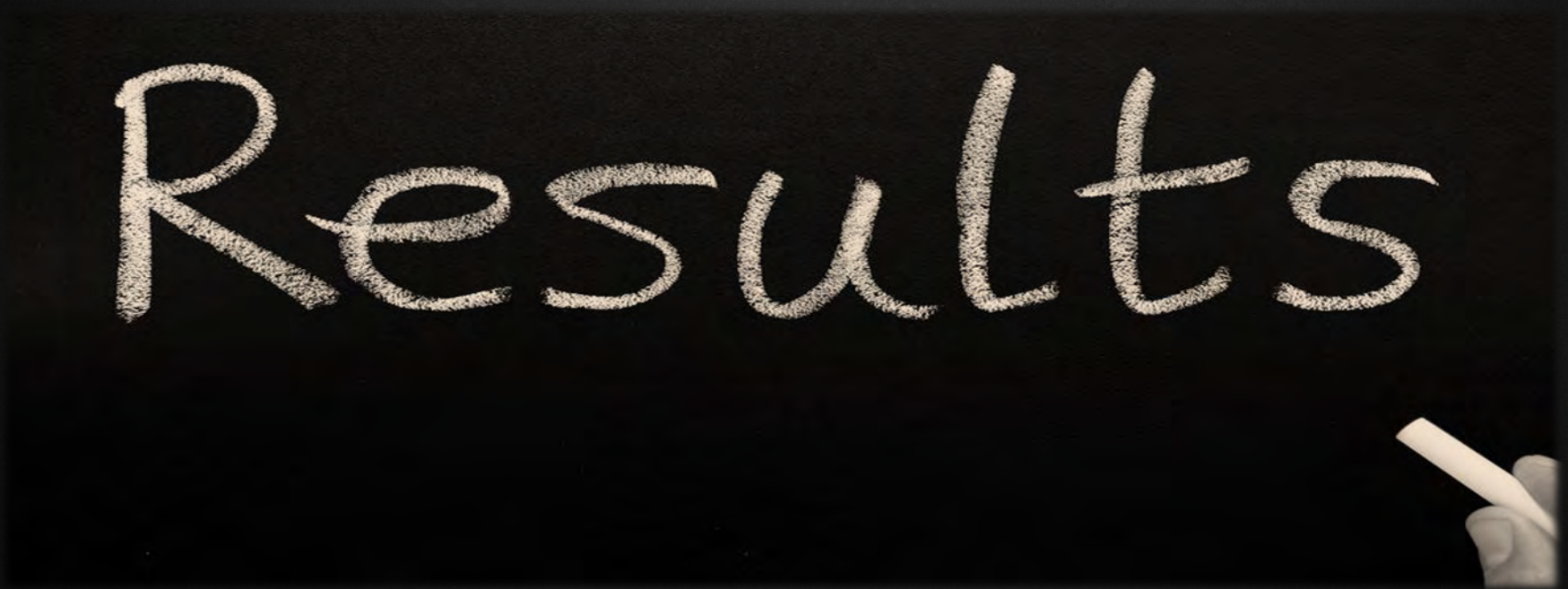
Final Thoughts

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# Results of Accepting the Resurrection Hypothesis

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Results

1. The atheistic/anti-supernatural worldview is declared false.
2. God and miracles are affirmed.
3. The historical Jesus of Nazareth is pronounced the divine Son of God.

“But if we admit God, must we admit  
Miracle? Indeed, indeed, you have  
no security against it. That is the  
bargain.”

– C. S. Lewis





# Bridging the Gap Between History and Faith

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- Philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and Soren Kierkegaard believed a 'leap of faith' was needed to move from the historical Jesus to the Messiah Jesus.
- The resurrection provides the evidence and means to bridge the gap between history and faith.

Born in Bethlehem

Jewish Rabbi

Performed great feats

Arrested for his teachings

Crucified under Pilate

Body went missing

Great moral teacher



The Resurrection

Born of a virgin

Prophet sent from God

Performed true miracles

Delivered up by God's plan

Lamb of God for humanity's sin

Resurrected by God

Son of God

"But now Christ has been  
raised from the dead,  
the first fruits of those  
who are asleep."

