

# Forum on the Resurrection with William Lane Craig

William Lane Craig

## SUMMARY

Panelists: Mark Ballin, Christian Dennis, Elliot Drallmeier, Alex Kim and Sunny Sidhu  
Discussion with students of the historicity of Jesus' resurrection.

### FORUM ON THE RESURRECTION WITH WILLIAM LANE CRAIG

**M:** Scientifically speaking, there's nothing anyone knows or anything that remotely proves that that event could occur. There's pretty much no evidence supporting it at all. As far as I know, unless I'm missing something.

**Dr. C:** I think that's right. Scientifically, the more we learn about what happens to the cells in the body when it dies, the more we see that scientifically it's impossible for a thing like the resurrection to have happened. So if it did happen, it would have to be a literal miracle because it would not be something that would occur through the normal biological processes concerning what happens with corpses.

**M:** So the topic boils down to whether or not a miracle took place.

**A:** Is it logically possible that Jesus' resurrection did occur?

**Dr. C:** Yeah. We need to distinguish between logical possibility and scientific possibility. Logical possibility means that it doesn't imply a contradiction. For example, say the universe's space-time is curved, so that if you go a certain direction you'll eventually come back to your starting point. If that's the case, then it is scientifically impossible for someone to go in an unending straight line forever and ever without recurring to where he started. So there's a big difference between a logical possibility and scientific possibility. In the case of the resurrection, there is no logical contradiction in saying that someone was brought back to life by God even though that is something that would contradict the normal behavior of the laws of nature.

**M:** So to know if a miracle took place, don't we have to go off the historical documentation of the people of that time? Isn't it believing in one person's word versus another?

**Dr. C:** I agree with the first sentence and not the second one. The way historians study the past is that they attempt to look at testimonial evidence and other remains of the past, and then they attempt to reconstruct what probably happened in the past based on the evidence. I don't think the

case of the resurrection of Jesus is any different than any other events in ancient history—for example: did Pontius Pilate sentence Jesus of Nazareth to death by crucifixion? Was Caiaphas the high priest during the lifetime of Jesus the Nazareth?—or even secular events in history: Did Julius Caesar return from Gaul with the Roman army to take Rome and become head of state? The historian will attempt to reconstruct the past according to what makes the best sense of the evidence. Similarly with the resurrection of Jesus: it's not just a matter of taking it by faith, but it's a matter of what you said, looking at the testimonial evidence and any other evidence to make what explanation sounds best.

**M:** The historical documentations were written by people who have yet to look, at the time, what their beliefs and faiths would look like after writing down this documentation. So you have to take it into retrospect and read what are they writing through the lines, so to speak.

**Dr. C:** That's right. You need to consider your sources and consider things like their bias and their point of view and so forth. But in that sense the Gospels are not unlike other documents in ancient history. All of ancient history is written from a point of view. Everybody who records ancient history has a point to prove or a reason that he's telling the story. So in that sense, the Gospels aren't really that different. That is part of the historian's task, to try to discern whether or not this is a product of someone's bias or point of view or whether or not this actually really happened. That's part and parcel of the historian's work. It would be wrong to think that just because a person has a point of view he can't tell objective facts about the past. Think of accounts of the Holocaust, for example, against modern day deniers of the Holocaust, people who say that the Holocaust never occurred. Well, those Jewish survivors of the Holocaust have a vested interest, a passionate interest, in saying that these events really did happen, that they really did undergo this persecution and so forth, but that doesn't mean that their testimony is discounted or doesn't give the objective facts, or anything of that sort. So a person's passionate interest in having a point of view or having a story to tell doesn't just automatically invalidate the truth of what he's saying.

**C:** With things like that it's possible that the resurrection is not true. For example, if enough people agreed you were in fact a woman not man, 20 years from now or whenever you pass away, 20 years from then, people will say you're a woman. If people agreed to that, then that would become historical fact. So technically we can't call it fact.

