

## Letters From a Skeptic Lesson 8: The Resurrected Lord

“...and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.”  
1 Cor 15:17



“Jesus is, if you will, the first butterfly  
to come out of the cocoon”

### Correspondence 16: “How can you believe that a man rose from the dead?”

#### Father <pp. 121-123>

1. Initially this seems like a **sad, discouraging** letter
2. Father is convinced the gospels have a “*good bit of reliable, first hand material*” in them
3. Unconvinced they’re reliable in **every** aspect—still holds that they may contain “*tall tales.*”
4. Real issue—everyone who dies stays dead! States clearly that he believes Jesus is **dead**.
5. Also states that such belief is a matter of **faith**—something he claims he just doesn’t have

#### Son <pp. 123-133>—a long reading, but well worth it! We’ll take it in **smaller bites**...

1. A **very encouraging** response! (and a great example for us, too)
  - a. Belt! Breastplate! Shoes! Shield! Helmet! Sword! (see Eph 6:13-17)
2. Time to “*talk about the Resurrection ... the single most critical issue to be discussed*”
3. Note how tremendously **positive** and **upbeat** the son is. He shows a lot of **faith!**
  - a. “*Dad, you are a marked man. God has your number!*”
  - b. “[*God*] *wants you*” (contrast with “**You need to change, Dad!**”)
4. Says belief in Resurrection isn’t just “*blind faith.*” Lots of historical evidence, too.
5. Turns the tables on his Dad a bit—based on the **evidence**, time to stop blindly **disbelieving** and start **disproving** what you don’t believe in (if you can!)
  - a. Goes on to list four **historical reasons** why gospels aren’t “tall tales”
    - a. Legends take time to grow—gospel accounts written too soon after the fact
    - b. Hostile environment—many wouldn’t have allowed such “tall tales” to gain popularity
    - c. Early and late writings equally filled with miraculous events
    - d. Legendary material wouldn’t pass “historical test” (discussed in an earlier letter)
7. Claims evidence for Resurrection is **stronger** than evidence for other events in Jesus’ life
  - a. Numerous, independent sources
  - b. All (pro and con) agreed that the tomb was empty
  - c. Church came into being within weeks of Resurrection and grew at an “explosive” rate
  - d. Resurrection accounts are consistent with eye-witness testimony
  - e. Paul and James (two very public disbelievers) came to believe only after the Resurrection
  - f. Strong, consistent evidence for post-Resurrection sightings of Jesus
  - g. Transformation of disciples after the Resurrection
  - h. No motive for disciples to fabricate the Resurrection
8. Addresses Dad’s **other theories**: body theft (who? how?), mass hallucinations (tomb still empty!), Jesus faked His own death (contradicts *a lot* of other evidence)
9. Tells Dad about Jesus as the “*Firstborn from the dead*” (Rev 1:4-6); how the Resurrection of Jesus is the pattern for our own resurrection on the last day (John 6:39-44, 54; 12:48)

*“More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”*

Phil 3:8-11

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10. Finally, son gives father a **warning** about being lost; encourages him to be **saved!**

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*“It is written: ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’”*

Rom 14:11

*“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.”*

Matt 7:21

*“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.”*

Matt 25:31-33

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

John 3:16

### Correspondence 17: “How can you believe a man was God?”

**Father** <pp. 134-135>

1. *“I must admit... your arguments on the resurrection of Christ were surprisingly strong”*
2. Tries to reconcile the evidence with a more “worldly” explanation
3. Claims that only Paul made Jesus out to be divine (says Paul was “off his rocker”)

**Son** <pp. 136-141; upshot: last full paragraph, p. 138, to end of middle paragraph, p. 139>

1. Demonstrates that Jesus was held to be divine throughout the New Testament
  - a. Jesus even claimed divinity Himself (“*I and the Father are one*”, “*If you see me, you see the Father*”)
2. Points to the fact that the Jews of the day **clearly understood** (and many believed) that Jesus was claiming to be divine
3. Says that the evidence for the **Resurrection** and the **deity** of Christ “*stands or falls together*”
4. Exhorts Dad to examine the evidence and “*Make Jesus the Lord and Savior of your life.*”

*“Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”*

Heb 2:17

**Homework:** Read Correspondence 18 and Correspondence 19.