- 1 Corinthians 15:20



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Origins  
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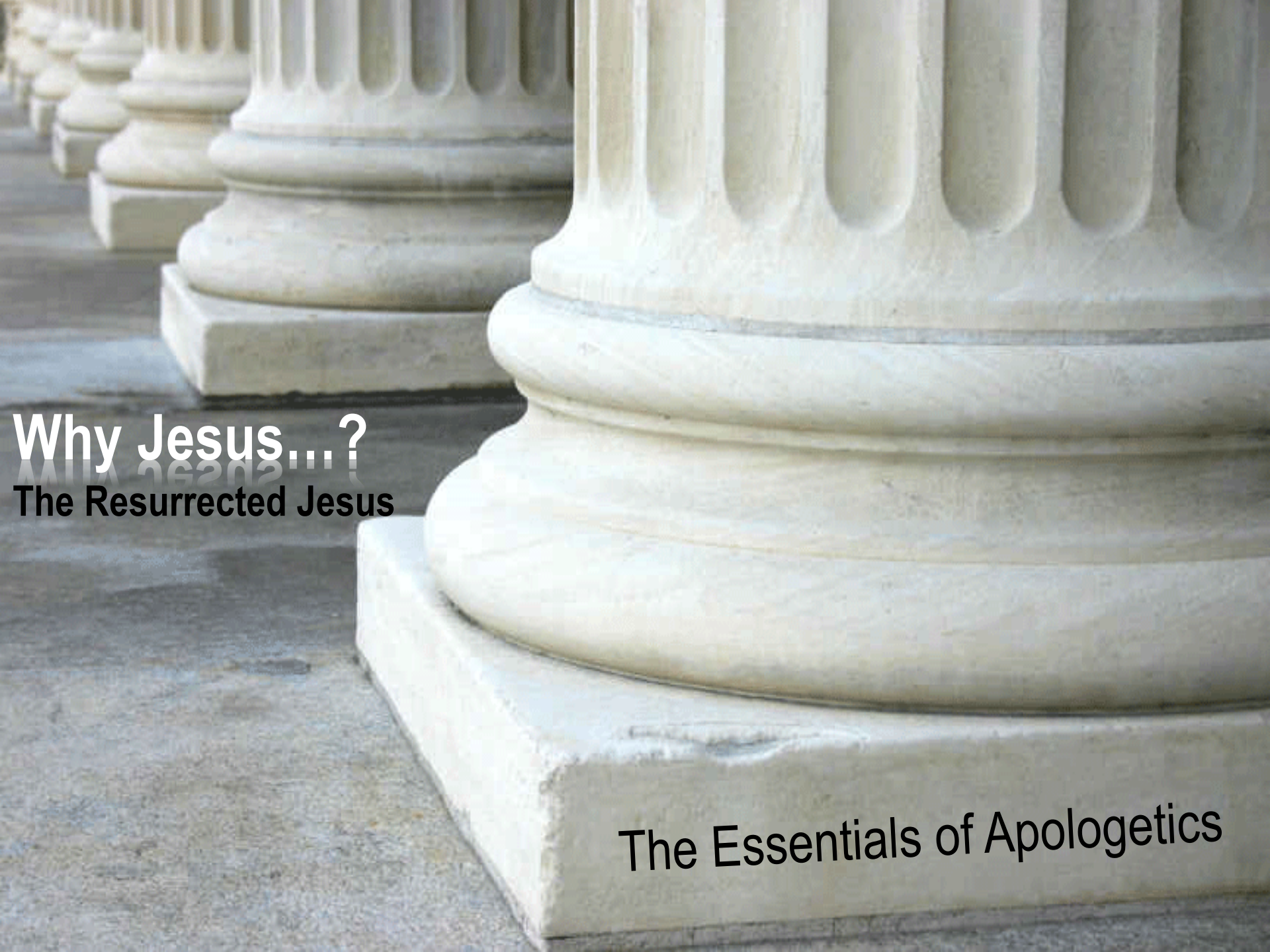
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