**Dr. C:** You raised a whole lot of issues there. In the first place, the idea of being sure is misplaced here. We're not talking about mathematics. We're talking about history, and I think what the

Christian would be very happy with would be if the resurrection of Jesus was comparably attested with other normal events in ancient history, like Hannibal's marching on Rome with elephants to try to take Rome in the Punic wars or Caesar Augustus' being emperor during the time of Christ. If you can show that these events in the Gospels have a comparable degree of certainty with other normal events in history, then I think that's all you can ask for. So it's not a matter of being sure in the sense of mathematical certainty. But also don't think that facts are just what things people agree on or what's in your mind. If everybody in 20 years came to think that William Craig was a woman, that wouldn't be a fact. It would be that they were all mistaken 'cause I'm not! So people can be mistaken about the past. And the question would be whether or not we have good evidence of what might be my gender. I think it'd be very difficult in the future for the evidence to preponderate in the direction that I was a woman. There are just too many eyewitnesses, too many documents, such as a birth certificate, that would suggest otherwise.

**M:** An event could have taken place and covered by a reporter. Iraq's a perfect example. I know a lot of people who've been to Iraq and who've talked about specific events. By the time the information gets to America, it's been skewed and rotated in so many ways because of how people perceive it and agree upon it. By the time it gets to our ears through media, it's totally distorted and ridiculous that it's almost not believable. And over time, it just gets worse.

**Dr. C:** That's a good point. Every historian has to deal with this. This isn't unique to dealing with the Gospels. This is just writing history. For that reason, one of the things that would make it more plausible is to have multiple witnesses as opposed to depending on a single source. If you can get multiple independent sources, that is going to increase the credibility of the reports. The other thing that you mentioned that is quite right is the time factor involved. The time between the occurrence of the event and the time of the report or the evidence is very important because the narrower that amount of time, the more credibility there will be to the narrative. A narrative recording events hundreds of years earlier is going to be less credible than narratives that are closer. That's one of the interesting things about the Gospels in comparison to other events in ancient history. Most of the documents for Greek and Roman history that we have are removed one or two generations or even centuries from the events that they record. And yet historians reconstruct the past with a great deal of confidence. To give one example, the earliest accounts, earliest biographies, we have of Alexander the Great were written over four hundred years after the death of Alexander. Yet historians rely on these accounts as largely reliable accounts of the life of Alexander the Great. In the case of Jesus of Nazareth, we have multiple independent accounts that are written down

during the first generation while the eyewitnesses were still alive. So these sources really are even better sources than the ones for Alexander the Great. You're right, all of these factors are very important: the time, the need for multiple witnesses, and so forth. What I would say, then, in each case, is that the Gospels fare very well in comparison with other sources for events in ancient history that most people accept, that are generally accepted by most scholars.

**E:** As far as physical evidence, when I was younger I remember hearing about people finding the linen that wrapped Jesus. Haven't there been finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls as well?

**Dr. C:** Well, the Dead Sea scrolls don't have anything to do with the resurrection of Jesus or even directly with Jesus Himself. They mainly provide background information about the culture of first century Judaism that sheds background light on the New Testament. The linen shroud you're referring to is the so-called Shroud of Turin. It's in the Church of St. John the Baptist in Torino in Italy. It's in a box. The church took it out a few years ago and allowed tests to be run on it. Some of the tests were quite striking, indicating the image of the man on the shroud had real blood on it. It had 3-dimensional data embedded in it that isn't embedded in an ordinary painting or photograph, that it's actually a negative image like a photographic negative, all kinds of remarkable things. This led a number of people to think that this could be the authentic burial shroud of Jesus. But they ran carbon-14 dating tests on it in three different independent labs, and they dated the cloth to be medieval. So that seems to suggest that it's not authentic but a medieval forgery. The mystery of the shroud still remains. If it is a forgery nobody knows how it was done. It is so totally unlike medieval paintings of that time. If you've ever seen pre-Renaissance paintings, the figures almost look like flat cartoon figures without any perspective, whereas the man on the shroud is anatomically accurate. It's quite a striking image. So some scholars who've been working on this whole shroud thing believe the carbon-14 test may have been skewed in some way because the shroud was damaged by fire around the 1500s. When the nuns repaired the shroud, they may have interwoven cloth into the fabric of the shroud in order to repair tears, patches or rips. It may be where they took the piece, a centimeter square piece of the hem of the shroud, some would suggest, that this may have been part of the repair work on the edge rather than the original fabric. So they want to rerun the test, but the Catholic Church doesn't permit it because when you carbon date these things it destroys the sample, and so for them it's destroying this precious relic. It's sacred so they don't want people doing it. The Church hasn't agreed to letting it be done again, but until those carbon dating tests are reversed, I think one can't say that the shroud is authentic. You would need to have those tests somehow shown to be erroneous. Apart from those tests, the signs

of authenticity on the shroud are quite remarkable.

**S:** So what other pieces of physical evidence of the resurrection are there?

**Dr. C:** Well, if you think about the resurrection, there isn't really any physical evidence of it apart from the empty tomb itself. I think that the empty tomb was the physical evidence that remained and it was known in Jerusalem. People in Jerusalem at the time, when the disciples began to proclaim about Jesus—if that tomb hadn't been empty, the easiest way to shut these disciples up would be to have pointed to the occupied tomb and maybe exhumed the body. But they didn't do it. The tomb was evidently empty. That would be the physical evidence for it. Now we don't know today for certain where the location of the tomb was, though there is strong historical tradition that the so-called Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem is in fact built on the site of the empty tomb. In the center of the church down in the bowels of the church, there are the remains of an old tomb, and the claims, historical traditions, for that being authentic, being the actual burial place of Jesus are pretty strong; they go very far back. But that is uncertain. What is more important is not that we today would know where the body was buried. What is important is the people of that time knew where the body was buried, so they could verify whether or not a corpse was in the tomb when the disciples began to go about Jerusalem preaching, "He is risen from the dead." That would be the really key thing.

Most of the evidence for the resurrection comes from what Mark was talking about, testimonial evidence. It would be the independent records you have of the event which dates back to within the first generation after it, and I think is ultimately based on eyewitness testimony.

**M:** But no one actually saw the resurrection. They saw the after effects of it.

**Dr. C:** That's correct. That's one of the interesting things about it. When you look at later legendary accounts of the resurrection that come out of the 2nd or 3rd century after Christ—there's a document called the Gospel of Peter, which is a forgery that was written in the 2nd century after Christ—there you have the story of Jesus coming out of the tomb with angels, and the angels' heads reaching up to the clouds and His head reaches above the clouds and then a cross comes out of the tomb with a voice from heaven saying to the cross, "Have you preached to them that sleep?" And the cross says, "Yea." This is how a real legend looks. It's embellished with all sorts of theological coloring. But by contrast, the original narratives that are the earliest don't relate the resurrection. They don't tell of angels coming out the tomb with the risen Jesus. They don't have scriptural proof texts being cited from the Old Testament. It's a very theologically unadorned

narrative. It's a very simple kind of retelling of the women's visiting the tomb early Sunday morning and finding it empty. That, I think, bespeaks its credibility, that it doesn't have these theological trappings that come up with these legendary stories A couple of hundred years later.

**S:** How do we know that the witnesses weren't making it up? How do we know that this is real?

**Dr. C:** This was a theory that was suggested back in the late 1600s and early 1700s by English and German deists. I call it the "Conspiracy Theory." These deists said that the disciples had enjoyed the easy life of preaching that they had had with Jesus, so in order for His cause to go on, they stole the body and then lied about the appearances and made it all up. Well, no modern scholar believes this anymore. The only place you find this tossed about is in sensationalist popular literature. I don't think anybody who reads the pages of the New Testament unprejudicially can deny these people sincerely believed this message they were preaching and that they were willing to die for. They were willing to go through horrible torturous deaths for the truth of this message. They could have been mistaken about it, but I don't think we could say that these people were insincere. They really believed it. So nobody really holds to that kind of a theory anymore. A second problem with the "Conspiracy Theory" is that it's terribly anachronistic. It looks at the situation of the disciples through the rear view mirror of 2000 years of Christian history. We look back on it now and say the resurrection is what we believe or what the Christians believe so maybe they hoaxed it and lied about it. But you see, that's Monday morning quarterbacking. What you have to do is put yourself in the shoes of a 1st century Jew, a 1st century disciple of Jesus of Nazareth, and ask what would you think if this man who you think is the Messiah suddenly got himself crucified by the Romans. In Jewish expectations, Messiah was going to be the deliverer of Israel. He was going to come and re-establish the throne of David in Jerusalem, the greatest Old Testament king. For 1st century Jews that meant throwing off the yoke of the Roman Empire. He was going to deliver Israel from Rome. They were going to be freed to set up the throne of David and triumph over its enemies. There's no idea anywhere in Judaism of a Messiah, who instead of triumphing over his enemies, is humiliated and executed by them as a criminal and dies. Then the idea that the Messiah would be raised from the dead was completely unknown in Judaism. The resurrection, as I think you, Mark, were indicating in your first question, is something that Jews expected to take place on judgment day after the end of the world, not something that happens in history. So a 1st century disciple of Jesus confronted with his crucifixion, his reaction would be to say, "What has gone wrong? I thought He was the Messiah. And now he's dead. This just doesn't make sense." He wouldn't think, "I'll steal the body, say He's risen from the dead, and say he's the

Messiah.” That’s totally un-Jewish. That’s looking at it, again, through the rearview mirror of Christian history. So this “Conspiracy Theory” is completely anachronistic in that sense. It also, I think, is an implausible view of the willingness of these people to die for the truth of this message that they were proclaiming. So that’s why nobody really holds to the “Conspiracy Theory” anymore.

**A:** There are four Gospels and there seem to be discrepancies in the stories about what the women see when they are visiting the tomb. How do you explain those discrepancies?

**Dr. C:** What you find is that these discrepancies appear in the secondary features of the narratives. They all agree in the core. All four of them agree that Jesus of Nazareth was buried on Friday evening by a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin named Joseph of Aramathia, that a group of women followers of Jesus, including Mary Magdalene, who is mentioned by name in all four of them, comes to the tomb early in the morning. They find the stone rolled away. They see an angelic vision and find the tomb empty. All of the narratives agree on that core. The differences between them are in the secondary circumstantial details, which don’t affect the historical core. In fact one of the things that I have just been reading and learning about lately that has been really interesting to me is something about the nature of oral tradition. We’re talking about a society that was an oral culture in which the ability to memorize and hand on information orally is very important and a high developed skill, in contrast to our literary society. We don’t have this kind of memory. The way oral tradition works is this: the person passing on the story has to get the basic flow of the story right. He has to have the key words or key phrases right. Especially, the climax has to be right. Then he’s free to tell the rest of the story as he wishes. The secondary details are not so fixed in oral tradition. The core is fixed. I think a really good analogy of this oral culture is when you tell a joke. When you hear different people tell the same joke on different occasions, they’ll vary some of the details, but it’s important to get the basic flow of the joke right, and especially the punch line you have to get right. For example, here’s a joke I heard a person tell me once. He said, “Did you hear of the Calvinist who fell down the elevator shaft?” I said, “No.” He said, “He got up, dusted himself off and said, ‘Whew, I’m glad that’s over!’” (If you don’t know what Calvinism is, you wouldn’t get the joke. Calvinism says that everything’s predestined; so he’s glad that’s over.) I heard another person later on tell this same joke. Only this is how told it: He said, “What did the Calvinist say when he fell down the stairs?” I said, “I don’t know.” He said, “Boy, I’m glad that’s over!” See the difference there. There were minor differences in the way it was related, but what was key was the flow of the story and then the punch line. When you look at the four Gospels, the teachings of Jesus, the stories of Jesus, this is very much what you find in the four

Gospels. They have the same core, but they differ in the circumstantial secondary details. The core is constant; and that's particularly the case with the burial and empty tomb story of Jesus. Historians aren't very troubled by these kinds of differences in the secondary details. What is remarkable is that we have these multiple, independent documents all agreeing on the core that this happened. That gives a very high credibility. We don't have four independent sources for most of the major figures of antiquity. I mentioned Caesar's crossing the Rubicon when returning from Gaul coming to Rome. Caesar's crossing the Rubicon is one of the famous events in ancient history. There are 5 accounts of this, and none of them actually narrates his crossing. They just say he was here before and then later was in Italy. They don't narrate that he crossed it. And yet everyone agrees he crossed the Rubicon and marched upon Rome. It's really amazing that you've got this obscure Palestinian preacher who gets crucified in the corner of the Roman Empire, and yet you have such good historical documentation about not only His life and teaching, but about His death and then the events after His death. The resurrection is an event that's a miraculous event. You wouldn't expect to have any evidence of something like this. The amazing fact is that we have very credible accounts that His tomb was found empty, that there were appearances of Jesus alive after His death to various witnesses, that the original disciples who were dispirited, discouraged, doubting, 1st century Jewish people suddenly became bold proclaimers of His resurrection and were willing to go to torturous deaths for this. These are all remarkable facts for historians to explain. You can't do it through a "Conspiracy Theory." That just doesn't explain the data adequately.

**E:** It says in the Gospels that soldiers guarded the tomb. What happened to them? Are there any accounts from the guards?

**Dr. C:** That's only in the Gospel of Matthew, where it has the guard. I think by the time the women got there, the guards had already fled and gone back into the city. We don't have any first hand documents written by guards who were at the tomb of Jesus, nor would we expect to find such a thing. What we do have is enemy testimony of the empty tomb. How do we have that? Well, why does Matthew relate the story of the guards? Why does he bother to tell the story? He tells us right at the end of the story. The story is that when the earthquake occurred, the tomb was opened, and the guard fled into the city terrified. It says in Matthew's Gospel that the Jewish chief priests then bribed the guard to tell people that the disciples stole his body while they were asleep around the tomb. That's a preposterous story at face value. A Roman guard wouldn't fall asleep when on guard around a tomb. If they did, they wouldn't be sleeping in la-la land while these men came,



pushed away this heavy, monstrous stone and broke into the tomb, without waking them up. Matthew says the guards were bribed to tell the story, and then he says, "This story has been spread among Jews till this day." So he makes it very evident that what Matthew is telling this story for is to counteract this Jewish attempt to explain away the empty tomb that the disciples came and stole the body. We have here evidence of an empty tomb from the very opponents of the early Christian movement, namely the Jews. The Jews were not saying the body is in the tomb. Instead the Jews were saying in response to the proclamation of the resurrection that the disciples stole the body. That implies the tomb was empty. The Jewish leaders wouldn't go around telling people the disciples stole the body if everyone knew that the body was still in the tomb in Jerusalem. It's evident from the fact that Matthew feels obligated to tell this story that the site of the tomb is known to be empty. In that sense, we do have actual enemy testimony to the emptiness of the tomb. That's important to the question raised, "Do the documents come only from the people who have a point of view, who believe in it?" In this case, what we do have is enemy testimony to the fact of the empty tomb in the Jewish allegation that the tomb is empty because of the theft of the body.

**S:** Is there any Roman record of the crucifixion of Christ?

**Dr. C:** There is a Roman historian, Tacitus. Tacitus wrote around AD 110. Jesus was crucified about AD 30. Tacitus, in his book *The Annals of Rome*, writes that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified under the edict of Pontius Pilate in Palestine. That's about all he says. We have that Roman testimony. We also have Jewish testimony to Jesus' crucifixion. There was a Jewish historian named Josephus who was a contemporary with Jesus actually. He wrote a history of the Jewish people. He was also a Roman collaborator. He was like the French in WWII who collaborated with the Nazis, like the Vichy French, who were considered traitors. That's what Josephus was. He was a Jew who was a collaborator with Rome. He wrote this history of the Jews; and in it he talks about John the Baptist, Caiaphas, and Annas the high priest during Jesus' life. He talks about Jesus and Jesus' brother, James, how he was stoned to death. And he mentions Jesus' being crucified. He says that Jesus of Nazareth was a wonder-worker, a miracle worker, who went around Palestine preaching and was executed by crucifixion. Josephus says that the bands of his followers have not died out. They continue to follow him today. So you do have this secular testimony to Jesus, in Roman and in Jewish historical writing, which is again amazing that this stuff should be there.

**E:** I have a question about when the women went to go visit the tomb that was sealed, why were they going there knowing that there were guards and this stone in front of the tomb?

**Dr. C:** When you read Jewish literature like the *Mishna*, a Jewish writing from a couple of centuries after Jesus, that talks of Jewish practices and religious observances and so forth,—probably the practices in the *Mishna* go back earlier, even centuries. What Jews would do after a person was entombed is go and visit the tomb for the next three days. They would anoint the body by pouring oils over it or fragrant spices and things of that sort. What the women are described as doing in the Gospels is exactly in line with what the *Mishna* describes as burial practices. Now you might say, “Why would they go if they knew that there was this big stone?” and so forth. I think that just underestimates their grief and devotion to Jesus. Perhaps they hoped the guards would move the stone for them and allow them to get in. In fact, in the narrative, it says as they go on the way they say, “Who’s going to roll the stone for us from the tomb?” They’re asking that same question. But these weren’t machine-like individuals. They were women who deeply loved Christ and wanted to do what was right by Him. So perhaps they hoped the guard would move the stone, let them in, and do their religious duties as Jews to pay their last devotions.

**E:** It says later after the resurrection, when Jesus came back to visit, the disciples didn’t recognize Him at first. So He let one of His disciples, Thomas, feel the holes in His hands. Why didn’t they recognize Him?

**Dr. C:** This non-recognition motif is only found in three of the Gospel appearance stories. He appears to Mary Magdalene in John’s Gospel. It’s in the story of the appearance by the Sea of Galilee in John 21. Then you have it in Luke’s account on the road to Emmaus where the disciples are walking to the village of Emmaus. But in the other stories there’s no problem in recognizing Jesus: the appearance in the upper room, the appearance to the women and so forth. So we have to ask ourselves, what is this about, this fact that they didn’t recognize Him at first? What Luke says in the Emmaus road appearance, not that His appearance had changed in any way, but he says, “Their eyes were held from recognizing Him.” He thinks of this as a supernaturally-imposed inhibition. Then in the moment where Jesus sits and breaks bread with them, then their eyes are opened, and they recognize Him. It wasn’t really anything in His appearance that was different. It was an inhibition that was supernaturally imposed upon them, and in the moment of disclosure their eyes were opened and they could recognize Him. What are the Gospel writers trying to tell us by this non-recognition motif? What is the point of this? I think that perhaps the point is this: what Jesus is trying to communicate to the disciples is that they would no longer relate to Him in the same way that they did when He once walked among them and they enjoyed His earthly presence with them. Now Jesus is going away, and He no longer will be in a recognizable physical way with

them. Therefore, they need to accustom themselves to this new mode of relating to Him in the post-resurrection period. That's my best guess to what the theological point is in the non-recognition and moment of disclosure motif.

**M:** If all of it is to be believed and His body disappears, a couple questions arise: if no one stole, how is it gone; and what was the purpose of it being gone, why is it gone? Like you said, if you look at it in hindsight, it's very obvious to why it was gone, but at the time, no one had any idea of why it would disappear. It was totally unheard of so why is it gone?

**Dr. C:** That's a good point. When you read the empty tomb accounts, it didn't bring about faith in the disciples. When they see the empty tomb, they don't say, "Huh! He's risen from the dead!" What they say is that someone has stolen the body. So your point is exactly right. Like good 1st century Jews, they think it's tomb robbery when they see it. It isn't until the appearances of Jesus to them that they come to believe that he was raised from the dead. So the empty tomb isn't the source of their faith—it was physical evidence of the resurrection but isn't what brought them to faith. The physical appearances were what made them believe. Now where did he go? My inclination is to say this: that Jesus in his resurrected state wasn't going to stay here anymore. He's going to exit this 4-dimensional space-time continuum. When you read the Gospel appearance stories, that's the impression you get. He's able to step into this space-time continuum in one place, and then step out of it, and then step into it some place else without traversing the distance in between. So he disappears in Emmaus, 7 miles from Jerusalem, and then appears in the upper room in Jerusalem without walking along the path in between. I think of this as a hyper-dimensional reality, just as in flatland, a 2-dimensional plane, I can intersect it here with my finger and then another place. The people on flatland can see my finger here and they'd see it just disappeared. Then they would see it here and it just appeared, yet it didn't cross the distance in between. That's very much what's going on with the resurrection body of Jesus. In this resurrection body, He has the ability to step in and out of our continuum at will at any point. Now he's exited our space-time continuum. What Christians look for is that someday the return of Christ will take place. The second coming of Christ will be the end of human history when Christ re-enters our space-time continuum in a personal bodily way and brings about the end of human history.

**E:** The miracles that happened in the past, why would you say even though he's left the Holy Spirit, we really don't see a ton of miracles today?

**Dr. C:** When you read the Bible, what you discover is that the miracles in the Bible are actually

confined to very narrow periods of time. They tend to cluster around the Exodus when God delivers His people from Egypt—the plagues on pharaoh and the Egyptians, the Red Sea, then during the time of Elijah and Elisha which is hundreds of centuries later, and then around Jesus of Nazareth which is again over a millennium later. In between, there are periods with no miracles or hardly any. So the Bible isn't chock full of miracles as one may be led to think. Actually, you can see narrow limits, they tend to cluster around events with tremendous revelatory significance, where God is revealing Himself in a very special way like to Moses to deliver His people out of bondage in Egypt. There is a series of miraculous events to show that he is the deliverer to take them out of bondage. This is similar with Jesus, the miracles of Jesus. He calls them "signs of the Kingdom." The central message that Jesus proclaimed was the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God in a human person. So the miracles and the exorcisms, the casting out of demons, are signs to people that the Kingdom of God is breaking into human history in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The climax, of course, is his resurrection, an unparalleled miracle. God has attested the claims of His Son in this very dramatic and unprecedented way that has never been repeated since. I think you would agree if Jesus really was the Son of God and was crucified for blasphemy that God has vindicated those allegedly blasphemous claims in a way that is unmistakable, dramatic, and shows that Jesus was who he claimed to be. He was telling the truth. He wasn't a blasphemer after all. The resurrection of Jesus was the divine vindication of the man the Jews had rejected as a blasphemer.

What's interesting, too, in the same connection, is that most historians do believe that Jesus of Nazareth was a miracle worker and an exorcist. Now they may try to explain those away by saying they were psychosomatic, but they don't deny that miracle working and exorcisms belonged the picture of the historical Jesus when he actually lived. These are not later legendary stories that accrued over the decades and centuries. Given the multiple witnesses and multiple independent testimonies, even liberal scholars believe that Jesus of Nazareth performed miracles and exorcisms as signs of the truth of the Kingdom of God.

**M:** You mentioned exorcisms. Why is it since Jesus has died we haven't seen demons so to speak and instances where exorcism was necessary?

**Dr. C:** That's controversial, but we have. Have you seen the movie *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*? It's based on a true story. There are accounts today of exorcism under demon possession. That one was dramatized in this movie. But have you heard of M. Scott Peck, who wrote *The Road Less Traveled* and other well-known books? He was a psychologist. Just before his death (he passed

away just recently) the last work he was doing was on demon-possession. He's written a book—I haven't read it yet but read reviews about it—where he documents three or four exorcisms to which he was a witness. He says he is convinced that this is a genuine phenomenon that cannot be psychologically explained away. He's a professional psychologist. Peck is not alone here. There are other researchers who have looked into demon-possession. They say this is a real phenomenon that actually still occurs. It's not everywhere. From the little that I've read about demonism the people who are in danger of this would be the people who get into the occult. There's something that happens when you get into occult practices; it kind of opens a door in your mind to this kind of demonic activity. But if you stay away from occult things, you're pretty safe. You're not going to get demonized. For that reason, I stay away from things like ouija boards, séances, trying to contact the dead, those kinds of things. I believe there is a spirit world that is out there and a portal to let them in.

**M:** At a point, you said Jesus was the one doing the exorcisms and he was a unique person. How are other people doing them these days?

**Dr. C:** I don't mean to say that Jesus was the only person that can do exorcisms. There were Jewish exorcists in his day. In fact, you have not only independent Jewish literature of these people but you even have them referred to in the Gospels. Exorcisms weren't unique to Jesus. I think what is unique to him is that he cast out demons by his own authority. He didn't pray to God to cast out demons or stuff like that. He would say, "I say to you, come out of the man." He had the power to direct demons. He showed the spiritual authority over the forces of darkness by his authority to command them, whereas today exorcisms that are done are typically done through prayer and fasting, getting a group of people to pray for the person. The Roman Catholic Church has a whole prescribed sequence of events you have to go through when you're going through an exorcism, which is seen in this movie I referred to, *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*, where the priest tries to go through this. He's confronted with this girl that's inhabited by 6 demonic beings. She overpowers him and the exorcism is a failure. It's very different, then, when Jesus commanded them out of His own authority. That's what struck people about Jesus: his authority with which he did this. He would perform miracles on his own authority, command demons on his own authority. He would teach the law on his own authority and teach about what God had said in the Old Testament on His own authority. He would even revise the law that God had given in the Old Testament on his own authority. So you would find a phrase at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, "The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority

and not as their scribes.” So anybody (wholly apart from the resurrection) is faced with the question that Jesus asked the disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Was he a nut? Was he a rabbi? Was he just a moral teacher? Was he who he claimed to be? I think the resurrection gives us a good answer: that he was who he claimed to be. He was in fact the Son of God, Herald of the Kingdom of God. God’s raising him from the dead shows he wasn’t a blasphemer.

**M:** What makes Jesus so special that he was able to resurrect?

**Dr. C:** I would say it is because Jesus of Nazareth is divine. He was God in the flesh. He was the second person of the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He was the second person of the Trinity incarnate in human history. The word incarnation comes from the Latin word *in* which means “in” and *carnis* meaning “flesh” “God in flesh.” That’s what Christians celebrate at Christmas. He is the only person who’s done that. And there isn’t anybody else like that. So the resurrection of Jesus is unique in human history. There’s nothing else like it.